

WITHDRAWAL OF COMMON RIVER WATERS BY INDIA

Water level in major rivers reduces to lowest

Ganga, Teesta Barrage projects uncertain

BSS, Rangpur

Major rivers including the Padma, Teesta, Brahmaputra and their tributaries are abnormally drying up due to continuous withdrawal of common river waters in the upstream through India's various dams including the Farakka barrage.

Officials told BSS yesterday that the giant Ganga-Kapotakshya (G-K) and the Teesta Barrage projects are facing uncertainty with a potential threat to the navigation, irrigation, bio-diversity and ecology in the country's northern districts.

They said experts as well as farmers in northern Bangladesh are seriously concerned about the current state of affairs resulted from India's unilateral withdrawal of common rivers' waters.

The officials said water levels in these rivers have reduced to their

lowest, causing emergence of hundreds of vast shoals and chars on their beds and leaving very little quantity of water to flow through narrower channels in the northern districts.

They said only small amount of water is being released through the Farakka Barrage, violating the Bangladesh-India 30-year Ganges Water Sharing Treaty while the larger amount of waters are being blocked by Mohananda and Gozaldoba barrages on the other side of the border.

Navigation has almost come to a halt at all points of the major rivers since the advent of the current dry season. Only five out of 15 spans at the Hardinge Bridge point and only one out of 44 sluice gates of the giant Teesta Barrage Project (TBP) at Dalia point in Nilphamari district have little water to flow.

According to official sources, Bangladesh got 13,813 cusecs of water in 1997, 38,685 cusecs in 1998, 33,892 cusecs in 1999, 35,509 cusecs in 2000, 19,898 cusecs in 2001, 35,509 cusecs in 2002, 34,725 cusecs in 2003, 35,000 cusecs in 2004 and 19,998 cusecs in 2005 till March 31 every year through the river Padma.

They said the quantity of water released by the Indian authorities

through their Farakka Barrage this year is alarmingly less than the amount agreed in the 1996 treaty. As a result, the G-K project is facing closure due to shortages of water.

On the other hand, they said, there should be 10,000 cusecs of water to bring an estimated 111,000 hectares under the Rabi crop programme but only 1,000 to 1,200 cusecs are now available in the upstream of the Teesta Barrage.

The Indian authorities are reportedly withdrawing the total water from the rivers Teesta and Mohananda through their Gozaldoba and Mohananda Barrages in the upstream.

Meanwhile, the water level of Brahmaputra has marked an all-time low at all points in Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jamalpur and Mymensingh districts.

Water with 0.5 meter to 2.5 meter depths is now flowing through 10 to 20 smaller and narrower channels in the river Padma, the officials said.

They said hundreds of boat passengers get stranded on the chars and shoals almost everyday as their boats run aground off the emerging shoals causing frequent accidents.



TV personality Shykh Siraj receives Dr Ibrahim Memorial Honorary Award at a function in the city on December 31 from Bangladesh Diabetic Association Secretary General Dr A K Azad Khan.

BDR-BSF confce begins Jan 5 in Sylhet

BSS, Dhaka

A three-day deputy director general level border conference between the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the Border Security Force (BSF) of India will begin on January 5 at the BDR sector headquarters in Sylhet.

A 14-member delegation led by

Inspector General (IG) of the BSF SC Srivastara will arrive in Sylhet on January 4 to attend the conference, an official handout said here yesterday.

Deputy director general of the BDR Brig. Gen. SM Golam Robbani will lead a nine-member delegation at the conference, which will discuss various border-related issues.

Shykh Siraj gets Dr Ibrahim Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shykh Siraj, a noted TV personality, yesterday received Dr Ibrahim Memorial Honorary Award for his outstanding contribution to the development of agriculture in the country, says a press release.

Dr Ibrahim Smriti Parishad handed over the award at a function organised to mark the 94th birth anniversary of Dr Ibrahim who was the pioneer of diabetic treatment in the country.

Secretary General of Bangladesh Diabetic Association Dr A K Azad Khan attended the function as chief guest while Director General of BIRDEM Hospital Prof Mirza Mazharul Islam, National Council Member Mahabuzzaman and Chief Editor of the daily Manabzamin Matiur Rahman Chowdhury were the special guests.

Speakers at the function said Dr Ibrahim passed his whole life for the betterment of the people.

Presided over by Dr C M Dilwar Rana, the award giving ceremony was held at the auditorium of BIRDEM hospital in the capital.

Last year, Dr Ibrahim Smriti Parishad gave the gold medal award to Anjuman-e-Mufidul Islam, a charity organisation for burial and other social services, for its contribution to social welfare.