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## India-Bangladesh: Sharing of waters of Feni River- A historical Event:

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After more than two decades India and Bangladesh signed a major MoU on sharing of waters of the Feni River. According to this agreement India is allowed to draw 1.82 Cusecs of water from Feni to the border town of Sabroom to augment the water supplies for the town.

The last agreement signed between India and Bangladesh was in sharing of Ganga waters in 1996- the Farakka and the agreement is still holding good.

The agreement on Feni was signed during the 4-day visit of Sheikh Hasina to India in the first week of October. The agreement was preceded by a meeting of a Secretary level of the two countries in August 2019 as a part of the Joint Rivers Commission meetings between the two countries held from time to time. This meeting that was much appreciated in the Joint Press Statement issued after the visit by coming to some positive agreements. The meeting also agreed to share data for an interim framework for sharing of waters of other trans boundary rivers- the Mana, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudh kumar.

Trans boundary rivers have always been problematic in resolving the vital issue of sharing waters and both the countries should be congratulated for a quick decision on the quantum of water to be shared. That the two Governments and their Representatives on Water sources have agreed to share the data and tentatively agreed to draw up a general framework for sharing of waters of such rivers is indeed a major paradigm change in the relationship between the two countries. The good will shown by Sheikh Hasina despite criticism from home on the still pending Teesta river issue is indeed, very commendable.

This additional supply of potable water from the Feni river is a great boon for the inhabitants of Sabroom town.

India and Bangladesh share as many as 54 major rivers and yet there had been an agreement only on one of the rivers.

Feni river originates from South Satpura hills and flows through Sabroom town where it enters Bangladesh. The river is navigable upto Ramgarh in Bangladesh.

In June 2015 PMs Modi and Sheikh Hasina jointly laid the foundation stone for a bridge on the Feni river near Sabroom. It is a four-lane highway entirely financed by India.

Chittagong Port will hardly be about 72 Kms from the bridge and there is a proposal for India to build a SEZ near Sabroom so that products made in the interior and in SEZ could reach Chittagong Port quickly.

Eventually, with the opening of the bridge and easy access to Chittagong, Sabroom in course of time is likely to become a major hub for transport of goods from North east and of benefit not only to Tripura but to the entire region.

As expected, some criticism has already set in that the bridge and the SEZ would have an adverse environmental impact in the region. This view is too far-fetched, and I am certain that India unlike what China is doing in Myanmar would take adequate precautions and safeguards to prevent any adverse impact on the region.

Despite India dragging its feet on sharing of Teesta Waters thanks to the West Bengal Government, Sheikh Hasina has been big-hearted enough to go ahead with the Feni agreement. It is time that India finds some ways and means to get over the problem of Teesta waters.

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