



THE GANGES RIVER CONFLICT AND ITS IMPACT ON INDOBANGLADESH RELATIONS 1972-1975

ENAAM ABDEL-AZIM SHAHEEN¹, PROF. KHAWLA TALIB LAFTA²

^{1,2}University of Basrah - Dept. of History, College of Arts - IRAQ.

Abstract:

India has occupied the top position in terms of its foreign political geographical coverage of Bangladesh. This is due to factors such as the geographical location, historical heritage, and, most importantly, its influence in addressing crucial issues that shape Bangladesh's way of life. Nothing is more prominent and significant for policymakers in Bangladesh than India. India provided crucial support to Bangladesh during the Liberation War in 1971, which paved the way for friendly relations between the two countries. India was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh as a sovereign state. However, despite their shared history and immense potential, the relations between Bangladesh and India have not always been friendly. There has been a lack of trust and cooperation, with several unresolved issues leading to periodic deterioration in their relations. This research focuses on studying the controversial issues, with the Ganges River dispute as a case study, and analyzing their impact on India-Bangladesh relations.

Keywords: Controversial issues, India-Bangladesh relations, Ganges River.

INTRODUCTION:

The history of relations between the two countries has been characterized by the presence of several politically geographical controversial issues that have proven difficult to resolve. While some are rooted in historical past, others are a result of prevailing dynamics in bilateral relations. These issues have encompassed various aspects, including the sharing of water resources of shared rivers, including the Ganges River.

First topic: Controversial Issues and Their Impact on India-Bangladesh Relations, The Case of the Ganges River

Rivers do not recognize political boundaries as they flow across countries and states, providing water for irrigation, industrial purposes, hydropower generation, navigation, and more. At the same time, these rivers can also cause pollution and floods. The importance of cooperative river projects undertaken by affected countries becomes evident in finding ways to manage and control the natural force of water.

The issue of sharing the waters of transboundary rivers has been at the forefront of the historical, geographical, and political relations between India and Bangladesh over the past four decades. It has significantly influenced their relationship towards each other. In fact, Bangladesh inherited this legacy from Pakistan, where the Farakka Barrage became a subject of historical, geographical, and political dispute even before the birth of Bangladesh in 1971. Regenerate response⁽¹⁾.

The dispute over the Ganges River has been influenced and exacerbated by factors arising from the geographical location, historical background, and political situation of the riparian states, namely India and Bangladesh⁽²⁾.

India constructed the Farakka Barrage across the Ganges River in Rajmahal, near a village called Farakka in West Bengal, approximately 11 miles (17km) upstream from the western border of Bangladesh. Prior to the operation of the Farakka Barrage, the nearby Hooghly River and its estuary faced four major problems: high salinity, excessive siltation, reduced navigability due to 16 sandbars and five or six sharp bends, and the presence of around 100 sunken ships, as well as increased frequency and intensity of tidal waves with decreased water flow. Before the implementation of the Farakka project, the currents from the Bay of Bengal carried approximately 12 million tons of silt each year to the port of Kolkata. The seasonal monsoon discharge would flush

out 7million tons, leaving a net accumulation of 5million tons of sediment on the riverbed annually. This led to the choking of the river. In such a condition, ships faced difficulty in navigating a distance of 200km upstream to Haldia from the sea to the port of Kolkata. Since Haldia only received water from the Ganges River during three months of the flood season, the Farakka Barrage was designed to divert water from the Padma River (known as the Ganges in Bangladesh) to save the port (and ensure water supply to the city with a population of 7million) upon which its existence depended environmentally.⁽³⁾.

The Ganges River, known as the Ganga in India and the Padma in Bangladesh, originates in Gangotri in the southern slope of the Himalayan mountain range. It then flows through India and near Farakka in the Indian state of West Bengal, it divides into two main branches. The first branch, known as the Bhagirathi, flows south through West Bengal and joins the Jalangi River. This shared river is known as the Hooghly. The second branch flows eastward to join the Brahmaputra River⁽⁴⁾ ..

It is worth mentioning that India is the upstream country along the river, while Bangladesh is the downstream country or in the direction of the river flow. Based on this, India controls the flow of water and diverts it through the construction of dams, negatively affecting agriculture and fishing in Bangladesh. Consequently, the Ganges River effectively divides India and Bangladesh as two riparian states at the source and the mouth, respectively⁽⁵⁾ .

