

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

11 September 2022



## INDIA AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

# Why is the Kushiyara river treaty important?

What is the status of the Teesta river water sharing proposal between India and Bangladesh?

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE

**The story so far:** During Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India from September 5 to 8, the two sides signed a slew of agreements, including the first water sharing agreement since the landmark Ganga Waters Treaty, 1996. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed on sharing of the waters of the Kushiyara river, a distributary of the Barak river which flows through Assam, and then on to Bangladesh. The agreement comes in a year when both lower Assam in India and Sylhet in Bangladesh have witnessed deadly floods highlighting the requirement for greater cooperation on flood control and irrigation-related issues between the two countries.

What is the Kushiyara agreement?

Over the last century, the flow of the Barak river has changed in such a way that the bulk of the river's water flows into Kushiyara while the rest goes into Surma. According to water expert, Dr. Ainun Nishat, the agreement is aimed at addressing part of the problem that the changing nature of the river has posed before Bangladesh as it unleashes floods during the monsoon and goes dry during the winter when demand of water goes up because of a crop cycle in Sylhet. Though the details of the agreement are not yet known, Dr. Nishat says that under this MoU, Bangladesh will be able to withdraw 153 cusecs (cubic feet per second) of water from the Kushiyara out of the approximately 2,500 cusecs of water that is there in the river during the winter season. There are various estimates about the area that will benefit from this supply but it is generally understood that approximately 10,000 hectares of land and millions of people will benefit from the water that will flow through a network of canals in Sylhet benefiting the farmers involved in Boro rice, which is basically the rice cultivated during the dry season of December to February and harvested in early summer. Bangladesh has been complaining that the Boro rice cultivation in the region had been suffering as India did not allow it to withdraw the required water from the Kushiyara. The agreement addresses Bangladesh's concern over water supply along the river,



Kushiyara is expected to require much more work.

How will Bangladesh use the water?

The water of Kushiyara will be channelled through the Rahimpur Canal project in Sylhet. The Rahimpur Canal project in Zakiganj upazila or subdivision of Sylhet was built to help the farmers access Kushiyara's water but the facility used to remain dry during the lean season without serving the purpose for which it was built. The eight km long canal is the only supplier of water from the Kushiyara to the region and Bangladesh has built a pump house and other facilities for withdrawal of water that can now be utilised.

Why is the water from the Kushiyara so important for Rahimpur Canal?

The water of the Kushiyara has been used for centuries in Sylhet's subdivisions like the Zakiganj, Kanaighat and Beanibazar areas. But Bangladesh has witnessed that the flow and volume of water in the canal has reduced during the lean season. The utility of the river and the canal dur-

ation of rice as well as a wide variety of vegetables for which Sylhet is famous. The additional water of Kushiyara through the Rahimpur Canal therefore is the only way to ensure steady supply of water for irrigation of agriculture fields and orchards of the subdivisions of Sylhet.

What was India's objection to the Rahimpur Canal?

The Kushiyara water sharing agreement finalised during the August 25 Joint River Commission and signed during Prime Minister Hasina's visit was made possible as India withdrew its objection to withdrawal of Kushiyara's waters by Bangladesh through the Rahimpur Canal. Withdrawal of India's objection is likely the main part of the agreement, said Dr. Nishat. Before this, Bangladesh had carried out the Upper Surma Kushiyara Project which included clearing and dredging of the canal and other connected channels of water; but the channels could not be of much use to Bangladesh because India objected to the move and claimed that the dyke and other infrastructure interfered in border security as Kushiyara itself forms part of the border between the two sides. However, the agreement indicates that the economic benefits possible from the river outweighed the security concerns.

What are the hurdles to the Teesta agreement?

The Kushiyara agreement is relatively smaller in scale in comparison to Teesta that involves West Bengal, which has problems with the proposal. The Kushiyara agreement did not require a nod from any of the States like Assam from which the Barak emerges and branches into Kushiyara and Surma. The reduced water flow of the Kushiyara during winter and Teesta too, however, raise important questions about the impact of climate change on South Asian rivers that can affect communities and trigger migration. Bangladesh has cited low water flow in its rivers during the winter months as a matter of concern as it affects its agriculture sector. Dr. Nishat contends that the coming decades will throw up similar challenging issues involving river water sharing as the impact of the climate crisis becomes more visible with water levels going down in several cross-bor-

# What is the G7 planning on Russian oil?

How will imposing a price cap on oil purchases from Russia help? How is India responding to the West's call?

