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Bangladesh Water Concern

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ABSTRACT

Concerns about food security and apprehensions of future water scarcity are common to all the countries in the world. This paper focuses on the water issue between India and Bangladesh. Crisscrossed by the rivers and streams, Bangladesh is a water- abundant country with low per-capital water availability. Almost 94% of the water resources of the country originate beyond its borders, and that 54 rivers and streams flow into Bangladesh from India. This consciousness, combined with that of India's size, colours Bangladeshi thinking gives it a sense of vulnerability. Four concerns like: flood-management; water-sharing with the upper riparian; internal water-resources management and the protection of natural environment are more crucial for the policy makers of Bangladesh. Bangladesh made certain agreements with India to settle the issue. But it is politics not water that will determine the future of the treaty as well as the issue. The basic objective of this research paper is to focus on Eastern Himalayan Region (EHR) with special reference to Bangladesh and Indian water disputes. The focused area of research paper is to highlight those factors which have so serious concerns that after long term comprehensive bilateral negotiations are still unresolved. What problems are placed in the language of the agreements signed between both states and further to understand those prospects for understanding future in context of the prevailing circumstances.

KEY WORDS: Water Conflict, South Asia, Settlements, Crisis Management

Introduction

Water politics is a term that has been used to refer inter and intra-state relations, affected by the availability of water and water resources. The substitute term for Water Politics is also called, the Hydro politics around the world .The availability of drinking water is shrinking day by day. The phenomena is not only damaging the economy and eco system of the developing world but states are also affecting with it. Increasing scarcity of water has created a desire among the states to control the water resources which has become a breeding conflict.

There are approximately 215 major rivers and 300 ground water basins shared by two or more countries. These international rivers are creating tension over

ownership rights, water supply, allocation, control and its use. It has become a common perception that the survival of state is dependent on the control of the nation's water resource. History is evident that the water conflict within the region is more volatile and a major source of future wars, around the world. Water crises are the result of misuse and poor handling of the resources. Water issues can be categorized into three ways:

1. Dwindling Fresh Water Supplier

It indicates that human activities are also involved in water crises. Shrinking of water resources is due to excessive industrialization and climatic change. A lot of water sheds have turned into deserts and glaciers are melting down because of global warming. Former Defense Secretary of Britain, John Reid predicted in a conference on climatic change in 2006, that global water crisis is becoming a global security issue and that Britain's armed forces should be prepared to tackle conflicts, including warfare, over dwindling water source (wiki\water-politics).

2. Inequitable Access to Water

The second category of water issues is the inequitable access to water which is clearly liked with the upstream and down stream states. Although the international river flows in both the states, but benefiting the upstream status. In Middle East, Israel, Jordan and Palestine rely in Jordan River but it is controlled by Israel in the case of Euphrates River. Turkey and Syria reached at the brink of war in 1998, when Turkey planned to build a dam on it (water-politics). The Ganges water in South Asia is a source of conflict between India and Bangladesh. These are few examples, where downstream states claim equal access of water.

3. The Corporate Control of Water

Third category is the corporate control of water, keeping in view the scarcity of fresh water resources, different multinational corporations (MNCs) have developed their own research wings for the provision of fresh water. These MNCs are a major source of provision of fresh drinking water to the people. The giant water Technology Company; Proctor & Gamble has created a home water purifier in USA. In developing countries, Coca Cola, Nestle and their local brands are working to provide fresh water. In the corporate control of water, the crises emerges, when this water is not accessible to poor people, especially in the third world countries, where MNCs seek control over water resource and provide bottled water to a particular class while the other group uses water from drains or pipes.

Water Sharing Disputes in South Asia

India -Pakistan Dispute on Indus water

India-Bangladesh Dispute on Ganges water
India-Nepal Dispute on sharing the Maha Kali River water
India-China Dispute on using the water of Brahma Putra water

The present study is related with second and third category of water related issues between India and Bangladesh. Before discussing the water issue between India and Bangladesh, it is imperative to understand the nature of South Asian regional water issues and the water systems.

