



**MALUKA IAS**

# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CLASS NOTES**



# MALUKA IAS

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## India-Bangladesh Relations: Fraternal Friendship

### Background

- India and Bangladesh share land and maritime boundaries, ethnic ties across borders as well as trans-boundary rivers. Similarities in language, culture and development trajectory makes the relations special
- Geographical locations complement each other and present an opportunity for both to further develop their connectivity links and economies.
- India played a significant role in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 by providing moral, material, military and diplomatic support to the Mukti Bahini and the leadership of the Awami League, especially Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- India was the first country to recognize Bangladesh as a separate and independent state.
- The 1972 India Bangladesh Treaty of Peace and Friendship laid the foundations of good relations between the two Countries

### Evolution

- Despite the bonhomie of initial years the relations soured especially since the military coup and assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the ascendance of the Military ruler Zia ur Rahman in the year 1975.
- Bangladesh remained under Military or Quasi Military rule for 1975 to 1990.
- This period, for most part, the relations were marked by brief periods of raised expectations and longer period coldness.
- Begum Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) became the Prime Minister in 1991.

In 1996 Awami League came to Power under Sheikh Hasina. In 2001 she lost to the BNP and Khaleda Zia. 2008 Saw the victory of Awami league under Shiekh Hasina

- One of the worst periods in India-Bangladesh relations was between 2001 and 2006. Only minor protocols or agreements were signed during this time and there was a surge in insurgency activities in the Northeast with the United Liberation Front of Asom and the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland, among other outfits, crossing the border for training.
- From 2009 onwards, as cross-border issues were addressed, bilateral relationship improved and progress was made in some key areas.
- Recent years have seen remarkable shift in these relations, under different governments in New Delhi.

### Recent Top Level Visits

- Bangladesh's Prime Minister Shiekh Hasina Visited India in April 2017. Both Countries signed 22 agreements.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh in June 2015
- Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Visited Bangladesh in 2011

### River Waters

- India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers: Ganga and Brahmaputra are chief among them. Bangladesh is a lower riparian state.
- Joint Rivers Water Commission was formed in 1972 for carrying out survey of the shared river systems.
- Farrakka Barrage constructed in 1975 by India to use water from Ganges to flush the Hooghly river and keep the Kolkata Port operational, became a bone of contention. Bangladesh under general Zia confronted India and tried to internationalise the issue.

• A settlement was finally reached in 1977, with a new government in India led by the Janata party, known as the Farakka accord.

- The Ganges Waters Treaty was signed in 1996 for the sharing of waters of the River Ganges during the lean season (January 1-May 31).
- On the Teesta River, an interim agreement was reached by both sides for water sharing in 1984. However, a final agreement has been elusive. The West Bengal's government's opposes any such agreement perceived to be unjust & insensitive to West Bengal's water needs & demands.

### The Teesta Dispute

- Historically, the root of the disputes over the river can be located in the report of the Boundary Commission (BC), which was set up in 1947 under Sir Cyril Radcliffe to demarcate the boundary line between West Bengal (India) and East Bengal (Pakistan, then Bangladesh from 1971).

During East Bengal's days as a part of Pakistan, no serious dialogue took place on water issues between India and East Pakistan. In 1972, the India-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission was established.

- The Teesta river originates in Sikkim and flows through West Bengal as well as Bangladesh. India claims a share of 55 percent of the river's water.

- The river is Bangladesh's fourth largest transboundary river for irrigation and fishing.

The Teesta's floodplain covers 2,750sq km in Bangladesh. Of the river's catchment - an area of land where water collects - 83 percent is in India and 17 percent is in Bangladesh.

That means more than one lakh hectares of land across five districts in Bangladesh are severely affected by withdrawals of the Teesta's waters in India, said the Observer Research Foundation.

These five Bangladesh districts then face acute shortages during the dry season, it added.

- In 1983, an ad hoc arrangement on sharing of waters from the Teesta was made, according to which Bangladesh got 36% and India 39% of the waters, while the remaining 25% remained unallocated.

- After the Ganga Water Treaty, a Joint Committee of Experts was set up to study the other rivers.

The committee gave importance to the Teesta. In 2000, Bangladesh presented its draft on the Teesta.

The final draft was accepted by India and Bangladesh in 2010.

In 2011, during then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka, a new formula to share Teesta waters was agreed upon between the political leadership of the two countries.

- The 2011 interim deal - that was supposed to last 15 years - gave India 42.5 percent of the Teesta's waters and gave Bangladesh 37.5 percent.