SUHASINI HAIDAR

**The story so far:** On September 2, Finance Ministers of all G7 countries, the U.S., Canada, the U.K., France, Germany, Italy, Japan, as well as the European Union announced their plan to “finalise and implement a comprehensive prohibition of services which enable maritime transportation of Russian-origin crude oil and petroleum products globally”, unless they are purchased at or below a “price cap” they will fix. The plan, however, doesn't include Russian gas, which Europe is still quite dependent on.

What is the price cap plan?

■ The price cap plan is the latest of the sanctions proposed by Western countries against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, as well as Belarus for its support to Russia. For the past few weeks, U.S. and EU officials have been trying to convince countries including India, China and Turkey to join the coalition or to at least support the price cap, which they say is in the interests of all oil buyers from Russia as it will give them leverage to lower purchase prices.

How will it be enforced?

■ For countries that join the coalition, it would mean simply not buying Russian oil unless the price is reduced to where the cap is determined. For countries that don't join the coalition, or buy oil higher than the cap price, they would lose access to all services provided by the coalition countries including for example, insurance, currency payment, facilitation and vessel clearances for their shipments. G7 countries say they are aiming to reduce the price of oil, but not the quantity of oil that Russia sells, so as to control inflation globally while



Supply crunch: The crude oil terminal Kozmino on the Nakhodka bay near the port of Nakhodka, Russia. • REUTERS

hurting the Russian economy and its ability to fund the war in Ukraine. This could only work, of course, if all countries joined the coalition.

How has Russia reacted to the plan?

■ Russian President Vladimir Putin has lashed out at the plan, warning that Russia would not supply “anything at all” if it contradicts Russian interests. Speaking at the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) in Vladivostok this week, that Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined virtually, he threatened that Russia could stop supplies of gas, oil, coal, heating oil... leaving European countries to “freeze”. On September 5, Russia also announced a halt on all supplies via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline to Europe due to “maintenance issues” arising from the EU sanctions already in place, raising fears of a very difficult winter for European countries.

Will the Modi government comply with the price cap?

■ The price cap is only the latest in a number of sanctions to hurt the Russian economy that the U.S. and EU have tried to bring India on board with: from asking

India to change its uncritical stance on Russia at the United Nations, to cutting down oil imports, to stopping defence and other purchases from Russia, and to avoid the rupee-rouble payment mechanism that circumvent their sanctions. Thus far, India has not obliged, and there is little indication that New Delhi is likely to, just yet. India's oil intake from Russia, which was minuscule prior to the war has soared 50 times over. When asked, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri rejected any “moral” duty to join the price cap coalition, and said his only duty was to providing affordable oil to Indian consumers. At the EEF, Mr. Modi said he wanted to “strengthen” ties with Russia in the energy field and boost India's \$16 billion investment in Russian oilfields. This week, Mr. Modi will also join President Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other leaders at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Uzbekistan, where the price cap issue will no doubt be discussed from the opposite viewpoint to the G7's. It also remains to be seen whether India will bargain with the U.S. to set aside sanctions against Iran and Venezuela, from which it cancelled oil imports under pressure from the U.S. in 2017-18, in exchange for joining the price cap coalition.