The total length of the Ganges River is 2,177kilometers, of which 2,036kilometers flow through Indian territory. The total river basin area is 943,500square kilometers, with 750,000square kilometers located in India. This represents 61.6million hectares of cultivable riverine land out of a total of 67.6million hectares in Indian territory. Additionally, %40of the population of India lives in the Ganges Basin and relies primarily on the river and its banks.⁽⁶⁾ .

Table No. (1)
Distribution of the Ganges River Basin Share⁽⁷⁾ .

Country	Basin Area (km ²)	Percentage of Total
China	33,520	3□08
Nepal	147,480	13□56
India	860,000	79□10
Bangladesh	46,300	4□26
The total	1,087,300	100□00

The Ganges River flows through some arid, semi-arid, and dry regions in the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. There is no other source of surface water supply in the region, with an annual rainfall ranging from 35 to 100 centimeters. The Ganges covers approximately 2,036 kilometers of its flow through India, with a catchment area exceeding 7.5 million square kilometers, compared to 141 kilometers of flow through Bangladesh, with a catchment area of 5,600 square kilometers. The political geographical dominance of India over the river is evident, leaving no room for doubt, as it has the upper hand in using and controlling the river water. This factor led Radcliffe to demarcate the borders between the two countries in the late 1940s.⁽⁸⁾ .

From the above, we can conclude that the Ganges River covers 90% of the Indian territory, and while it intersects with the borders of Bangladesh, over 98.50% of its length is located in Indian territory, while Bangladesh's contribution to Ganges water is estimated to be less than 0.5%. Additionally, about 40% of the total population of India, which is around 210 million people, resides in the Ganges basin. However, only 15 million people have benefited from irrigation facilities in the Indian Ganges basin through major and medium irrigation projects, out of the total cultivable area estimated at 169 million.



Bangladesh shares the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna river basin with other countries in South Asia. Bangladesh has 54 shared rivers with India, which contribute 92% of the total surface water, while the remaining 8% is generated within Bangladesh. As Bangladesh has the least percentage of coastline, it does not control the shared rivers. The withdrawal of water from one side by India at the course of the Ganges River, the construction of the Farakka Barrage and the Teesta Barrage, and the interlinking river projects are the main sources of dispute between India and Bangladesh.⁽⁹⁾ Bangladesh, being the downstream country and economically reliant on the Ganges River, automatically finds itself in a vulnerable position against any plans that may involve the diversion of Ganges water by the Indian government. This has raised genuine concerns in Bangladesh and has created a geopolitical tension between the two countries at any given time.⁽¹⁰⁾

As a result, disputes erupted between India and Bangladesh over the sharing of Ganges River waters. The reason is that India is situated upstream of the river, while Bangladesh is a downstream country, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, this geographic advantage has led to significant and deep-seated disputes over the distribution of river waters.⁽¹¹⁾

The Ganges River is characterized by a high seasonal flow. During the monsoon season, there is an ample flow of water that meets the needs of both countries. However, they face a severe problem during the dry season when the flow is insufficient to meet their requirements. The construction of the Farakka Barrage in India on the Ganges River to maintain a continuous water flow to Kolkata and Haldia, which was a subject of controversy even between India and Pakistan in the post-1947 era, led to a long series of correspondences and bilateral discussions between India and Pakistan, and later between India and Bangladesh, at various levels and at different times.⁽¹²⁾

Pakistan pressed for ministerial-level talks again in 1970, but India insisted that the meetings at the secretarial level should continue until appropriate preparations were made for a higher-level meeting. In the tenth round of Indo-Pakistani talks and the last Secretary-General-level meetings in July 1970, some progress was made. India agreed to make Farakka the water supply point for the eastern wing of Pakistan. The two sides also agreed that "the point of delivery of supplies to Pakistan of such a quantity of water as may be agreed upon shall be Farakka." India rejected the ministerial meeting because general elections were scheduled in India in 1971, which were won by the Congress Party led by Indira Gandhi, who refused to consent to a ministerial-level meeting and instead proposed another round of talks at the secretarial level. Despite Pakistan's agreement, the situation deteriorated rapidly in East Pakistan, leading to the division of Pakistan and the liberation of its eastern wing as an independent state in Bangladesh.⁽¹³⁾

Indian experts reiterated their case by producing data and charts illustrating the necessity of directing Ganges water to preserve the port of Kolkata, where 50% of the country's exports take place. They also explained how the dam contributes to helping East Pakistan address the recurring flood threats.

