

'TEESTA DELAY HOLDING UP HILSA FISH SUPPLY TO INDIA'

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Economics of Animal-Rearing incl. White, Blue & Pink Revolutions

Playfully chiding the Indian government for failing to deliver on the Teesta water sharing agreement, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday said the treaty, held up since 2011 due to differences between the Centre and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, was also holding up Hilsa fish supplies to India.

"You [India] aren't giving us enough water, so I can't give you Hilsa fish right now. But I promise I will be able to supply Hilsa by the upcoming Puja season [in October]," she said, laughing, during a diplomatic reception in Delhi, in a reference to the lower water flows in the Teesta and other rivers.

India and Bangladesh are expected to sign some agreements on joint management of rivers on Tuesday, and discuss a number of ways to cooperate on water sharing.

In an indicator of how important the issue is on the bilateral agenda, the Bangladesh High Commission, which hosted the special reception for Ministers, diplomats and military officers in Delhi, had named each of the tables at the dinner after a Bangladeshi river, including Teesta, Megna, Padma, Khowai and Kushiya.

When asked about whether she would meet Ms. Banerjee during the visit to New Delhi (September 5-8), Ms. Hasina said she wanted to meet the West Bengal Chief Minister, like on her previous visits, but learned that Ms. Banerjee had not come to Delhi.

"Mamata is like my sister, and we can meet anytime. Some ties are personal, beyond politics, like my relations with the Gandhis," Ms. Hasina told journalists, in a reference to Congress president Sonia Gandhi .

Ms. Hasina spoke emotionally about her visit upon arrival to the Nizamuddin Sufi shrine on Monday.

She explained that she had first visited the Dargah, that dates back to 1325 AD, on April 9, 1981, while she lived in exile in Delhi after her father's assassination.

"I had an unusual feeling about the visit, it was a very spiritual place. I then went and read my father's [Bangladesh founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's] diary and realised he had visited the Nizamuddin dargah on the same day on April 9, in 1946," Ms. Hasina said.

On Thursday, the Bangladesh Prime Minister will visit the Ajmer Sharif Dargah in Rajasthan.

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