

Delhi concedes to Dhaka's concern

Agrees to put river-link worries on meeting minutes

REAZ AHMAD in Dhaka with PALLAB BHATTACHARYA in New Delhi

New Delhi has agreed to include Dhaka's concern over India's controversial river-link project in the minutes of the crucial water talks in the face of unrelenting pressure from Bangladesh.

At a joint press conference after

the end of the two-day talks that rolled into early hours of today, Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed and his Indian counterpart Arjun Charan Sethi announced the agreement reached hours after the talks hit the rocks.

The disagreement surfaced between Bangladesh and India, as Dhaka demanded inclusion of the

river-link project on the main agenda in the next Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) meeting and in the minutes of the latest talks, which New Delhi opposed.

India also agreed to inform Bangladesh beforehand about the diversion of water flow of common rivers from northeastern India to water-deficient areas in the south-

west under the multibillion-dollar project that threatens to deprive Bangladesh of its fair share of water.

India's bid to bypass the agreed Indo-Bangla demarcation of a two-kilometre stretch along the Muhuri river had also become a point of difference. Bangladesh is learnt to have given its view against the

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Bottled danger

Old Dhaka traders make quick bucks on tap water in used container



Water bottles stacked on the roadside in Old Dhaka are filled with untreated tap water, resealed and sold on the market as the original brands.

NAIMUL HAQ

Unscrupulous traders in Old Dhaka fill up thousands of empty plastic water bottles with tap water and fix fake security seals to them for commercial sale.

An investigation by The Daily Star yesterday revealed that these traders in Chankharpool and Keraniganj are doing a booming business in fake mineral water, posing a serious health hazard.

Some of the traders said they buy each 'flawless' bottle for Tk 0.20.

"Bottles with dents or without proper labels are rejected. But we don't mind if the lids are damaged since these could be produced elsewhere," said one of the traders at Nawab Katra Road.

Another trader, who purchases such used bottles worth around Tk 2,000 to Tk 5,000 a day, said, "We resell the bottles to some other traders who clean them and refill

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Massive changes in public purchases

STAR DESK

The government yesterday approved Public Procurement Regulations to ensure transparency, accountability and efficiency in purchases in the public sector and fulfil a World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) condition for 'anti-poverty loan'.

Lack of a co-ordinated guideline for public sector purchases gave rise to widespread allegations of corruption and nepotism.

The WB had asked the government to approve the guideline as a condition for development support credit of \$300 million. The guideline was supposed to be approved by February 8 this year

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GDP to grow

Asian Development Outlook Update released

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's gross domestic product (GDP) should accelerate from 5.3 percent in 2003 to 5.7 percent in 2004, with a further upturn in domestic and external demands, said the latest Asian Development Bank (ADB) report yesterday.

"A stronger growth in imports than in exports and moderated workers' remittances will lead to a

current account deficit of 1.2 percent of the GDP in 2004 from the surplus of 0.6 percent in present fiscal," the Asian Development Outlook 2003 Update (ADO Update) released yesterday observed.

Reviewing the regional economy, the report said a more stable political environment and improved global economic condition should enable South Asia to maintain its

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Govt to conduct off-site maritime boundary study

RAFIQ HASAN

The government has decided to conduct an off-site study on the Bay of Bengal to mark the country's maritime boundary.

The off-the-spot study will help protect maritime territories and resolve disputes over lands like South Talpatty along the border with India, sources said.

The foreign ministry is to co-

ordinate the study, set to start in the second week of December, and provide logistic support and recruit experts.

The decision to conduct such a cost-effective study, which should run for six months, was made at a recent inter-ministerial meeting, chaired by Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan.

The decision preceded the September 21 instruction of the

parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry to the navy for ensuring Bangladesh's sovereignty over South Talpatty.

The meeting felt a maritime database should be in place before venturing into the costly hydrographic survey in the sea, sources said. A proposal for a hydrographic survey in the Bay of Bengal is lying with planning ministry for approval.

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BDR push back push-in victims

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The Border Security Force (BSF) forced nine Indian Bangla-speaking people into Bangladesh in a pre-dawn push-in Tuesday, but Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) pushed them back after hours of detention.

The Indian border guards of Himkumari camp in Kutchbihar subdivision of Jalpaiguri district huddled the nine at gunpoint on the other side of the border at 4:00am and pushed them through Chilahati checkpoint in Doman, Nilphamari.

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CPA chief asks Saber to talk Hasina into joining meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association chief asked a special emissary of the main opposition Awami League (AL) to talk its President Sheikh Hasina into joining the CPA October 4-12 conference in Dhaka, said Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar yesterday.

"It's an international conference, so the opposition should participate in it," Sircar, president of the 49th

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Lawyers stay off courts today

Pro-govt lawyers ask for boycott call-off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawyers under the banner of Six-point Demand Implementation Committee will be boycotting courts across the country today to press for repeal of the amended Civil Procedure Code (CPC).

They are also demanding independence of the judiciary, rescind

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