

PRESS RELEASE
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LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
NEW DELHI

**REPORT ON THE SUBJECT 'FUTURE OF INDIA-BANGLADESH
RELATIONSHIP'**

The Committee on External Affairs headed by Dr. Shashi Tharoor presented their Ninth Report on the subject 'Future of India Bangladesh Relationship' in Lok Sabha today *i.e.* 18.12.2025. The Report contains 33 Observations/Recommendations.

**SOME OF THE IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS ARE AS
FOLLOWS:**

1. Strengthening of bilateral engagement with Bangladesh emphasized

The Committee highlighted the significance of India's enduring and multifaceted relationship with Bangladesh, shaped by shared history, culture, and landmark agreements such as the Land Boundary Agreement and maritime boundary settlement. While acknowledging recent political challenges in Bangladesh, including instability and concerns over democratic freedoms, the Committee affirmed India's constructive and pragmatic approach, focusing on strategic cooperation and regional security. The Committee have urged the Indian government to continue advocating for a democratic, stable, and inclusive Bangladesh, rooted in mutual respect and the spirit of 1971. The Committee also recommended sustained diplomatic engagement with all stakeholders, including political, social, and civil society groups, alongside efforts to enhance people-to-people connections and counter anti-India narratives.

(Recommendation No. 1)

2. Encouraging Democratic Processes in Bangladesh

The Committee expressed concern over the evolving political situation in Bangladesh since August 2024, including uncertainty surrounding democratic elections, incidents of political violence, and the rise of extremism, which have impacted certain aspects

of bilateral engagement. While noting that India's response has remained diplomatic, non-interventionist, and guided by respect for Bangladesh's sovereignty, the Committee appreciated the Government of India's political foresight and quiet diplomacy during this period of transition. Reaffirming India's commitment to a democratic, stable, peaceful, and inclusive Bangladesh, the Committee emphasized India's consistent support for a participatory and inclusive electoral process as essential for restoring political stability, and urged the Government to continue encouraging free, fair, and credible elections in Bangladesh.

(Recommendation No. 2)

3. Concern expressed over attacks on Minorities in Bangladesh

The Committee expressed concern over the continuing attacks on minority communities in Bangladesh following the events of August 2024, including assaults on places of worship, cultural institutions, and individuals, which have adversely affected Bangladesh's social fabric and strained bilateral relations. Despite India consistently raising the issue with the Interim Government of Bangladesh, the Committee noted with concern the initial lack of decisive action and attempts to downplay the violence. The Committee urged the Ministry of External Affairs to continue prioritizing the protection of minorities as a key component of its diplomatic engagement, and to press for swift, effective action by Bangladeshi authorities to ensure the safety, rights, and justice for all minority communities.

(Recommendation No. 3)

4. Humanitarian Approach to the Stay of Former Bangladesh Prime Minister in India acknowledged

The Committee underscored that India's approach to the stay of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is guided by its civilizational ethos and humanitarian tradition of providing refuge to individuals facing grave distress or existential threat. It was noted that the Government of India has not allowed any political activity or platform from Indian territory and has strictly adhered to the principle that no actions

directed against another country are undertaken. The Committee also took note of the extradition request made by the Government of Bangladesh following the pronouncement of a death sentence on Sheikh Hasina in absentia, and urged the Government to keep the Committee informed of developments in this regard.

(Recommendation No 5)

5. Establishment of a Strategic Communication Body to counter Anti-India Narratives

The Committee observed that persistent misinformation and anti-India rhetoric in certain sections of Bangladeshi media and digital platforms have created perception challenges. To address this, the Committee has recommended that the Ministry of External Affairs set up a dedicated Strategic Communication and Perception Management Unit within its External Publicity & Public Diplomacy (XPD) Division. This unit would work in coordination with relevant ministries, such as Home, Defence, and Information & Broadcasting, to monitor, analyze, and counter anti-India narratives, while promoting factual information and enhancing India's soft power globally.

(Recommendation No 9)

6. Maintaining vigilance on foreign activities in Bangladesh

The Committee have expressed concern over the expanding Chinese footprint in Bangladesh, particularly in infrastructure, port development, and defence-related cooperation, including projects such as the Mongla Port expansion, Lalmonirhat Airbase, and the submarine base at Pekua. While acknowledging Bangladesh's sovereign right to pursue diverse international partnerships, the Committee have emphasized the importance of safeguarding India's strategic and security interests, particularly in sensitive regions such as the Siliguri Corridor and the Bay of Bengal. The Committee have therefore recommended that the Government closely monitor the activities of foreign powers in Bangladesh to prevent any unfriendly military foothold, while simultaneously strengthening India's engagement by leveraging its comparative advantage in development cooperation, including connectivity and port

access initiatives, to reinforce India's position as Bangladesh's most reliable and trusted partner.

(Recommendation No. 11)

7. Strengthening India-Bangladesh Border Management

The Committee have noted that of the 4,096 km India–Bangladesh border, approximately 3,231 km has been fenced, while about 864 km remains unfenced due to difficult terrain and riverine conditions. The Committee have been informed that fencing is technically feasible along nearly 689 km, whereas around 175 km poses significant challenges owing to geographical constraints, bilateral provisions restricting construction within 150 yards of the international boundary, and land acquisition issues. Emphasizing that effective border management is essential for national security, regional stability, and socio-economic development, the Committee have recommended that the Government should accord priority to completing the remaining fencing by engaging closely with Bangladesh and expediting technical clearances, feasibility studies, and land acquisition processes. The Committee have further recommended that the Ministry of Home Affairs, in coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs and state governments, adopt innovative engineering and technological solutions, including smart surveillance sensors, in sectors where conventional fencing is not feasible.