Water Situation in South Asian Region

Water and water resources are the matter of life and death for the whole South Asian region. Almost all states have agricultural based economy. The agriculture of these states is dependent on natural and artificial sources of water. Lots of rivers in the region are common having the status of International rivers. Besides other conflicts amongst the states in the region, water sharing of these international rivers is one of the most volatile conflict.

Three zones of water eco-system are found in South Asian region:

a) Western Himalayan River system (WHR), the dominant river is Indus;
b) Eastern Himalayan Region (EHR). The dominant rivers are the ranges the Brahma Putra and the Meghna-Barak;
c) Last zone of South Asian water eco-system is the river system, situated in South India, lies within Indian Territory.

Status of EHR Rivers

In the Himalayan ranges of India, the Ganges River rises at an elevation of 7,010 meters. From the Rajmahal Hills of India, it enters into Bangladesh at Nawab Ganj district. Three tributaries of Ganges also rise in China and flow through Nepal to join the Ganges in India. Three tributaries, the Karnali, the Gandaki and the Kosi contribute approximately 71 percent during the natural dry season and 41 percent of the total annual flow of the Ganges. In South Asia, there zones of water ecosystem are identifiable. On Western Himalayan River system (WHR) the dominant river is Indus, the other is Eastern Himalayan regain (EHR), where the dominant rivers are the Ganges, the Brahma putra and the Meghna-Barak. The third zone of south Asian water eco-system is the river system situated in south India lies within India territory.

In West Bengal for about 18km below to Farakka Ganges it forms 119 km long common boundary between India and Bangladesh. The Ganges Joins the Jamuna River after flowing its east and South east for about 240km. Jamuna is the main flow of Brahma Putra. After this confluence the combined flow is known as, Padma. The length of Ganges from its source to confluence with Brahma Putra is 2500 km and about 240 km lies in Bangladesh (Rasheed, 2004).

Brahma Putra River

It also rises in the Kailas range of Himalayas in Tibet, locally known as Tsangpo. It flows East ward-opposite to the Himalayas for about 1700 km and near the North-Eastern border of India. It bends towards South and South-West and enters in the Indian territory of Arvanchal Pradesh. Here the two tributaries the dibang and the Lohit join the river and it gets the name of Brahmaputra while flowing Westward. Kurigram is the district where Brahmaputra enters Bangladesh, joining several tributaries, coming from India and Bhutan. The total length of Brahmaputra from its source to confluence with Ganges is 2900 km whereas about 260 Km flows within in Bangladesh (Ibid).

Meghna Barak

It rises in the Manipur Hills, which are also part of the Himalaya Ranges. It flows along the North-Eastern side of India at an elevation of about 2900 meters. After crossing the South-West and North side near Tipaimukh, it flows towards Bangladesh border of Sylhet, where it is divided into two channels, The Susma and the Kusiyara. In the South-West, Ganges Padma, and Brahmaputra meet with the Barak near Chand Purr. In the South of Chand Purr, the combination of three river system is known as the Lower Meghna which falls into the Bay of Bengal. The length from bits source up to Chand Purr is about 902 km and around 400 km lies with in Bangladesh (Rasheed, 2004: 4).

In HER River System, Bangladesh is considered as a lowest riparian state and India, the upstream riparian state. Consequently, water security of Bangladesh is not assured until and unless there is an agreement or treaty between Bangladesh and India regarding this issue.

