

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. The relationship between India and Bangladesh is anchored in history, culture, language and shared values of secularism, democracy, and countless other commonalities between the two countries. It is based on sovereignty, equality, trust, understanding and win-win partnership that goes far beyond a strategic partnership. In the last couple of years, the relationship has been further strengthened including through cooperation in new and high-technology areas.

High Level Visits and Exchanges

There have been regular high-level visits and exchanges between the two countries. There have also been frequent visits at Ministerial level as well as between senior officials on a regular basis.

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 in high technology areas of Civil Nuclear Energy, Space, Information Technology, Defence, Capacity building etc. A 3rd Line Of Credit (LOC) worth US\$ 4.5 billion was also extended to Bangladesh. The two Prime Ministers presided over a commemorative ceremony in honour of Indian martyrs of Liberation War of Bangladesh. Prior to this visit, PM Hasina had visited India on 16-17 October 2016 to participate in the BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit.

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) and a 2nd Line of Credit (LOC) worth US\$ 2 billion.

After assuming charge, External Affairs Minister of India Smt 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.

Former President Pranab Mukherjee visited Bangladesh in March 2013, which was his first trip abroad since assuming office. President of Bangladesh, Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid visited India in December 2014, which was the first visit by Bangladesh's 'ceremonial Head of State' after a gap of 42 years.

The list of bilateral visits at the level of Heads of State / Heads of Government is on the website of High Commission (<https://www.hcidhaka.gov.in/pages.php?id=1624>)

Bilateral institutional mechanisms

There are more than 50 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 3rd JCC was held in New Delhi on 20 September, 2014. The 4th JCC is expected to be held in Dhaka soon. A list of some important bilateral mechanisms and list of important bilateral documents concluded between the two countries since 1971 is on the website of High Commission.

Security & Border Management

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.

A number of agreements related to security cooperation have been signed between both the countries. 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.

The settlement of the maritime boundary arbitration between India and Bangladesh, as per UNCLOS award of July 7, 2014, has paved the way for the economic development of this part of the Bay of Bengal.

Sharing of River Waters

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 meetings of the JRC (37 meetings held so far), JRC Technical level meetings are also held regularly.

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

The first Trade Agreement between India and Bangladesh was signed in 1972. The India-Bangladesh Trade Agreement was last renewed in PM's visit in June 2015 for a period of 5 years with a provision for auto renewal. There are a number of other trade related agreements that have been signed between both countries.

Bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh has grown steadily over the last decade. In the five years, total trade between the two countries has grown by more than 17%. India's exports to Bangladesh in the period July 2016 – March 2017 stood at US\$ 4489.30 million and imports from Bangladesh during FY 2016-17 stood at US\$ 672.40 million. More details on bilateral trade statistics are on the website of High Commission.

India has provided duty free quota free access to Bangladesh on all tariff lines except tobacco and alcohol under South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) since 2011. Four Border Haats, two each in Tripura and Meghalaya, have been established for the benefit of bordering communities. Additional Border Haats on the India-Bangladesh border are under consideration.

Total Indian investment proposals in Bangladesh registered with the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) exceed US\$ 3 billion. Indian Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Bangladesh reached US\$ 88.0 million in 2015-16. During PM Sheikh Hasina's visit in April 2017, 13 agreements worth around US\$ 10 billion of mainly Indian investment in power and energy sectors in Bangladesh were signed.

India's Economic Assistance to Bangladesh

India has extended 3 Lines of Credits to Bangladesh in the last 7 years amounting to US\$ 8 billion. This makes Bangladesh the largest recipient of LOC funds from India till date.

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 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 completion.

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.

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.

In addition to LOC funds, Government of India also provides grant assistance to Bangladesh for projects under 'Aid to Bangladesh'. Projects such as construction of school/college buildings, laboratories, dispensaries, deep tube wells, community centres, renovation of historical monuments/buildings etc have been financed by Government of India under this programme. At present, three Sustainable Development Projects (SDPs) are being undertaken in the cities of Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet. The extended development work of RabindraNath Tagore's ancestral house in Shilaidaha is as well as 36 community clinics in selected districts of Bangladesh is also being undertaken. One of the biggest projects under the Indian grant assistance is the Bangladesh section of the Agartala-Akhaura rail-link.

Power and Energy Sector Cooperation

Cooperation in power sector has become one of the hallmarks of India Bangladesh relations. Bangladesh is currently importing about 660 MW of power from India. In March 2016, the two Prime Ministers inaugurated the export of power from Tripura to Bangladesh as well as export of Internet bandwidth to Tripura from Bangladesh. Supply of another 500 MW is expected to begin in 2018. 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 developed 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 public /private companies and Bangladesh side.

Energy sector cooperation between India and Bangladesh has also seen considerable progress in the last two years. Many Indian public sector units such as Indian Oil Corporation, Numaligarh Refinery Limited, Petronet LNG Ltd are working with their Bangladeshi counterparts in the oil and gas sector of Bangladesh. India has agreed to fund the construction of India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline from Siliguri to Parbatipur for supply of Diesel to Bangladesh from Numaligarh Refinery Limited. ONGC Videsh Ltd has acquired two shallow water blocks in consortium with Oil India Limited and is currently exploring these blocks. The possibility of gas grid interconnectivity for the mutual benefit of the two countries is also being explored.

