

FOCUS

Let Them be Rivers of Hope

by Amjad Hossain Khan

The outcome of the summit particularly on water is encouraging. The two Governments have acknowledged the need for settling the water sharing issue of all the common rivers between India and Bangladesh . . .

HD Deve Gowda, Indian Prime Minister arrived in Dhaka on 6th January 1997 accompanied by an entourage of 17 officials. News media in Bangladesh quoting various sources prior to the visit indicated that the summit level talks may cover a host of agenda including all bilateral relations between the two countries. The visit was considered significant to strengthen the bilateral relations immediately following the signing of the 30 years Ganges Water Treaty. It was reported that the two Prime Minister may review the joint monitoring of water sharing arrangements.

Of particular importance was the official level talks on sharing of the water of 53 other common rivers. This aspect of the agenda is a follow-up of the recently concluded Ganges Water Treaty. Article IX states that "Guided by the principles of equity, fairness . . . both the Governments agree to conclude water sharing treaties/agreements with regard to other common rivers". The preamble of the Ganges Water Treaty of 1996 provides for sharing by mutual agreement the waters of the international rivers following through the two countries, and of making optimum use of the water resources of their region in the fields of flood management, generation of hydropower for the mutual benefit of the two countries.

During the summit level meeting two sides also discussed joint collaboration of the water

resources of the four countries — Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan from the Ganges and the Brahmaputra river systems.

Bangladesh should endeavour to start dialogue on sharing of water of the Brahmaputra and all other common rivers as a priority. The Meghna river, as part of the Brahmaputra basin, should be included in the discussion for long term benefits, if any, from the proposed Tipai Mukh dam project in Monipur, India. The Kosi high dam project on Kosi river in Nepal is close to Bangladesh, and India and Nepal are already discussing the high dam project. In view of recent developments, it may be worthwhile to pursue the matter for association of Bangladesh in future negotiations. Bhutan has also possibilities of developing high dam projects in Manas and Sankoth. These rivers are tributaries of the Brahmaputra. Any development on these rivers should form a part of the overall water resources management. All these developments should form a larger issue of integrated development of the river basins of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra. Nepal and Bhutan already showed their keen interest in such developments. As India is also

now willing to cooperate, Bangladesh may take the initiative for formal talks in the matter.

The summit level meeting on 6th January between Prime Ministers of Bangladesh and India covered wide range of issues to forge greater economic cooperation and they expressed their political will on certain crucial issues. The two sides agreed to reactivate the Indo-Bangladesh Joint River Commission, the Joint Economic Commission and a joint working group on eradicating cross border insurrections. The two Prime Ministers discussed the importance of regional/sub-regional cooperation among four South Asian countries — Nepal, Bhutan, India and Bangladesh.

While emphasising the need for fostering friendly and active relation among close neighbours, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, "The complementaries that we have in the countries of this region will usher in a new era of development. She added "we have ample scope for greater cooperation in the fields of trade, tourism, development of natural and water resources, flood control and creating employment opportunities for the people."

The Ganges Water Treaty for 30 years is just the beginning of

Reciprocating the sentiment expressed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the Indian Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda underlined the need for building edifice of cooperation between India and Bangladesh for improving the quality of life of their people. Mr Gowda called for tapping the vast natural and human resources of the region for common benefit. He said, "The rivers that flow through the territories of both our nations are a rich endowment" and added "they should become rivers of hope and opportunity". He further said that the potential for joint efforts to improve water management for flood control, irrigation, conservation and navigation are immense. Mr Gowda said that in the near future India and Bangladesh should mandate the experts of both the nations to work out schemes for full harnessing of their crucial resources.

The outcome of the summit level meeting has clearly indicated the political will of both the Governments for maximising the optimum development of the vast water resources among the riparian countries for the benefit of the people.

The Ganges Water Treaty for 30 years is just the beginning of

a new era of hope for the people of Bangladesh. While efforts will be made by both the countries for a treaty on water sharing of all common rivers including the Brahmaputra, the urgency of regional cooperation among the south Asian countries, Nepal, Bhutan, India and Bangladesh, will bring rich dividends to the countries.

The two Prime Ministers addressed a press conference before the departure of the Indian Prime Minister. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told that the Teesta river as the next focus of attention along with setting the share of water of all other common rivers. She further said that the two countries have "agreed to work together to further strengthen the regional cooperation within SAARC as well as seeking avenues for having faster track of development involving countries of our regional/sub-regional approach."

Deve Gowda, noted that the signing of the Ganges Water Treaty for sharing the Ganges Water between the two countries was a landmark event and should usher in a new chapter in relations "based on trust ending past suspicions".

The outcome of the summit particularly on water is en-

couraging. The two Governments have acknowledged the need for settling the water sharing issue of all the common rivers between India and Bangladesh and Teesta river has been identified as the next focus of attention.

