

AIR Discussions (December 2nd Week)

AIR SPOTLIGHT: GOLDEN JUBILEE OF BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR

Context: Amid bilateral tensions over communal violence in Bangladesh, the **Sheikh Hasina** government has invited **President Ram Nath Kovind** for the 50th Victory Day celebrations to be held in Dhaka later this year.

More on the news:

- Bangladesh celebrates **Victory Day** on **16 December** every year to celebrate the country's liberation from Pakistan in 1971.
- Dhaka believes **Kovind's visit**, as a follow-up to **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip in March**, will **further deepen ties between Bangladesh and India** as both sides are keen to take the relationship to the next level.
- In March, **PM Modi visited Bangladesh** to celebrate '**Mujib Borsho**', the birth centenary of the country's founding father **Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**, the golden jubilee of diplomatic ties between India and Bangladesh, and 50 years of the Bangladesh Liberation War.
- Meanwhile, the **situation continues to remain tense between Dhaka and New Delhi** in the wake of the **communal violence in Bangladesh** on the occasion of **Durga Puja**, in which the **minority Hindu community** was targeted.

Bangladesh liberation war:

- The year **2021** marks the **golden jubilee of the Muktijuddho** or the Liberation War.
- Bangladesh's Independence in 1971 not only **gave Bangladesh its freedom from the clutches of oppressive East Pakistan** but changed the history and geopolitical scenario of South Asia.
- **Oppressive military action** by the then west Pakistan's military led to a massive refugee and humanitarian crisis.
- The plight of the ten million refugees did have an impact on the Indian government and prompted it to launch a retaliatory action against Pakistan.
- However, **India's intervention was not only altruistic in nature, but was primarily based on realpolitik.**
- In the 1950s the **centralised Pakistani state was run undemocratically by a military-bureaucratic oligarchy dominated by West Pakistan.**
- Under this system, **Bengalis had no political say.** But **West Pakistan dominance was challenged in 1970 during general elections.**
- East Pakistan' **Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League** had a clear overall majority, enough to become the prime minister.
- However, west Pakistan was not willing to let a leader from its eastern provincial wing rule the country.
- The then **West Pakistan (present Pakistan), under the leadership of Yahya Khan, started a brutal assault on the people of East Pakistan** (present Bangladesh) who were demanding freedom because of the language and cultural differences between the two regions.
- After political negotiations failed, the **Pakistani army under General Yahya Khan decided to start the crackdown.**
- **Operation Searchlight:** West Pakistan kicked in operation searchlight across the whole of East Pakistan on March 26, 1971.
- This resulted in **millions of Bangladeshis fleeing to India, mainly West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura.**

- West Bengal, in particular, was massively burdened by the onrush of the refugees and the state appealed to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her government for assistance for food and shelter.
- With the **subsequent bravery of the Indian Army coupled with the spirited fight put up by Mukti Bahini – the Bangladeshi guerilla resistance movement consisting of the Bangladeshi military, paramilitary and civilians – defeated the Pakistani forces.**
- On December 16, 1971, Lt Gen Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, the Chief Martial Law Administrator of East Pakistan and Commander of Pakistan Army forces located in East Pakistan signed the Instrument of Surrender.
- Over 93,000 Pakistani troops surrendered to the Indian forces and Bangladesh Liberation forces making it the largest surrender since World War II.
- The **intervention brought a conclusion to the war in 13 short days and led to the birth of a new nation.**

Background of relations:

