

## TODAY'S IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS

### UPSC MAINS

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### INDIA BANGLADESH RELATIONS

**Source:** The post is based on the article published in “The Hindu” on 18.05.2025.

**In News:** India curbs Bangladesi exports via Land ports

Relations have recently become strained due to India's close association with former PM Sheikh Hasina, which has alienated other political actors in Bangladesh

**Syllabus:** Mains – GS II(POLITY -INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)



#### Historical Ties

The relationship began in 1971, when India played a **decisive role** in Bangladesh's independence by providing military and humanitarian support during the **Bangladesh Liberation War**.

India was the **first country to recognize Bangladesh** and helped shape its early diplomatic framework, including the **1972 Treaty of**

#### Friendship, Cooperation, and Peace.

Initial years saw close cooperation, but relations **soured after 1975** due to regime changes in Bangladesh, border disputes, and issues like water sharing and cross-border insurgency.

#### Political Relations

The relationship has alternated between cooperation and contention, influenced by changes in government in both countries.

- ❖ Under Former PM Sheikh Hasina's Awami League (from 2009), **ties improved** with cooperation on security, border management, and the 2015 **Land Boundary Agreement**, which resolved decades-old enclave disputes.
- ❖ Persistent challenges include allegations of **Indian interference in Bangladeshi politics**, unresolved water-sharing disputes (notably the Teesta river), and rising anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh due to domestic and regional issues.
- ❖ **Recent leadership changes** in Bangladesh have introduced new dynamics, with calls for a more balanced and sovereign approach to bilateral relations.

## **Economic Relations**

- ❖ Economic cooperation has **grown steadily**, with Bangladesh becoming **India's largest trading partner in South Asia**.
- ❖ Bangladesh is India's largest trading partner in South Asia; bilateral trade reached around **\$12.9 billion in FY 2023-24**, with India exporting \$11.06 billion worth of goods to Bangladesh.
- ❖ Key areas include **trade, energy, infrastructure, and connectivity**; both countries have signed agreements to boost power trade, transport links, and cross-border investments.
- ❖ Despite progress, trade imbalances, logistical challenges, and periodic restrictions on Bangladeshi exports to India remain points of friction.
- ❖ India has made concessions in water-sharing and trade, but **economic asymmetry and dependence on Indian markets** are ongoing concerns for Bangladesh.

## **Cultural and Social Ties**

- ❖ Both countries share strong cultural bonds, especially among **Bengali-speaking populations** in Bangladesh and Indian states like **West Bengal and Tripura**.
- ❖ Regular cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts reinforce the relationship, though periodic tensions affect public perceptions.

## **Defence and Security Relations**

- ❖ Defence cooperation includes regular **joint military exercises** (e.g., Exercise Sampriti, Exercise Bongosagar) and coordinated naval patrols.
- ❖ Border management remains a challenge, with issues like **illegal migration**, smuggling, and occasional border clashes between security forces.

- ❖ **Counter-terrorism and intelligence sharing** are ongoing, but concerns persist about insurgent groups and cross-border crime.
- ❖ After Hasina's ouster in 2024, India has had to recalibrate ties with the new interim government, leading to diplomatic uncertainty and calls for broader engagement beyond one political faction.

## Recent Issues and Challenges

- ❖ **Political Disconnect:** India's perceived favoritism towards Hasina has led to mistrust among other Bangladeshi political groups, complicating **post-Hasina engagement**.
- ❖ **Border and Security:** Illegal migration, smuggling, and border killings remain persistent problems, straining relations and causing socio-economic tensions in India's Northeast.
- ❖ **Water Sharing:** Disputes over sharing the Teesta and Ganges river waters remain unresolved, fueling public resentment in Bangladesh.
- ❖ **Minority Rights:** Attacks on Hindu minorities in Bangladesh and India's concerns over their safety have become flashpoints.
- ❖ **China's Growing Influence:** Bangladesh's participation in **China's Belt and Road Initiative** and acceptance of **Chinese investments** in infrastructure pose strategic challenges for India.
- ❖ **Public Sentiment:** Anti-India protests and campaigns in Bangladesh reflect deep-rooted mistrust, aggravated by issues like the Citizenship Amendment Act and border incidents

## India's measures

- ❖ In May 2025, **India imposed major restrictions on Bangladeshi exports**, affecting \$770 million worth of goods—about 42% of bilateral imports.
- ❖ Key Bangladeshi products like ready-made garments, processed foods, and plastics can now only enter India via the Kolkata and Nhava Sheva seaports; **land border entry** is largely **banned**.
- ❖ India also **revoked** a key **transshipment facility** in April 2025, which had allowed Bangladeshi goods to access international markets through Indian infrastructure.

## Bangladesh's Measures

- ❖ Since late 2024, Bangladesh has imposed its **own curbs**, including **bans on Indian yarn imports** via land ports, tighter controls on rice, and new transit fees for Indian cargo.
- ❖ Bangladesh has **shifted to Chinese suppliers** for textile inputs, reducing India's market share in Bangladesh's garment sector.

## Problems and Impact

- ❖ The new restrictions have **disrupted established, cost-effective land trade routes**, forcing exports through more expensive and slower seaports.
- ❖ Bangladeshi exporters, especially in garments, face **higher costs** and logistical delays, threatening their competitiveness in the Indian market.
- ❖ Indian exporters are also affected by Bangladesh's restrictions and new transit fees, leading to **delays and increased costs**.
- ❖ The tit-for-tat trade war is straining economic ties and may hurt MSMEs and border communities on both sides.
- ❖ Geopolitical Context
- ❖ These measures reflect not just trade disputes but also Bangladesh's growing alignment with China, which has invested heavily in Bangladesh's economy and infrastructure.
- ❖ The escalation **threatens long-term economic cooperation and regional stability**

## Way Forward

- ❖ India and Bangladesh should resume **high-level dialogue** to **rebuild trust**, reopen key land ports for smooth trade, and modernize border infrastructure.
- ❖ Both sides need to negotiate **balanced trade agreements**, enhance **joint border security**, and avoid political interference.
- ❖ Strengthening **cultural ties** and supporting border communities will help improve relations and ensure long-term cooperation.