

## WATER-SHARING ISSUES India will keep discussing them: Misri

UNB, New Delhi

Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri yesterday said India will continue discussions with Bangladesh on water-related issues, including the Ganges and Teesta water-sharing treaties.

"The Ganges Water Treaty is still valid and we will continue to discuss related issues within the framework of the Joint Rivers Commission," Misri said.

He said all are aware that there is a joint rivers commission between the two sides and all the issues of the agenda have been taken up.

The foreign secretary noted that India's objective regarding the Teesta water-sharing agreement remains the same as that discussed with the previous government. "We have put proposals on the table, we remain ready to discuss those proposals, including with the future government that would be elected."

Misri made the remarks during an interaction with members of the Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAB) at India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

The Indian foreign secretary highlighted the warm and historic Bangladesh-India ties emphasising that India has always approached the Dhaka-Delhi relationship in a positive and constructive manner with a people-centric orientation.

Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, Joint Secretary (Bangladesh and Myanmar) B Shyam, DCAB President AKM Moinuddin, and General Secretary Md Arifuzzaman Mamun were present.

Bangladesh and India share 54 rivers, including the Ganges, and have maintained cooperation through the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC), a bilateral mechanism established to address shared water management issues.

Officials from both countries held the 86th meeting of the JRC in Kolkata a few months ago, where they discussed the renewal of the 30-year-old Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, which is set to expire next year.

Bangladesh has also reiterated its long-standing request to finalise an interim agreement on the sharing of Teesta River waters, a draft of which was completed in 2011.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A bus stops just after exiting the elevated expressway at Farmgate to pick up and drop off passengers. The sudden halt raises the risk of accidents, with vehicles coming down the ramp at speed. The passengers getting off and on also cause jams on the street.

## Renewables overtake coal in global power generation

Solar power sees 31% growth during first six months of 2025

AFP

Solar and wind farms generated more electricity than coal for the first time on record this year, but US and Chinese policy shifts are slowing growth, putting a global 2030 target out of reach, reports said on Tuesday.

The surge in renewable use marks a milestone in efforts to turn away from fossil fuels, which are responsible for most of the greenhouse gas emissions that are driving climate change.

Renewables' share of global electricity rose to 34.3 percent in the first half of the year, while coal fell to 33.1 percent and gas maintained its 23 percent share, according to Ember, an energy think tank.

"We are seeing the first signs of a crucial turning point," said Malgorzata Wiatros-Motyka, senior electricity analyst at Ember.

"Solar and wind are now growing fast enough to meet the world's growing appetite for electricity.

"This marks the beginning of a shift where clean power is keeping pace with demand growth," she said.

The report found that solar power generation jumped by a record 31 percent in the first six months of 2025, far outpacing wind, which grew 7.7 percent.

Coal fell by 0.6 percent while global gas generation inched down by 0.2 percent.

At the UN climate summit in Dubai in

2023, the world pledged for the first time to transition away from fossil fuels, with nations also setting the goal of tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030.

The International Energy Agency, however, said on Tuesday that the world would "fall short" of reaching the target.

Last year, the Paris-based IEA, which advises developed nations on energy, had forecast that the world would come close to the Dubai target with the addition of 5,500 gigawatts of renewable power.

But the IEA now sees only a 4,600-GW gain by 2030, or 2.6 times the 2022 level, due to "policy, regulatory and market changes since October 2024", it said in its latest report on renewable energy.

Con job

## No referendum before the polls

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These issues were discussed at a meeting of the BNP Standing Committee at its chairperson's Gulshan office on Monday night, according to several sources who were present.

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman presided over the meeting virtually from London.

Committee members discussed how the referendum could affect the upcoming election and the party's overall strategy.

They said the BNP stood against the idea of a referendum from the beginning but since it has backed the proposal at the Consensus Commission, changing its stance now could erode public support.

A Standing Committee member, seeking anonymity, said, "The house was not satisfied with the referendum issue. This is a trap of Jamaat-e-Islami. We fell into a trap. That would be very cumbersome."

The party believes the July Charter does not reflect the wishes of all parties. It serves the interests of a few political groups and ignores broader national consensus, the sources said.

The Standing Committee members also said holding the next election in just over four months is a huge task itself and having a referendum before it would be too big a challenge, as it would require manpower and budget.

It would be a waste of time, money, and might delay the general election, they said.

A Standing Committee member, speaking anonymously, said, "Jamaat is trying to create obstacles and delay the polls through it [referendum before polls]."

On Monday, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said the referendum would ensure that the charter has genuine popular backing.

"There is a question of whether all political parties together truly represent the entire population. If we can seek approval from the people, then that will be the final opinion on implementing the July Charter," he said.

Standing Committee members believe that to maintain internal unity ahead of the next election, leaders who were punished for violating party discipline should be reinstated if proven innocent.