# G7

## Group of Seven (G7)

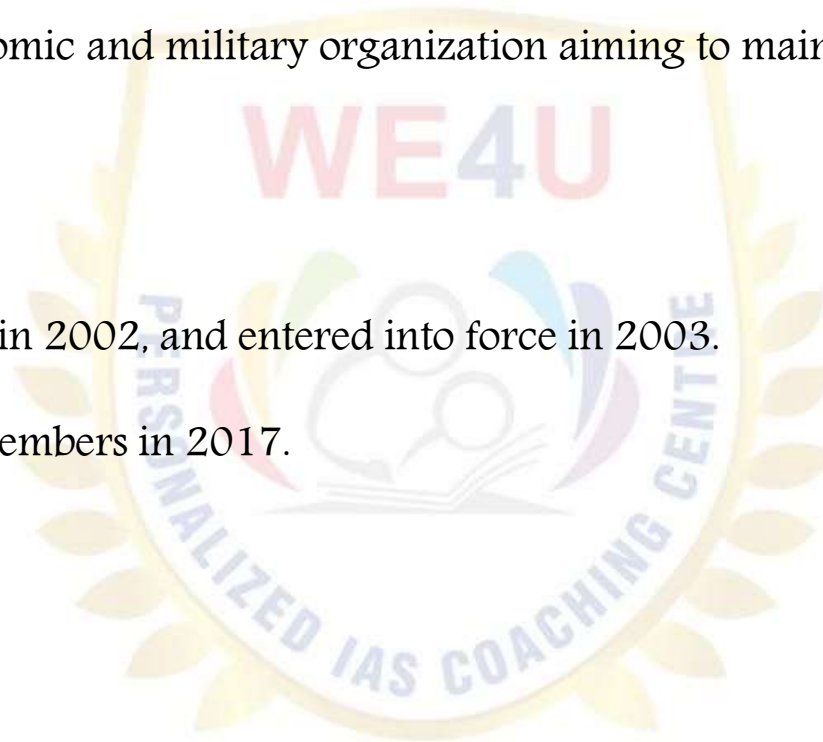
- ✓ It is an intergovernmental organisation that was formed in 1975.
- ✓ The bloc meets annually to discuss issues of common interest like global economic governance, international security and energy policy.
- ✓ The G7 countries are the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the US.
- ✓ All the G7 countries and India are a part of G20.
- ✓ The G7 does not have a formal charter or a secretariat. The presidency, which rotates among member countries each year, is in charge of setting the agenda. Sherpas, ministers and envoys hammer out policy initiatives before the summit.

## **EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM**

- ✓ EEF was established by the decree of the President of the Russian Federation in the year 2015.
- ✓ It takes place each year in Vladivostok, a city in Russia.
- ✓ It serves as a platform for the discussion of key issues in the world economy, regional integration, and the development of new industrial and technological sectors, as well as of the global challenges facing Russia and other nations.
- ✓ Over the years, it has emerged as an international platform for discussing the strategy for developing political, economic and cultural ties between Russia and Asia Pacific.

# SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION

- ✓ SCO is a permanent intergovernmental international organization.
- ✓ It's a Eurasian political, economic and military organization aiming to maintain peace, security and stability in the region.
- ✓ It was created in 2001.
- ✓ The SCO Charter was signed in 2002, and entered into force in 2003.
- ✓ India and Pakistan became members in 2017.



# Why cloudburst forecast in India still remains elusive

Monitoring stations on the ground can hardly capture cloudburst characteristics due to their highly localised and short occurrence

## Why forecasting cloudbursts is a challenge

Efforts to monitor and forecast cloudbursts are still at a nascent stage

**1** As per the IMD definition, over **100 mm of rainfall in one hour** is called a cloudburst. It usually occurs over a small geographical region (20-30 sq. km)

**2** Rainfall of 100 mm per hour translates to **100 litres for every square metre** where a cloudburst occurs. For a small region of 20 sq. km, it is about **two billion litres of water** in an hour

**3** Tall cumulonimbus clouds causing cloudbursts can develop quickly (in about **30 minutes**) as the moisture

updraft happens rapidly – 60-120 km/hr

**4** Cloudbursts occur mostly over the rugged terrains over **the Himalayas, Western Ghats**, and northeastern hill States of India

**5** In India, cloudbursts often occur during the monsoon season, when the **SW monsoon winds bring in** copious amounts of moisture inland

**6** Satellites fail to detect cloudburst systems as the **resolution of the**

**precipitation radars** are much smaller than the area of individual cloudburst events

**7** Multiple doppler weather radars can **monitor moving cloud droplets** and help to provide forecast for the next three hours. But **radars are expensive** and installing them widely may not be feasible

**8** The change in monsoon extremes and cloudbursts are in response to the **1-degree Celsius rise** in global surface temperature

# ‘Cooperatives only way to resist farm distress’

Agro economist suggests that Centre and Punjab work together on an agriculture policy that benefits farmers, consumers

A. M. JIGEESH

Eminent agro economist **Sukhpal Singh**, who has done detailed studies about Punjab's agricultural systems, will take charge as the new Chairman of the State's Farmers and Farm Workers Commission on Monday. Speaking from his office at the Punjab Agriculture University, where he is a principal agro economist, Dr. Singh said only the cooperative system can save agriculture and the economy. Dr. Singh, who believes that farming can be made a profitable vocation with a little help from the government, said crop diversification is a priority for him and for that, both the Centre and the State should frame policies. Excerpts from the interview:

There is a new government in Punjab. So, what is the mandate of the commission when it is being reorganised now?