- West Bengal CM, Mamata Banerjee opposed this deal so it was shelved and remains unsigned.

In fact, she was scheduled to accompany the then PM Manmohan Singh to Bangladesh to sign that deal in 2011, but cancelled the trip.

- West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee has in the past countered Bangladesh's argument citing the amount of Teesta waters India already gives Bangladesh.

"When we need a certain quantity of water to maintain our Kolkata Port and fulfil the need of farmers, water is released from Teesta and Farakka barrages to Bangladesh sacrificing the state's interest" she said in 2013.

- Hydropower on the Teesta is another point of conflict.

There are at least 26 projects on the river mostly in Sikkim, aimed at producing some 50,000MW.

- Mamta Banerjee has proposed sharing the waters of other rivers.

As north Bengal is completely dependent on the Teesta, she said, rivers like the Torsa and Manshai, which are closer to the border of India and Bangladesh, are good options.

The Torsa, in fact, has connectivity with Bangladesh's Padma river.

The West Bengal CM proposed that the two countries set up a commission to ascertain the level of water flowing through the Torsa and the quantum of water that can be shared.

#### The Border Issue

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

- Before the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) came in to effect in 2015, the border was contentious due to numerous exclaves and enclaves.

- For allowing Bangladesh access to its enclaves in West Bengal, the Government of India had agreed to lease out a small corridor of land (Teen Bigha Corridor) in 1974,

however, it faced strong domestic opposition within India & the matter was finally resolved only in 1982.

This generated needless friction over the delay in implementation of the agreement

#### The Borders and Boundaries: Key Agreements

- A Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) was signed in 2011 to synergize the efforts of both Border Guarding Forces for more effective control over cross border illegal activities and crimes as well as for the maintenance of peace and tranquility along the India-Bangladesh border.

- The Land boundary agreement (LBA) was implemented in 2015.

- Government of India has sanctioned barbed wire fencing to the extent of 3326.14 km along the Indo-Bangladesh border.

Out of this, fencing to the extent of 2731 km has been completed till March 2017.

- The settlement of the maritime boundary arbitration between India and Bangladesh, as per UNCLOS award on July 7, 2014, paved the way for the economic development of this part of the Bay of Bengal and is seen as beneficial to both countries.

#### The LBA

India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement (LBA), was first signed in 1974. A protocol to this agreement was signed in 2011.

The three outstanding issues were:

- o an un-demarcated land boundary of approximately 6.1 km
- o exchange of enclaves
- o unresolved adverse possession

- The agreement was, Implemented in 2015, with the passage of relevant Act (100th Amendment Act) by the Indian Parliament and exchange of instruments the same year.
- This step not only removed all hurdles for the final settlement of borders, but also ensured the way for exchange of Enclaves and merger of Adverse Possessions by re-drawing the International Boundary (IB), also known as the Radcliffe Line.
- India transferred 111 enclaves with a total area of 17,160.63 acres to Bangladesh, while Bangladesh transferred 51 enclaves with an area of 7,110.02 acres to India.
- As for Adverse Possessions, India received 2777.038 acres of land and transferred 2267.682 acres to Bangladesh.
- Thus, the 2015 LBA implements the unresolved issues stemming from the un-demarcated land boundary—approximately 6.1-km long—in three sectors, viz. Daikhata-56 (West Bengal), Muhuri River–Belonia (Tripura) and Lathitila–Dumabari (Assam);

- o exchange of enclaves; and
- o Adverse possessions, which were first addressed in the 2011 Protocol.

- The nearly 14,000 residents of the Bangladeshi enclaves in India have decided to stay on and become citizens as per the option given to them under the LBA. 971 residents of the Indian enclaves in Bangladesh, out of the nearly 37,000, opted for Indian citizenship.

#### The Maritime Boundary Award

- On 7 July 2014 a landmark judgment of the Hague-based Permanent Court of Attribution (PCA) awarded Bangladesh an area of 19,467 sq km, four-fifth of the total area of 25,602 sq km disputed maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal with India.
  - The UN Tribunal's award clearly delineated the course of maritime boundary line between India and Bangladesh in the territorial sea, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf within and beyond 200 nautical miles (nm).
  - Now, Bangladesh's maritime boundary has been extended by 118,813 sq km comprising 12 nm of territorial sea and an EEZ extending up to 200 nm into the high seas.
- In addition, the ruling acknowledged Bangladesh's sovereign rights of undersea resources in the continental shelf extending as far as 345 nm in the high seas, taking Chittagong coast as the base line.

