

Instead of bilateral treaties, the South Asian countries should go for basin-wise water management of common rivers because it will benefit all the sharers most, experts told a discussion yesterday.

In bilateral agreements, one country tries to exert control over the other, a situation which would not arise in basin-based management, they said.

Examining the viability of treaties, the speakers gave the example of Bangladesh and India which share 54 rivers but have signed only one agreement concerning the Ganges.

The Bhorer Kagoj and abnews24.com jointly organised the programme at Jatiya Press Club

In the keynote paper, Prof Pranab Kumar Roy, director, Center for Hydro-Meteorological Research, underlined the importance of all countries' involvement, which is possible in basin-based management.

He also suggested diverting flow of the Brahmaputra to the Teesta to meet irrigation needs during the lean period as a part of internal water management in Bangladesh.

However, hydrologist Prof Ainun Nishat said that since 92 percent of the water flowing through Bangladesh came from India, most rivers would not get water in winter despite interlinking of rivers and canals unless India released water on time.

Citing the successful examples of Jordan-Israel and India-Pakistan, ex-foreign minister Dr Dipu Moni said there was no problem in signing treaties. Mir Sazzad Hossain, member of Joint River Commission (JRC), said Bangladesh had prepared a water policy to improve its water management capacity and would construct the Ganges barrage to store water in the lean period.



This 1.5-kilometre earthen road is being funded and constructed by locals seeking to connect Dogair in Demra with Signboard and bring an end to the hours of wading through knee-to-waist deep waters, especially during the monsoons. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO:
FIROZ AHMED

Road to unity

One community's efforts to better connectivity

HELEMUL ALAM

The idea of having to literally swim just to get to school might seem like a practice of remote, rugged areas. But right in present day Dhaka, it is an everyday routine during the monsoons for Md Asif and most of his school-mates, who carry an extra dress for the purpose.

This was the scenario for only one section of the muddy route between Dogair in Demra and Signboard, approximately 1.5 kilometres in length, for long, thanks to the apparent obliviousness of the authorities concerned.

The need for a proper road and to bring an end to suffering of thousands who daily have to wade through knee-to-waist deep waters at other sections along the route has now brought together thousands of one community.

With donations amounting to around Tk 3 lakh collected under Dogair Dokkhin Pashchim Para Adarsha Samaj Unnayan Sangsad in the last two weeks, they have been using earth to raise the route by around five feet while maintaining a width of around 20 to 24 feet.

"We, around 100 people, collected funds and started



constructing the road getting a positive nod from local representatives including the lawmaker and Sarulia union chairman and members," said the sangsad Vice-President Mohammad Ullah.

Around 1 lakh people of Demra, Matuail, Sarulia,

Dogair and Demra Staff Quarter will benefit, predicts the treasurer, Belal Hossain.

A half-a-kilometre road already connects Dogair to Basherpool on the Dhaka-Demra highway, said the sangsad general secretary Nurul Alam Chowdhuri.

Another 2.5-kilometre road connects Dogair to Demra Staff Quarter, from where another leads to Rampura. It was constructed by the government in 2007 but the current under-construction one could not be made then for lack of funds, said Sarulia Union Chairman Mohammad Shahidul Islam.

He terms the under-construction road vital in linking Rampura and Narayanganj.

It will also ease movement to Jatrabari and Kanchpur, said Belal, reducing time to reach the Jatrabari-Kanchpur road or Signboard-Narayanganj link road.

However, Shahidul said he has urged the locals to continue dumping earth so that a layer of asphalt can be laid on the road from Demra Staff Quarter to Signboard via Dogair next year, when he hopes the LGRD ministry will approve a project proposed last year in this regard.

Govt trying to brand BNP-led movement as terrorism

The party says in a statement; cops obstruct hermaphrodites' anti-blockade march towards Khaleda's Gulshan office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday accused the government of spreading propaganda to establish the party-led ongoing agitation as a "movement of terrorists and militants".

In a statement, BNP Joint Secretary General Salahuddin Ahmed also claimed that they had already presented information before the nation that the ruling party men were involved in "all" petrol bomb attacks.

Pointing out Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's remarks that the present situation was like the Liberation War, he said she was correct. The people fought against the ruler in 1971 and they are fighting similarly now, the BNP leader added.

He said, "There is no alternative to unity of the nation in the spirit of the Liberation War."

The people will think about her (the prime minister) safe exit if she resigns quickly aiming to hold an inclusive national election under a non-party administration, said Salahuddin.

Meanwhile, about a hundred hermaphrodites, demanding an end to the blockade, had marched towards the BNP chief's Gulshan office but were stopped by police near Banani playground around 1:00pm.

During the gathering, Bangladesh Hijra Kalyan Foundation leaders said the blockade and hartals had sent the prices of essentials soaring, which became a big concern for them.

Abida Sultana Mitu, president of the organisation, told The Daily Star that they brought out the procession from Bangabandhu Avenue to go to Khaleda's office to protest the recent violence.

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