■ Our mandate is yet to be prepared. But certainly there is a need to develop the agriculture policy of the State. It should be a long-term policy consisting of the various long-term aspects on income behaviour, natural resources management, marketing policy, expenditure patterns and profitability of farmers.

It should be also about the value-addition process of the Punjab's agricultural economy. Trade is also important here.

International trade is the mandate of the Union government. We are a border State. We need opportunities to seek avenues to improve our trade with the neighbouring countries too. Punjab is an agriculture State, producing for the market. We produce mostly foodgrains, which are not perishable. Considering the inter-

national ecosystem and international economic scenario, we must produce foodgrains.

You have worked in detail on farmers' suicide in Punjab. Do you have any alternative to help farmers to fight indebtedness?

■ Punjab is a land of small peasants. Average land holding though is higher than national average, farmers are facing problems and committing suicide. Farming gives income and there is profitability. But due to liberalisation, all the social sectors such as health and education are now privatised. Farmers, as a result, are not entitled to get income from their work.

We will frame a strategy in discussion with the State government and the Punjab Agriculture University to see that the share of an agricultural producer in consumer's



🌀 **Crop diversification is very important for farmers and natural resources management**

rupee should be increased. Cooperative system is the way for it. We should develop a cooperative system for production and for marketing. Cooperative system is the only solution for the economic problems. We should develop cooperatives, not corporates.

Cooperatives will help to develop backward and forward linkages in agriculture. Cooperatives will also help

MSMEs to face the crisis they face now.

Crop diversification is an issue in Punjab. Both the Centre and the State promotes crop diversification but farmers do not have much choices. What's your view?

■ Crop diversification is very important from the farmers' and the natural resources management angles. The problem here is economics. Farmers are tied up to wheat and paddy cultivation. They don't see any chances of diversification. Both the Centre and the States should help the farmers to grow crops that are suitable for both the consumers and the ecology. We have to have policies from States and Centre to diversify crops. State has resource issues. Centre should help the State and farmers with the advice from experts to diversify crops.

The commission will actively consider the ways to develop methods for diversification.

Natural farming is the new slogan of the Centre. Can Punjab turn to natural farming?

■ In certain clusters and crop combinations in some belts, we can try organic and natural farming. I personally think natural farming has no scope in Punjab considering its productivity level. Land rents are high here. There is nothing called zero budgeting. Everything has a budget. One cannot do farming in zero budgeting.

There is no two opinions that we should reduce the use of chemicals in farming. Precision farming will help us here. It can be applicable in high value crops. We will face problems in both production and in marketing if we shift to methods of natural production.



# Facing land 'shortage', DDA declining compensatory afforestation requests

Union Environment Ministry yet to respond to letter seeking relaxation, says official

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

"Shortage" of land for carrying out compensatory afforestation (CA) has forced the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to deny requests from service agencies which are executing development projects in the Capital, said a senior official.

"We recently received a request from the Indian Railways to provide close to 25 hectares for one of its projects. However, we told them we were unable to attend to the requirement due to a shortage of land for CA. Previously, we had to convey the same for a project of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)," said the official, adding that the urban body had provided 119.76 hectares in 2021.

He said the urban body had flagged the issue in a letter to the Union Environment Ministry in March this year and sought a relaxation in the guidelines to carry out CA, but the latter was yet to respond.

## Trees for trees

Compensatory Afforestation, according to the Handbook of Forest Conservation Act, 1980, has to be carried out for diversion of forest land or deemed forest land for non-forest purposes, while the purpose of CA is to compensate for the loss of "land by land" and loss of

## NO LAND FOR TREES

Land allotted by DDA for compensatory afforestation in 2021

- Inter University Accelerator Centre
- New Lab Complex at Aruna Asaf Ali Road (Dushghara, Todapur)
- ▲ **2.0 hectares**
- National Capital Region Transport Corporation
- Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System Corridor
- ▲ **4.61 hectares**
- Power Grid Corporation of India
- Khetri (Rajasthan)-Jhatikara (Delhi) Transmission Line
- ▲ **4.89 hectares**
- School Of Planning And Architecture Delhi
- Construction of SPA campus, Vasant Kunj
- ▲ **8 hectares**



