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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

A Growing Trust Deficit: On India and Bangladesh

THE HINDU

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A Growing Trust Deficit: On India and Bangladesh

 **The Hindu** 16 June 2026 **GS2**

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INTERVIEW ANGLE

"When a friendly neighbour's government changes, how should India recalibrate ties without letting domestic rhetoric poison a relationship of mutual need?"

Source: [Original editorial](#)  [The Hindu](#)

 **Every fact web-verified against primary sources** (<https://ujjyari.com/how-we-verify/>)

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

India-Bangladesh ties have entered a strained phase under the post-Hasina **BNP-led government**, with the **1996 Ganga Waters Treaty** set to expire on **December 12, 2026**. For an aspirant, this is a GS2 case on **neighbourhood policy**, **transboundary** (<https://ujjyari.com/vocab/transboundary/>) **water diplomacy** and **managing a political transition** in a partner state.

THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

Ties with Dhaka's new government are strained by **trade restrictions**, **visa curbs** and **transshipment frictions**, while **illegal-immigration rhetoric** (<https://ujjyari.com/vocab/rhetoric/>) deepens distrust. The biggest pressure point is the **Ganga Waters Treaty**, expiring December 12, 2026. India has legitimate interests, but drift is costly given Bangladesh's role in **Act East connectivity and the Northeast**. The deficit needs a fair treaty renewal and broad engagement.

THE ISSUE, DECODED

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ELEMENT	WHAT IT IS	WHY IT MATTERS
Political transition	BNP-led government after Sheikh Hasina	Old familiarity no longer guaranteed
Economic frictions	Trade curbs, visa limits, transshipment disputes	Erodes connectivity and commerce gains
Ganga Waters Treaty	1996 dry-season Farakka water sharing, expires Dec 12, 2026	A success at risk of becoming a flashpoint
Immigration rhetoric	Domestic political framing of migration	Read in Dhaka as hostile, deepening distrust

THE ANALYSIS: HOW A PARTNERSHIP DRIFTED

- ❶ **Familiarity lost.** With a new dispensation in Dhaka, India can no longer lean on the personal trust of the previous era.
- ❷ **Economic stress.** Trade restrictions, visa curbs and transshipment frictions are unwinding recent connectivity gains.
- ❸ **Water at the centre.** The 1996 treaty's looming expiry makes fair renewal the single most important task.
- ❹ **Rhetoric as accelerant.** Intensified illegal-immigration messaging is being received in Dhaka as antagonism, widening the gap.

DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

Ganga Waters Treaty, 1996, a 30-year agreement on sharing dry-season flows at the **Farakka Barrage**; expires **December 12, 2026**. **Political context:** BNP-led government in Dhaka after the departure of **Sheikh Hasina (Awami League)**. **Frameworks:** India's **Neighbourhood First and Act East** policies; BBIN connectivity; transboundary river cooperation. **Concepts:** transshipment, water diplomacy, riparian rights, strategic neighbourhood.

THE DEBATE

Argument for firmness: India must protect border security and economic interests, and some friction is inevitable when dealing with a less predictable government in Dhaka.

Argument for restraint: Letting domestic rhetoric and economic curbs erode ties endangers water cooperation and connectivity that India itself depends on for the Northeast and Act East.

The balanced verdict: Protect core interests, but do not let them be hijacked by electoral rhetoric. A fair treaty renewal and broad-spectrum engagement serve India's interests better than drift.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

When a neighbour's government changes, separate the relationship from the personalities. Ask which interests are structural, water, trade, security, geography, and which are merely tied to one leadership. Structural interests outlast governments and should anchor policy, not the comfort of past familiarity.

DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

Government change in Dhaka -> familiarity lost -> trade and visa curbs + immigration rhetoric -> trust deficit -> Ganga Treaty renewal endangered -> structural interests (water, connectivity) at risk

THE WAY FORWARD

- ① **Prioritise the treaty.** Treat a fair renewal of the Ganga Waters Treaty as the top diplomatic task before the December deadline.
- ② **Restore commerce links.** Ease trade and transshipment frictions that hurt both economies.
- ③ **Insulate from rhetoric.** Keep migration messaging from poisoning a relationship of mutual need.
- ④ **Engage broadly.** Build ties across Dhaka's full political spectrum, not a single faction.

THE TAKEAWAY BOX

India-Bangladesh ties as a test of neighbourhood policy and water diplomacy during a political transition.

Lift line: "Neighbours cannot choose each other." **Prelims hooks:** Ganga Waters Treaty 1996; Farakka Barrage; Neighbourhood First; Act East; BBIN. **Ethics/Interview angle:** Balancing legitimate domestic concerns against the duty to sustain a strategic relationship. **PYQ linkage:** UPSC has asked on India's neighbourhood policy and on transboundary river disputes. **Connects to:** Northeast connectivity, Teesta negotiations, illegal-migration debates, regional integration.

Sources: *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/>), *PIB* (<https://pib.gov.in/>)

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 Analysis

● **KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE**

Ties with the post-Hasina BNP-led government in Dhaka are being strained by trade restrictions, visa curbs, transshipment frictions and the impending expiry of the 1996 Ganga Waters Treaty, while intensified illegal-immigration rhetoric deepens the deficit at exactly the moment cooperation is most needed.

✓ **SUPPORTING**

- The political transition in Dhaka means India can no longer rely on the familiarity of the previous government and must rebuild trust with a new dispensation across the spectrum.
- Economic frictions over trade restrictions, visa curbs and transshipment routes are eroding the connectivity and commerce gains of recent years.
- The 1996 Ganga Waters Treaty expires on December 12, 2026, and a failure to renew it on fair terms would convert a water-sharing success into a flashpoint.

⚠ **COUNTER**

Some argue that India must protect its security and economic interests firmly, and that a degree of friction is the natural cost of dealing with a less predictable government in Dhaka.

→ **WAY FORWARD**

Insulate the relationship from domestic rhetoric, prioritise a fair renewal of the Ganga Waters Treaty, restore trade and connectivity links, and engage Dhaka's full political spectrum to rebuild trust.


MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK

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QUESTION

India-Bangladesh relations face a widening trust deficit at a moment of treaty renewal and political transition. Examine the drivers and the way forward. (250 words)

INTRODUCTION

The strength of India-Bangladesh ties has long rested on personal and political familiarity. A change of government in Dhaka has tested how durable that relationship is when familiarity falls away.

BODY

The relationship is passing through a difficult phase. With a BNP-led government in Dhaka after the departure of Sheikh Hasina, the easy trust of the previous era has thinned, and a series of frictions has filled the gap.

Trade restrictions and visa curbs have slowed the flow of goods and people, transshipment arrangements have become contentious, and intensified rhetoric in India about illegal immigration has been read in Dhaka as hostile. The most consequential pressure point is water.

The 1996 Ganga Waters Treaty, which governs the sharing of dry-season flows at Farakka, expires on December 12, 2026, and its renewal is now entangled with the broader deterioration in ties. A failure to renew on fair terms would not merely end an agreement; it would convert one of South Asia's rare water-sharing successes into a grievance.

India does have legitimate interests in border security and in protecting its economy, and friction with a less predictable government is to some extent unavoidable. But the costs of drift are high: Bangladesh is central to India's Act East connectivity, to the Northeast, and to managing transboundary rivers.

The answer is to separate the relationship from electoral rhetoric, treat the treaty renewal as a priority, and engage Dhaka's full political spectrum rather than a single faction.

CONCLUSION

Neighbours cannot choose each other. India and Bangladesh need each other on water, trade and security, and the trust deficit is best closed by a fair treaty renewal and engagement that outlasts any one government.


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