It may be mentioned that India constructed their Teesta Barrage near Gazoldoba in 1978 with specific assurance on sharing of water. Bangladesh started construction of the Teesta Barrage at Dalia and completed it in 1987. Unfortunately the sharing of water on Teesta would not be reached due to divergent view of both the sides. Present situation may help in solving the sharing of water of the Teesta soon.

Mr H D Deve Gowda has clearly stated that experts of the two countries be mandated to start the dialogue on the issue of harnessing the water resources of the region.

The reactivated Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission has been given the responsibility and the political will for resolving water sharing issues and of harnessing the water resources potentials of the Ganges and Brahmaputra basins. given the political will of the two countries it should not be difficult for them to come to an amicable solution of the vital issues which concern millions of people of South Asia. Let the rivers become rivers of hope for the future.

The writer ex-Chairman, Bangladesh Water Development Board

Dhaka Day by Day

Mouth-watering but not before Sunset

by Anindita Sarkar



Large Dams: Back on World Bank's Agenda

by Himanshu Thakkar

BIG dams are once again on the agenda of the World Bank, despite unhappy past experiences.

A study titled "The World Bank's Experience With Large Dams: A Preliminary Review of Impacts" (dated September 1996) by the Operations Evaluation Department (OED) of the Bank has come out strongly in defence of big dams after a desk assessment of 50 Bank-financed large dams.

It underlines that as the mitigation of adverse social and environmental consequences of large dams are feasible and economically justifiable in 74 per cent of the cases, they are acceptable.

Arguing that the controversy surrounding the large dams has made potential and 'justified' borrowers reluctant to approach the World Bank and other development agencies for assistance, the study says that if these mega projects comply with the new Bank guidelines and the design, construction and operation of new projects take into account the lessons of experience, they should be given a chance.

Attacking this conclusion as flawed, Patrick McCully, campaigns director for the International Rivers Network in the US, says: "The sources of data

have been the dam agencies themselves, so the answers are not surprising."

The study also fails to take note of the fact that the Bank has similarly failed to fund many smaller dams, watershed development, preservation and propagation of traditional and local water harvesting systems, which could cater to the water and power needs in different ways, he argues.

A number of international NGOs, including Bretton Woods Project (UK), Urgewald (Germany), Probe International (Canada) have condemned the study as it has not taken into consideration the views of NGOs, citizen's groups, and affected peoples, "which have the most experience in studying and critiquing the large dams which the Bank has financed."

At present, the World Bank is directly or indirectly involved in about 10 per cent of the 250 dams being completed worldwide each year. A recent list shows 604 dams that have been supported by the Bank. But the review only includes the names of large dams (greater than 90 metres) and reservoir area (more than 300 square kilometres) between the years 1956 and 1987.

