

## India-Bangladesh Relations

India was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh and establish diplomatic relations immediately after its independence in December 1971. India-Bangladesh relationship is anchored in history, culture, language and shared values of secularism, democracy, and countless other commonalities between the two countries. Both countries share an all-encompassing win-win partnership based on sovereignty, equality, trust and understanding that goes far beyond a strategic partnership.

### High Level Visits and Exchanges

2. There have been regular high-level visits and exchanges at Ministerial level as well as at senior official level between the two countries.

3. Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a State visit to Bangladesh on 6-7 June, 2015. During the visit, 22 bilateral documents were concluded including the exchange of instrument of ratification for India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement (LBA). Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina paid a State Visit to India from 07-10 April 2017. During the visit, 36 bilateral documents were concluded in various areas including civil nuclear energy, space, information technology, defence and capacity building etc. On this occasion, the two Prime Ministers presided over a commemorative ceremony in honour of Indian martyrs of Liberation War of Bangladesh. Prime Minister Hasina visited West Bengal from 25-26 May 2018 for joint inauguration of Bangladesh Bhaban at Santiniketan University along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During this visit, she was awarded a Doctor of Literature (D.Lit) by Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol.

4. The Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh also met on the sidelines of summits of BRICS-BIMSTEC in October 2016 in Goa, CHOGM in April 2018 in London and BIMSTEC in August 2018 in Kathmandu.

5. On 31 December 2018, Prime Minister Modi congratulated Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina over telephone on her re-election as the Prime Minister in the 11th Parliamentary polls held on 30 December 2018 for an unprecedented fourth term.

6. Former President Pranab Mukherjee visited Bangladesh in March 2013, which was his first visit abroad since assuming office. President of Bangladesh, Md. Abdul Hamid visited India in December 2014, which was the first bilateral visit by Bangladesh's Head of State after a gap of 42 years. President Hamid also represented Bangladesh at the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance in New Delhi on 11 March 2018. During his visit, he also travelled to Guwahati and Shillong, Balat (Meghalaya) from 8-10 March 2018 where he had lived as a *Muktijoddha* during the Liberation War.

7. After assuming charge, External Affairs Minister (EAM) of India Sushma Swaraj and Minister of State for External Affairs Lt. Gen (Retd) V.K.Singh had paid their first stand-alone overseas visits to Bangladesh on 25-27 June and 24 August 2014 respectively. The Foreign Secretary also visited Bangladesh from 8-10 April 2018.

8. Several senior Cabinet Ministers of the Government of India visited Bangladesh in recent years including Defence Minister Manohar Parikkar in November 2016 (which was the first ever visit by Indian Defence Minister to Bangladesh since 1971), EAM Sushma Swaraj in October 2017 to attend the 4<sup>th</sup> Joint Consultative Commission meeting, Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Arun Jaitley in October 2017 to sign the Dollar credit line agreement to operationalize the third Line of Credit of USD 4.5 billion to Bangladesh, Home Minister Rajnath Singh in July 2018 for Home Minister Level Talks and the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Civil Aviation Suresh Prabhu in September 2018 to discuss trade, investment and connectivity related issues.

9. From the Bangladesh side, important Ministerial level visits in recent years included that of Minister of Science and Technology Yeafesh Osman in October 2017 for the third India International Science Festival in Chennai, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed in November 2017 for the Horasis Asia meeting in Kolkata, Civil Aviation Minister Rashed Khan Menon in November 2017 for the North-East Development Summit in Imphal, Foreign Affairs Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali in January 2018 to attend the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi and in August, 2018 to attend the funeral of former Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee; Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor in April 2018 to visit Santiniketan; Industries Minister Md. Amir Hossain in April 2018 to attend the eight Regional 3R Forum of Asia and Pacific for Clean Water; Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism A K M Shahjahan Kamal in August 2018 to attend 6<sup>th</sup> International Buddhist Conclave; Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu in August 2018 to attend the inauguration of India International Mega Trade Fair; Planning Minister of Bangladesh A.H.M Mustafa Kamal to attend the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention in New Delhi in October 2018; State Minister of Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam to attend the second Indian Ocean RIM Association (IORA) Renewable Energy Ministerial Meeting in New Delhi in October 2018.