- Bangladesh was created with Indian Armed Forces help, in 1971 at the wake of the Liberation War against Pakistan.
- Diplomatic Relations between the two countries was followed by the visit of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in March 1972, at Dhaka, where she had signed the Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Peace Relations, popularly known as the 'Indira-Mujib Treaty of 1972, with then Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- They are common members of SAARC, BIMSTEC, IORA and the Commonwealth.
- The two countries share many cultural ties.
- India-Bangladesh relations are presently at an important juncture.
- PM Modi's scheduled visit to Dhaka on 17 March, subsequently cancelled because of the coronavirus outbreak, had provoked protests in Bangladesh. This reflects the emerging strains in bilateral ties that, until very recently, were said to be going through a 'golden phase'.
- In addition to the high level visits and exchanges between the two countries, there have also been various visits at senior official level for participating in various bilateral mechanisms.
- The multi-dimensional cooperation between the two countries ranges from traditional sectors of tourism, health and education to frontier technologies of nuclear science, space and information technology.
- **Security and Border Management:** regular meetings are held to discuss management and security of 4096.7 Km of the India-Bangladesh land border.
- **Defense Cooperation:** High level exchanges at the level of services chief of Indian Navy, Bangladesh Navy and Indian Air Force, conduct of annual defense dialogue and inaugural tri-services staff talks, service specific talks of Navy and Air Force and the DG level talks between the Coast Guards have contributed to significant improvement in bilateral defense cooperation. The Indian army band also for the first time performed at the national parade of Bangladesh during Victory Day
- **Connectivity:** Both the governments are undertaking various measures to restore the pre-1965 rail links and other connectivity links that existed between India and Bangladesh. To enhance people to people contacts, it has been decided to increase the frequency of two passenger trains, i.e., Maitree Express and Bandhan Express. During the visit of PM Sheikh Hasina to New Delhi in October 2019, both the governments decided to commence Dhaka-Siliguri-Gangtok-Dhaka and Dhaka-Siliguri-Darjeeling-Dhaka bus service to enhance people to people contacts between both the countries and the trail run of Dhaka-Siliguri-Gangtok-Dhaka was also held in December 2019.
 - Two new India-Bangladesh Protocol Routes (Sonamura-Daudkandi on river Gomti and extension of Dhulia to Godagiri up to Aricha on river Padma) have also been agreed upon for inclusion in the second addendum to the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT).

- **Economic and Commercial:**

- Bangladesh is India's biggest trade partner in South Asia. India's exports to Bangladesh in FY 2018-19 stood at US\$ 9.21 bn and imports from Bangladesh during the same period were US\$1.04 bn.
- In order to promote cooperation on bilateral trade, both the Prime Ministers agreed to create an India-Bangladesh CEO's Forum to provide policy level inputs in various areas of trade and investment and also to facilitate exchanges among the business communities of both the countries.
- 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 meetings of Joint Working Group (JWG)/Joint Steering Committee (JSC) on power were also held in 2019.

- **Development Partnership:**

- 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 for development of infrastructure in various sectors including roads, railways, shipping and ports.
- In addition to LOCs, the Government of India has also been providing grant assistance to Bangladesh for various infrastructure projects including construction of Akhaura-Agartala rail link, dredging of inland waterways in Bangladesh and construction of India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline.

- **Capacity Building and Human Resource Development:**

- The Government of India has been training 1800 Bangladesh Civil Service officials from 2019 at National Centre for Good Governance, Mussoorie.
- Bangladeshi police officials are also being trained at various premier training institutes in India on various modern policing and new investigative techniques of this information age.
- Government of India has been extending training for 1500 Bangladeshi judicial officials since 2017 at National Judicial Academy, Bhopal and also at various State Judicial Academies in India.
- Bangladesh is also an important ITEC partner country and annually around 800 participants from Bangladesh avail the ITEC training courses.

- **Visas:** In pursuance of the policy of the Government of India to further liberalize Indian visa application process and to strengthen people to people contacts between India and Bangladesh.

Challenges in relation:

- **Spillover of India's citizenship legislation:** Dhaka has strongly rejected the idea of the state persecution of its religious minorities. NRC leading to a massive influx of people from India is perhaps Bangladesh's biggest concern.
- **Water woes:** Increasing domestic pressure that questions the credibility of Hasina's pro-India policy could compel a rethink on her part and impact other aspects of the bilateral relations.
- **A lurking China:** Inadequate management of these existing challenges could pose a more long-term geopolitical challenge for India. Any deterioration in bilateral relations is likely to benefit China.
- A major area of contention has been the construction and operation of the Farakka Barrage by India to increase water supply in the River Hooghly.
- There have also been disputes regarding the transfer of Teen Bigha Corridor to Bangladesh.
- Terrorist activities carried out by outfits based in both countries, like Banga Sena.
- Bangladesh has consistently denied India transit facility to the landlocked North Eastern Regions of India.
- **Illegal Bangladeshi immigration into India:** The border is porous and migrants are able to cross illegally, though sometimes only in return for financial or other incentives to border security personnel.
- Continuous border killing of Bangladeshi people by Indian border guards, aiding illegal immigrants, helping in armed dacoity, fake money transfer and illegal drug trades by both Indian and Bangladeshi people are the major problems between Bangladesh and India.

