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Crisis in Bangladesh

Watching crisis in Bangladesh closely: India

Centre expresses 'strong concern' about the safety of minorities in neighbouring country

Centre adds Bangladesh diplomats were not in any danger; protest at mission was quickly dispersed

Bangladesh is not the only place where such incidents take place, says Dhaka spokesman

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India on Sunday described the killing of a Hindu youth in Bangladesh as a "horrendous act", and expressed "strong concern" about the safety of minority communities in the neighbouring country.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal dismissed media reports in Dhaka about threats to Bangladesh's diplomats in India, terming them "misleading propaganda".

The Ministry's remarks drew a quick response, with the Foreign Affairs Adviser of the interim Bangladesh government, Touhid Hossein, saying "such incidents occur in all countries" of the South Asian region and that Bangladesh had already arrested several suspects in the case.

Dipu Chandra Das, 25,

was lynched in Mymensingh city on Thursday amid the protests following the death of student leader Sharif Osman Hadi. The mob allegedly hanged the youth's body from a tree and set it on fire.

"India continues to keep a close watch on the evolving situation in Bangladesh. Our officials remain in touch with Bangladesh authorities and have conveyed to them our strong concerns at the attacks on minorities. We have also urged that the perpetrators of the barbaric killing of Das be brought to justice," Mr. Jaiswal said.

Responding to the reports published in multiple news outlets in Bangladesh about an incident outside the High Commission of Bangladesh here, Mr. Jaiswal said, "The fact is that about 20-25 youth gathered in front of the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi on December 20 and raised slogans in



Taking a stance: Students held a silent protest in Dhaka on Sunday to condemn the killing of a Hindu youth Dipu Chandra Das. AFP

protest against the horrendous killing of Dipu Chandra Das in Mymensingh, while also calling for the protection of all minorities in Bangladesh."

Earlier, *Amar Desh*, a newspaper edited by prominent journalist Mahmudur Rahman, had published a report with the headline "Threat to kill High Commissioner in Delhi". The report said a group of men belonging to Akhand Hindu Sena had come to the main gate of the Bangladesh High Commission in Chanakyapuri's Radhakrishnan Marg and

held an "aggressive" demonstration. The sharp exchanges took place when India announced that the Indian Visa Application Centre in Chittagong and the main Indian Visa Application Centre in Dhaka will remain shuttered indefinitely.

This follows "security incidents" near IVACs in Rajshahi, Chittagong, Khulna, and Dhaka. "It's difficult to operate our visa facilities in Bangladesh when people are unable to step out because of the prevailing security situation," said an official, explaining that Indian missions have been subjected to stone-throwing and frequent targeting by mobs in the past several days.

'Will ensure safety'

Responding to Bangladesh's concerns about the incident outside their mission in Delhi, Mr. Jaiswal said, "The police stationed at the spot dispersed the group after a few minutes. Visual evidence of these events is available publicly for all to see ... India is committed to ensure the safety of foreign missions/Posts in its territory in accordance with the Vienna Convention."

Responding to the In-

dian remarks, Mr. Hossein said, "One Bangladeshi citizen was brutally murdered. This incident should not be mixed with the minorities. The person who was killed was a Bangladeshi citizen and we took action on this without any delay and several individuals have been arrested in this case."

"Bangladesh is not the only country where such incidents take place. They take place in all countries of our region and every country should take appropriate action to deal with such cases and Bangladesh has already taken steps," Mr. Hossein said, addressing the media at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka.

Mr. Hossein's opinions were further amplified by a Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement, which said, "The intercommunal situation in Bangladesh is better than in many other parts in South Asia."

India strongly condemned the killing of a Hindu youth, Dipu Chandra Das, in Bangladesh and expressed concern about the safety of minority communities there. India urged Bangladeshi authorities to punish those responsible and said it is closely monitoring the situation.

India also rejected reports in Bangladeshi media claiming that Bangladesh's diplomats in India were threatened, calling them misleading.

According to India, a small group of protesters briefly demonstrated outside the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi against the killing, and the police quickly dispersed them.

Bangladesh responded by saying such incidents happen in all South Asian countries and should not be linked to minority issues. It stated that several suspects have already been arrested and claimed that the situation of communities in Bangladesh is relatively better compared to other countries in the region.

Amid rising security concerns and attacks near Indian visa centres in Bangladesh, India decided to suspend operations at some visa application centres. India reiterated its commitment to protecting foreign diplomatic missions under international law

Railways to hike its fares

Indian Railways has announced a small increase in train fares to raise about ₹600 crore. From December 26, fares will go up by **1 paisa per km** for ordinary class journeys beyond 215 km, and **2 paisa per km** for non-AC classes of mail/express trains and all AC classes.

The Railways clarified that there will be **no change in suburban train fares or monthly season tickets**, and

no hike for ordinary class travel up to 215 km. For example, a 500-km non-AC journey will cost only ₹10

more.