10. The list of bilateral visits at the level of Heads of State / Heads of Government is on the website of High Commission ([https://hcidhaka.gov.in/Bilateral\\_Visits](https://hcidhaka.gov.in/Bilateral_Visits)).

### **Bilateral institutional mechanisms**

11. There are more than 60 bilateral institutional mechanisms between India and Bangladesh in the areas of security, trade & commerce, power & energy, transport & connectivity, science and technology, defence, rivers & maritime affairs etc. A Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) led by the Ministers of Foreign/External Affairs coordinates and oversees implementation of initiatives taken between the two countries as well as explores newer avenues for cooperation. The 4<sup>th</sup> JCC was held in Dhaka on 22 October, 2017. A list of some important bilateral mechanisms and the list of important bilateral documents concluded between the two countries since 1971 is available in the website of High Commission.

### **Security & Border Management**

12. India and Bangladesh share 4096.7 km. of border, which is the longest land boundary that India shares with any of its neighbours. The India-Bangladesh Land

Boundary Agreement (LBA) came into force following the exchange of instruments of ratification in June 2015. On July 31, 2015 the enclaves of India and Bangladesh in each other's countries were exchanged and strip maps were signed. Residents of these erstwhile enclaves, who opted to retain their Indian citizenship made a final movement to India by November 30, 2015.

13. A number of security related agreements (Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters; Transfer of Sentenced Prisoners, Combating International Terrorism, organized Crime and Illicit drug trafficking, MoUs on Prevention of Circulation of Fake Currency Notes and Prevention of Human Trafficking and Extradition Treaty) have been signed between both the countries and working groups have been constituted to monitor their implementation.

14. The Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) signed in 2011 aims to synergize the efforts of both the border guarding forces for checking cross border illegal activities and crimes as well as for maintenance of peace and tranquility along the India-Bangladesh border.

15. The longstanding maritime boundary dispute between India and Bangladesh was settled as per arbitration award of 7 July 2014 which paved the way for cooperation in the maritime sector.

### **Defence Cooperation**

16. India and Bangladesh share the historical legacy of cooperation and support during the Liberation War of 1971. The active engagement on the defence side includes high level exchanges at the level of Service Chiefs, conduct of the inaugural Annual Defence Dialogue and service specific staff talks. Various Joint exercises of Army (Exercise Sampriti) and Navy (Exercise Milan) take place between two countries. Both navies and coast guard exchange goodwill ships visits to each other. Scholarships are given to heirs of *Muktijoddhas* (Bangladesh War Veterans) for Higher Secondary & Undergraduate students every year by the Government of India. 100 *Muktijoddhas* patients per annum are treated in various Indian armed forces hospitals from 2018. Exchange visits of Bangladesh *Muktijoddhas* and Indian war veterans take place every year in December to mark the Victory Day celebrations in Dhaka and Kolkata.

### **Sharing of River Waters**

17. India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers. A bilateral Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) is working since June 1972 to maintain liaison between the two countries to maximize benefits from common river systems. Besides the JRC meetings, technical level meetings are also held regularly.

18. The Ganga Waters Treaty signed in 1996 for sharing of waters of river Ganga during lean season (January 1-May 31) is working satisfactorily. Regular meetings of the Joint Committee on Sharing of Ganga Waters are held to take stock of the implementation of the provisions of the treaty.

### **Bilateral Trade and Investment**

19. Bangladesh is India's biggest trade partner in South Asia. Bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh has grown steadily over the last decade. In the last three years (the period between FY 2015-16 and FY 2017-18), bilateral trade grew around 31.5% from USD 7 bn to USD 9.3 bn. India's exports to Bangladesh for the (Indian) financial year 2017-18 (April to March) stood at US \$ 8.46 billion and imports from Bangladesh during the financial year 2017-18 stood at US \$ 0.68 billion. More details on bilateral trade statistics are on the website of High Commission.

20. India and Bangladesh have trade agreement which is facilitative in nature. India-Bangladesh are members of various regional trade agreements including the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), SAARC Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) and the Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) which govern the tariff regimes for trade. Under SAFTA, India has granted duty free quota free access to Bangladesh on all items except alcohol and tobacco. Various bilateral institutional mechanisms including Commerce Secretary Level Meeting, Shipping Secretary Level Talks, Joint Working Groups on Trade, Customs and Fisheries and Sub-groups on Banking and Infrastructure etc meet regularly.