Nature of India-Bangladesh Water Conflict

Bangladesh is criss-crossed by rivers, and 86 percent of the total land is based on three major river basin system- Ganges, Brahma Putra and Meghna. The Ganges basin accounts for nearly 32 percent of the land. Beside this, the State's historical, cultural and civilization attachment with Ganges basin has also meaningful expression which can not be ignored. Bangladesh is facing serious ecological situation, which has been deteriorated to unrepeatable level:

> "Salinity front has travelled up to 280 km upstream from the sea coast, the salinity level in the surface water has been increased 500 micro-mhos to 29000 micro mhos at Khulna which has exceeded the safe limit by several times. Ground water salinity has also been increased from 200 mhos to 3000 m mhos at places during past Farakka period, one of the

> largest mangrove forest, Sunderban, has already dying out affect due to increase in Salinity level in estuarine rivers flowing through it, industrial growth has been retreated due to non –availability of potable water during the dry month[4-6], agriculture in suffering due to shortage of irrigation, especially after one of the largest irrigation project Ganges-Kobodak project (GK project) covering a total area of about 1,50,000. Health condition of the great majority of the people has also been affected adversely with the increase of diarrheal diseases, hypertension and kidney diseases"(ganges water sharing treaty, 5).

Thus Bangladesh has shown its great concern towards the issue. The nature of India-Bangladesh water conflict is based on three aspects:

a) How to share the river water?
b) To make friendly and cooperative agreements about the sources of water.
c) Mechanism of data sharing collecting which is important on Common River to facilitate flood forecasting (Ahmad, 2005: 55-67).

Origin of the Dispute

On the basis of above mentioned factors, water dispute between India and Bangladesh originated on the sharing of the Ganges water, during lean period of the year. The subcontinent is facing problems related to water management, which are based on the division of the region .The problems between Bangladesh and India were initially between Pakistan and India over the waters of the Ganga River. On October 28, 1951, Pakistan officially called Indian attention to the reports of Indian plans to build a barrage at Farakka, about 17 kilometers from border. This project can disturb water flow. Indian government responded on March 8, 1952 that that the project was under initial investigation and the concern by Pakistan is baseless. The government of Pakistan proposed the services of UN for co-operative development but the Indian government was not in favor of such suggestions. The problem arose when Indian intentions were to make Calcutta port operational for navigation by flushing the Hooghly River with the water from Ganges. A great deal of negotiations and efforts on diplomatic and technical expert's level were made between the two Governments to resolve the issue. In the last days when Pakistan was toying for Indian commitment for sharing the Ganges water, India followed a policy of stalling the talks by asking for more data (Abbas, 1982). Attempts at conflict management were done at different levels like:

Frequency of Meetings	Outcome	Comments
First round of talks	First round of expert level meetings	The meeting failed to achieve any positive results

June 28, 1960-July 3, 1960	between India and Pakistan decided to meet again	
Three rounds of talks in 1962	Experts were not able to decide the issues	India informed Pakistan that construction had begun on the Farakka Barrage. Pakistan attempted to arrange a meeting at the level of minister but Indian government refused to hold the meeting until full data is not available.
Fifth round in May 13, 1968	India agreed only to a series of meetings at the level of secretary, in advance of a Minister-Level meting.	Pakistan was not satisfied with the proceedings due to the reason that enough data was never the less available for substantive talk.

Table 1: Expert Level Meetings
Source: Compiled by the researcher

Frequency of Meetings	Outcome	Comments
First round on December 9, 1968	Different strategies became apparent	Pakistani sense of urgency was greater and they demanded for a settlement. Indian tactics were to prolong the issue in the absence of complete and accurate data.
Four rounds of talks in 1970 were held in alternative capitals.	Pakistan proposed an agreement for the fixed minimum deliveries of Ganges water but again argued that such an agreement could only take place after the two sides had agreed to "basic technical effects".	The meetings were useless and no solid results can be made.
Fifth round on July 16-21, 1970	Three recommendations were finalized: 1) Constitution of a body consisting of one representative from each state. 2) A high level meeting would be held in 3-6 months.	Pakistani and the Indian government had shown seriousness to settle the issue.

	3) The point of delivery of supplies to Pakistan may be agreed.	

Table 2: Sectary Level Meetings
Source: Compiled by the researcher

In the mean time, East wing of Pakistan assumed its new identity in the shape of Bangladesh. After its emergence, it was thought that the prospects for a solution of the dispute were bright in the context of evolving friendly relations between two states but the logic of real politics played its role and the bilateral relationship were upset on different outstanding disputes and especially on water issues.

