

Japan to provide \$1.8m aid to Rohingyas

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its eighth year. “We are deeply grateful for Japan’s unwavering solidarity with the Rohingya people as they face ongoing challenges from fires, cyclones, floods, and insecurity in the camps. Japan’s latest contribution is crucial for providing critical assistance, especially to women and children.”

Japanese Ambassador Saida Shinichi expressed hope that the assistance would improve living conditions for the Rohingyas. “This \$1.8 million aid underscores Japan’s commitment to humanitarian support, alleviating hunger and malnutrition, and fostering stability in the region.”

Since the 2017 Rohingya influx, Japan has provided over \$230 million in aid to Bangladesh through WFP, UN agencies, and NGOs, including this new funding.



First responders work at the Delta Air Lines plane crash site at Toronto Pearson International Airport in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, on Monday. The regional jet flipped upside down upon landing at the airport amid windy weather following a snowstorm, injuring 18 of the 80 people on board, officials said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Disputes over credit now out on social media

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Md Abu Shadik Kayem, who was the president of Shibir’s Dhaka University unit during the uprising and also a key coordinator of the Students Against Discrimination, wrote, “Instead of focusing on important tasks, the current bickering over who will be at the centre of power is akin to mocking the martyrs.”

Chhatra Shakti, a student organisation formed in October 2023, and Shibir, which was not active publicly, worked as the coordinators of the Students Against Discrimination platform that spearheaded the uprising.

Another platform called the Jatiya Nagorik Committee was formed on September 8 last year, comprising leaders and activists from various

organisations that were involved in the movement.

The 188 member central committee of the Nagorik Committee includes leaders from Chhatra Shakti, at least three former presidents of Shibir’s Dhaka University unit, representatives from Qawmi madrasa-based organisations, Chhatra Odhikar Parishad, the AB Party, Chhatra Union, and Chhatra Federation.

Students Against Discrimination and its civic platform the Nagorik Committee are expected to announce a new political party by the end of this month.

The citizens’ platform, meanwhile, is split into at least three groups over the top posts of the new party’s convening committee, said insiders.

Adviser Nahid Islam is almost certain to be the

convenor of the new party while discord has surfaced over the member secretary post.

Sources within the Nagorik Committee say that Adviser Mahfuj Alam wants Nagorik Committee Convener Nasiruddin Patwary to be in the top leadership of the new party.

On the other hand, the former Shibir activists on the platform want Ali Ahsan Zonaid, former president of Shibir’s DU unit and member of Nagorik Committee’s executive body, into the second-in-command position of the new party.

Sources said that the key policymakers are mulling creating a senior joint convenor and senior member secretary post to accommodate former Shibir leaders and avoid a potential split.

Fair share of water

FROM PAGE 1

of Teesta water is a legitimate right under international law, not an act of charity, generosity, or goodwill.

He said the water rights of the Teesta and 54 other common rivers must be ensured to protect the livelihoods of millions in northern Bangladesh. But the neighbouring country has been behaving “unneighbourly” towards Bangladesh.

Tarique said that several significant issues with India are still unresolved.

“Basic equity has not been upheld in these agreements [with India]. The people of Bangladesh believe that all unequal, unjust, and unilateral agreements with neighbouring countries should be reviewed and reassessed, if necessary.”

“In today’s world, there are no permanent enemies or permanent allies. Instead, the relationship between countries should be founded on mutual interests, fairness, and necessity,” he added.

The BNP leader said it is a must to implement the Teesta Master Plan to prevent Bangladesh’s northern region from becoming a desert.

The Teesta Master Plan includes dredging the riverbed, constructing embankments, and establishing sustainable water management practices.

The venue near Teesta Rail Bridge point in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila stretched nearly four kilometres to Kaunia in Rangpur. It hosted the largest gathering with approximately 75,000 participants, according to the organisers. The second-largest gathering of around 55,000 people was reported in the Teesta Barrage area of Hatibandha upazila, while Mahipur in Rangpur’s Gangachhara upazila saw a turnout of around 45,000 participants.

The events featured rallies, cultural performances, and traditional sports activities.

In Kaunia, our correspondent witnessed thousands of protesters holding banners and placards with messages like “Teesta River is Our Mother, We Won’t Let It Die”.

The Teesta, which flows 115 kilometres through Bangladesh, has been significantly affected by upstream interventions in India. Hydropower projects and irrigation diversions have reduced water availability in Teesta during the dry seasons, while floods occur in monsoons due to the sudden discharge of water from India.

The Teesta crisis has severely impacted agriculture in the region. The river’s natural dry-season flow is expected to be 5,000 cusecs, but it often drops to just 400 cusecs, according to the Bangladesh Water Development Board. This

water scarcity extensively disrupts crop production.