21. Four Border Haats, two each in Tripura (Srinagar and Kamalasagar) and Meghalaya (Kalaichar and Balat), have been established for the benefit of bordering communities. Additional Border Haats on the India-Bangladesh border are under implementation.

22. Total Indian investment proposals in Bangladesh registered with the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) exceed US\$ 3 billion. Cumulative FDI from India to Bangladesh has doubled from USD 243.91 mn in 2014 to USD 539.91 mn in June 2018. Indian companies have invested in various sectors including telecommunications (Airtel), pharmaceuticals (Sun Pharma), FMCG (Marico) and automobiles (Tata, Hero Motors) sectors in Bangladesh. During PM Sheikh Hasina's visit in April 2017, 13 agreements worth around US\$ 10 billion of Indian investment mainly in power and energy sectors in Bangladesh were signed.

### **Development Partnership:**

23. Bangladesh is the biggest development partner of India today. India has extended 3 Lines of Credits to Bangladesh in the last 8 years amounting to US\$ 8 billion.

24. During the visit of Bangladesh PM to India in January 2010, India had announced a US\$1 billion Line of Credit (LOC) for Bangladesh covering 14 projects in public

transportation, roads, railways, bridges and inland waterways etc. Most of these projects have been completed and the remaining are at various stages of implementation.

25. India had extended the second LOC of US\$ 2 billion during the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Bangladesh in June 2015. This LOC covers 15 projects in areas of roads, railways, power, shipping, SEZs, health & medical care and technical education.

26. During the visit of Bangladesh PM to India in April 2017, India extended a third LOC of US\$ 4.5 billion to Bangladesh. The new LOC will cover projects in areas of port construction, railways, roads, airports, power & energy, telecommunications, and shipping etc. The Dollar Credit Line Agreement for implementation of the third Line of Credit was signed in the presence of the Ministers of Finance of India and Bangladesh on 4 October 2017.

27. In addition to LOC funds, the Government of India has also been providing grant assistance to Bangladesh for various infrastructure and socio-economic projects including the Agartala- Akhaura rail link, dredging of inland waterways and India Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline. Several Small Development Projects in the areas of education, health, water, culture, urban development, disaster management and community welfare etc are also being implemented.

### **Power and Energy Sector Cooperation**

28. Cooperation in power sector has become one of the hallmarks of India- Bangladesh relations. Bangladesh is currently importing 1160 MW of power from India. The 1320 MW coal-fired Maitree thermal power plant, a 50:50 JV between National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) of India and Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), is being constructed at Rampal. During Bangladesh PM's visit in April 2017, agreements for generation/ supply/ financing of more than 3600 MW electricity were signed between Indian and Bangladeshi public /private companies.

29. Energy sector cooperation between India and Bangladesh has also seen considerable progress in the last two years. Various Indian public sector units including Indian Oil Corporation, Numaligarh Refinery Limited are working with their Bangladeshi counterparts in the oil and gas sector of Bangladesh. ONGC Videsh Ltd has acquired two shallow water blocks in consortium with Oil India Limited and is currently exploring these blocks.

30. The GOI is also extending financial assistance for construction of 130 Km India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline for supply of diesel from Siliguri to Parbatipur in Bangladesh.

### **Connectivity**

31. Improvements in connectivity are an important prerequisite for trade, investments and people-to-people ties. This has been an important area of focus for India and Bangladesh. In order to promote connectivity, various initiatives have been taken in the

last few years. The overland movement of goods between India and Bangladesh is operationalized through 34 functional Land Customs Stations (LCSs) and two Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) along the border at Agartala and Petrapole. Around 37% of India's trade with Bangladesh operates through the Petrapole (India) – Benapole (Bangladesh). Petrapole (India) – Benapole (Bangladesh) has started 24x7 operations from August 01, 2017. Work has also commenced on upgrading the Dawki LCS in Meghalaya.

32. India and Bangladesh have a Protocol on Inland Waterways Trade and Transit (PIWTT), to facilitate trade and transit between the countries, since 1972. PIWTT permits movement of goods over barges/vessels through the river systems of Bangladesh on eight specific routes between points in India and Bangladesh, and between points in India through Bangladesh.