Bangladesh is also the victim of geography. Its geographical location dictates its foreign policy makers to give a significant status to India. The relationship between them realizes the size and power of India and also its hegemonic status in the region. About the foreign policy of Bangladesh, Article 25 of the Constitution of Republic of Bangladesh states:

> "The state shall base its international relations on the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, non interference in the internal affairs of other countries' peaceful settlements of International disputes and respect for international law and the principles enunciated in the United Nations charter."

Policy makers of Bangladesh are aware of the fact that the region is Indo centric and there are certain geographical vulnerabilities with Bangladesh (in the shape of 4.025 km border proximity and 54 rivers with India) (Sharma, 1972). On the basis of this fact that Bangladesh is dependent on India for the regular flow of water in its 54 rivers, the initial relationship was so cordial and warm. They viewed their policies with each other being mutually friendly. Bangladesh's Prime Minister, Sheikh Mujeeb-ur-Rehman was unstinting in expressing the gratitude of the people of Bangladesh for the valuable contribution of India during its independence movement (Haq, 1993). From 1971 to 1974, several agreements were made between both the states and due to the regimes compatibility different issues were ignored by both sides.

Frequency of Meetings	**Outcome**	**Comments**
First round of talks on July 16-17, 1973	Both sides agreed to accept a solution before operating the Farakka Barrage.	India realizes the serious concern of Bangladeshi government.

Second round of talks was held between foreign ministers on February 13-15, 1974.	Agreement was confirmed.	-
Prime Ministers meetings on May 12-16, 1974	Deceleration was made on May 16, 1974.	Both sides agreed to opt two general approaches about the Ganges flow to settle the issue.

Table 3: Minister Level Meetings
Source: Compiled by the researcher

This period of cordial relationship did not last long in 1975. With the entrance of General Irshad on the political scene of Bangladesh, the relationship started deteriorating (Ibid).

During this period, for the first time, the conflicting issues were raised from both sides. It was perceived that India was perusing Bangladesh to secure its own geo-strategic interest, in the region. Suspicions and fears about India spread through out the country. Under this stressed environment a lot of issues were highlighted which had been ignored by the previous government. Among these issues, one of the most volatile issues is related to water.

Attempts to Settle the Issue in New Era

In the initial phase a 25-years Treaty of Friendship Cooperation and Peace was signed between both states. Article 6 of the treaty stipulates that both parties agreed, “To make joint studies and to take joint action in the field of flood control rivers basin development and development of hydro-electric power and irrigation” (Iftikharuzzaman, 1994: 15-30, 215-235). In the post independence period although the Government of Bangladesh was not in a hurry to raise the issue immediately, but concerns about the issue were there. Under the concepts of peace and friendship, both states held their regular meetings about their concerns on common rivers.

In April 1975, India was able to convince Bangladesh about a limited trial for operating of Farakka Barrage. Under an interim agreement, India took the right to withdraw 11.000 to 16.000 Cusec water during the dry season of April 21-May 31, leaving 39000 to 44000 Cusec water for Bangladesh at the same period. As the normal flow of the Ganges during the dry season would increase from 55000 to 65000 cusec, the amount of water allocated to Bangladesh could rise up to 49.500 (Pannalal, l991).

Although Bangladesh gave its consent about the limited operation of Farakka Barrage, but dissatisfaction on its side remained and was highlighted on different occasions, especially when the water resource minister of Bangladesh was invited

to attend the commissioning ceremony, it was refused (States man, 19 -20 May, 1975).

One of the reasons might be that both sides insisted that a mutual consensus should be developed about the allocation of the water available during the lean period before the Farakka Barrage was commissioned. This commitment was not fulfilled and it was commissioned in 1975 (Islam, 1987).

From Indian side, the unilateral withdrawal of the Ganges water at Farakka continued and had adverse impact.