It was planned for Pakistani engineers to visit Farakka, and Pakistan also agreed to allow Indian engineers to inspect the Ganges-Kobadak project downstream of the Ganges estuary in East Pakistan, which was supposed to irrigate three and a half million acres of land⁽¹⁴⁾.

India rejected the proposal of the Pakistani delegation regarding referring their dispute to trusted officials from a third party such as the World Bank concerning the use of disputed eastern river waters⁽¹⁵⁾.

The talks finally concluded on May 26 without signing any agreements due to Pakistan's insistence on involving a third party. The Indian newspaper Express wrote on one of its pages that the clear objective of the Pakistani delegation was to exert pressure for a ministerial-level meeting to find a solution. Pakistan was also keen on elevating the issue to the political agenda for internationalization, and subsequently inviting a third party to intervene in case of any disruption of the Indus waters⁽¹⁶⁾.

With the emergence of Bangladesh, which received full support from India in 1971, the first phase of negotiations on sharing the waters of the Ganges River began. India felt confident that



Bangladesh's cooperation in this endeavor would bring abundance, and that the arguments of the days of Pakistan would be a thing of the past, especially since India enjoys a strategic geographic position vis-à-vis Bangladesh⁽¹⁷⁾ . .

Initially, India and Bangladesh approached the talks from a new perspective, emphasizing the immense opportunities for comprehensive development in the water resource region. However, this optimism did not last long as differences emerged between the two countries, primarily regarding the quantity of water to be shared during the dry season.⁽¹⁸⁾

During Mrs. Gandhi's first visit to Dhaka from 17th to 19th March 1972, the issue of water was raised in the Friendship Treaty signed between the two countries. Article 6 of the treaty stated that the two governments "agreed to undertake joint studies and joint action in the areas of flood control and river basin management, development and utilization of hydroelectric power and irrigation," as well as central cyclones. However, it should be noted that there is less consensus on whether the reference to the water issue in the treaty was included to highlight its particular importance in Indo-Bangladesh relations. In a dissenting opinion, S.A. Karim, the then Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, mentioned that some senior members of the government were aware that such a treaty could be misunderstood as a defensive arrangement with India. The idea of diluting the water issue in the treaty diluted any military connotation.⁽¹⁹⁾

In April 1972, the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) between India and Bangladesh was established⁽²⁰⁾. Under the Treaty of Friendship and Peace between the two countries, issues related to water sharing, flood control, cyclone management, and river basin development are to be resolved and addressed.⁽²¹⁾

On November 24th, 1972, the Charter of the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) was officially signed and adopted by the governments. According to Article 4 of the JRC Charter:⁽²²⁾ ...

1. The committee's tasks are as follows:
 - a) Maintaining communication between the participating countries to ensure more effective joint efforts in maximizing the benefits of shared river systems for both countries.
 - b) Formulating flood control works and recommending the implementation of joint projects.
 - c) Formulating detailed proposals regarding pre-flood warnings, flood forecasting, and hurricane alerts.
 - d) Studying flood control and irrigation projects in a way that allows the fair utilization of water resources in the region, benefiting the peoples of both countries.
 - e) Formulating proposals for coordinating flood control issues that affect both countries.

2. The committee also performs other functions that may be mutually agreed upon by the governments.

The Joint Committee extensively discussed the approach taken in the long-term planning for the development of water resources in the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna river networks in the eastern region. Despite the committee's best efforts, it was unable to reach an agreement on the allocation of Ganges water, mainly due to differing opinions of the disputing parties. In the context of the committee's work, the Bangladeshi side proposed the establishment of a joint secretariat for the committee in Dhaka, as well as the inclusion of dedicated committee experts and the conduct of monthly reviews involving the Ministers of Irrigation from both countries, in addition to the annual review conducted by the planning commissioners. However, this proposal was not acceptable to India, which believed that the technical experts and other committee experts could enhance the annual review of its work. Thus, the countries differed regarding the performance of the Joint Rivers Commission.⁽²³⁾

On January 17, 1972, B.M. Abbas, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, visited Delhi regarding flood control, irrigation, and energy. During his visit, he said, "A new horizon has opened for candid and free discussions between Bangladesh and India regarding the Ganges and Brahmaputra river systems".



The sharing of Ganges river waters was one of the topics discussed by the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Mr. Abdus Samad Azad, during his first visit to India, less than a month after the birth of Bangladesh. This demonstrated the willingness of the Bangladesh government to resolve issues.⁽²⁴⁾

The first meeting of the Joint Research Center was held in Delhi from June 25 to June 26, 1972. The main issues on the agenda were flood control, training on border rivers, and river development in the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna system. The meeting concluded without achieving any significant results⁽²⁵⁾.

