



International Conference on

Water Resources of South Asia: Conflicts to Cooperation (WARSA-CC)

Second Call for Papers with revised deadlines

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon [Bangladesh Environment Movement] (BAPA), Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN), and other co-organizers are pleased to announce the "**International Conference on Water Resources in South Asia: Conflicts to Cooperation (WARSA-CC)**" to be held on January 4-5, 2013 in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh.

Background

The basins of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna Rivers support over one billion people living in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, China, and Nepal. Rivers, lakes, wetlands, estuaries, and groundwater in these basins are life-sustaining resources that are not only essential for survival of humans, but also necessary elements for healthy ecosystems of the region. Though these river basins are divided by political boundaries, their water and sediment need to be managed using a multilateral, basin-wide approach, keeping in mind the interests of all co-riparian countries.

Unfortunately, as of now, the dominant approach in managing these resources has been unilateral, with each country trying to manage and utilize the water resources and ecosystems within its own boundary without adequate coordination with other co-riparian countries. This approach is not proving conducive to optimal utilization of the resources. Instead, it is often leading to conflicts.

For example, there were reports in the media about China's intention to divert water from the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra River, known as Yarlung-Tsang Po River. Such a step will obviously have serious consequences for the lower riparian countries, namely India and Bangladesh.

Similarly, India has constructed diversionary and flow-control structures at various points on these rivers. Of these, the Farakka Barrage on the Ganges River, in operation since 1974, is the most well-known example. The Gajoldoba Barrage on the Teesta River, Montudu-Leska Dam on Montudu-Saari River, and Rangit Dam on Ranjit River (a tributary of Teesta River) are other examples. The work on Tipaimukh Dam on the Barak River is proceeding. On top of these individual projects is the proposed Indian River Linking Project (IRLP), the main purpose of the Himalayan part of which is to transfer water from the Brahmaputra and the Ganges Rivers to southern and western India. These Indian water projects have now become the main obstacle to improved Indo-Bangladesh relationship. For example, water disputes are making it difficult for Bangladesh to agree to India's proposal for transit facility through Bangladesh to her north-eastern states.

The lack of a multilateral, basin-wide approach is also holding back joint efforts toward control of river pollution, improvement of navigability, mitigation of flood and draught, ensuring proper flow and deposition of silt, sustainable utilization of groundwater resources, and protection of coastal and marine environment of the Bay of Bengal, including the Sundarban mangrove forests.

Elsewhere in the world, countries appear to be cooperating well in managing and utilizing shared river resources. In Europe, for example, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands are cooperating in protection and utilization of the Rhine River through International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) (set up in 1950), International Commission for the Hydrology of the Rhine Basin (established in 1970), and Central Commission for Navigation of the Rhine (set up in 1815). Similarly, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and the Ukraine are cooperating in protecting and using the Danube River through the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) (established in 1998) and the Danube Commission (set up in 1948). In Latin America, for example, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela are cooperating in protecting and using the Amazon River through Amazon Cooperation Treaty. In Africa, for example, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda are cooperating for protection and use of the Nile River through the Nile Basin Initiative, taken in 1999. Close to home, Laos, Viet Nam, Kampuchea, and Thailand are cooperating in protecting and

Local enquiries:

Kamrul Ahsan Khan, Kamrul@gmail.com; Dr Swapan Paul, swapanil@yahoo.com

using the Mekong River through the Mekong River Commission (set up in 1995).

By contrast, efforts at cooperation with regard to the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers have so far remained limited to bilateral framework only. Unfortunately, this has not produced satisfactory results, as can be seen from the ongoing conflicts between India and Bangladesh, and also between India and Nepal, and the potential conflict between China and the downstream countries of India and Bangladesh.

It may therefore be time to think about breaking out from unilateral and bilateral approaches and adopt a genuine multilateral, basin-wide approach in managing the water resources and sediments of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna river basins. The ominous consequences of climate change, including sea level rise, aggravated seasonality of precipitation, glacier melting, salinity ingress, and higher incidence of extreme weather events have made multilateral cooperation regarding the rivers more urgent.

