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India - Bangladesh

Why in news?

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Bangladeshi PM has planned to visit India in early April 2017.

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What are the agreements that are expected to be signed?

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- Bangladeshi PM's visit will further build on the boost the relations received from signing the historic Land Boundary Agreement in 2015.

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- Speculation is, a defence partnership agreement, Teesta water-sharing agreement, the Ganga water barrage project, and other energy & connectivity projects will be announced during PMs Indian visit.

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- Any of these will go a long way in cementing ties between both the neighbours.

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What are issues involved?

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- Some of the said agreements **involve the Centre-State relations.**

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- Ex: water-sharing is a highly emotive subject. Also, the movement on Teesta water-sharing has been held up because of West Bengal's reservations.

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- So, to address them, the Central government needs to reach out to West

Bengal Chief Minister.

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- Similarly Bihar Chief Minister is against the Farakka Barrage project.
- Also, the Bangladeshi PM faces an election in 2018. Her opposition accusing her of being soft on India.
- It means, **she cannot return home empty-handed on the water question.**
- Other major issue is, while the border issue has been resolved, **border firing has not ceased.**
- Bangladeshi PM also faces an uphill task of addressing India's mistrust over Chinese investment in Bangladesh (\$38 billion pledged in infrastructure cooperation and joint ventures).

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What is the way forward?

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- Recently, India has decided to allow its border roads in Mizoram and Tripura to be used by Bangladeshi forces since they are constructing border outposts in the terrain areas.
- The decision shows how far the two countries have come to **bridge their trust deficit.**
- So, the time is now ripe for India and Bangladesh to consolidate the gains on key issues.

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Source: The Hindu

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