The Congress criticised the move, saying the fare hike should have been announced in the Budget instead of being implemented separately. The Railways said passengers who have already booked tickets for travel after December 26 will **not have to pay any extra amount**.

Railways to hike its fares from Dec. 26; Cong. slams decision

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

With the aim of mobilising ₹600 crore, the Railways has increased train ticket fare by one paisa per km for journeys in ordinary class beyond 215 km, and two paise per km for non-air conditioned classes of mail or express trains and AC classes of all trains. The new rates will be effective from December 26.

The Congress criticised the hike, and alleged that instead of announcing it in the Budget, the government had used an unauthorised manner to implement the move.

"There is no increase in the monthly season tickets of suburban trains and up to 215 km travel in ordinary

Ticket check

Railways has revised train fares for tickets booked on or after December 26*

What's changing

- Ordinary class (non-suburban) journeys > 215 km: **+ ₹0.01 per km**
- AC classes (all trains): **+ ₹0.02 per km**

- Non-AC classes of mail/express trains: **+ ₹0.02 per km** (for instance, for a 500-km journey in non-AC coaches, ₹10 extra)

What's not changing

- No increase in suburban fares
- No increase in monthly season tickets
- No increase for ordinary class up to 215 km

(*those who have already booked tickets for journeys after December 26 will not have to pay any additional amount)

class of other trains," a note circulated to presspersons said. "Railways will earn about ₹600 crore this year as a result of this rationalisation. For a 500-km journey in non-AC coaches, passengers will

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- The Winter Session (15 sittings) saw **heavy legislative activity**: 10 Bills introduced, 8 passed, including major laws on **FDI in insurance, nuclear power liability, repeal of obsolete laws, and changes to MGNREGA**.
- **Political symbolism** dominated time: over **24 hours** were spent debating Vande Mataram, which could have been handled through a **unanimous resolution** instead.
- **Hindi titles of Bills** caused controversy, with MPs from non-Hindi regions citing **constitutional provisions favouring English drafting** of legislation.

Winter is behind

A less acrimonious session is an opportunity to build upon

The winter session of Parliament, which had 15 sittings, witnessed significant and controversial legislative business, along with political grandstanding by the government to mark the 150th anniversary of the national song, Vande Mataram. Ten Bills were introduced and eight were passed by both Houses. Notable Bills that won parliamentary approval include one repealing or amending dozens of outdated laws; another allowing 100% FDI in the insurance sector; one facilitating private sector investment in nuclear power by reducing the liability of suppliers, and, importantly, major changes to the rural employment guarantee scheme, a flagship welfare programme started by the UPA government in 2005. The titles of several Bills, which were in Hindi, caused consternation among Members of Parliament from non-Hindi regions. They pointed to constitutional provisions that require legislation to be drafted in English, with translations made available as required. The insurance Bill is titled Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha, while the rural employment guarantee Bill is called Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin), or VB-G RAM G, which became an Act on December 21 with the

Winter is behind

- A long debate on **electoral reforms** failed to rise above party positions, missing a chance to address the **credibility crisis in elections**.
- Important public issues like **Delhi's air pollution** were not discussed, while **Bills were rushed** and **parliamentary committees remained underused**.
- Despite shortcomings, the session was **less confrontational**, with improved decorum and constructive gestures between the government and Opposition — a positive practice worth strengthening

India-Africa economic ties

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to Namibia, Ghana, and Ethiopia have renewed attention on **India-Africa economic relations**. Over the past decade, ties between India and African countries have gained momentum, moving beyond historical cultural and political links towards stronger economic cooperation. A key sign of this growing partnership was the African Union becoming a permanent member of the G20 during India's presidency in 2023, highlighting Africa's rising importance in India's global economic and diplomatic strategy.

Unlocking the potential of India-Africa economic ties

P rime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to Namibia and Ghana, as part of a five-nation tour (including Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina and Brazil) in July 2025, focused the spotlight again on India-Africa economic relations – just as his recent visit to Ethiopia (December 16-17, 2025) did. The recent decade has witnessed a fresh momentum in India's relations with various African countries. A testament to this is the entry of the African Union as a full-time member of the G-20 during India's presidency term in 2023. India and Africa share a long history of cultural affinity and political solidarity, but their relationship has increasingly been shaped by economics in recent decades.

Uncertainties in western markets

In FY24, India's exports to the United States and the European Union constituted around 40% of its total exports. Given the rising unpredictability of these markets and the threat of a potential slowdown, it is essential that India looks to other markets, particularly African economies.

