

SAI INTERNATIONAL MUN 2025



INDIAN PARLIAMENT

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**AGENDA: India-Bangladesh: Strengthening Ties,
Supporting Stability, Shaping the Future.**

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Members,

It gives us great honor and immense pleasure to welcome you all to the simulation of the Indian Parliament at SAI MUN 2025. As Members of Parliament representing diverse political parties, constituencies, and interests across the nation, you are entrusted with the responsibility of debating, deliberating, and legislating on the pressing issues placed before the House.

This background guide has been designed to help you get started on your research. However, this document should not be your only source of research. Building upon the outlook presented by this guide, you are expected to conduct your own research through authentic sources and make sure to engage in comprehensive and pragmatic debate throughout the sessions. The Executive Board will not interfere in the flow of debate unless absolutely required. Therefore, the onus to ensure that the committee does not stagnate lies with the members. We strongly believe that with good research, the members will be able to steer the committee in the right direction.

We kindly ask all Members to approach this conference as a collaborative effort rather than a zero-sum game. Parliamentary simulations thrive on dialogue, cooperation, and constructive debate, and we hope to foster this spirit within our committee. Our objective is not to solve the nation's challenges in just two days, but to deepen our understanding of them, ensuring we emerge as a generation of informed, responsible leaders equipped to contribute meaningfully to our society. With that in mind, we wish you all the best and eagerly look forward to the proceedings of this parliamentary session.

With warm regards,

Executive Board

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INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA

India and Bangladesh share a deep-rooted relationship shaped by geography, history, culture, and strategic interests. Since Bangladesh's liberation in 1971, with significant support from India, the two countries have maintained a complex yet evolving partnership. This committee seeks to evaluate the multifaceted bilateral relationship with a focus on strengthening mutual cooperation, ensuring regional stability, and envisioning a future of shared growth and security.

Historical Context and Bilateral Foundations

India and Bangladesh share a deep-rooted history intertwined by culture, language, and politics. India played a crucial role in the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, supporting the Mukti Bahini against West Pakistani oppression and welcoming over 10 million refugees. This cooperation laid the foundation for a special relationship, built on mutual respect and shared struggle.

However, ties have seen fluctuations over the decades due to changes in governments, security concerns, and regional shifts. Yet, recent years have seen an upswing, especially under Sheikh Hasina's Awami League and successive Indian governments, with a strong focus on connectivity, trade, and strategic trust.

Strategic and Geopolitical Importance

Connectivity & Access to the Northeast

Bangladesh offers India the most efficient land route to its landlocked Northeast region. Infrastructure projects like the India-Bangladesh Protocol Routes, Agartala-Akhaura Rail Link, and Maitree Setu help bypass the Siliguri Corridor (Chicken's Neck), enhancing logistics, trade, and military mobility.

2. Indo-Pacific Strategy

Bangladesh's location in the Bay of Bengal makes it a strategic pivot in India's Act East and Indo-Pacific policies. It helps India project influence, secure sea lanes, and balance China's growing naval presence in the region.

Maritime Influence in the Bay of Bengal

The Bay of Bengal is becoming a new theatre for maritime security, trade routes, and energy competition. Bangladesh's ports Chattogram, Mongla, and Payra are strategically located near key shipping lanes.

India seeks to develop a Blue Economy partnership with Bangladesh, focusing on fisheries, port logistics, maritime domain awareness, and disaster response.

Naval cooperation between India and Bangladesh is growing, including joint exercises, hydrographic surveys, and coordinated patrols.

Strategic relevance:

Ensures **freedom of navigation**, especially as Chinese submarines dock in regional ports like Hambantota (Sri Lanka) and Kyaukpyu (Myanmar). Acts as a buffer to **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** encirclement strategy (the "String of Pearls").

Economic Partnership and Trade

India is Bangladesh's second-largest trading partner, and bilateral trade crossed USD 18 billion in 2022–23. Bangladesh enjoys a trade surplus due to India's duty-free quota-free access for Bangladeshi goods.

Joint efforts include:

- **Cross-border energy trade** (India supplies 1,160 MW of power).
- **Special Economic Zones** for Indian industries in Bangladesh.
- Enhanced use of **Inland Waterways** for cargo transport.

Future goals include:

- Finalizing **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**.
- Expanding **digital trade and fintech cooperation**.

