

## Khaleda Zia and India-Bangladesh Relations: A Troubled Phase

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- Zia was born on August 15, 1946, in Dinajpur district of undivided India.
- India played an important role in Bangladesh's Independence in 1971.
- Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was assassinated, the military-backed and military-run government came to power under Khaleda Zia's husband General Ziaur Rahman.
- Ziaur Rahman was inclined towards China, the West, and Islamic nations like Pakistan.
- General Rahman was assassinated in 1981.
- Khaleda Zia joined the Bangladesh National Party in 1982.
- Khaleda Zia emerged as a national leader in the late 1980s and early 1990s
- She opposed the Awami League's historic closeness to India.
- Her first opposition was the refusal for land transit to India's north-eastern states, for that she said a reason was Bangladesh's security and sovereignty would compromise.
- The Farakka dam dispute began in 1976, continued during Khaleda Zia's tenure despite the signing of bilateral agreements in the meantime.
- In 1991, she came to power for the first time.
- In 1992, she visited India and signed a joint statement to reach an equitable and long-term water-sharing arrangement. This was opposed by the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League. Then Zia refrained from signing further negotiations.
- Then the historic Ganga Water Treaty was signed with India by Sheikh Hasina when she came to power in 1996.
- When the BNP returned to power in 2001, bilateral relations went to lowest level.
- Indian officials accused Dhaka of harbouring or tolerating insurgent and militant outfits targeting India's Northeast.
- Khaleda Zia further opposed the renewal of the 1972 'India-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace', aka Indira-Mujib Treaty.
- Khaleda Zia's tenures (1991-96 and 2001-06) were also marked by the rise of separatist and secessionist groups, like ULFA and NDFB, from Assam and other Northeastern states of India.
- Only after Zia lost power to Hasina in 2006 that the bases of the militant outfits were dismantled and their operations curbed.
- Even after leaving office, she continued to oppose Bangladesh becoming economically or strategically dependent on its larger neighbour.