(Recommendation No.13)

8. Addressing security concerns affecting the Northeast India

The Committee have noted that recent developments in Bangladesh have significant security implications for India's Northeast region. Acknowledging the ongoing coordination between the Border Security Force of India and the Border Guard Bangladesh in monitoring border movements and preventing infiltration, the Committee have recommended that India continue its close engagement with the relevant Bangladeshi authorities and strengthen structured intelligence-sharing mechanisms to effectively track and counter terrorist and insurgent activities. The Committee have emphasized the importance of ensuring that Bangladesh does not

become a safe haven for groups operating against India's security interests in the Northeast.

(Recommendation No.15)

9. Strengthening Centre-State Coordination

The Committee have noted that five Indian states bordering Bangladesh- West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram- play a crucial role in shaping India's approach towards Bangladesh due to their geographic proximity, cultural ties, and cross-border socio-economic linkages. While recognizing that foreign policy remains the prerogative of the Union Government, the Committee have emphasized the importance of regularly consulting state governments on matters affecting bilateral relations and border management. Noting existing coordination mechanisms such as the North Eastern Council, NITI Aayog's Sub-Group of Chief Ministers, and the States Division of MEA, the Committee have recommended that these platforms be revitalized and function proactively as structured interfaces for regular consultations between the MEA and state governments on Bangladesh-related issues.

(Recommendation No.17)

10. Ensuring Smooth Trade Transition Post-Bangladesh's LDC Graduation

The Committee have noted Bangladesh's impending graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category in 2026 and its likely impact on bilateral trade. Currently, Bangladesh enjoys duty-free and quota-free access to India under SAFTA as part of LDC benefits, which will change upon graduation, potentially affecting its export competitiveness. The Committee have welcomed ongoing negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) as a forward-looking framework for trade and investment cooperation. They have recommended that the Government of India expedite the conclusion of CEPA well before 2026 to ensure continuity, predictability, and stability in bilateral economic relations. The Committee have also suggested that the CEPA include provisions for continued preferential treatment for select Bangladeshi sectors, while safeguarding India's domestic interests and establishing a balanced framework for long-term cooperation.

(Recommendation No.21)

11. Boosting India-Bangladesh Connectivity and Development Cooperation

The Committee have noted that infrastructure and connectivity cooperation form a cornerstone of India–Bangladesh relations, spanning rail, road, waterways, energy, and digital linkages. India has provided nearly USD 10 billion in Lines of Credit and grants for projects including the Maitree Super Thermal Power Plant, Khulna-Mongla and Agartala-Akhaura Rail Lines, the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline, and the Maitri Bridge over Feni. While acknowledging these achievements, the Committee have expressed concern over delays in certain projects due to tendering, procedural, and security challenges. The Committee have strongly recommended that the Ministry of External Affairs take all necessary steps to ensure the timely completion of ongoing major projects, including Dhaka-Tongi Joydepur and Khulna-Darshana Rail Lines, inland port upgrades, and EPC projects, to maximize mutual benefits.

(Recommendation No.22)

12. Revitalizing India-Bangladesh Cultural and People-to-People Ties

The Committee have noted the deep civilizational, linguistic, and cultural affinities shared by India and Bangladesh, reflected in shared history, literature, music, cinema, and figures like Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam. While initiatives such as joint cultural festivals, literary collaborations, and youth exchange programmes have strengthened mutual understanding, the Committee have expressed concern that recent developments in Bangladesh have temporarily affected the atmosphere of trust and goodwill. The Committee have recommended intensifying cultural diplomacy through annual joint festivals, film retrospectives, and art residencies, and promoting sub-national cultural linkages with Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and West Bengal to strengthen people-to-people engagement and strategic ties.

(Recommendation No.25)

13. Restoring Visa and Consular Facilitation with Bangladesh

The Committee have noted that visa and consular services form a key people-centric aspect of India-Bangladesh relations, impacting tourists, patients, students, and businesspersons. In 2023, India issued over 1.6 million visas to Bangladeshi nationals, one of its largest visa operations abroad. While essential visa services have continued despite temporary disruptions following August 5, 2024, reduced processing and security-related constraints may affect public perception and people-to-people engagement. The Committee have urged the Ministry of External Affairs, in coordination with security agencies, to progressively normalize visa operations and establish a bilateral consular cooperation mechanism to review visa policies, address grievances, and facilitate legitimate travel, while ensuring necessary security safeguards.

(Recommendation No.29)

14. Renewal of Ganga Water Treaty

The Committee have noted that the Ganga Water Treaty of 1996, which governs the sharing of Ganga waters at the Farakka Barrage, is set to expire in 2026. Recognizing the key role of West Bengal in the treaty's formulation and ongoing Joint River Commission meetings, the Committee have recommended that India initiate bilateral discussions with Bangladesh at the earliest to ensure continuity. They have emphasized that the renewal should be guided by updated hydrological data, climate change projections, and principles of equitable and sustainable water use, with continued consultations with concerned states, particularly West Bengal and Bihar. The Committee have further underscored those issues relating to Teesta River water sharing should be duly addressed in the negotiations.

(Recommendation No.31)