They are particularly criti-

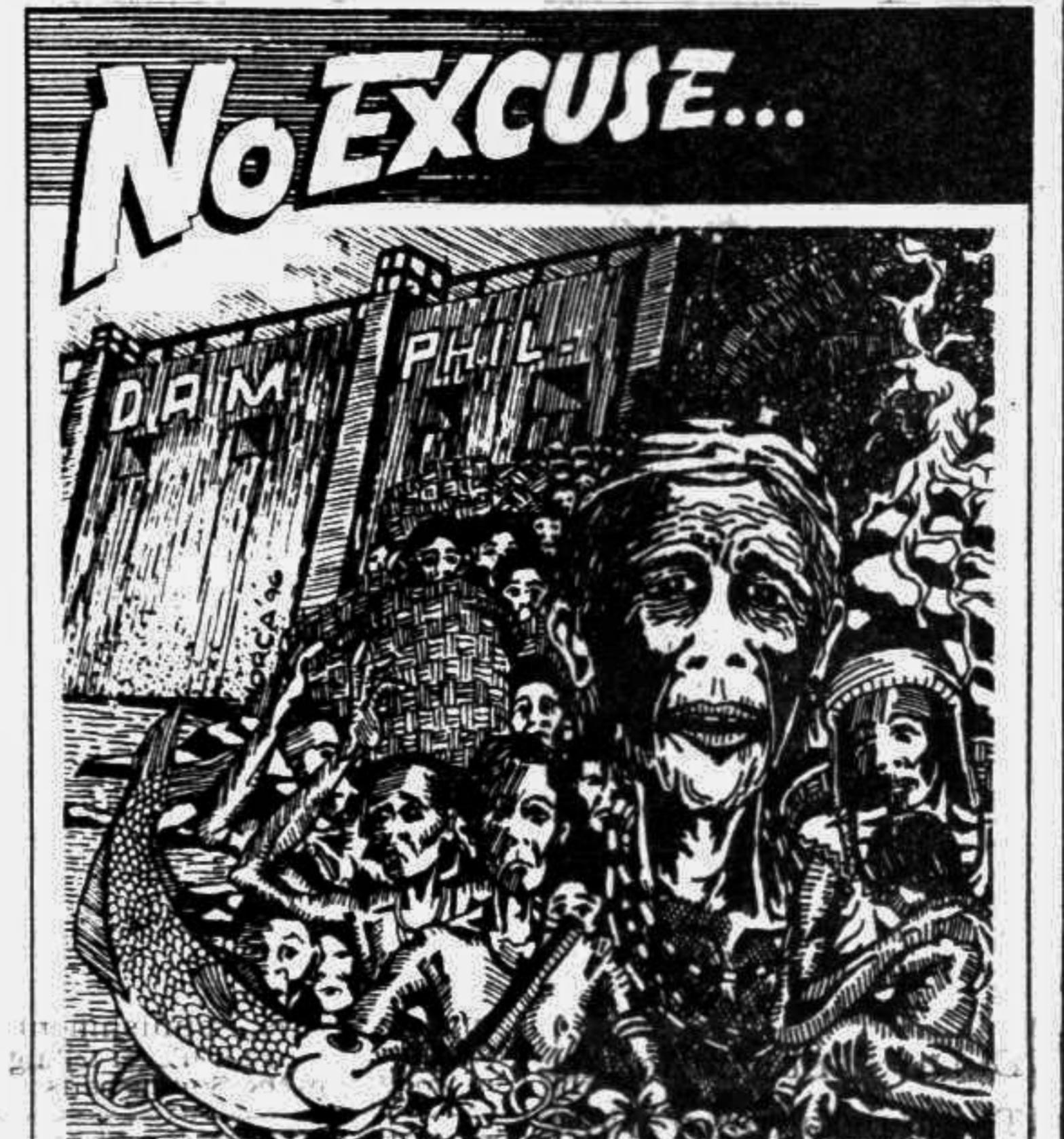
cal of the study's claim of presenting an economic, social and environmental evaluation of big dams as only 14 of the 50 large dams reviewed in this report were appraised after the Bank guidelines concerning resettlement impacts were adopted in 1980 and only one was appraised after the first guidelines on the environment were produced in 1986.

Ironically, the study itself admits that only a quarter of the projects that have been reviewed were implemented so as to comply with the Bank's current criteria.

The study also confesses to cost overruns in 59 per cent of the projects under review due to inflation, underestimation at appraisal, design revisions, contract problems and unexpected geological conditions. But it says that a deterioration of economic returns with passage of time cannot be ruled out since the Bank has not normally monitored the implementation of followup measures required to sustain the benefits of the projects, including the safety, sedimentation, and the adaptation of operations to changing needs and conditions.

Detractors see the review's terms of reference and research methodology as narrow and likely to lead to biased conclusions. They say the study is partisan as it has not looked at feasible alternatives to big dams and refuse to accept the Bank's defence: "Given the limited scope of this preliminary review, it was not possible to revise the least cost justification for each large dam project."

CSE/Down To Earth Features



Poorly-planned dams and river controls can destroy water ecosystems. Extinction of local species and displacement of people result. This allows the rich to "capture" a vital resource. People must have a voice in decisions to build dams.

DEPTHnews

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide



STAR PLUS
6:00am Home and Away 6:30 The Sullivans 7:00 Aerobics Oz Style 7:30 Star News 8:00 Sky News 8:30 Star News 9:00 Sky News 9:30 Aerobics Oz Style 10:00 Ann Willian's Look And Cook 10:30 BBC World News Special 11:00 BBC World News Special 11:30 BBC World News Special 12:00 The World Today Special 02:00 BBC World Headlines 02:05 The Money Programme 02:50 Building Sights 03:00 BBC World News 03:30 Time Out: The Travel Show: Holiday 04:00 BBC World Report inc. World Business Report/24 Hours

CHANNEL V
6:00am Frame by Frame 7:00 Rewind VJ Sophia 7:00 Jump Start VJ Alessandra 10:00 Frame by Frame 11:00 The Vibe VJ Luke 12:00 Rewind VJ Sophia 1:00 By Demand VJ

BBC
07:00 BBC Newsroom inc. World Business Report/Asia Today /24 Hours 10:00 BBC World Headlines 10:05 The Money Programme 11:00 BBC World News 02:00 BBC World Newsday