After the monsoon season, drastically low water level and discharge was recorded. The minimum level of water recorded was about 5.5 feet. This reduction affected the agricultural production, fisheries forestry, navigation industry and ecology of that area. The discharge of Ganges at Hardinge Bridge reached a record low level, 23,200 Cusec. As a result, Gorai, the main distributor of the Ganges got dried (Haq, 1993). This was the time when bilateral negotiations resumed on the protest of Bangladesh. Experts from the two sides visited, ministerial level meetings also conducted, but all efforts failed and then unilaterally Bangladesh decided to internationalize the issue by raising it in an international forum like UNO.

In January 1976, Bangladesh formally registered its protest against India with the General Assembly at the forum of United Nations. From January to November 1976, the issue was discussed at the forum but on 26 November, General Assembly adopted a consensus statement that both the parties should continue these bilateral meetings and the ministerial level meetings should be convinced to reach at a fair and acceptable settlement (South Asian Media).

At ministerial level, talks between the two countries resumed and were held in Dhaka in December 1976 and in New Delhi in January 1977. However, these meetings failed and no consensus was developed on any point. Meanwhile the Indian Government was changed after 1977 elections and Mr. Morarji Desai became the Prime Minister. After this change of Government, two high level meetings were held and on 18th April 1977, an understanding was made about the sharing of the Ganges water during the last 10 days of April, the leanest period of the year. It was agreed that Bangladesh would get 34,500 cusecs and India 20,500 cusecs at Farakka during the lean period (Ahmad & Abdul, 1989). After this break throw official talks continued in New Delhi and Dhaka. In all the meetings, major issues under discussion were:

- Total period of dry season;
- Other than the leanest period, shares for different 10 days period;
- Mechanism and body for implementation of the decision and resolving the disputes;
- Long term planning;
- Duration/period of the agreement.

Apart from these issues, one major problem was that India had maintained that the difficult period is only lean period but Bangladesh insisted that the water

is to be shared for the entire dry season and not only from mid March to mid May. Ultimately the period to share water was agreed from January to May (Ibid).

Ganges Water Agreement 1977

Three levels of official talks were held from May to September 1977 and then an agreement was made by the heads of the delegations. Formally, the agreement was signed on 5th November 1977. Through the Ganges Water Agreement of 1977, for the first time India recognized the international character of the water of an international river. Although the agreement provided a short term solution of the distribution of water but it opened the way for a long term planning. In the specific provisions of the charter, it was clearly indicated".

Article-I

The allocation of water would be at Farakka:

Article-II

The dry season availability of the historical flows was established from the recorded flows of the Ganges from 1948 to 1973 on the basis of 75 % availabilities. The share of Ganges flows at 10 day period of April (the leanest), being 2,050 and 34,500 Cusec respectively, out of 55,000 Cusec availability at the period. In order to ensure Bangladesh's share in the event of any lower availability at Farakka, Bangladesh's share should not fall below 80% of the stated share in a particular period, shown in a schedule annexed to the Agreement.

Article-III

Minimum water would be withdrawn between Farakka and border of Bangladesh.

Article-IV & V

It was agreed that a joint committee should be made to supervise the sharing of water, provide data to the two governments and submit an annual report.

Article-VI

It was also agreed that the joint committee would be responsible for examining any difficulty, arising out in the implementation process. The unresolved issue would be referred to a panel having equal numbers of experts from both sides. If the dispute was still not resolved, the matter would be referred to the two governments, which would meet urgently to resolve it through mutual discussion. The agreement was for five years and could be extended for specific period by mutual agreement (Ganges Water Sharing Treaty).

Aftermath

After the agreement, at the end of the year, more meetings at ministerial levels were held. Two countries reintroduced their earlier proposals. Bangladesh insisted for the construction of storage dams in Nepal and in India while India gave its potential argument to divert Brahmaputra water to the Ganges, through a link canal from Bangladesh. It would also be a navigation route to the Sea. These proposals were taken up for consideration but no consensus had been developed. In the meantime, once again the change of government was seen through elections in India and the change in Bangladesh as well, when General Zia-ur-Rehman was assassinated and Martial law was promulgated in Bangladesh (Abbas, 1982).