Purpose of the Conference:

The purpose of this conference is to bring together experts, activists, and representatives of other stakeholders from the countries of the South Asian region, as well as from the rest of the world, in order to review the current state of water-related planning and management efforts, and to consider ways of raising the cooperation to a higher level in order to protect and harness the water resources of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers for the benefit of all co-riparian countries. It is hoped that the conference will allow the participants to rise above narrow national interests and to consider the interests of the rivers and the population inhabiting their basins as a whole. The concrete objectives of the conference are as follows:

- a) Review the experience of water development efforts of the countries lying in the basins of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers; examine the philosophies and approaches that have guided these efforts so far; identify the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and the concrete water projects that have followed from them.
- b) Review the experience of basin-wide, multilateral cooperation practiced elsewhere in the world in the light of the need and potential of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna river basins.
- c) Formulate recommendations for the governments and people of countries sharing the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna river basins about approaches and policies to follow and steps to take with regard to protection and utilization of resources of these river basins.
- d) Sensitize the people of the region and the international community about the current problems in water development in the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna river basins and about the potential of the basin-wide approach and multilateral cooperation.
- e) Establish unity among experts and activists of the region through free exchange of ideas and opinions and dissemination of information about work they are doing in their respective countries.

Topics of the Conference:

The broad topics to be covered by the conference include:

- a) The current state and potential of rivers and ground water resources of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna river basins.
- b) The experience of existing dams and barrages in the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna river basins.
- c) The pros and cons of proposed dams, barrages, and other river flow control structures and projects.
- d) The lessons for the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna river basins from cooperation among countries of river basins elsewhere in the world.
- e) Broader impact of river related conflicts on cooperation in other areas among South Asian countries.
- f) Impact of climate change on water resources of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna river basins and cooperation necessary to deal with the impact.
- g) Cooperation necessary for protection of the coastal and marine environment of Bay of Bengal.
- h) Hurdles to greater cooperation among peoples, governments, experts, and activists for protection and use of water

Local enquiries:

Kamrul Ahsan Khan, Kamrul@gmail.com; Dr Swapan Paul, swapanil@yahoo.com

resources of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna river basins.

Format of the Conference

The conference will have a dual format, comprising of (i) Expert Sessions and (ii) General Sessions

The Expert Sessions are dedicated to presentation of papers and discussion by regional and international experts. The timeline and other information regarding submission of papers are given below.

To the extent that discussion by experts alone cannot solve the problem of cooperation, the conference will have General Sessions devoted to discussion by non-experts, including

- a) River activists
- b) Representatives of people affected by dams, barrages, and other river intervention structures
- c) Political leaders
- d) Representatives of mass organizations and civil society
- e) Representatives of Non-governmental organizations (NGO)
- f) Representatives of various sections of the society
- g) Concerned individuals

The conference will have both Plenary and Parallel sessions. Most of the Expert and General Sessions will be organized in the parallel mode. However, a few of them will be organized as Plenary Sessions. The Inaugural and Concluding Sessions will be the other Plenary Sessions.

Call for Papers with revised deadlines for submissions

Papers are invited on the topics above. The timeline regarding papers is as follows:

September 30: Last date for submission of one-page abstract of the proposed paper.

October 15: Notification to the authors of the accepted abstracts.

November 15: Last date for submission of complete papers.

November 30: Deadline for submission of the revised complete version of the accepted papers.

Papers written by authors inside Bangladesh are requested to send their abstract and full paper to

Prof. Feroze Ahmed
Dept of Civil Engineering
Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology
Dhaka, Bangladesh
E-mail: fahmed@ce.buet.ac.bd

Papers written by authors outside of Bangladesh should send their paper by e-mail to the following:

Prof. Md. Khalequzzaman
Dept of Geology & Physics
Lock Haven University
Pennsylvania, USA,
E-mail: mkhalequ@lhup.edu

Organizing Committee

Meanwhile a Conference Organizing Committee (COC, WRSA CC) has already been formed with Prof. Nazrul Islam, former Chairman, University Grant Commission, Vice President of BAPA and an eminent Environmentalist as the Chairman. The committee is in the process of incorporating other co-organizers & associate organizers comprising renowned public and private universities & institutes, professional associations, dedicated non-governmental & civil society organizations and networks etc.

[For any explanation and further information please contact Dr. Mohd. Abdul Matin, General Secretary, Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA), Tel: 01819 223343, E-mail: memory14@agni.com, or bapa2000@gmail.com and Fax no: [+880 2 8113469](tel:+88028113469)]

Local enquiries:

Kamrul Ahsan Khan, Kamrulk@gmail.com; Dr Swapan Paul, swapanil@yahoo.com