

Tipai emits

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confined within officially informing the government that they have not started any construction yet.

"They also informed us that they would not construct the Phulertal barrage under the project," said Mir Sazzad Hossain, member of the Joint River Commission.

At a Joint River Commission (JRC) meeting in September 2005 held in Dhaka India formally assured Bangladesh that they would not divert any water for their irrigation project, he said.

Hiding any information by the upper riparian countries about the use of common rivers is considered violation of the international water management convention.

The expert warn of an increase in salinity in the Meghna-Surma basin, unusual floods in haor region, reduced water flow in the Surma, Kusiyara and Meghna rivers in certain period, damage to the country's ecosystem and agriculture patterns in Sylhet region, among other impacts of the dam.

A chain of severe impacts is very likely as Bangladesh gets 7-8 percent of its river waters through the Barak.

Negative impacts of any large dam are very widely known around the globe. A detailed study by the World Dam Commission published in 2000 says adverse impacts of any large dams are irreversible for the lower riparian region.

The study after reviewing 1,000 dams from 79 countries concludes in its report: "The environmental impacts of dams are more negative than positive ones and in many cases dams have led to irreversible loss of species and ecosystems."

Indian High Commissioner to Dhaka Pinak Ranjan Chakrabarti at a meeting with Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain recently said though his country will have sole control over water flow at the proposed dam site, it would not make any barrage.

He also said Bangladesh would not be affected by the dam.

However, experts fear once the dam is set up, it may reduce the natural monsoon flood patterns in the Sylhet region, adversely affecting cultivation and livelihoods on a vastscale.

"It will increase the risk of floods at the end of monsoon and hamper the agriculture patterns during winter," said Amin Nishat, eminent river expert of the country.

Rainfall patterns are changing due to climate change and a lot of rainfall takes place at the end of monsoon, said Amin Nishat. If it rains at the end of monsoon, it will necessitate opening of the spillway gates of the dam and unusual floods will occur here, he added.

They would preserve the water during monsoon after building the dam and release it in winter, which will increase the water flow downstream.

"The land downstream the Barak in Sylhet region is wetland, where people grow crops during winter when it gets dry. If they release water during winter the wetland will be inundated and it will be a great impact on our agriculture," Nishat warned.

An increase in water level in the winter will cause a major impact on the ecosystem if the wetland gets inundated, he added.

He however said without checking every piece of information it is not possible to measure the total impact of Tipaimukh dam.

The experts fear India may hold up water flow during dry season and divert water at the proposed Phulertal Barrage 100 kilometres downstream Tipaimukh and 100 km upstream Amalsidh in Sylhet.

The Phulertal barrage would have a direct bearing on the Surma, Kusiyara and Meghna rivers due to diversion of water for irrigation purposes in northeastern India. On hydropower component and rock fill dam, India claims no damage would occur to Bangladesh, but Bangladesh fears upstream water flow regulation.

Director General of Water Resources Planning Organisation (WARPO) Jalaluddin Md Abdul Hye said, "We don't have enough information to talk about the issue."

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AND GANGES WATER SHARING TREATY, 1996

According to the International Convention on Joint River Water, without the consent of the downstream river nation no single country alone can control the multi-national rivers.

But India seemingly does not care for these international laws despite being a signatory to this convention.

If India constructs the dam without the consent of Bangladesh, it will also violate the article 9 of Bangladesh-India Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, 1996.

Asked about a possible solution, Amin Nishat said the solution has to be political. He added in the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty both the countries agreed to manage all the joint rivers on bilateral basis.

"So under the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, both the countries can resolve by sharing

50,000 farmers

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and central districts, peat basin in Gopalganj, piedmont plains in the extreme northern districts, hilly areas in Chittagong Hill Tracts and Moulvibazar.

A separate organisation will also be selected for training and dissemination of training materials and information to effectively implement the project.

Under the SFC project, groups of 25 farmers will be formed and they will be provided power tillers or irrigation pumps, seeds and fertilisers free of cost.

That pump or power tiller of a group will be used for cultivating or irrigating all the land of the group as well as other farmers whose land is nearby," SFC Project Director Moeenuddin told The Daily Star on the sidelines of the Call for Proposal programme.

The farmers in the group will also be provided information on proper use of fertilisers. The soil of the farmers' land will be tested and they will be suggested what crops to grow, he said.

Moeenuddin said appropriate use of fertilisers could increase 10 to 20 percent yield. Besides, organic fertiliser will also be encouraged.

After the project, the equipment the farmers received in groups will be their own. "We want farmers to have a practice of cooperation," Khandker Moeenuddin said.