The committee also highly praised Tarique's interview with BBC Bangla for clearly articulating the BNP's position and message. They said his remarks were timely and based on logic.

## Accused barred from election

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This amendment clearly violates the most basic principle of justice: a person is innocent until proven guilty.

"If someone is only accused of a crime against humanity and is barred from contesting elections or holding government jobs, that becomes a form of punishment without trial," he told The Daily Star.

"To give an example -- suppose both you and I are contesting in the next election. I can simply file a case under the ICT law accusing you of involvement in the July killings.

"Before the trial even begins, you'll have to prove your innocence. But by then, the election will be over, and I'll have won. Isn't that an injustice?" Malik said.

He described the amendment as a "deeply regressive step", saying it contradicts the very idea of due process.

"You would have to go back to the pre-1800s era to find a similar law -- a time when human rights did not exist as a concept. No country in the past 200 years has enacted such a provision," he added.

## India risks irking people

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principle of "Bangladesh first".

"... our people, our country, our sovereignty -- these must remain intact. Preserving these interests above all else will guide everything we do."

Tarique, 59, has been living in London for almost 18 years.

Tarique has described the 2007-2008 caretaker administration as a "maliciously motivated government". "If I have to say in one sentence or briefly, the 1/11 government was a purposefully motivated, ill-intentioned government."

"We saw how they wanted to smash everything, depoliticise the country, push it into darkness. Later, perhaps we saw another form of the same thing, in a slightly different form, 'in the name of democracy'."

The 1/11 government in Bangladesh refers to the military-backed caretaker administration that assumed power on January 11, 2007.

He said that despite its flaws and setbacks, Bangladesh's political landscape was gradually building a democratic foundation until that government intervened.

Asked about relations with India, Tarique said, "Of course, I want our share of water. Of course, I don't want to see another Felani hanging [from the barbed wire fence]. Of course, we

The advisory council gave final approval to the draft amendment on September 4.

This newspaper spoke to Chief of the Electoral Reform Commission Badiul Alam Majumdar at that time.

"Those accused under the ICT Act cannot be treated like ordinary offenders; they are dangerous criminals," he had said.

"According to article 47(A) of the constitution, some of their rights are already curtailed. From that perspective, such measures warrant consideration."

So far, the ICT has either framed charges or taken cognisance of or received formal charges against 67 individuals in seven cases over crimes against humanity committed during the July uprising.

The accused include several prominent political figures such as former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, former information minister Hasanul Haq Inu, Awami League Joint General Secretary and ex-lawmaker Mahbul Alam Hanif, former

Dhaka-19 MP Muhammad Saiful Islam, former Kushtia Zila Parishad chairman Sadruddin Khan, district AL General Secretary Azgar Ali, and Kushtia city AL General Secretary Ataur Rahman Ata.

Most of the other accused are from the police force, including former inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, ex-Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner Habibur Rahman, ex-Rangpur Metropolitan Police commissioner Md Moniruzzaman, and former Dhaka Range DIG Syed Nurul Islam.

Chief Prosecutor Tajul said, "Trials in several cases are nearing completion. Charge sheets in major cases are likely to be submitted this month, and formal charges are also expected to be pressed soon."

Another prosecutor, seeking anonymity, said the prosecution aims to complete investigation reports for at least 20 additional cases of crimes against humanity, including several involving enforced disappearances, before the general election in February next year.

am saying that reforms are needed in several areas in Bangladesh in order to repair the state."

"A person cannot be the prime minister for more than two terms and will not be. There are other issues like this. When there was a dictatorship in Bangladesh, we, the BNP, said these things to their faces, looking them in the eyes."

INTERIM GOVT

The BNP acting chairman said his party wants the interim government to be successful. "We also expect that the current government will properly fulfill the main responsibility bestowed upon it and will be able to hold a fair, free election."

Responding to a query about how he evaluates the role of the government over the last one year, Tarique said, "Considering everything, I feel that maybe they have tried in many areas. Not everyone can be successful in all matters. Naturally, they have some limitations. Within those limits, they may have tried, and maybe they are still trying as much as they can."

Regarding changes in BNP's politics, he said that their main goal would be to build a strong foundation for BNP's future democracy and to create accountability within the organisation.

## Commission may propose

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Speaking to The Daily Star, Prof Riaz said, "The referendum could be held either before or during the election, but it must be made clear that the next parliament will function as a reform assembly with a defined constitutional duty. The timeframe for completing the reforms must also be clearly stated."

He added that in addition to refining the main proposal, the commission also is developing an alternative package.

"We have held preliminary discussions on it, and we will meet again with the experts tomorrow [October 8] at noon. At the meeting, we expect to finalise the concrete proposals," he said.