- India's attempts to equate Bangladesh to fundamentally theocratic Muslim nations such as Pakistan and Afghanistan is something that is unacceptable to Bangladeshis.

Way Forward:

- They should **move to the next level, based on cooperation, coordination and consolidation.**
- **Pending issues like Teesta and Rohingya issue need to be resolved first.**
- The two countries share 54 transboundary rivers, and **water management is the key to prosperity.**
- **Effective border management.**

Sources:

1. <https://theprint.in/diplomacy/bangladesh-invites-president-kovind-for-50th-anniversary-of-liberation-from-pakistan/758381/>
2. <http://www.uniindia.com/golden-jubilee-of-bangladesh-liberation-war-bsf-hosts-cultural-event-at-agartala-border/east/news/2590667.html>
3. <https://mea.gov.in/>
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5. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bangladesh%E2%80%93India_relations
6. <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/india-bangladesh-have-created-a-golden-chapter-of-mutual-relations-pm-modi/amp-11584465998064.html>

NEWS IN BRIEF: PRELIMS SPECIAL

G - 20 Seminar

- On behalf of the Government of India, the Union Minister for Finance virtually attended the **G- 20 international seminar hosted in Bali by the Presidency of Indonesia.**
- **Theme of the Seminar:** Recover together, Recover Stronger
- **Aim:** The seminar intended to discuss ways to recover the global economy and to find the areas of collaboration at the multilateral level.

<https://newsonair.gov.in/News?title=FM-Sitharaman-virtually-participates-in-G20-International-Seminar-hosted-by-G20-Presidency-of-Indonesia&id=431204>

SAMPANN Project

- Over 1 lakh people have received pensions directly in their bank accounts through the SAMPANN project.
- **SAMPANN (System for Accounting and Management of Pension) Project is an ambitious project of the Government of India and implemented by the Ministry of Communications (Controller General of Communication Accounts, Department of Telecommunications) introduced in the year 2018.**
- It is an online pension processing system and payment system for pensioners.
- The direct credit of pension into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries is ensured.
- This also assisted the department to resolve pension cases and enabled ease of accounting.

<https://newsonair.gov.in/News?title=Over-one-lakh-people-getting-pension-directly-into-their-bank-accounts-through-SAMPANN-Project%3A-Govt&id=431188>

Human Rights Day

- President of India graced the occasion of Human Rights Day which is **celebrated every 10th day of December.**
- **The celebration of Human Rights Day paid special attention to the central theme of 2021 which was "Equality" and in this context Article - 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that echoes the doctrine of equality was quoted.**
- Besides, the Right to Healthy Environment and Climate Justice was discussed as a matter of enormous significance.

<https://newsonair.gov.in/News?title=Human-Rights-Day-is-being-observed-today&id=431242>

Observer Status to ISA

- The UN **grants observer status to the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in order to offer a progressive move towards equitable energy solutions to the world.**
- ISA was a collaborative effort by India and France to tackle climate change through the usage of solar energy.
- This was presented at the 21st Conference of the Parties which adopted the Paris Agreement in 2015.
- The UN General Assembly conferred observer status to ISA based on the sixth committee report that invited the ISA to participate in the sessions of the

Pinaka Extended Range System

- It is a **multi barrel rocket launcher system** which is tested at the Pokhran range.
- It offers a **range of 70km which is 45 km over the existing range of the missile.**
- The Pinaka - ER is designed by the laboratories of Defence Research and Development Organisation - the Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE), Pune and High Energy Minerals Research Laboratory in Pune.
- With the successful testing, the Pinaka - ER is ready to be partnered with industries for a series of production.

<https://newsonair.com/2021/12/11/pinaka-er-range-system-successful-tests-of-the-upgraded-system-carried-out-at-pokhran-range/>

Saryu Nahar National Project

- Prime Minister inaugurated an **interlinking of rivers project called the Saryu Nahar National Project which was pending for four decades. The inauguration took place at Balrampur in Uttar Pradesh.**
- This project intends the **interlinking of five rivers namely Ghaghara, Saryu, Rapti, Banganga and Rohini.**
- The onset of the project took place in 1978 but due to lack of funds and inefficient coordination between the departments it was stalled for a long time
- In 2016, the project was included within the ambit of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi

<https://newsonair.com/2021/12/11/the-nation-is-with-the-families-of-the-heroes-we-have-lost-pm-modi/>