Water Sharing and Teesta River Dispute

Water sharing continues to be a contentious issue in India-Bangladesh relations, with the Teesta River dispute at the forefront. The river is vital for agriculture in northern Bangladesh, yet an agreement on its water sharing remains elusive. A key reason for the deadlock is the resistance from the state government of West Bengal, despite there being political will at the national level in India. This reflects a broader challenge, as Bangladesh also seeks an equitable distribution of other transboundary rivers, but India's federal structure often complicates water cooperation. However, there have been some recent positive developments. Progress has been made in the sharing of flood forecasting data, and the Joint River Commissions of both countries have become more actively engaged in discussions, signaling a willingness to strengthen collaboration in this critical area.

Multilateral and Regional Dynamics

SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)

Formed in 1985, SAARC includes 8 South Asian nations, including India and Bangladesh.

However, SAARC has become largely dysfunctional due to India-Pakistan tensions, especially post-Uri attack (2016), where India boycotted the SAARC summit. For Bangladesh and India, SAARC's stagnation has pushed both countries to seek more functional, apolitical regional platforms.

BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation)

BIMSTEC connects South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka) with Southeast Asia (Myanmar and Thailand). Bangladesh, being a literal and strategic centre of the Bay of Bengal, plays a pivotal role in linking India's South Asia outreach with its Act East policy. BIMSTEC projects focus on energy cooperation, coastal shipping, disaster management, counter-terrorism, and technology sharing. Bangladesh hosted the first BIMSTEC Energy Centre and is instrumental in pushing for a BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement.

BBIN (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Initiative)

A sub-regional group for enhancing land connectivity, trade, and cross-border movement of goods and people.

The BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement allows seamless travel of cargo and passenger vehicles across member countries. Bangladesh's central geography makes it the key connector in the BBIN corridor, especially for India's landlocked Northeast.

Despite Bhutan's temporary suspension due to environmental concerns, India and Bangladesh are actively advancing bilateral and trilateral BBIN projects.

Strategic Implication:

These platforms give India and Bangladesh an alternative to SAARC, enabling project-based functional cooperation with like-minded countries and reducing regional gridlock.

2. China Factor: Bangladesh's Engagement with China

Infrastructure

China has invested over \$40 billion in Bangladesh through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Projects include: Padma Bridge Rail Link (\$3.1 billion), Karnaphuli River Tunnel (first of its kind in South Asia), Payra Power Plant and Special Economic Zones.

China is also helping modernize Bangladesh's digital infrastructure, roads, and industrial parks.

Military Ties

China is Bangladesh's largest defense supplier accounting for over 70% of its arms imports.

Supplied two submarines in 2016, and assisted in constructing Bangladesh's first submarine base at Cox's Bazar.

China regularly holds military training programs and joint exercises with Bangladeshi forces.

India's Concerns:

- Strategic unease about Chinese presence near the Bay of Bengal and India's eastern seaboard.
- Fear of a dual-use infrastructure model—where civilian Chinese projects may serve future military purposes (as seen in Sri Lanka's Hambantota port).
- Possibility of military encirclement (String of Pearls).

Bangladesh's View:

- China is a source of cheap loans, arms, and fast infrastructure development, not necessarily a strategic ally against India.
- Dhaka continues to maintain economic relations with Beijing, while assuring India that it won't allow any foreign military base or interference.

3. India's Neighbourhood First Policy vs Bangladesh's Balanced Diplomacy

India's Neighbourhood First Policy

A central tenet of India's foreign policy under PM Modi.

Emphasis on:

Prioritizing neighbors in development and diplomacy. Enhancing trade, connectivity, and people-to-people exchanges. Providing grants, lines of credit, and capacity-building programs to South Asian neighbors.

Bangladesh is a model success under this policy:

Receives highest number of Indian scholarships and visas. Indian grants used for infrastructure, railways, IT parks, and power connectivity. Joint efforts in security, health, and border management.

Bangladesh's Balanced Diplomacy

- Bangladesh has adopted a "friendship with all, malice toward none" foreign policy.
- Seeks to balance its ties with all major powers—India, China, the US, Russia, Japan, and the EU.

- Pragmatic approach: Uses Chinese financing, enjoys Indian goodwill, and engages global institutions like the World Bank and IMF.
- Sheikh Hasina has repeatedly asserted that Bangladesh's foreign policy will not harm India's interests, but it will also not be limited to Indian influence.

Counterterrorism and Regional Stability

A stable Bangladesh is essential for security in India's Northeast, where insurgent groups previously found sanctuary.

Radical groups like Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Ansarullah Bangla Team pose a threat to both countries and require joint intelligence and border coordination.

Regional security mechanisms like the India-Bangladesh Coordinated Patrols (CORPAT) and Joint Working Groups on Security are vital to prevent cross-border extremism, narcotics trade, and arms smuggling.

