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JRC meet ends on good note

Delhi assures of advancing Teesta issue in next talks, Dhaka feels relieved at river link promise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and India yesterday signed an agreed minutes after their two-day Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) meeting, pledging to hold ministerial-level water talks every six months with high hopes to advance the Teesta water sharing talks further at the next meeting in New Delhi.

Upon signing the agreed minutes, drafted overnight following the end of the 36th meet of JRC on Tuesday afternoon, the water resources ministers of the two countries addressed a joint press conference at Hotel Sonargaon yesterday morning.



Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, left, and his Indian counterpart Priya Ranjan Dasmuni exchange documents after signing an agreed minutes at the JRC meeting in the capital yesterday.

Water Resources Minister and JRC Chairman, Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, and his Indian counterpart and JRC Co-chairman, Priya Ranjan Dasmuni, told the press that the 36th JRC meeting succeeded in dispelling Bangladesh's concerns over India's multibillion dollar river linking project (RLP) and Tipaimukh Hydrological Dam.

Dasmuni reassured Bangladesh it would not implement the RLP in Himalayan range rivers that include the Ganges and Brahmaputra, which have direct bearings on Bangladesh.

"We were concerned particularly about the Brahmaputra because this single river is the source for 65

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PM stresses frequent JRC talks

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday laid importance on frequent holding of Indo-Bangla Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) meeting at high level to resolve the outstanding issues of the common rivers.

Her call came when visiting Indian Minister for Water Resources Priya Ranjan Dasmuni paid a courtesy call on her at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in the afternoon.

Dasmuni, who headed the Indian delegation at the JRC meeting in Dhaka, agreed to the suggestion for frequent holding of the JRC meeting at ministerial level.

He informed the prime minister that discussion with his Bangladesh counterpart and the outcome of the JRC meeting were "very constructive".

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Jamaat link to militants becomes evident

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Link of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh with different Islamist militant organisations is becoming evident with the arrest of militants in connection with the attacks on different NGOs in northern districts in February and August 17 country-wide serial bomb blasts.

While the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leaflets found at all the August 17 bomb blast spots demanded establishment of Islamic rule in the country, the Jamaat chief earlier openly declared that "Islamic rule will be established soon."

Jamaat chief and Industries

Minister Matiur Rahman Nizami on February 25 told his followers at a public rally at Jaldhaka in Nilphamari, "Wait and see...get ready for directive."

A number of arrested militants confessed to having close ties with Jamaat and its front organisations. Moreover, Jamaat, a key constituent of the ruling coalition, has at times worked for the release of many such arrestees, which also prove its connections with the militant groups.

Jamaat's intervention and success to free the militants also clearly show that the Islamist party is enjoying administrative support and using government machinery to

achieve its target.

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According to police record, over 100 militants were arrested during January-August this year in connection with the bombings, and all the arrestees either belong to Jamaat or its various wings at present or worked with them earlier.

Whenever any Jamaat or Shibir activist was arrested for militant activities, Jamaat lobbied for their release, and where they failed, they announced that the arrested militant had been expelled from the party earlier.

Although a good number of activists of the banned Islamist

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50 hurt in clashes during hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 50 people, including an Awami League (AL) lawmaker and two journalists, were injured in clashes involving the police, pickets and ruling BNP activists in Dhaka and Khulna during yesterday's dawn-to-dusk hartal enforced by the AL-led 14-party alliance.

The 14 opposition parties called the shutdown across the country demanding withdrawal of increased fuel price, and protesting the August 17 serial bomb blasts and the government's alleged patronage of the Islamist militants.

The police cordoned off

Bangabandhu Avenue, Russell Square and its surrounding areas from morning till evening and restricted the opposition leaders and activists from picketing and bringing out any processions from there.

Educational institutions, large shopping malls, and markets and shops located beside main roads in the city remained closed.

Almost all modes of vehicles except some public transports remained off the streets. But the rickshaws plied on the city streets as usual.

Launches, trains and flights

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EC has nothing to do with polls officers' appointment

CEC says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice M A Aziz yesterday said upazila election officers (UEOs) are appointed through the Public Service Commission (PSC), and the Election Commission (EC) has nothing to do with it.

He made the comments following press reports that at least 150 Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders or activists have been appointed UEOs!

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Ex-army corporal confesses to training militants

Wide network of JMB revealed

STAR REPORT

Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militant Obaidullah Suman yesterday identified retired lance corporal Harunur Rashid as his instructor of making bombs while the former army personnel also confessed to giving training to JMB bomb squads.

A Kishoreganj court sent Harun,

arrested at Monipur in Dhaka on Tuesday, on a seven-day remand soon after Suman identified him at the Kishoreganj Police Station.

Suman, who was arrested with four kilograms of powder explosives and 50 detonators in Kishoreganj on September 14, also disclosed that eight experts gave them training in operating different firearms.

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\$500m Saarc fund for poverty reduction on the cards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The members of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (Saarc) may set up a fund of \$500 million to \$1 billion for poverty eradication programmes in this region.

A decision in this regard may be made in the upcoming Saarc summit slated for November 12-13 in Dhaka.

A technical committee comprising representatives from the central banks of all the seven member countries has already started working on the modality of the fund, a Bangladesh Bank (BB) source said.

The committee has reported their progress on the matter at the Saarc Finance Governors' symposium held in Mumbai on September 9-12 last. Bangladesh Bank

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OMS, VGF start Sept 25

UNB, Dhaka

After missing the deadline twice, the food ministry is finally set to kick-start the biggest-ever countrywide food distribution on September 25 through OMS, VGF and village rationing in the wake of rising prices.

Earlier, the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) was assigned to start the Open Market Sale (OMS) of rice from September 1, but realising the magnitude of the task, the food ministry itself took the responsibility for the operation supposed to begin September 20.

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