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BILATERAL RELATIONS

INDIA - BANGLADESH

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INTRODUCTION

India and Bangladesh share a relationship rooted in a common history, cultural heritage, language, and deep people-to-people ties. This enduring bond remains profoundly shaped by the shared history of the 1971 Liberation War and the historic sacrifices made by both nations. Moving into a new era of regional dynamics, both countries continue to engage in an all-encompassing partnership based on sovereignty, equality, and mutual understanding, with institutional cooperation spanning political, economic, security, energy, and developmental fields.

As a vital partner under India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy, bilateral relations have transitioned toward a pragmatic recalibration aimed at ensuring regional stability and preserving decades of institutional progress. Strategic focus centers on securing a resilient future for trans-boundary water sharing, advancing border management, and expanding energy interdependence—highlighted by operational grid integration such as the trilateral power flow from Nepal to Bangladesh via India.

The economic dimension of the partnership remains a primary anchor. Bangladesh stands as India’s largest trading partner in South Asia, while India is Bangladesh’s second-largest trading partner in Asia. Both nations are working to consolidate these commercial links through advanced trade frameworks, including negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Backed by Indian Lines of Credit for critical infrastructure and targeted High Impact Community Development Projects, the ongoing integration of cross-border rail, road, and inland waterway corridors continues to serve the shared economic aspirations of both peoples.



HISTORY

The historical relationship between India and Bangladesh is deeply rooted in the shared history, culture, language and social traditions of the Bengal region. Before 1947, present-day Bangladesh formed part of British India. The Partition of 1947 divided Bengal and created a new international boundary between India and East Pakistan. Despite the political division, close cultural, linguistic and familial connections continued between the people on both sides of the border.
The relationship entered a decisive phase during the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. India provided political, diplomatic, humanitarian and military support to the people of East Pakistan during their struggle for independence. Millions of refugees crossed into India, creating a major humanitarian challenge. Indian armed forces subsequently joined the Bangladesh liberation forces in December 1971, contributing to the liberation of Bangladesh. Bangladesh emerged as an independent country on 16 December 1971.

India formally recognised Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign state on 6 December 1971. Diplomatic relations were established soon afterwards, and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Bangladesh in March 1972. The two countries signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship on 19 March 1972, establishing a framework based on peaceful coexistence, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference and cooperation.

During the following decades, India and Bangladesh worked to institutionalise their relationship through agreements and bilateral mechanisms covering trade, water resources, border management, transport and economic cooperation. The Ganga Waters Treaty of 1996 was an important milestone in bilateral water cooperation, while the India–Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement of 1974, together with its 2011 Protocol, provided a framework for resolving long-standing boundary issues.
Since 2009, bilateral relations have witnessed significant expansion, particularly in security cooperation, connectivity, trade, energy and development partnership. The settlement of the land boundary issue in 2015 and the exchange of enclaves marked a major achievement in bilateral relations. New rail and road links, inland-waterway connectivity, electricity trade and development projects have further strengthened the relationship.

The shared legacy of the 1971 Liberation War remains an important foundation of India–Bangladesh relations. Both countries continue to commemorate the historical ties between their peoples, while cooperation has expanded beyond historical connections into contemporary areas such as connectivity, commerce, energy, defence and security, climate change, digital cooperation and people-to-people exchanges.



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

India–Bangladesh relations have entered a new phase following the 2026 general elections in Bangladesh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Tarique Rahman on his election victory in February 2026 and reaffirmed India's commitment to the peace, progress and prosperity of both countries and their peoples. India also emphasised the deep-rooted historical and cultural ties between the two close neighbours.
At the diplomatic level, engagement has continued under the new political dispensation in Bangladesh. External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. Khalilur Rahman in New Delhi on 8 April 2026, reflecting the continuation of high-level dialogue and bilateral engagement. India has continued to emphasise a people-centric approach and the importance of institutional mechanisms in advancing bilateral cooperation.

Connectivity and economic cooperation remain important areas of the relationship. The two countries have continued to focus on trade, rail and road connectivity, inland waterways, energy cooperation and development partnership. Earlier initiatives such as the India–Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline, which has a capacity to transport 1 million metric tonnes per annum of high-speed diesel, have strengthened cross-border energy cooperation and connectivity.

India and Bangladesh are also seeking to build on the Shared Vision for Future, announced in 2024, which identified connectivity, commerce and collaboration as key pillars of future cooperation. It included initiatives relating to digital connectivity, rail and inland-waterway links, economic cooperation and sub-regional connectivity, including facilitating the movement of Bangladeshi goods to Nepal and Bhutan through India.

A crucial focus of recent interaction has been transboundary resource management, particularly navigating the transition following the expiration of the Ganga Water Sharing Treaty in December 2026. Through structured dialogue within the Joint Rivers Commission, both sides have sought to balance institutional water governance with ecological and climate priorities. Overall, recent developments indicate an effort to maintain constructive engagement and preserve the gains achieved over the past decade while addressing emerging bilateral concerns through dialogue. The continued emphasis on political contact, connectivity, trade, energy, development cooperation and people-to-people ties remains central to India's approach towards Bangladesh.

DEFENCE RELATIONS

Defence cooperation is an important component of India–Bangladesh bilateral relations and has progressively expanded through high-level military exchanges, institutionalised dialogues, training and capacity-building programmes. The MoU on Defence Cooperation Framework, signed in April 2017, provides an institutional basis for cooperation, while the Annual Defence Dialogue and Tri-Services Talks serve as important mechanisms for reviewing and strengthening defence ties.