When asked about the nature of the proposals, Prof Riaz explained, "We did not make any proposal on October 5. We only asked political parties to bring theirs, and the idea of the referendum came from them. The commission will present its proposals today."

"If all 30 parties agree on a single position regarding the referendum... we will submit one unified proposal. But if they differ, we will keep both ready and submit two alternative packages."

Another commission member told this newspaper that differences of opinion arose among political parties over how the July Charter should be implemented.

"Implementation basically means incorporating the proposals into what I call the 'white book'. There is nothing else to it. But BNP says that if it happens, it should remain only as a proposal, and the next government

## ICT launches probe into AL

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Regarding concerns that recent amendments to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973 might raise questions about the credibility of the trials, Tajul said: "There is no scope for that."

The trial process against the Awami League as a party has not started yet. "Questions can arise only when a law is amended during an ongoing trial, but the amendment made recently has not yet been applied."

Responding to a query on whether the law allows for the punishment of a political party, Tajul said: "A party itself cannot be punished like an individual. However, the law specifies the types of penalties that can be imposed on a party -- such as banning it, imposing other sanctions, seizing its properties or issuing directives concerning its leaders and activists. All of these measures are included in the law."

The investigation against the AL is now underway, and if credible

## Bangladesh wins presidency of Unesco's 43rd General Conference

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has been elected president of the 43rd General Conference of Unesco, marking a historic milestone in the country's 53-year membership in the organisation.

During the vote at the 222nd session of the Unesco executive board in Paris yesterday, Bangladeshi candidate Ambassador Khondker M Talha secured the presidency with a 30-27 victory over Japan, according to a statement from the Bangladesh Embassy in France.

Initially, four countries -- Bangladesh, Japan, India, and South Korea -- contested the position. However, India and South Korea withdrew their candidatures in September.

This is the first time Bangladesh has been elected to this apex position within Unesco.

Talha, Bangladesh's permanent delegate to the Unesco and ambassador to France, Monaco, and Côte d'Ivoire, will assume the presidency.

He will succeed Ambassador Simona Mirela Miculescu of Romania at the General Conference of Unesco, to be held later this month in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, Education Adviser CR Abrar, and Cultural Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki expressed their appreciation to the Unesco executive board for electing Bangladesh to this prestigious position.

Prof Yunus called it "a landmark achievement" and thanked the education and cultural advisers, as well as the permanent mission, for their leadership in driving Bangladesh's successful campaign. "This is a proud moment for Bangladesh."

CR Abrar noted, "This election to Unesco's highest office will bring global attention to Bangladesh's contributions in arts, culture, and education. It is a rare honour."

Adviser Farooki said, "Bangladesh's active participation in recent Unesco sessions has already drawn praise. This new role offers a powerful platform to project the vibrancy of our artistic, cultural, and heritage landscape on the world stage."

Ambassador Talha expressed deep gratitude to the Unesco executive board members for their confidence in Bangladesh's leadership.

"This is a historic achievement for our country," he stated, pledging to work tirelessly to uphold Unesco's mandate during this critical time for global multilateralism.

will decide which parts to adopt," he said.

"So, there is a difference in interpretation. Most people understand it one way, while BNP explains it differently," he said.

"This issue must be clarified in the next meeting. Tomorrow's discussion should make it clearer."

During Sunday's discussion with the commission, the parties agreed that a referendum should be held to seek public approval for implementing the charter. However, there is a political disagreement over when the referendum should be held.

BNP believes that the party that will win the national election should implement the charter according to its own view or note of dissent. However, Jamaat-e-Islami believes that there may be differences of opinion on some decisions, but those differences are not binding, and there is no obligation to accept them.

BNP also believes that there is no alternative but to hold a separate ballot for the referendum on the same day as the national election.

Jamaat wants the referendum to be held before the polls. NCP supports holding the referendum on the day of the election, but it has demanded issuing a "July Charter Implementation Order" before the referendum.

Because of these differences, there is uncertainty whether political consensus on the referendum can be achieved.

The July Charter is being prepared with 84 reform proposals. Of these, there are differences of opinion on some constitutional reform proposals.

allegations are brought against any other political party in the future, those will also be investigated accordingly.

On May 10, President Mohammed Shahabuddin promulgated an ordinance amending the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973 to empower the tribunals to try a political party facing charges of genocide and crimes against humanity and punish it if found guilty.

With the amendment to the act, the tribunal shall now suspend or ban the organisation's activities, declare the organisation illegal, suspend or cancel its registration or licence and confiscate the organisation's property.

The ordinance also explicitly defined "organisation" as any political party, any entity subordinate to, affiliated with, or associated with such a party, or any group of individuals which, in the opinion of the tribunal, propagates, supports, endorses, facilitates, or engages in the activities of such a party or entity.