Memorandum of Understanding-1985

Both governments in India and Bangladesh resumed their talks on the issue at different levels. In October 1982, a joint communiqué was issued, in which it was decided that 1977 agreement would not be extended and within 18 months, they will achieve a new solution. Although the time limit was not followed. Yet on 22nd November 1985, an Indo-Bangladesh Memorandum of Understanding was signed. This was based on the sharing of the Ganges' dry season flow through 1988. A join committee of experts was also established to settle the issue. Once again India proposed stressed to link Brahmaputra with Ganges and Bangladesh focused on building a series of dams on the Ganges head water in Nepal.

Under this memorandum of understanding, both states carried their negotiations and meetings on different levels. These meetings enhanced the efforts to solve more unresolved issues. In 1992, a meeting at the Prime Minister level was held on the Ganges and other rivers related issues. Both the heads instructed their ministers to make more efforts for a long term treaty on Ganges.

Ganges Water Treaty-1996

Under this treaty a new formula for sharing the Ganges water at Farrakka during dry season was established. It was guaranteed that below Farakka, the water is not to be reduced further, except for "reasonable use" in a limited quantity. This was also determined that the amount of water to be released by India to Bangladesh at Farrakka would be for a period of 30 years. The new formula to share the water was as follows:

> "If the Ganges flow at Farrakka is 70,000 Cubic feet or less, both countries are to receive 50 % ,with a flow of between 70,000 and 75,000 Cusecs, Bangladesh receives 35,000 Cusecs and India receives the rest; with a flow of more than

> 75,000 Cusecs India receives 40,000 Cusecs and Bangladesh receives the balance" (South Asian Media).

In the new Agreement, one more provision was designed about the flow of water. It was said that if the flow is below 50,000 Cusecs, the sharing arrangements are to be reviewed after every five years and if no adjustment have been made then India has to release 90% of Bangladesh's share.

Another major feature of this treaty is that it is called, a 30 years Water Sharing Treaty. The treaty has been made after discussions and negotiation of 35 years between the two states. At that time, experts had thought that treaty will open new rooms to invest in long term sustainable projects and it will give opportunity to develop the two governments.

Apart from the problems in the treaty, there are certain projects of Indian governments which once again created tension and feelings of mistrust between both states. One is the Tipaimukh Dam Project on the river Barak in the North-East of India. Barak River flows Westward and merges into Meghna river system in neighboring Bangladesh. India wants to build a multi-purpose hydroelectric dam over the Barak River. This news has created resentment in the civil society of Bangladesh and has become a hot issue now-a-days. Although Indian Government clarifies its position that the Tipaimukh Dam is for hydroelectric purpose only and not for agriculture but the Bangladesh's foreign Minister, Dipu Moni declared that if this Dam goes against the interest of Bangladesh, we will do whatever is necessary to protect our national interest (Bangladesh-India-water-problem). People in Bangladesh are thinking in a way that the Tipaimukh will be another Farakka. The averment experts are of the opinion that if there are new fresh water resources in the Ganges, the social and environmental balance will be part of the region and a new phase of peace and cooperation will be started between co-riparian states.

Problems after Settlement

Soon the existing Ganges Water Sharing Treaty between India and Bangladesh proved itself inadequate. Due to various reasons:

- **a)** The agreement has proved itself inadequate for extreme drought season having limited provisions to resolve the situation.
- **b)** The treaty has very weak crisis management plan. There are certain factors which are beyond political control, like after first year of the treaty the climate has dramatically changed and the average annual rainfall in the catchments area has decreased. This climatic change produced a severe dry season spell in the Ganges. In this situation, a well organized joint handling crisis management cell is required by both countries.
- **c)** Dam is constructed which will create severe problems for Bangladesh.