BTV
3:00 Opening announcement Al-Quran Programme summary 3:10 News in Bangla 3:15 Patriotic song 3:20 Recitation from the Bible 3:25 Cartoon Film: The Lone Ranger 3:50 Re-cast of selected programmes 4:45 Educational programme 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 Dolan Champa 5:50 Sports programme 6:30 Anu Paramanu 6:50 Open University 7:00 The News 7:25 Band show 8:00 News in Bangla 8:45 Package Drama 10:00 News in English 10:30 Janamat 10:50 Comedy series: Seemef 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Tuesday's programme 11:40 Close down

DD 7
10:30 Janmadin 10:35 Educ Prog 11:00 Nazrulgeeti 11:15 Folk Songs 12:30 Monoroma Cabin 1:00 Janani 1:30 Trishna 1:45 Alai-Billighiza Pakistan 10:05 Shab Daigh 10:35 English Film: Goof Troop 10:55 Milli Nagma 11:00 Khatra 11:10 The Saint (Roger Moor) 12:00 Sargam Sargam 9:45 Alai-Billighiza 11:05 Angara (Drama Serial) 2:00 Shehrad (Drama Serial) 2:30 The Face of Cultural Day 5:30 Dennis The Menace 6:30 Saawan 6:30 Shatranj 03:30 Abhinetri 04:00 Bgd. Balwant 04:30 The Music Real Count Down 05:00 Talaash 05:30 Dennis The Menace 7:00 Premier 7:30 I Dream of Jeannie 8:00 Bishesh Khera 6:00 Palki Katha 6:30 Batayan (Drama Serial)

EL TV
06:30 Dance Dance 7:30 Jugal Jodi 8:30 Music Time 9:30 Tarana Aur Fasane 10:30 Kal Bhi Aaj Bhi 11:00 Tere V Chup 11:30 Amar Prem 12:00 Monorjan 12:30 Song Yatra 1:00 Special: Nam Gum Jayega 01:30 Tarannum 02:00 Aya Saawan 03:00 Shatranj 03:30 Abhinetri 04:00 Bgd. Balwant 04:30 The Music Real Count Down 05:00 Talaash 05:30 Special: Jhumo Nacho 06:30 Its My Choice 07:00 Bangla Serial

PTV
8:00am Tilawat Aur Tarjuman 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabra 8:45 Abb Pata Challa 9:05 Khat Farmash 9:20 Sargam Sargam 9:45 Alai-Billighiza Pakistan 10:05 Shab Daigh 10:35 English Film: Goof Troop 10:55 Milli Nagma 11:00 Khatra 11:10 The Saint (Roger Moor) 12:00 Sargam Sargam 9:45 Alai-Billighiza 11:05 Angara (Drama Serial) 2:00 Shehrad (Drama Serial) 2:30 The Face of Cultural Day 5:30 Dennis The Menace 6:30 Saawan 6:30 Shatranj 03:30 Abhinetri 04:00 Bgd. Balwant 04:30 The Music Real Count Down 05:00 Talaash 05:30 Dennis The Menace 7:00 Premier 7:30 I Dream of Jeannie 8:00 Bishesh Khera 6:00 Palki Katha 6:30 Batayan (Drama Serial)

SONY ET
8:30am Yaadon Ki Baarat 9:00 The Three Stooges 9:30 Dennis The Menace 10:30 I Dream Of Jeannie 10:30 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune (Game Show) 11:00 Faasle (Serial) 11:30 Civil Lines (Serial) 12:00 Jadugar 12:30 Cover Story-Hotel (Serial) 1:00 Jane Kaha Mera Jigar Gaya Ji 1:30 The Young And The Restless (Eng. Serial) 2:30 Quraan-e-Hakeem 1:02 Bismillah 1:15 Angara (Drama Serial) 2:00 Shehrad (Drama Serial) 2:30 The Face Of Cultural Day 5:30 Dennis The Menace 6:30 Saawan 6:30 Shatranj 03:30 Abhinetri 04:00 Bgd. Balwant 04:30 The Music Real Count Down 05:00 Talaash 05:30 Dennis The Menace 7:00 Premier 7:30 I Dream of Jeannie 8:00 Bishesh Khera 6:00 Palki Katha 6:30 Batayan (Drama Serial)

Star Xpress
9:00 Jevan Mirtu 9:30 Yeh Sadi Nahi Ho 10:00 Chamatkar (Serial) 10:30 Ghaav 11:00 The Young And The Restless 12:30 O'Maria (Serial) 1:00 Pehli Mukalai 1:30 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune 2:00 Premier 2:30 Closed

ZEE CINEMA
07:30 Bangla Serial 08:00 Sorry Mery 09:00 Dance Mania 09:30 Karz (Serial) 10:00 Chalo Cinema 10:30 Yeh Duniya 11:00 Hee Hee Haa Haa 11:30 Hit Hai Hit 12:00 Intezar 12:30 Helen Special 1:30 Music Time 2:30 Ched Chad 3:30 Jazaat

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