

TEESTA WATER SHARING Dhaka expects interim accord

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh awaits an interim agreement on the sharing of Teesta water

soon as New Delhi has assured

considering Dhaka's proposal on

the provisional arrangement among other

fast-track measures for boosting

bilateral cooperation.

"I am expecting very positively an

interim agreement on the Teesta water

sharing until the study of water flow of

other common rivers completes,"

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan told

the news agency yesterday on the

outcome of Prime Minister Khaleda

Zia's visit to India.

He said the Indian water resources

minister will come to Bangladesh

immediately after West Bengal elections

and visit the sites of both Teesta

and Tipaimukh with the Bangladesh

water resources minister.

After the visit, the Joint River

Commission (JRC) will look into the

interim arrangement positively,

Morshed said.

On Dhaka's concern over the huge

trade deficit with New Delhi, he said

India assured that it would take positive

actions after identification of para-

tariff and non-tariff barriers by the

business communities.

"After submission of the list of

barriers by the business communities,

both the governments will take appropriate

steps for removal of the barriers," the foreign minister said.

He informed the commerce ministers

of the two countries will also meet

soon on bilateral FTA, which India

feels will be much more favourable for

Bangladesh in reducing the trade gap

than Safta.

The foreign minister said New

Delhi also assured that land ports on

the Indian side will be developed for

uninterrupted trading between

Bangladesh and Nepal and

Bangladesh and Bhutan.

Asked about cross-border train

service between Sylhet and

Joydehpur, he said a joint technical

committee will study the pros and

cons, including condition of rail tracks

and capacity of sustaining load, before

commissioning of the service.

Disagreeing with a notion that the

prime minister's visit yielded naught,

BNP yet to decide

FROM PAGE 16

clarification of a number of specific

aspects. Earlier on March 20, Bhuiyan

in his letter sought names for a com-

mittee to discuss the opposition's

proposals.

Bhuiyan suggested that the com-

mittee could be formed solely with

members of parliament. But the

members of the 14-party alliance who

do not have representatives in parlia-

ment are publicly demanding their

participation in the committee.

BNP policymakers believe a small

committee formed with lawmakers will

function better and smoothly as the

issue will have to be finally settled in

parliament.

A senior minister who declined to

be named said if non-MPs are incorpo-

rated in the committee, its size will be

huge and it may very well turn into a

seminar instead of a committee.

"It will be very difficult to reach a

consensus on such a crucial matter at

the meeting of a huge committee," he

explained.

BNP sources said the party is not

going to include its coalition partners in

the committee. But the party top brass

are considering inclusion of some of

the AL's non-MP allies, they added.

Bhuiyan told *The Daily Star* the

BNP wants to discuss the reform

proposals with the opposition leaders.

"We'll write back to the main opposition

very shortly after holding talks with the

prime minister," he said.

the foreign minister said the visit will

have a long-term impact on establishing

peace and stability in the region.

Without elaborating, he termed the

one-to-one talk between the two prime

ministers and Khaleda's meeting with

Sonia Gandhi very important. "These

two meetings were held in a very warm

and cordial atmosphere," he said.

Asked whether the prime minister's

visit will improve the political relations

between the ruling Indian Congress and

the ruling BNP, Morshed said, "The leaders of the two countries have

now got better understanding and clear

picture of each other's positions."

"They (India) don't have any prefer-

ence for any particular political party...

They will be happy to work with any

political leadership in Bangladesh

mandated by the people," he said, indicating a change in the mindset of

politicians on both sides in a changed

perspective.

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immediately after West Bengal elections

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Khulna power plant goes out of order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The 110-megawatt power plant at Kalishpur in Khulna remains out of order due to major mechanical problems since Friday night.

It will take at least three days to carry out repairs on the boilers of the plant. Because of technical glitches, the largest power plant in the south could barely generate around 70 megawatts power.

The demand for electricity in Khulna Zone is 550 MW a day, whereas the supply never exceeds 200 MW mark.

A source in Power Development Board (PDB) said the power situation in 21 districts of Khulna and Barisal divisions and greater Faridpur worsened after the Kalishpur plant had come to a halt.

The national grid is unable to cope with such a huge shortfall. Its interconnection system can harness only about 50 MW power, the source added.

The speakers also said according to the agreement, AEC would extract coal for 30 years in an open-pit system and would export two thirds of the quantity. The company would have ownership of the mine during the mining period and Bangladesh would receive only a six percent royalty as well as taxes and duties, they said.

The rally was presided over by Eng Sheikh Muhammed Shahidullah where Prof Anu Muhammad, Manjurul Ahsan Khan, Haidar Akbar Khan Rano, Roni Hossain Prince, Moshrefa Mishu, Advocate Abdu Salam and Abdul Moteen Khan spoke.

Ahsan Habib Deepu, an official of AEC, however, dispelled such concerns and said the project would be managed.

On Thursday midnight, a caller identifying himself as a PBCP operative threatened to blow up the Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) Headquarters over cellphone to take revenge for the recent killings of the PBCP men by DBP police on the pretext of crossfire incidents.

The DB police arrested Shafiqul Islam, 25, from Morolpara under Phult