

5. India-Bangladesh Joint Water Measurement- International Relation

India, Bangladesh begin joint water measurements as Ganges Water Sharing Treaty enters final year. India and Bangladesh have commenced a joint water measurement initiative on the Ganga and Padma rivers as the landmark 1996 Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, which governs water distribution at the Farakka Barrage, enters its final year before expiring in December 2026.

India-Bangladesh Joint Water Measurement & Ganges Treaty (1996)

1. Context and Current Development

Joint Initiative- India and Bangladesh have initiated a joint water measurement exercise on the Ganga (India) and Padma (Bangladesh) rivers.

Timeline Relevance- This initiative comes as the landmark Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, signed in 1996, enters its final year before expiring in December 2026.

2. About the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty (1996)

Date of Signing- 12 December 1996.

Location of Sharing- The treaty governs water sharing at the Farakka Barrage, located in West Bengal, approximately 18 km upstream of the Bangladesh border.

Diplomatic Significance- It marked a major breakthrough, ending decades of tension that had strained bilateral relations since Bangladesh's independence in 1971.

3. Origins of the Dispute

The roots of the conflict lie in the diversion of water by India and the subsequent downstream effects on Bangladesh.

Trigger Event- The completion of the Farakka Barrage by India in 1975.

India's Objective- To divert water into the Hooghly River to flush out silt and improve the navigability of the Kolkata Port.

Bangladesh's Concerns (Lower Riparian State)

Agriculture & Fisheries- Reduced downstream flows harmed local farming and fish habitats.

Navigation- Lower water levels disrupted river transportation.

Salinity- Reduced fresh water flow led to increased salinity intrusion in coastal areas.

Ecology- The delicate ecosystem of the Sundarbans was threatened.

4. Historical Steps and Agreements

Prior to the 1996 treaty, several interim measures were attempted

1977- Five-year Ganges Agreement (Interim).

1982 & 1985- Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) on Flow Sharing.

2011 (Teesta)- Teesta Water Sharing Agreement was proposed but remains unsigned.

5. Current Challenges and Criticisms

Perspective	Key Concerns
Bangladesh	Insufficient water flow during lean months. Continuing issues with salinity intrusion. Loss of critical fish habitats.
India	Increasing water demand in upstream states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar) and West Bengal.
Common Threat	Climate Change- Altered monsoon patterns and glacier melt threaten the future reliability of river flows for both nations.

6. About the Ganga River

Geography and Flow

Origin- Gangotri Glacier in Uttarakhand.

Length- Approximately 2,525 km.

Basin Area- Covers about 8,61,452 sq. km, representing nearly 27% of India's landmass.

Course- It flows through 11 Indian states (including Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal). It enters Bangladesh below the Farakka Barrage as the Padma River. It eventually merges with the Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers before emptying into the Bay of Bengal.

Ecological and Economic Importance

Population Support- The basin supports over 45% of India's population.

Water Stress- Despite receiving 35.5% of India's total precipitation input, the Ganga Basin is the second most water-stressed basin in the country (after the Sabarmati Basin).

Key Tributaries- Yamuna, Ghaghara, Gandak, Kosi, and Son.

Delta- It forms the Sundarbans, the world's largest delta, shared between India and Bangladesh.

Source- <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/india-bangladesh-begin-joint-water-measurements-as-ganges-water-sharing-treaty-enters-final-year-13753043.html/amp>