33. The PIWTT also allows for transshipment of goods to India's North- Eastern States through the Ashuganj River Port (and from there to Akhuara-Agartala by road) in Bangladesh.

34. Coastal Shipping Agreement signed in June 2015 has also enabled direct sea movement of containerized/bulk/dry cargo between the two countries.

35. India and Bangladesh signed an agreement in October 2018 on the use of Chittagong and Mongla Ports for transshipment of goods to and from India. The MoU on movement of passenger and cruise vessels on the waterways and coastal routes between the two countries is expected to be operationalized soon to facilitate tourism between the two countries.

36. Out of the erstwhile 6 rail links that existed, four broad gauge inter-country rail links between the two countries are operational i.e., (i) Petrapol (India)-Benapol (Bangladesh), (ii) Gede (India)-Darsana (Bangladesh), (iii) Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh) and (iv) Radhikapur (India)-Birool (Bangladesh). The two remaining rail linkages i.e., (i) Karimganj/Mahisasan (India)-Shabazpur (Bangladesh) and (ii) Haldibari (India)-Chilahati (Bangladesh) are also being restored. The seventh new rail-link between Agartala and Akhaura is being financed under grant assistance of India.

37. There are currently four inter-country bus services in operation. Dhaka-Kolkata direct bus service has been running from 1999. Other bus services are between Shillong-Dhaka; Agartala-Kolkata via Dhaka and Kolkata-Khulna. Various additional services were introduced including launching of Kolkata- Khulna 'Bandhan Express' train services in November 2017 and introduction of end-to-end immigration and customs clearance for travelers in the 'Maitree Express' between Kolkata and Dhaka.

38. There are presently around 100 flights operating weekly between India and Bangladesh connecting various Indian cities including New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai to Dhaka and Chittagong. From Bangladesh, US-Bangla Airlines, NOVOAIR, Regent Airways and Biman Bangladesh; and from India, Jet Airways, Spice Jet, Indigo and Air India are operating flights between India and Bangladesh.

## **Training and Capacity-Building**

39. A number of training courses are being conducted for Bangladesh officials. Bangladesh is also an important ITEC partner country, and around 800 participants from Bangladesh avail training courses under the ITEC programme annually. In addition, 200 scholarships are awarded by ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) every year to students from Bangladesh for pursuing courses in culture, drama, music, fine arts and sports, etc.

## **Cultural Exchanges**

40. The Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre (IGCC) in Dhaka regularly organizes cultural programmes and also conducts classes in various Indian cultural elements including Hindi, yoga, Hindustani music and Manipuri and Kathak dances etc. These courses are very popular with the Bangladeshi students. IGCC Hindi teacher also teaches Hindi at Institute of Modern Languages in University of Dhaka.

41. The ICCR has initiated a Tagore Chair in University of Dhaka since 2011. MoUs were signed to establish Hindi and Urdu language chairs in Dhaka University.

42. A 100 member youth delegation from Bangladesh has been visiting India annually since 2012 to promote understanding among the youth about each other's countries.

43. The High Commission of India has been publishing a highly popular Bengali literary monthly magazine 'Bharat Bichitra' since 1972.

## **Consular Services**

44. The Indian High Commission in Dhaka and the Assistant High Commissions in Bangladesh together issue the highest number of Indian visas compared to any other Indian Mission. The numbers are increasing manifold with figures exceeding 14 lakhs in 2018. To meet the rising demand for Indian visa in Bangladesh, an integrated state-of-the-art Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC), was inaugurated on 15 July 2018 in Dhaka. Apart from this, there are 14 more IVACs across Bangladesh in Chittagong, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Khulna, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Barisal, Jessore, Thakurgaon, Bogura, Cumilla, Noakhali, Brahmanbaria and Satkhira which cater to the Indian visa requirements of Bangladesh nationals.

## **Indian community in Bangladesh**

45. About 10,000 strong Indian community is estimated to be living in Bangladesh. Most of the Indians are engaged in Ready Made Garment (RMG) sector or as top professionals in MNCs. Around 3000 Indian students are also pursuing medical courses in different Universities/colleges in Bangladesh. A 24X7 helpline (01937400591) is functional to assist the Indian community in Bangladesh.

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