

NEW DELHI AND DHAKA FAIL TO INK DEAL ON RIVER WATERS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Bangladesh

Sheikh Hasina

India and Bangladesh on Saturday failed to conclude a framework agreement to optimise the use of waters from six rivers including the Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar, which has been discussed for several months.

According to a joint statement issued after the bilateral meeting between visiting Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the two leaders have directed officials to complete the six-river agreement as well as a feasibility study for the Ganga-Padma barrage project as part of an upgraded version of the 1996 Ganga Water Sharing treaty.

No progress was also reported on the long pending Teesta water sharing agreement either, said the joint statement, but "Prime Minister Modi informed that his government is working with all stakeholders in India for conclusion of the Agreement soonest possible," indicating that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has not withdrawn her opposition to the agreement.

In other major agreements on river water issues, Bangladesh has agreed to allow India to withdraw 1.82 cusecs water from the Feni river for a drinking water supply project in Tripura.

Procedural data for the use of two Bangladeshi ports for goods from India was also exchanged as the two sides committed to greater connectivity between the two countries.

The other issue that came up during the bilateral talks was the plight of nearly a million Rohingya refugees who are currently staying in camps in Cox Bazaar.

Rohingya refugees

Ms. Hasina reportedly requested Mr. Modi to use his "good relations" with the Myanmar government to facilitate the return of all the refugees.

When asked if Bangladesh was holding back Hindu Refugees from Rakhine state to send them back along with the majority Muslim Rohingya community, Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque denied that they were holding anyone back.

"We have twice made facilities for Rohingyas to go back so we have not stopped anyone from going back whose citizenship has been verified [by Myanmar]. The border is open from our side and we want them to go back as soon as possible," he said.

Ms. Hasina also invited Mr. Modi to visit Bangladesh for the birth centenary celebrations of her father and the founder of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, next year, which he is expected to accept.

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