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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina being received at the Edinburgh airport yesterday by Ian McLumey, Representative of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

— PID photo

## Ganges barrage project

## Dhaka plans consortium meet of donors in Feb

Dhaka is planning to hold a consortium meeting of donor countries and agencies in February to mobilise support for the proposed Ganges barrage project, reports UNB.

The project is aimed at protecting the country's south western and northwestern parts from environmental degradation caused by salinity intrusion and desertification.

Nearly three crore people in southwestern districts are facing problems due to saline water while another one crore people in northwestern districts for the desertification process.

Talking to newsmen at his ministry yesterday, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak said the planned Ganges barrage would help Bangladesh utilise river water during the lean period after the signing of the Ganges water treaty with India.

The construction of the multi-purpose barrage would ensure protection of environment, forest, wild life and fisheries from salinity and ensure smooth irrigation as well.

A number of countries and donor agencies have already pledged support to the pre-feasibility and feasibility study for the project whose estimated cost is about seven billion US dollars.

India assured technical as-

sistance while Netherlands, Italy, UK, Korea, ADB and World Bank also expressed their positive attitude towards the project.

A technical commission of ADB is now visiting the country in connection with feasibility study of the project. It will prepare an appraisal report and submit it to the Bank.

Razzak who recently visited Japan said he had fruitful talks with Japanese leaders and officials who showed keen interest in the barrage project.

At the planned consortium, Razzak said the government would apprise donor countries and agencies of necessity of the project in the wake of environmental degradation and salinity problem and try to forge an understanding among the donors.

He said countries in the Ganges basin like India, Nepal and Bhutan will also be invited to the consortium meeting.

In this regard, a joint river commission (JRC) ministerial meeting will be held in New Delhi in the first week of December and another JRC meeting will be held there in the last week of December for discussing the issue with India, the minister said.

A total of 17 million US dollars will be spent for preparing the feasibility reports, Razzak said.

## Press report on pay scale

From Page 1

The press release said as per the estimate of the Finance Division Taka 936.15 crore would be spent as the pay hike of the officials and employees and tiffin allowance for the year 1997-98.

Of the amount, it said, Taka 851.40 crore will be spent as additional expenditure in revenue sector and Taka 84.75 crore as additional expenditure for the salary of officials and employees or development projects.

The press release said no estimates of the report was consistent with the estimates of the Finance Division.

It said as per the primary estimate of the Finance Division at least Taka 100 crore will be spent as tiffin allowance for the government non-gazetted employees and employees of government grant-dependent autonomous organisations.

The report did not present this information deliberately, the press release said.

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