In addition, the establishment of the committee was intended to conduct joint studies and efforts regarding the benefits of the shared river system between India and Bangladesh. According to Article 4 of the Joint Research Center's statute, the committee is responsible for maintaining communication between the governments and conducting joint studies. It is worth mentioning that there was a disagreement during the establishment of the Joint Research Center regarding its design, as Bangladesh wanted to have a full-time secretariat with experts, which was not supported by India. Although the Joint Rivers Commission Act does not mention Farakka, the two governments can resort to the committee if they wish to address the issue of Farakka. Shortly after its establishment, issues related to the increase in the flow of the Ganges river fell under the jurisdiction of the committee.⁽²⁶⁾

The intensity of the geopolitical and political dispute between the two countries increased due to several reasons. The most evident reason was the decrease in available water for nearly one-third of Bangladesh during the driest period of the same year. This had a significant and adverse impact on the environmental, social, and economic aspects of Bangladesh⁽²⁷⁾. The situation worsened and the conflict escalated due to the provocative decision of the Indian government to continue diverting the flow of the Ganges river after the expiration of a temporary agreement with Bangladesh, which lasted from April 21 to May 31, 1975.⁽²⁸⁾

A two-day ministerial-level conference was held in New Delhi to discuss the Farakka issue, from July 16 to July 18, 1973. It was the first of its kind since the liberation of Bangladesh. After the conference, the delegations of both countries reiterated that the settlement of unresolved issues related to the development of shared rivers would be based on mutual discussions to ensure the benefit of the citizens of both countries. The delegations decided that the resolution of issues concerning the development of shared river systems would be based on mutual dialogue for mutual benefit.⁽²⁹⁾

Based on the information provided regarding the Farakka Barrage project, the Prime Ministers of both countries agreed that a joint committee should be formed to provide appropriate recommendations for the water needs of both nations. In this context, it was agreed upon that there should be a fair increase in the flow of the Ganges River during the dry months. They also acknowledged that during periods of lower flow, there might not be sufficient water to meet the needs of Kolkata Port and the entire Bangladesh. Therefore, the necessity of increasing the flow of the Ganges River during the dry months to meet the needs of both countries was recognized.

On July 8, 1973, the first round of political dialogue took place in Delhi between the Indian Minister of External Affairs, Sardar Swaran Singh, and his Bangladeshi counterpart, Khondakar Moshtaque Ahmed. They reiterated their commitment to reach a final decision on the sharing of the Ganges River during a summit meeting between the Prime Ministers, scheduled to be held in 1974. The Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Abbas, who had previously participated in water negotiations as a member of the Pakistani team before 1951, recalled his conversation with the Indian Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh regarding India's decision to supply coal for the construction of a power station in Bangladesh. Abbas mentioned, "Mr. Swaran Singh did not express any difficulty in increasing the power generation capacity in Karnafuli because the lands that would be submerged within India were barren. I pointed out that India had objected to this project in Pakistan days ago, claiming the flooding of an Indian copper mine. He laughed and said that the situation was different now⁽³⁰⁾".



This indicates that if the geopolitical relations between the governing systems are friendly, they contribute to the development of mutual understanding between neighbors.

On July 21, 1973, the Joint Rivers Commission decided to proceed with practical development as the dam construction was still in the preparatory stage. The development plan included the following.⁽³¹⁾

1. Work program to study flood problems in Sylhet-Kashar and adjacent areas in order to prepare suitable projects for flood control in the region.
2. Consideration of long-term planning for flood control and hydroelectric dams in Brahmaputra and Ganges basins, and recommend studies on methods to mitigate the impacts of flood peaks and low flows.
3. Support a program for expanding flood embankments on the Tista River and connecting them with those existing in Bangladesh, and harmonize their elevations.
4. Application of these criteria to other rivers flowing from West Bengal to Bangladesh.
5. Decision to coordinate all aspects of flood control in the fields of weather forecasting, flood measurement and prediction, wired and wireless communications, and organizations dealing with daily flood control operations.
6. Study of data and related studies, along with aerial and hydrographic surveys of the Ganges region from Farakka to Gauri.

