

Bangladesh-Pakistan Relations: A Source of India's Regional Anxiety

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On May 4, 2026, a 12-member delegation of senior Bangladeshi bureaucrats arrived in Pakistan for a two-week Executive Leadership Training program at the Civil Services Academy in Lahore, with all expenses covered by the Government of Pakistan. This program is the first of its kind that Bangladesh has conducted with Pakistan since the latter's inception in 1971. Bangladeshi political analysts view this as the country's measure of "reducing India's monopoly over official training, institutional access and [regional diplomatic comfort](#)." It is a symbolic act that signals "India will no longer be the automatic first destination for bureaucratic and diplomatic exposure". Additionally, Pakistan and Bangladesh have signed a 10-year Memorandum of Understanding for strengthening coordinated efforts to combat narcotics trafficking and money laundering through information sharing, joint intelligence, and [capacity-building initiatives](#). This historical tilt of Bangladesh towards

Pakistan, aimed at regional strategic cooperation, began during the interim government of Muhammad Yunus in August 2024 and has been continued by Tarique Rehman's BNP-led government since February 2026. The Yunus Administration signed an agreement with Pakistan, [exempting](#) holders of official and diplomatic passports from visa requirements. Another significant MoU was signed during this period to establish a Joint Working Group on trade issues. The resumption of direct trade between the two countries also happened during this period.

Diversifying Away from Delhi

For India, Bangladesh's decision to send a delegation of civil servants to Pakistan carries more weight than the training itself. The move underscores Dhaka's growing willingness to cooperate with Pakistan and diversify its foreign partnerships beyond those with which it has traditionally been closely aligned, such as India. India has held a decades-long privileged position in its relationship with Bangladesh in terms of bureaucratic and institutional engagement; therefore, the decision to move the training program away from Mussoorie presents a challenge to India's longstanding soft-power advantage as it diversifies. The timing is also noteworthy; the shift comes amid growing uncertainty in India-Bangladesh relations over the impending renewal of the [1996 Ganga water treaty](#) and the absence of a Teesta agreement. Water sharing remains one of the most politically weighted issues in Bangladesh. This became even more acute after India had suspended its treaty on water sharing with Pakistan, which occurred as a result of the 2025 India-Pakistan conflict. While both events are completely independent, this step initiated discussions in Bangladesh about the [viability](#) of future treaties on the distribution of river water with India. Concerns about India's willingness or ability to address the disputes have prompted calls for a more autonomous foreign policy in Bangladesh. Engagement with Pakistan in this context

is best understood as an effort by Dhaka to expand its diplomatic options.

This development coincides with heightened border tensions between India and Bangladesh. Disputes over illegal migration and border management have influenced domestic discourse and political narratives on both sides. On 4th June, Bangladesh said it had [foiled several attempts](#) by India to force people into the country over a 24-hour window. This rekindled a dispute over alleged undocumented migration, leading to the use of the terms “push-back” and “push-in” of illegal migrants by India and Bangladesh, respectively. West Bengal Chief Minister [Suvendu Adhikari](#) on May 7th said that “around 4,800 illegal immigrants had been sent to Bangladesh from holding centers set up in border districts over the past month, and another 836 were awaiting deportation”. He further mentioned that “those not covered under the CAA act were being deported under existing legal provisions and handed over to the BSF”.

Hard-Security Stakes for India

This issue demanded a [Director General-level conference](#) between BSF and BGB in New Delhi from June 8 to June 11. The key issues on the agenda of this conference include incidents of fence breaching by Bangladeshi Nationals, measures to prevent assaults on BSF personnel and Indian civilians, and efforts to curb trans-border crimes. In addition to these existing political irritants, a statement made by the Director General of Pakistan’s Military media wing last year is worth examining. He stated that “Pakistan will strike deeper within India, and the [attack would start from the east](#) if India were to carry out any military actions like Sindoor in the future”. The statement can be viewed in light of Bangladesh’s interest in procuring Pakistan’s [JF-17 fighter jets](#), jointly produced with China. This could threaten India’s access to the Siliguri Corridor, the gateway to the country’s north-eastern region. The decision to engage with Pakistan also comes at a time when India’s [Neighborhood First](#)

[policy](#) faces growing challenges across the region. For over a decade now, Bangladesh has been regarded as one of the most successful outcomes of the policy in South Asia, with close ties, political coordination, expanding connectivity, and deep institutional engagement.

While the downturn in India-Bangladesh ties began under the Yunus-led IG, the rejuvenation of Bangladesh-Pakistan ties reflected a longer-term character by late 2024 – one that would survive the change of guard in Dhaka in February 2026. Presently, there is sufficient evidence to show that both the BJP-led Union Government in New Delhi and the BNP-led government in Dhaka have adopted an engagement-heavy posture. Among the principal objectives of building greater political bridges between the two capitals is the regeneration of goodwill. However, this effort occurs in parallel with the increase in material variables that contribute to bilateral friction, both directly and indirectly. While issues relating to water sharing or illegal immigration are inherent to the India-Bangladesh bilateral relationship, the Bangladesh-Pakistan relationship is an indirect variable that is arguably more irreconcilable, given that direct issues can be resolved through sustained engagement and sufficient goodwill. Bangladesh's political discourse since Hasina's ouster in 2024 has been dominated by the need to diversify its foreign partnerships. Since the relationship with Pakistan is now viewed through the same diversification lens, the potential for Dhaka to change course due to New Delhi's concerns is low. This is especially affirmed by the scale and rapidity of changes in the Bangladesh-Pakistan relationship, and its special military and bureaucratic focus. For India, the foremost threat posed by this new feature is Pakistan's renewed space for a strategic presence to India's East, both on land and at sea (given the Pakistan Navy's in Bangladesh in late 2025). With the Bangladesh military's leadership set to transition towards leaders not appointed under the Hasina era, the force's growing operational relationship with Pakistan

will likely dominate India's threat landscape vis-à-vis both Pakistan and China.