d) Another project of Indian government is the Indian River Link Project. Through this project, India wants to divert a huge volume of water to the water deficit area in India. The division is primarily intended from the Ganges and Brahma Putra River. According to Bangladeshi government's scientists estimations, approximately 20% reduction in the water flow to the country could dry out great areas.

e) Bangladesh is an agricultural country 80% of Bangladeshi farmers grow rice and the product is dependent on water. As a lower riparian state, the flow of water is from India to Bangladesh, has created the feelings of insecurity in Bangladesh. Once again these feelings could be clearly observed when in September 2003 Bangladeshi Water Resource Minister Hafizuddin Ahmad said, "The idea of lining these rivers is very dangerous'.

f) North of Bangladesh is already drying out, after the Ganges was dammed by India in 1976. India is planning to do the same on the rest of 53 common rivers that enter in the country via India. Bangladesh completely depends on water (Indian Water Problem). The plan of linking water flows in India will create 31 future links, among 36 rivers of the country. The most important thing is that without taking case of Bangladesh's concern, the supreme court of India passed an order to complete the river linking project within 12 years (The doubtful science of interlinking).

g) Apart from other things on this specific issue, of multifunctional river linking project, the Indian government did not provide necessary information to the Bangladesh government. One of the rational that Indian government presented is that they will use surplus of water which causes flood in different parts of India. The surplus water will be used in those areas which have acute water scarcity. For this purpose, when they divert the water ways in a positive way, then this would be the best use of that surplus water. These arguments not only refuted in Bangladesh but in some parts of India also and it has been said that the project is vote catching activity of the ruling party (Lailufar, 2004: 84-94).

h) After the commitments, although the Indian leaders commented that the project would not put any negative impact on Bangladesh's economy ecology and river system (Ibid), yet the previous experience reminds Bangladesh, how international law was defied and how an upper riparian state violated the rights of a lower riparian state.

How to Minimize the Conflict?

Problematic situations among the neighboring states always create crisis and play a vital role in the state's political instability. These tense relationships also challenge the regional stability. This is the situation in South Asian region where some states have boundary issues and some have water issues. In order to maintain

better liaison between Bangladesh and India, following steps should be taken to ensure not only regional stability but the internal strength of the state:

- Equitable share on common rivers should be accepted and it should be ensured that the lower riparian state is also getting common benefits.
- For this purpose, the need is to relief international law related to the rights and duties of co-riparian states.
- A strong international regional forum should be introduced to resolve these issue and states should be bound to abide by the rules laid down.
- Between the states, a joint river commission should be established and only the persons having political vision should be allowed as members.
- A mechanism should be developed for the flow of information and data transfer.
- Both governments should adopt certain confidence building measures in order to avoid distrust.
- States should give prior information to other states about their new projects on those areas or waters, linked with its neighboring states.
- A detailed study about the issue should be made from both the sides and should give weightage to each other.
- Stake holders should visit each other and state and joint meetings on specific issues should be convened regularly.
- Technical issues should not be used for political motives.

Conclusion

The study shows that there is a list of misunderstandings and distrust between Bangladesh and India. India as a powerful player in getting full advantages of an upstream state, as the international Law allows an upstream state to use the water flowing in its own territory. This is the reason that all the international forums including United Nations have stressed to resolve the issue bilaterally.

Different studies have been made about the disastrous impact of this river link mega project. If it is materialized the impact on Bangladesh would be much severe than that of Farakka. Some preliminary studies indicated that the salinity would reach at almost 100 km inside the country. Wet Lands, beds, hoars and boars will be drained quicker. The Dry season will start earlier. Fresh water flow would be reduced in different areas of the country. Low water level in rivers will cause depletion of forests and it will bring major environmental changes. Another serious consequence of this project would be the disastrous impact on the sunder bans forests shared by India and Bangladesh. On all these issues, the government of Bangladesh has responded strongly. In September 2003, an important development took place during the talks of Joint River Commission, as India agreed to involve its neighbor in future discussions about the project. These critical issues need political will to settle the matters.

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