The two countries maintain regular exchanges among their armed forces. In 2023–24, the Chiefs of the Indian and Bangladesh Armed Forces undertook reciprocal visits, while Bangladesh's National Defence College delegation visited India. The 5th Annual Defence Dialogue and 4th Tri-Services Talks were held in Dhaka in August 2023, covering various aspects of ongoing defence cooperation. Training and professional exchanges between defence institutions, including the National Defence College and Defence Services Staff Colleges of both countries, further strengthen military-to-military relations.

Defence cooperation also includes capacity building and defence equipment cooperation. India has extended a US$500 million Defence Line of Credit to Bangladesh for procurement of defence equipment. Both sides have also enhanced cooperation in naval and maritime domains, including port visits and professional exchanges between their navies. These activities contribute to greater familiarity and interoperability between the armed forces of the two countries.



BORDER SECURITY MANAGEMENT

India and Bangladesh share a 4,096.7-kilometre international border, passing through West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. Border management is an important component of bilateral relations, with both countries working through their respective border-guarding forces, the Border Security Force (BSF) of India and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), to maintain peace and address cross-border crime, smuggling, trafficking and irregular movement. India has developed border infrastructure including fencing, roads, floodlighting and Border Out Posts, while technological solutions are being deployed in areas where physical fencing is difficult.
The two countries have established several institutional mechanisms for managing the border. The Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP), signed by the BSF and BGB in 2011, provides for regular coordination between the two forces. DG-level talks, regional commander-level meetings and coordinated patrols are used to address security concerns and prevent trans-border criminal activities. The 57th BSF–BGB Director General Level Border Coordination Conference, held in New Delhi from 8–11 June 2026, agreed to strengthen coordinated patrolling, vigilance, real-time information sharing and joint efforts against trans-border criminal networks.

Border fencing remains a major element of India's border-security strategy. As reported by the Ministry of Home Affairs in February 2025, 3,232.218 km of the 4,096.7-km India–Bangladesh border had been fenced, while approximately 864.482 km remained unfenced, including stretches where fencing is technically difficult because of riverine terrain, marshland and other geographical constraints. India is also strengthening surveillance through equipment such as thermal imagers, night-vision devices, UAVs, CCTV cameras and sensors, together with the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS).



ENERGY COOPERATION

Energy cooperation has become a crucial pillar of India–Bangladesh relations, particularly in electricity, petroleum products and cross-border energy connectivity. Bangladesh imports 1,160 MW of electricity from India, while the Maitree Super Thermal Power Plant, with a capacity of 1,320 MW, has been supplying electricity to the Bangladesh grid since becoming operational in 2023. The two countries coordinate through the Joint Working Group/Joint Steering Committee on Power, which provides an institutional framework for cooperation in cross-border electricity trade.

A major milestone in petroleum cooperation was the inauguration of the India–Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline on 18 March 2023. The 131-km pipeline has the capacity to transport 1 million metric tonnes per annum of high-speed diesel from India to Bangladesh and provides a reliable and cost-effective mode of transporting petroleum products. Indian Oil Corporation Limited has also been registered as a Government-to-Government supplier of petroleum, oil and lubricant products to Bangladesh.

Energy cooperation has increasingly acquired a sub-regional dimension. In November 2024, India facilitated the first trilateral power transaction in which up to 40 MW of electricity generated by Nepal was supplied to Bangladesh through the Indian power grid. This arrangement represents an important step towards developing an integrated regional electricity market involving India, Bangladesh, Nepal and potentially Bhutan.



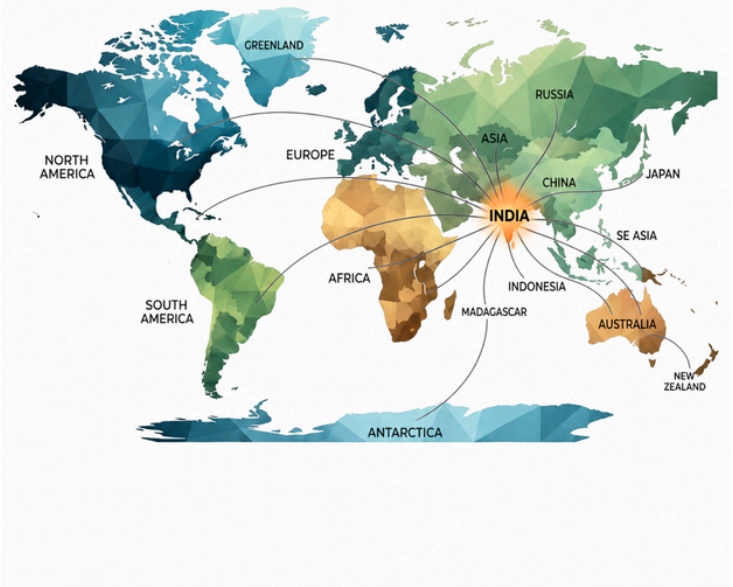
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY



Economic activity is an important pillar of India–Bangladesh relations, with cooperation covering trade, investment, connectivity, infrastructure, border trade and development partnership. Bangladesh is India's largest trading partner in South Asia, while India is Bangladesh's second-largest trading partner in Asia. Bilateral trade was US$12.90 billion in FY 2023–24, with Bangladesh exporting about US$1.84 billion of goods to India. Recent trade data from the Department of Commerce also shows continued substantial two-way commerce.

India's economic engagement with Bangladesh extends beyond merchandise trade to infrastructure and connectivity. India has extended four Lines of Credit amounting to around US$8 billion for projects in roads, railways, shipping and ports, while grant assistance has supported projects such as the Akhaura–Agartala rail link and inland-waterway development. The two countries are also working to improve land ports, customs infrastructure, border haats, road and rail connectivity and multimodal transport.

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