In the fourth meeting held on March 29-31, 1973, Abbas expressed the difficulties faced by Bangladesh in planning its water program due to a lack of precise knowledge about India's water utilization plan in the upstream areas of the Ganges River. Abbas also raised the issue of increasing dry season flow in the Ganges River to meet the long-term irrigation requirements of India and Bangladesh through the construction of dams on the main tributaries that feed the Ganges. He emphasized the need for Nepal's participation in the Joint Research Center talks, based on the understanding that suitable dam and reservoir sites should only be located on the feeding tributaries.⁽³²⁾

The Ganges River flows through Nepalese territory. However, the Indian side ignored the proposal.⁽³³⁾

The Joint Rivers Commission met four times until March 1973 but declared its failure to reach any agreement. After that, the issue was escalated to the political level.⁽³⁴⁾

In February 1974, at the end of a meeting of the Joint Committee concerned with the river, the two sides discussed three main items to increase the flow of the Ganges River during dry weather. Regarding the increase in Ganges flow during the dry season and the issue of the Tista River, the committee examined nine reports from the official level committee. The countries agreed to share the waters of the Ganges and insisted on the need to make a decision that would benefit the peoples of both countries.⁽³⁵⁾

At the invitation of Kamal Hossain, the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Sardar Singh, the Foreign Minister of the Indian government, made an official visit to Bangladesh from 13th to 15th February 1974. They emphasized cooperation in various areas between the two countries. One of the issues they discussed was the necessity of the continued work of the Joint Committee for Rivers in the development of water resources in the region. The Foreign Ministers also discussed the issue of sharing the waters of the Ganges River between India and Bangladesh and the need for an early decision on this matter. They were confident that their discussions on this subject would push their joint approach towards finding an early solution to this issue. The Foreign Ministers agreed that an acceptable solution would be reached by both parties before the operation of the Farakka Barrage project.⁽³⁶⁾

From 28th February to 2nd March 1974, the Joint Research Center convened for the seventh time, but the Farakka issue was not, as usual, part of its agenda.



During the visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh to India and the discussions with Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1974, the leaders realized that the Farakka barrage would be operational before the end of the year.⁽³⁷⁾

Since the drought season was not sufficient to meet the requirements of both countries, the Joint Rivers Commission sought to explore all possible options to increase the optimal use of shared water resources for an acceptable solution for both parties to share water during the drought season. Despite intense negotiations on an increase starting from June, the Joint Research Center was unable to reach an agreement on increasing the flow of the dry season in the Ganges River. Meanwhile, New Delhi proposed an increase in the lower Ganges from Farakka in light of limited storage capabilities on the Ganges River and the increasing agricultural requirements within India. On the other hand, Bangladesh persisted in demanding an increase within the Ganges basin. Additionally, two ministerial-level meetings were held in February and April 1975, but they failed to break the deadlock regarding the increase.⁽³⁸⁾

The Indian side proposed that while discussions on the increase continue, testing the feeder channel of the Farakka Barrage has become necessary in light of the onset of the drought season that year. The two sides also agreed that India would release varying discharges ranging from 11,000 cusecs to 16,000 cusecs over a 10-day period from 21st April to 31st May, ensuring the continuity of remaining flows from 39,000 cusecs to 44,000 cusecs for Bangladesh. The amount negotiated for Bangladesh was larger than what Pakistan had demanded in 1968. However, Bangladesh felt deceived by the manner in which the temporary agreement on water withdrawal at Farakka was implemented, and an excessive amount of water was stored, awaiting any progress towards an acceptable solution for both parties.⁽³⁹⁾

In the joint declaration issued at the end of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's visit to India in May 1974, both sides affirmed for the first time the necessity of reaching an acceptable agreement for both parties and acknowledging the real obstacle. This obstacle was that the flow of the Ganges River was insufficient to meet the needs of both sides.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Second Topic: Temporary Agreement on Farakka:

During the remaining period of 1974, more high-level delegation visits between the two countries continued. Each president visited the capital of the other, as did the foreign ministers⁽⁴¹⁾. They directed the Joint Rivers Commission to study the situation and propose the best ways to increase the flow of the dry season in the Ganges River by optimizing the available water resources of both countries in the region. The commission was tasked with providing recommendations to the governments.⁽⁴²⁾

Based on that, the Joint Rivers Commission exchanged data and worked on ensuring water availability in Farakka during different periods. Despite intense negotiations from July 1974 onwards, the Joint Research Center was unable to reach an agreement on increasing the flow of the dry season in the Ganges River.⁽⁴³⁾