Connectivity

India-Bangladesh is a good example of connectivity through all modes of transport. The movement of goods by road is operationalised through 36 functional Land Customs Stations (LCSs) and 2 Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) along the border. This includes the Petrapole-Benapole ICP through which more than 50% of the bilateral

trade takes place on account of which it has been decided to operate these landports on 24x7 basis since 01 August, 2017.

The Protocol on Inland Water Trade and Transit (PIWTT) has been operational since 1972. It permits movement of goods over barges/vessels from India through the river systems of Bangladesh on eight specific routes. Trans-shipment of goods to Northeastern States of India through Ashuganj river port and further through Akhaura-Agartala by road commenced in June 2016 under the PIWTT.

Coastal Shipping Agreement signed during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bangladesh in June 2015 has also enabled direct sea movement of containerized/bulk/dry cargo between the two countries. In February 2017, container ship services have started between Kolkata and Pangaon (which is just around 20 km from Dhaka) under this framework.

Out of the erstwhile 6 rail links that existed, four Broad Gauge inter-country rail links between the two countries are operational now. The Radhikapur-Birol rail link was the latest to be put back in operation during PM Sheikh Hasina's visit in April 2017. Apart from these, work on the remaining two new rail links is ongoing. The 7th new rail-link between Agartala and Akhaura is being financed under grant assistance of India. The '*Maitree Express*' between Kolkata and Dhaka now operates 4 days a week and has been converted into a fully AC train service. The trial run of the 2nd *Maitri Express* between Khulna-Kolkata was conducted during PM Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in April 2017 and will be operational soon.

There are regular bus services between Kolkata-Dhaka, Shillong-Dhaka and Agartala-Kolkata via Dhaka. A new bus service (Dhaka-Khulna-Kolkata) was launched during PM Sheikh Hasina's visit in April 2017.

The Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal – Motor Vehicle Agreement (BBIN-MVA) is expected to significantly boost connectivity by road. The trial run of Cargo Movement on Trucks from Kolkata to Agartala via Dhaka and Dhaka to New Delhi via Kolkata and Lucknow was conducted in August 2016.

There are presently around 100 flights operating weekly between India and Bangladesh connecting various Indian cities like 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 and Air India are operating flights between India and Bangladesh.

Training and Capacity-Building

A number of training courses are being conducted for interested Bangladesh officials / nationals including personnel of administration, police, judiciary, fire-fighters, narcotic officials, nuclear scientists, teachers etc. Bangladesh is also an important ITEC partner country, and around 800 participants from Bangladesh avail of training courses under the ITEC programme annually. In addition, scholarships are granted by ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) every year to students from Bangladesh for pursuing general courses in arts, sciences, engineering and also specialized courses for culture, drama, music, fine arts and sports, etc.

Cultural Exchanges

The Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre (IGCC), High Commission of India, is a Cultural Centre of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations of India in Bangladesh. Inaugurated in 2010, IGCC regularly organizes programmes covering a wide-gamut of cultural activities. The IGCC also holds regular training courses in Yoga, Hindi, Hindustani Classical Music, Manipuri Dance, Kathak and Painting. The courses are very popular with the Bangladeshi students. IGCC Hindi teacher also teaches Hindi at Institute of Modern Languages in University.

ICCR has initiated a Tagore Chair in University of Dhaka since 2011. A MoU was also signed in January 2017 for a 'Hindi' Chair in University of Dhaka. A 100-member Youth Delegation is visiting India annually since 2012.

High Commission of India has been publishing a print and electronic edition of Bengali literary monthly magazine '*Bharat Bichitra*' for the last 43 years. The magazine has a wide readership in Bangladesh.

Visa

The Indian High Commission in Dhaka and the two Assistant High Commissions in Chittagong and Rajshahi together issue the highest number of Indian visas compared to any other Indian Mission. The numbers are increasing manifold with the figures touching 9.33 lakhs in 2016. There are 12 Indian Visa Application Centres (IVAC) in Bangladesh managed by the State Bank of India (SBI): 4 in Dhaka (Gulshan, Dhanmondi, Motijheel and Uttara), Chittagong, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Khulna, Mynmensingh, Rangpur, Barisal and Jessore.

Indian community in Bangladesh

About 10,000 strong Indian community is estimated to be living in Bangladesh. Indians in Bangladesh are well respected for their hard work and managerial skills and as a community are doing very well socially and economically. 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.

Useful Resources:

Website of Indian High Commission: www.hcidhaka.gov.in

FaceBook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInBangladesh>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/iLCDhaka>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/HCIDhaka>

Bharat Bichitra: <https://issuu.com/hcidhaka>

Assistant High Commissions (AHCs) in Bangladesh (at Chittagong and Rajshahi):
<http://www.hcidhaka.gov.in/pages.php?id=16>

Indian Visa Application Centre, Bangladesh - <http://www.ivacbd.com/>

High Commission of Bangladesh in India- <http://www.bdhdelhi.org/>

September 2017