Rohingya Refugee Crisis

Background:

Over 1 million Rohingya refugees have taken shelter in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, fleeing ethnic cleansing in Myanmar.

While India has provided humanitarian assistance under Operation Insaniyat, it has also repatriated Rohingya from Indian territory, citing security risks.

Tensions:

Bangladesh seeks regional and global cooperation to facilitate safe repatriation of Rohingyas.

India, balancing its ties with Myanmar's military regime, has not been very vocal about pressuring Myanmar on refugee return.

Current Relevance:

The Rohingya camps are now seen as breeding grounds for trafficking, arms smuggling, and radicalization. Bangladesh wants India to take a stronger leadership role in ASEAN and UN forums to push Myanmar for safe, voluntary repatriation.

Climate Vulnerability and Environmental Challenges

Shared Vulnerability:

Both India and Bangladesh are among the top 10 most climate-vulnerable countries globally.

The Sundarbans, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, straddles both countries and faces threats from rising sea levels and industrial pollution.

Conflict Points:

India's river interlinking and hydropower plans in the Ganges-Brahmaputra basin may impact Bangladesh's freshwater availability and sediment flow.

Bangladesh is deeply concerned about upstream river diversions and salinity intrusion in coastal areas

Recent Political Unrest and Civil Disturbances

In the run-up to the January 2024 General Elections, Bangladesh witnessed intense political unrest, widespread protests, and violent crackdowns between the ruling Awami League (AL) and the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

The BNP demanded elections under a neutral caretaker government, citing fears of electoral manipulation. In response, the Awami League rejected the demand and proceeded with elections, leading to boycotts by opposition parties.

Clashes erupted across Dhaka and major cities between protesters, police, and ruling party cadres. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International reported excessive use of force, mass arrests, suppression of free press, and allegations of custodial torture.

While not classified as a “civil war,” the level of confrontation raised fears of democratic backsliding, weakening of institutions, and internal instability, especially in a country with growing geostrategic importance.

The unrest threatens to:

Strain internal governance mechanisms. Impact Bangladesh’s credibility in international forums. Delay developmental projects involving India and other foreign partners.

For India, instability in Bangladesh poses concerns over: Border security and illegal migration. Impacts on joint infrastructure projects. Rise in Islamist extremism and radicalization near sensitive border regions.

Conclusion

India and Bangladesh share a unique and multifaceted relationship rooted in deep historical, cultural, and economic ties. As neighbors, their futures are inherently interconnected both face shared opportunities and challenges that demand cooperation, mutual respect, and strategic foresight.

While their partnership has witnessed remarkable progress in trade, connectivity, and regional integration, contemporary challenges such as water-sharing disputes, border management issues, trade imbalances, and evolving geopolitical dynamics require continuous dialogue and trust-building. Bangladesh’s strategic balancing act between India and China, alongside its aspirations as a sovereign middle power, underscores the need for India to engage with sensitivity and long-term vision.

The future of India-Bangladesh relations hinges on their ability to transcend historical grievances and work collaboratively within multilateral platforms like BIMSTEC and BBIN, while addressing pressing issues such as climate change, regional security, and inclusive development. By strengthening these ties, both countries can foster a stable, prosperous, and peaceful South Asia that benefits their peoples and contributes to regional stability.

In this MUN, delegates have the opportunity to explore innovative and pragmatic solutions that support a partnership rooted in equality, shared prosperity, and regional peace—thereby shaping a future that honors their common heritage and ambitions.

NATURE OF SOURCES/EVIDENCE

1. Government Reports (Each ministry publishes its own reports including External Affairs Ministry)
2. Government Websites
3. Government run News channels i.e. RSTV, LSTV, DD News
4. Standing Committee Reports
5. RTI Proofs

NOTE: Under no circumstances will sources like Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>), Amnesty International (<http://www.amnesty.org/>) or newspapers like Times of India (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>), etc. be accepted as PROOF/EVIDENCE. But they can be used for better understanding of any issue or even be brought up in debate if the information given in such sources is in line with the beliefs of a Government.

Points for Delegate Research

To prepare for the committee, member must research:

- Their party's official stance on India-Bangladesh relations.
- Position on trade, border security, migration, and water-sharing.
- Past debates or interventions by their leaders on these issues.
- Impact of foreign policy moves on domestic populations.
- Suggested policies to build sustainable, future-oriented ties.

Closing Note

We hope this Background Guide serves as a helpful foundation for your research and deliberations. The agenda at hand presents both immense opportunities and complex challenges and we trust that with informed debate and diplomatic insight, this committee will rise to the occasion.

Thank you, and best wishes for fruitful preparation and a stimulating session ahead.