On the other hand, New Delhi proposed an increase in the lower Ganges from Brahmaputra, considering the limited storage capacity on the Ganges River and the rapidly growing demand for agricultural requirements within India. Meanwhile, Bangladesh continued to insist on expansion within the Ganges basin. However, both parties failed to resolve the issue fundamentally, as mentioned earlier.⁽⁴⁴⁾

After the disastrous failure of the twelfth meeting of the Joint Research Center in January 1975, Mujib decided to send Rabb Sernbad, the Minister of Flood Control, Power, and Irrigation, to New Delhi for talks with Jagjivan Ram, the new Indian Minister of Irrigation and Agriculture. However, this meeting was also unproductive. In early April, the Indian government sent a message to the Bangladeshi government stating that it had become necessary to conduct a test of the feeder channel, which connects the Farakka Barrage on the Ganges River to the Jangipur Barrage on the Bhagirathi, during the upcoming drought season. They proposed conducting joint observations on



the impact of withdrawals at Farakka on Bangladesh and the Hugli River. Immediate meetings were held within the Ministry of Flood Control and with Sheikh Mujib. Among the points put forward for Mujib to consider was the requirement for a "test," meaning that approval must be granted for instructions regarding the allocation of water releases before allowing the feeder channel to operate any joint study on the impacts of the withdrawals.⁽⁴⁵⁾

The following day, on April 16, 1975, Jagjivan Ram arrived in Dhaka for talks on the issue of withdrawals at Farakka. On April 18, 1975, after three days of challenging negotiations between the Indian Minister of Agriculture, Jagjivan Ram, and his Bangladeshi counterpart, Abdur Rab Serniabat, they managed to sign a short-term geopolitical agreement between India and Bangladesh in Dhaka. Under this agreement, water allocations were specified, and the barrage was decided to be operated temporarily for a period of 41 days, from April 21 to May 31, 1975. It was agreed that the continued operation of the barrage would be conditional upon reaching an acceptable solution by both parties.⁽⁴⁶⁾

According to the agreement, India was also allowed to withdraw a specific amount of water for the Farakka Feeder Canal to benefit the port of Kolkata. The daily withdrawals ranged between 11,000 during the last ten days of May 1975.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Bangladesh will receive the remaining flow of water. It was also agreed to form joint teams to monitor the effects of the agreement at the withdrawal locations in Farakka for both countries, in Bangladesh, and on the Hugli River for the benefit of the port of Kolkata. A joint team will be stationed in Farakka to record the discharges in the Feeder Canal and the remaining flows for Bangladesh. These teams will submit their reports to the governments for consideration, taking into account the supplies that can be relied upon in Farakka as specified in subsequent agreements between India and Bangladesh.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Table No. (4)
Participation of water flow in the lean season in Faraka⁽⁴⁹⁾. 1975Convention

"Period of 10 days"	"The available quantity of shares (in cubic feet)"	"The allocated shares for India (in cubic feet)"	"Bangladesh's share in cubic feet"
21-30 April 1975	55,000	11,000	44,000
1-10 May 1975	56,500	12,000	45,000
11-20 May 1975	59,250	15,000	44,250
21-31 May 1975	65,500	16,000	49,500

According to this agreement, Bangladesh's share of the Ganges waters during the dry months ranged from 44,000 to 49,500 cubic feet per second, while India's share ranged from 11,000 to 16,000 cubic feet per second. There was also a "safeguard clause" in favor of Bangladesh in case the water flow in Farakka fell below the historical minimum. This was a temporary agreement that required ongoing negotiations. However, the assassination of Sheikh Mujib in August 1975 and the subsequent installation of a new regime led to a completely different trajectory in the relations between the two parties, diverging from what was mentioned before.⁽⁵⁰⁾



In a statement in Lok Sabha on April 21, 1975, Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Jagjivan Ram, stated that since the feeder channel would be operated for the first time after the agreement, the discharges should gradually increase in order to take measures to minimize any disruption. Mr. Jagjivan Ram described the Dhaka Agreement as a "breakthrough" that sets an "exemplary precedent for understanding and adaptation" between two neighboring countries in the development of water resources in an international river.⁽⁵¹⁾