- The verdict has been broadly accepted by both the countries as a positive development for further consolidation of friendly relations
  - India is also happy with the ruling and considers it as a diplomatic breakthrough for various reasons.
- Among other gains, the verdict has recognised India's sovereignty over New Moore Island and awarded nearly 6000 sq km of the contested zone where the island had once existed.

#### Significance of the Maritime Boundary Award

The award is significant given the geo-strategic/political significance of greater Indian Ocean region and South Asian sub-region. Moreover, the award has wide security and economic implications not only for India and Bangladesh but also for the entire Bay of Bengal region.

- The verdict would contribute towards establishing strategic partnerships among the nations sharing borders in the Bay.

The award is expected to have positive impact on emerging multilateral forum like BIMSTEC.

- The verdict has been broadly accepted by both the countries as a positive development for further consolidation of friendly relations especially given the geo-strategic/political significance of greater Indian Ocean region and South Asian sub-region.
- By clearly delineating the maritime boundary between the two nations, the verdict could help boosting coastal and maritime security in the region.

- It opened the door for exploration of oil and gas in the Bay—the site of huge energy reserves.

India's discovery of natural gas in 2006 took place in a creek which is situated about 50 km south of the mouth of the Hariabhanga river within the contested zone.

- The development of Fishery resources is another prospect.
- The award is expected to have positive impact on regional integration and emerging multilateral forum like BIMSTEC.

It may be noted that India has already settled its maritime borders with Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand.

#### Economic Cooperation and Trade

- Bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh has grown steadily over the last decade. In the last 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.

- There are estimates that the trade potential is at least four times the present level.

- Lines of Credit:

In recent Year India has extended three lines of credit worth US\$ 8 billion 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.

This is the largest quantum of credit India has extended to any other country by far and comes at a highly concessional rate of interest.

- Despite duty-free access, Bangladeshi exporters face high non-tariff barriers in the form of bureaucratic and customs bottlenecks, delays due to manual clearance, visa problems, lack of banking services and warehouse facilities at the border. The cost of cross-border trade is quite high.

- 'Border Haats', or markets across the India-Bangladesh border (currently four such haats are functional), were a successful solution to increase legal business on the borders.

Recently, Bangladesh and India have agreed to set up six more haats along their borders.

#### Energy

- Power: Government-to-government power trade is 1,300 MW from India to Bangladesh.
- India's state-run Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) is building the Rampal coal-fired power plant in Bangladesh.
- In the private sector, Reliance Power has won approval to set up a 750 MW LNG-based power plant and an LNG terminal in Bangladesh, paving the way for \$1.3 billion investment, and Adani Group is set to sell 3,000 MW power to Bangladesh.
- Connectivity: the focus has been road, rail, rivers, sea, transmission lines, petroleum pipelines, and digital links that would give India access to the Northeast and to Southeast Asia through Bangladesh.

#### Connectivity

- Two Trains services, Maitri and Bandhan, run between Kolkata and Dhaka.
- The new Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala bus service via Dhaka was started in 2016.
- Trains are planned to run from Kolkata to Agartala via Dhaka, a project to be completed in 2019. on the Completion of the Akhaura-Agartala section the railway distance between Tripura and Kolkata would be reduced by over 1,000 km
- The two sides agreed to examine the request of Bangladesh to establish a new rail link between Panchagarh (Bangladesh) to Siliguri (India).
- Bangladesh-India coastal shipping began operationalisation in March 2016.
- In 2017 Bangladesh allowed Indian vessels to dock at Chittagong Port, the first time after 40 years. Indian companies are interested in developing Payra Port.
- Trucks carrying Indian goods reached Tripura from Ashuganj port in Bangladesh on June 19 2016, making the long-cherished idea of transshipment into reality
- Grid Connectivity: Bangladesh already draws 600 megawatt from the Indian grid, with another 500 megawatt to be added through the Bheramara-Bahrapur inter-connection.
- Diesel Pipeline: India is already constructing a Indo-Bangla friendship pipeline from Siliguri to Parbatipur (In Bangladesh) for supply of high speed diesel as a grant-in-aid.
- If the two neighbors have their way, by mid-2020 India will cease to depend only on the Siliguri Corridor or the Chickens Neck, the 22-km corridor near Siliguri in West Bengal that connects the Northeast with the rest of the country.