Among the attendees was 70-year-old Sudhangshu Barman from Rajpur village in Lalmonirhat. Having lost 26 bighas of his ancestral land to Teesta’s erosion over the past two decades, he now lives on someone else’s property. “The Teesta took everything from me. I joined this movement so that others don’t suffer the same fate,” he said.

Farmer Meher Ali from Kurigram lamented the loss of nine bighas of his 12-bigha farmland to erosion. “With just three bighas left, we struggle to survive. If the master plan is implemented, many of our lands could be restored,” he said.

Crops like maize, chilli, pumpkin, wheat, and jute, once abundant in the fertile Teesta basin, now suffer from inadequate irrigation.

The protesters, many of whom waded knee-deep into the cold waters of the Teesta, remain hopeful. “We don’t understand treaties and technicalities,” said farmer Mofizul Islam from Char Ishli. “We just need water to grow our crops and secure our lives and livelihoods.”

Local fishers share similar grievances. “The river is drying up, and so is the fish population,” said Ajaharul Islam, a fisherman from Rangpur’s Kaunia upazila. “We can no longer sustain our families from fishing alone.”

Around 11:00am, the demonstrators marched from the Teesta Bridge point of the Rangpur-Kurigram highway. After the rallies in the afternoon, the protesters joined a sit-in in the evening, carrying torches. Cultural functions and movie-screening were also held.

Tarique joined the programme again at that time, promising that the BNP will implement the Teesta Mega Plan if it gets the people’s mandate.

As the programme was nearing its end, the organisers vowed to continue their struggle until concrete measures were taken to address the Teesta crisis.

Professor Dr Tuhin Wadud, Director of Riverine People and a faculty at Begum Rokeya University, said the environmental toll from unregulated Teesta water flow was huge. “It causes silt to accumulate, reducing the river’s water-holding capacity. Without proper management of Teesta, floods will continue to ravage the communities of the Teesta basin,” he warned.

Legal expert Palash Kantu Nag said, “Joint river basin management with India and international cooperation are essential for a long-term solution. Bangladesh must assert its water rights through diplomatic channels and global environmental forums.”

At the launch of the

programme on Monday, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said India must resolve the Teesta issue, stop border killings and abandon its “big brother” attitude if it wants to be friends with the people of Bangladesh.

He accused the previous Awami League government of failing to secure Bangladesh’s water rights. “In 15 years, they have sold Bangladesh, but they couldn’t bring a drop of water,” he said.

Beijing ready

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assistance for the project in 2021 by submitting a proposal.

After evaluating the proposal, China submitted a report to the Bangladesh government in 2023, suggesting that the project should be revised as it included several unnecessary components, he said.

“But we have yet to receive any response from the Bangladesh government since then.”

Speaking on reforms, the Chinese diplomat said that issues related to reforms are internal matters of Bangladesh, and he wished to see stability, unity, and development in the country.

Regarding medical treatment, Wen said Bangladeshis seeking treatment in China will have access to three top-rated hospitals in Kunming, and that medical visa process will straightforward.

On the Rohingya crisis, the Chinese envoy said that China and Bangladesh share the same stance.

He opined that a ceasefire between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar government is a prerequisite for progress and that China

is committed to ensuring the smooth repatriation of the Rohingyas.

“China maintains good relations with all political parties,” the ambassador said in response to another query.

China is ready to work with Bangladesh to mark the 50th anniversary a new starting point to strengthen strategic communications, deepen practical cooperation, and enhance Belt and Road Cooperation, he said.

Addressing concerns about loans, Wen assured that China never attaches any conditions, saying that there are many landmark projects across various sectors in Bangladesh.

“China firmly supports Bangladesh in upholding national independence, sovereignty, and dignity. We respect the Bangladeshi people’s right to choose a development path suited to their national conditions.”

The Chinese envoy also opined that Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain’s decision to go to China in his first official visit after taking office reflects the great importance the interim government places on ties with China.

‘It came as a surprise to me’

FROM PAGE 2

The incident sparked widespread criticism, with many viewing it as an affront to the Bangladeshi art community and a disservice to a renowned artist.

Contacted, Pro-VC Prof Mamun told this newspaper that there were concerns that Prof Rafiqun Nabi’s

presence at the event might cause disturbances among a certain group.

“Our priority was to ensure the event’s success. Given the concerns raised, we felt it was necessary to take precautionary measures to guarantee a peaceful exhibition,” he added.

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Procurement & Store Department

Memo No: PSD40-0/00071/2024(1)/1/3796

Date: 17/02/2025

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(Md. Parvez Sazzad)
Director (in-charge)
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GD-456

Government of the People's of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD

Ferry Division

Shiromony, Khulna

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