India is Africa's fourth-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching nearly \$100 billion. In FY24, India exported goods worth \$38.17 billion to African countries – the key destinations included Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania. Petroleum products, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, rice and textiles were some of the major goods exported. In 2024, Africa's imports from India were around 6% of its total imports. To put this in perspective, in addition to being one of the largest investors, China is also Africa's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade exceeding \$200 billion. Around 21% of imports to Africa in 2024 came from China. Interestingly around 33% of imports from China fell under the HSN 84 and 85 product categories, demonstrating China's industrial prowess. These product categories comprise machinery, boilers, electrical machinery, and semiconductor devices.

Recognising the need to catch up, India has already set a target of doubling its trade with



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India's
engagement
with the
continent must
move towards
developing
long-term and
sustainable
partnerships

Africa by 2030. Here is a five-point strategy that may enable India to fulfil its target.

The first strategic pillar should focus on removing trade barriers and engaging in negotiations for preferential trade agreements and comprehensive economic partnership agreements with regional economic communities and the major African economies.

The second pillar should aim to move from low-value commodity exports to two-way value-added and cross-border joint venture manufacturing. Currently, Indian firms lag in utilising the incentives offered by multiple African governments to enable firms to set up manufacturing units. For Indian enterprises, setting up manufacturing facilities across Africa presents a strategic dual advantage. It enables them to maintain preferential access to the U.S. market through favourable tariff regimes, while simultaneously capitalising on Africa's growing consumer base and industrial demand. Moving beyond petroleum and traditional exports is critical in transitioning to a new phase of India's ties with African economies. Deepening engagement with African regional groupings such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can open greater opportunities for Indian exporters.

An opportunity for MSMEs

The third pillar must prioritise the scaling-up of the Lines of Credit and improve accessibility to trade finance. The African market offers a great opportunity for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) segment, unlike the European and American markets where MSMEs find it difficult to gain a foothold. There is a considerable lack of policy attention in enabling MSMEs to gain access to the African markets.

Ensuring easy access to trade finance is critical in achieving a sustainable trade relationship with the continent. Other measures may include adopting trade in local currencies, and forming a joint insurance pool to cover political and

commercial risks for medium-term projects which may reduce the perceived risk for small and medium enterprises and banks.

The fourth strategic pillar should focus on lowering freight and logistics costs by investing in port modernisation, hinterland connectivity and in developing India-Africa maritime corridors.

The final strategic pillar involves the scaling up of services, digital trade, and people-to-people links. It is essential that India leverages its strength in Information Technology, health care, professional services and skill development to boost services exports and stimulate goods trade. Services enable high-value exports and facilitate greater two-way trade. Current policy measures fall short in enabling services trade with African economies. There needs to be a considerable improvement in this regard.

A role for the Indian public sector

Strengthening investments by Indian firms in African manufacturing, agro-processing, infrastructure, renewable energy and critical and emerging technologies may lend further strength to India's relations with African economies. Currently, India's investments in Africa are inflated by investments in Mauritius which are often done with an intent to evade taxes. Multiple factors, including bureaucratic hurdles, political instability and financing costs act as barriers for Indian firms to invest in Africa. Indian firms, particularly the public sector units must take the lead in investing in the African continent, particularly in mining and mineral exploration.

Ultimately, India's engagement with Africa must go beyond transactional trade and move towards building long-term, sustainable partnerships. As global supply chains undergo restructuring and the world shifts towards a multipolar economic order, Africa will remain central to India's aspirations of becoming a global economic power. The time is ripe for India to recalibrate, innovate, and deepen its economic footprint across the African continent.

Uncertainties in Western Markets & Africa Strategy

- With **40% of India's exports going to the U.S.** and EU, uncertainty and slowdown risks in these markets make **diversification essential**. Africa offers a strong alternative.
- India–Africa trade is already close to **\$100 billion**, but India lags behind **China**, which dominates Africa's imports with high-value industrial goods.
- India aims to **double trade with Africa by 2030**, shifting from commodity exports to **value-added manufacturing and joint ventures**, especially using AfCFTA (**African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**) opportunities.
- **MSMEs** can benefit greatly if India improves **trade finance, Lines of Credit, local currency trade, and risk insurance mechanisms**.
- Lowering **logistics costs**, improving maritime connectivity, and expanding **services, digital trade, and people-to-people links** are key to deepening India–Africa economic ties.

A role for the Indian public sector

Indian public sector companies should play a bigger role in strengthening **India–Africa economic ties, especially in sectors like manufacturing, agro-processing, infrastructure, renewable energy, and critical technologies**. At present, India's investment figures in Africa are overstated because many investments are routed through Mauritius mainly for tax reasons, rather than real economic activity in Africa.

Indian companies face challenges such as bureaucracy, political instability, and high financing costs, which discourage direct investment. To overcome this, **public sector undertakings (PSUs)** should lead the way, particularly in **mining and mineral exploration**, where Africa has strong potential.

Overall, India must move beyond short-term trade and focus on **long-term, sustainable partnerships** with African countries. With global supply chains changing and the world moving towards a multipolar order, Africa will be crucial for India's ambition to become a global economic power.