FILE PHOTO

- Delhi Metro Rail Corporation
- Deforestation of Ridge Area
- ▲ **15 hectares**
- Delhi Metro Rail Corporation
- Instead of use of deemed forest area for various roads
- ▲ **10 hectares**
- NCRTC, CPWD, Northern Railway
- Instead of deemed forest land being utilised for works related to Central Vista Project
- ▲ **15 (1,282), 8.11, 2.396 hectares, respectively**
- Delhi Urban Heritage Foundation
- Mehrauli Archaeological Park
- ▲ **705 Sqm**
- National Highways Authority of India
- Urban Extension Road-II
- ▲ **49.76 hectares**
- National Highways Authority of India
- Delhi-Saharanpur Highway
- ▲ **15.0 hectares** (Not allotted due to land shortage)
- AGENCY ● PROJECT
- ▲ LAND ALLOTTED

## "trees by trees"

"We have no land for CA and this is alarming since it will affect development works in the city. Delhi has limited space. How can we compare the status of land in the city to States such as Madhya Pradesh or Uttar Pradesh. In our letter to the Ministry, we had conveyed solutions such as relaxation in order to carry out CA in neighbouring States or they should give us some solu-

tion," said the DDA official.

**'Exclusive relaxation'**  
A senior official at the Union Environment Ministry said that the DDA was seeking "exclusive relaxation" in carrying out CA.

The official said the DDA has "no shortage of land" for CA, adding that the urban body's "so-called shortage is a white lie".

"They [DDA] simply do not want to part with the

land that they have for CA. There is an Act in place for CA that applies to the entire country and they must follow it. The DDA has been beating around the bush regarding their shortage while they have not categorically stated that they have no land for CA. In fact, the DDA has more than 5,000 hectares of Yamuna floodplains which remains encroached upon," said the Ministry official.

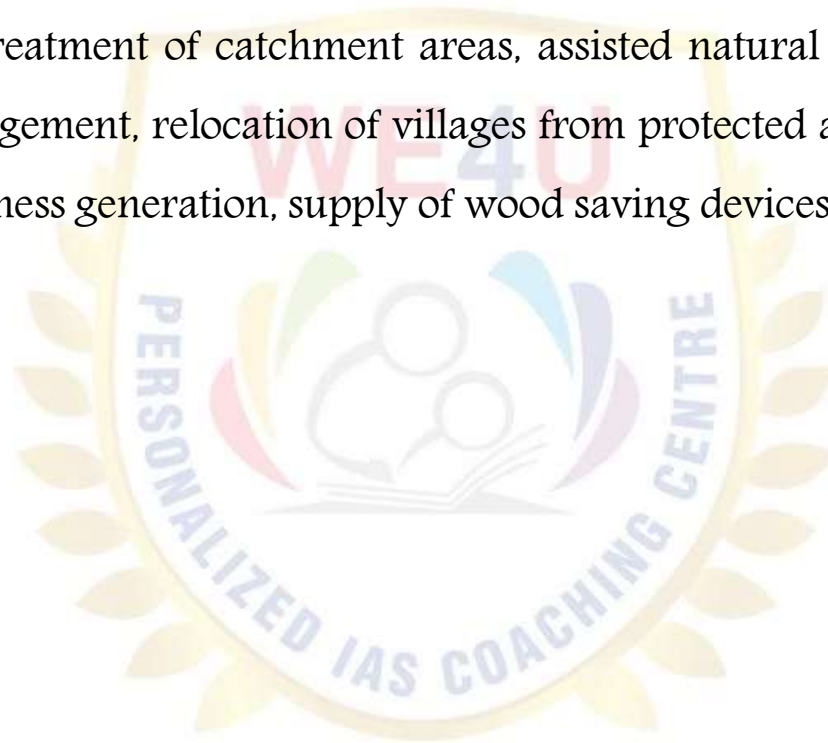
## Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA).

✓ The CAF Act was passed by the centre in 2016 and the related rules were notified in 2018.

✓ The CAF Act was enacted to manage the funds collected for compensatory afforestation which till then was managed by ad hoc CAMPA

✓ Compensatory afforestation means that every time forest land is diverted for non-forest purposes such as mining or industry, the user agency pays for planting forests over an equal area of non-forest land, or when such land is not available, twice the area of degraded

- ✓ As per the rules, 90% of the CAF money is to be given to the states while 10% is to be retained by the Centre.
- ✓ The funds can be used for treatment of catchment areas, assisted natural generation, forest management, wildlife protection and management, relocation of villages from protected areas, managing human-wildlife conflicts, training and awareness generation, supply of wood saving devices and allied activities.





**THANK YOU**