Addressing the programme as the chief guest, Additional Secretary to the Agriculture Ministry AKM Awal Majumder said they had found many inconsistencies in implementing such projects before. "Every step must be transparent so that the real poor, small and marginal farmers get the benefit," he said.

Joint Secretary to the Agriculture Ministry Saidur Rahman said the issue of climate change and its effects on soil must be considered, while implementing the project.

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4-lane

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it worthy of the day to reduce the number of road accidents.

Abul Hossain also stressed the need for taking collective steps by all agencies involved in traffic management and safety.

It is possible to reduce the number of road accidents by 20 percent within three years and by half in 15 years following the fourth road safety action plan, he said.

Lawmaker Shahjahan Khan said it is important to adopt flawless methods for road construction to bring down the number of road accidents.

He said stern actions must be taken against those involved in forging driving licences.

BRTA Chairman Kamrul Hasan, who chaired the seminar's inaugural session, said the number of accidents could be reduced significantly if all people could be made aware of traffic rules.

He said although the fatality rate in road accidents is much higher than that of AIDS, the awareness campaign on road accidents is given less importance.

Roads and Railways Division Secretary ASM Ali Kabir said although statistics put the yearly death toll in road accidents at around 4,000, the actual figure is higher than that.

The statistics in the key-note paper of Dhaka Transport Coordination Board Executive Director Abu Bakar Md Shahjahan at the seminar show a total of 3,749 people were killed in 4,869 road accidents in 2007 while the number of deaths was 1,597 in 1994.

He said road accidents cost Bangladesh US\$ 39 billion every year.

Abu Bakar cited overloading, overtaking and driving at high speed as main reasons for the rise in casualty in road accidents, he said.

Earlier, after an inter-ministerial meeting at his secretariat office yesterday the communications minister said the government has decided to invite bid for constructing metro rail in the capital.

Chaired by the minister the meeting formed a seven-member body to determine the terms and condition for the bidding and estimate feasibility of the project.

The project is not for the common people, they said, appealing to the government to let the Ahurun free.

How far they have advanced could not be confirmed, but the project is scheduled to be completed by 2012, different websites mentioned.

Recently, the Indian high commissioner said most of the Bangladeshi experts are making comments without having adequate information.

In response to the envoy's remarks, this correspondent tried to reach him in Dhaka, but he was not available.

None of the other high officials at the Indian High Commission in Dhaka could be contacted for comments despite repeated attempts by the government.

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Winds dying down across the US

AP, Washington

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The Bangladesh government are always in the dark about the issue," he observed.

About the JRC meet in 2005, he said the Indian minister assured that they would not build any barrage at Phulertal and they would inform later if they decide to build any barrage at any other point.

He added BNP will soon arrange a press conference on the issue.

INDIAN CITIZENS ALSO PROTESTING THE DAM

Information surfaced in different websites says several Indian organisations and civil society bodies are protesting the dam considering its negative impacts.

The websites also say the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of India has found the design of the dam contains many errors, omissions, gaps, lacks in scientific rigour and fails far short of compliance of normative standards set by the scientific and academic community in India and the world.

The Action Committee Against Tipaimukh Dam (ACTIP), a platform protesting the dam, along with some other local committees from Manipur and Mizoram submitted a memorandum on March 14, 2007 to the president and prime minister of India in protest against the project.

They mentioned in their memorandum that once the project is implemented, an area of 286.20 square kilometres land will go underwater forever.

Eight villages situated in the Barak valley will be completely inundated leaving over 40,000 people landless and more than 50 villages, mostly in Tamenglong district, adversely affected. Besides, about 27,242 hectares of cultivable land will be lost.

The Barak waterfalls and Zelai Lake, which are connected with the history of the Zeliangrong people, an indigenous community in India, will go forever under water. All folklore and legends will have no monuments' proof and it will become a makeup story for the next generation.

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Budget to spell out steps to end outages

Says energy adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Wind measurements plotted out on U.S. maps by Pryor show wind speeds falling mostly along and east of the Mississippi River. Some areas that are banking on wind power, such as west Texas and parts of the Northern Plains, do not show winds slowing nearly as much. Yet, states such as Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Georgia, northern Maine and western Montana show some of the biggest drop in wind speeds.

"The stations bordering the Great Lakes do seem to have experienced the greatest changes," Pryor said Tuesday. That's probably because there's less ice on the lakes and wind speeds faster across ice than it does over water, she said.

Still, the study, which will be published in August in the peer-reviewed Journal of Geophysical Research, is preliminary. There are enough questions that even the authors say it's too early to know if this is a real trend or not. But it raises a new side effect of global warming that hasn't been looked into before.

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