Many Indians and Bangladeshis viewed the previous agreement with skepticism. The short-term agreement ended on May 31, 1975. After the agreement expired, India unilaterally started withdrawing 40,000 cubic feet per second of water from Farakka, which is the full capacity of the feeder channel. India's actions posed a significant economic threat to one-third of Bangladesh. India argued that it has 98% of the catchment area and that 94.5% of the population lives in that region, thus claiming a legitimate right to use the water for its own benefit. However, this Indian claim clearly contradicts international law, which states that a riparian state has a legal right to use water from an international river within its territory only if it causes minor or no harm at all to the other riparian country.⁽⁵²⁾

Mr. Sadiqi, Bangladesh's observer in Farakka, sent his protest to New Delhi, but the government of Bangladesh did not take any further action. The only response from India was a proposal to study the potential adverse effects of the channel. The issue was suggested to be studied at an expert level.⁽⁵³⁾

Based on what has been mentioned, the agreement was unable to solve the Farakka crisis due to its temporary and short-term nature. According to the agreement, the joint team was supposed to collect all the data and submit a timely report, which they failed to do.

Bangladesh insisted that in order to improve the flow in the Ganges River, Nepal should be involved because most suitable sites are located there. However, the Indian government insisted that a third party should not be brought into the picture since the Farakka issue is a bilateral matter and therefore its resolution should also be bilateral. Bangladesh argued that if a comprehensive approach to the development of the region's water resources is desired, as recognized by India, then Nepal, with almost all of its territory in the Ganges basin, should be part of the collective effort.

There are at least two reasons for India's objection to Nepal's participation. Firstly, India wanted to keep Bangladesh out of the equation and secure its own agreements with Nepal to maximize its gains. Events after 1975 demonstrate that this is exactly what happened. Secondly, Nepal needs to be kept away from the Joint Research Center due to "Indian fear that Nepal could become a Trojan horse for China".

The opposition in Bangladesh, including opponents of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, played a major role in undermining the goodwill between the two countries. The leader of the Awami National Party in Bangladesh, Maulana Bhashani, criticized Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for sacrificing Bangladesh's political and economic sovereignty for the sake of India. This, along with the unresolved Farakka issue, fueled such sentiments. Former Ambassador Harun-or-Rashid explained that Sheikh Mujib faced a difficult time domestically. The water problem with India was among the reasons that led to a military coup led by disgruntled army officers, resulting in the assassination of Sheikh Mujib and his family and the overthrow of the government, establishing a military regime led by General dhyaa Rahman.⁽⁵⁴⁾

Conclusion:

With the increasing concerns and animosity between interest groups in both countries, the governments of Bangladesh and India faced difficulties in meeting each other's needs. The essence of the matter was that Bangladesh could not accept India's proposal to increase the flow of the Ganges River as it would create additional severe problems for the country. India, in turn, rejected Bangladesh's proposal for study because it wanted to retain the Ganges water for its own use.



Consequently, disputes over water sharing between Bangladesh and India persisted. These conflicts continued for a long period, extending into the era of General dheyaa Rahman.

Footnotes and Sources:

-
- 1 - Monika Kashyap, Op.cit, p. 161.
 - 2 - punam pandey , Revisiting the Politics of Ganga Water Dispute between India and Bangladesh, India Quarterly, 68,(3), New Delhi, 2012,p.267.
 - 3 - , Op.cit, p. 156. P. Sukumaran Nair
 - 4 - Niluka Kadurugamuwa, Sharing of Trans-Boundary River Waters in South Asia; Geopolitics and Beyond, 2014, p.56.
 - 5 - Md. Abul Kashem, Recent Issues in Bangladesh - India Relations: ABangladeshi perspective, Space and Culture Journal, No.4:1, India, 2016, p. 21.
 - 6 - R.K.Dixt, Indo-pakistan Talks on Farakka Barrage and Related matters, Indian. Journal of Intemational Law, Vol.9,1969, p.219.
 - 7 - ZAGLUL HAIDER, Op.cit, p.190.
 - 8 - R.K.Dixt, Op.cit ,p.219.
 - 9- ZAGLUL HAIDER, Op.cit, p.75.
 - 10-Shariful Islam, Bangladesh-India Water Sharing Disputes Possible Policy Responses, JOURNAL OF Bangladesh Studies, VOLUME 14, NO.1, 2012, P.1.
 - 11 - Nilanjana Nayak, India-Bangladesh Bi-Lateral Relations Since 1990s, Thesis Submitted for the degree of Doctor , Faculty of Arts, Vidyasagar University, India, 2020, p.13.
 - 12 - Nilanjana Nayak, India-Bangladesh Bi-Lateral Relations Since 1990s, Thesis Submitted for the degree of Doctor , Faculty of Arts, Vidyasagar University, India, 2020, p.14.
 - 13 - Punam Pandey, Op.cit, p.5.
 - 14 - Indo -pak Relations, 1981.
 - 15 - Ibid.
 - 16 - Ibid.
 - 17 - Avtar Singh Bhasin, India-Bangladesh Relations Documents1971 - 2002, part One, New Delhi , 2003, p.19.
 - 18 - Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, Understanding the Ganges Water Treaty, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRLO), 2013, P.37.
 - 19 - Shaukat Hassan, Op.cit p.235.
 - 20 - Maya Mirchandani, The Teesta Water Dispute: Geopolitics, Myth and Economics, SEPTEMBER 2016, p.12.
 - 21 - Piyali Dutta, India-Bangladesh Relations Issues, Problems and Recent Developments, IPCS Special Report, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi, SEPTEMBER 2010, p.4.
 - 22 - Shaukat Hassan, Op.cit p.233.
 - 23 - , Op.cit, p. 166. P. Sukumaran Nair
 - 24 - Shaukat Hassan, Op.cit p.237.
 - 25 - Monika Kashyap, Op.cit, p.174.
 - 26 - Tamanna Ashraf, BANGLADESH AND INDIA: THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL REPERCUSSIONS OF ASYMMETRIC AND SECURITIZED HYDRO, LORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, Miami, Florida, 2020, p. 89.
 - 27_ Dr. K. W., Ministry of Economy, Economic and Trade Report, File Number 7/1/256 on 14/4/1973, p. 101.
 - 28 - Kathryn Jacques, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan International Relations and Regional Tensions in South Asia, London, 2000, p.35.
 - 29 - Kathryn Jacques, p.35.
 - 30- punam pandey , Op.cit , p.p.268-269.
 - 31_ AZRA KHAN, India-Bangladesh relations since 1972, PhD thesis Department of Political Science Aligarh Muslim University India, 1993, p.155-156.
 - 32_ Shaukat Hassan, Op.cit p.239.
 - 33_ AZRA KHAN, Op.cit p.157.



- ³⁴ - punam pandey, Op.cit , p.267.
- ³⁵ - AZRA KHAN, Op.cit , p. 50.
- ³⁶ - Avtar Singh Bhasin, India-Bangladesh Relations Documents 1971 - 2002, part One, New Delhi , 2003, p.83.
- ³⁷ - F.C.O37/ 1427, British High Commission, New Delhi, 18 December, 1974, No: FSB 3/302/1, p.7.
- ³⁸ - Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, Op.cit , P.37.
- ³⁹ - punam pandey, Op.cit , p.268.
- ⁴⁰ - Tamanna Ashraf, BANGLADESH AND INDIA: THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL REPERCUSSIONS OF ASYMMETRIC AND SECURITIZED HYDRO, LORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, Miami, Florida, 2020, p. 89.
- ⁴¹ - Monika Kashyap, Op.cit, p. 177.
- ⁴² - Avtar Singh Bhasin, Op.cit, p. 127.
- ⁴³ - F.C.O37/ 1427, British High Commission, New Delhi, 22 November, 1974, No: FSB 3/302/1, p.18.
- ⁴⁴ - Punam Pandey, Bangladesh, India, and Fifteen Years of Peace Future Directions of the of the Ganges Treaty , Asian Survey, Vol. 54, Number 4, University of California, p. 657.
- ⁴⁵ - Shaukat Hassan, Op.cit p.247.
- ⁴⁶ - AZRA KHAN, India-Bangladesh relations since 1972, PhD thesis Department of Political Science Aligarh Muslim University India, 1993, p.157.
- ⁴⁷ - Komal Kaushik Baral, Op.cit ,p. 82.
- ⁴⁸ - Monika Kashyap, Op.cit, pp. 177-178.
- ⁴⁹ - s.s. Bindra, Indo -Bangladesh Relations: Mujib Era (New Delhi, 1982), pp.68-69. نقلاً من المصدر:
AZRA KHAN , Op.cit, p.158.
- ⁵⁰ - Nilanjana Nayak , Op.cit, p.13. †Avtar Singh Bhasin, Op.cit, p. 127.
- ⁵¹ - Avtar Singh Bhasin, Op.cit, p. 127.
- ⁵² - ZAGLUL HAIDER , Op.cit, p.81.
- ⁵³ - Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, Op.cit, p. 41.
- ⁵⁴ - punam pandey, Op.cit , p. 269.