

## India-Bangladesh Relations

India was the first country to recognize Bangladesh as a separate and independent state and established diplomatic relations with the country immediately after its independence in December 1971. India's links with Bangladesh are civilisational, cultural, social and economic. There is much that unites the two countries – a shared history and common heritage, linguistic and cultural ties, passion for music, literature and the arts. This commonality is reflected in our multi-dimensional and expanding relations. India and Bangladesh's geographical locations complement each other and present an opportunity for both to further develop their connectivity links and economies.

High-level exchanges, visits and meetings take place regularly alongside the wide ranging people-to-people interaction. The landmark visits of the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India in January 2010 and the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Bangladesh in September 2011 have opened a new chapter in our bilateral relations with Bangladesh. The visit of President Pranab Mukherjee to Bangladesh in March 2013, on his first trip abroad since assuming this post, reflects the highest importance that Government of India attaches to its relationship with Bangladesh, which is based on the principles of equality, partnership and mutual growth. Smt. Sushma Swaraj's first "stand-alone" visit to Bangladesh as the External Affairs Minister in the last week of June 2014 had provided further momentum to the close and friendly relationship between India and Bangladesh.

In the last more than four decades, the two countries have continued to consolidate their political, economic, trade and cultural relations and have built a comprehensive institutional framework to promote bilateral cooperation. Both countries share 54 rivers, out of which, a treaty is already in existence for sharing of the Ganges water and both sides are working for early finalisation of agreements for sharing of water of other common rivers. Both countries are also cooperating in the conservation of the entire Sunderbans ecosystem, which is a common biodiversity heritage.

Bangladesh is an important trading partner for India. The two-way trade in FY 2012-2013 was US \$ 5.34 billion with India's exports to Bangladesh accounting for US \$ 4.776 billion and imports US \$ 0.564 billion with the duty free access given by India to Bangladesh for all items except 25. Two border haats are already operational with a few more on the anvil along the India-Bangladesh border. Investment by Indian companies (Airtel, CEAT, Marico etc.) in Bangladesh continues to grow with the signing of bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection agreement. For the first time in their post-independence history, India and Bangladesh have established inter-grid connectivity for the flow of bulk power from India to Bangladesh. Prime Ministers of both the countries inaugurated the grid-connectivity ; Bangladesh has started importing 500MW of Power from India since October 2013.

India has always stood by Bangladesh in its hour of need with aid and economic assistance to help it cope with natural disasters and floods. To express India's sympathy at the loss of lives and destruction as a result of cyclone 'Sidr' which hit the Bangladesh coastal areas in November 2007, the then External Affairs Minister, Shri Pranab

Mukherjee visited Bangladesh in December 2007. He also visited the cyclone-hit areas and expressed India's sympathy to the affected people of Bangladesh in their hour of need. Prior to the visit, India had declared an elaborate aid package. Aid worth over Taka 250 crore (over US \$ 37 million), including supply of relief materials consisting of medicines, tents, blankets, ready-to-eat meals, portable water-purifiers, 1,000 MT of skimmed milk powder and 40,000 MT of rice was handed over to Bangladesh. The Government of India also worked with the Government of Bangladesh for rehabilitation of ten cyclone-affected villages in the southern part of Bangladesh. India has also completed and handed over 2,800 core shelters in the affected villages in Bagerhat district in southern Bangladesh. Similarly, 2800 solar lamps have also been handed over to the beneficiaries of these core shelter houses. Similarly, Taka 230 million in the form of relief goods comprising clothing, water purification equipment and dry food was also supplied to Bangladesh after 1991 cyclone, which killed more than 1,35,000 Bangladeshi nationals.

India has extended a line of credit of US\$ 800 million to Bangladesh for a range of projects, including railway infrastructure, supply of Broad Gauge microprocessor-based locomotives and passenger coaches, procurement of buses, and dredging projects. US\$ 150 million out of the US\$ 200 million grant has already been released to Bangladesh in three installments for utilization in projects of priority to Bangladesh.

Scholarships and training programmes under ITEC, TCS of Colombo Plan, ICCR, AYUSH, Commonwealth, SAARC and IOR-ARC scholarships/ fellowship schemes are being offered to Bangladesh nationals. Muktijoddha Scholarship Scheme extended by the Government of India to Higher Secondary-level students (200 scholarships) and Graduate-level students (478 scholarships). Bangladesh Diplomats are also imparted training at Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi in 2011.

India and Bangladesh are also engaged in regional cooperation through multilateral forum such as SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) and IOR-ARC (Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation) etc. In pursuance of directions of the Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh, both sides have also commenced implementation of sub-regional cooperation initiatives along with Nepal and Bhutan.

Given the shared history and commonality of language, cultural exchanges form an important bond of friendship between the people of two countries. Special emphasis has been laid on promotion of exchanges in the fields of music, theatre, art, painting, books, etc. A bilateral Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) provides the framework for such exchanges. To promote bilateral cultural exchanges, the Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre (IGCC) of Indian Council for Cultural Relations was inaugurated at Dhaka on March 11, 2010. Both countries jointly celebrated year-long celebrations of the 150<sup>th</sup> birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore and the 90th Anniversary of the publication of the poem 'Bidrohi' by Kazi Nazrul Islam in 2011-12.

## **Useful Resources:**

For more information and latest updates please visit

High Commission of India, Dhaka website:

<http://hcidhaka.gov.in/>

High Commission of India, Dhaka Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/HighCommissionofIndiaDhaka>

High Commission of India, Dhaka Twitter account:

<https://twitter.com/ihcdhaka>

India Global- AIR FM Gold Program featuring India and Bangladesh Relations:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mli10DGyIZ0>

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