

# MUTUAL COOPERATION IN MANAGEMENT OF COMMON RIVER WATERS CAN CHANGE THE FATE OF MILLIONS IN SOUTH ASIA

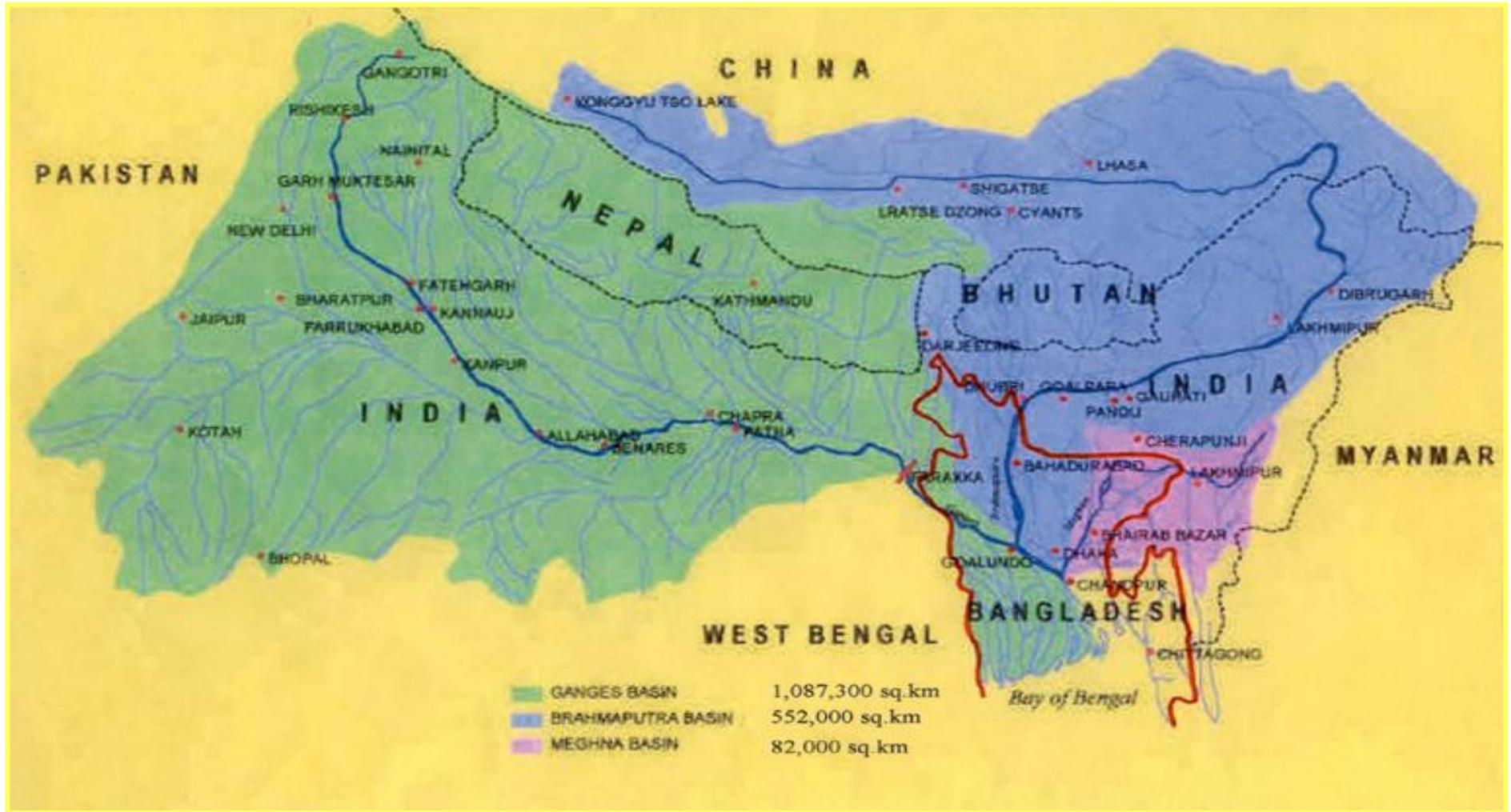
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## INTRODUCTORY

- There are several thousand rivers in South Asia
- Many of those are transboundary in nature and common to two or more countries.
- Important among those are the Indus the Ganges the Brahmaputra and Meghna etc.
- Access to water is a basic human right.
- Most of the economies of South Asia are agro based.





## CONTD

- There is serious competition over the use of waters of the common rivers amongst the riparian countries.
- Water is used by all the countries both for consumptive and non-consumptive users both of which are equally important.
- The flow availabilities are highly seasonal in this region and vary widely between the wet (June to Oct) and dry (Nov to May) seasons.
- As a consequence, many of that South Asian countries often face disaster floods during the wet monsoon season and severe scarcity of water during the dry season.





## CONTD

- The situation is further exacerbated in many parts due to human interventions in the natural flows of the common rivers by some upper riparian countries like diversion of up scarce dry season flows of the common river in the upstream.
- Such phenomena have given rise to serious differences, disputes between riparian countries in some parts of the region.
- The result is acrimony and bitterness between riparian countries.

## CHALLENGES FACED BY THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION

- The South Asian Countries faces various challenges like meeting the basic needs, securing the food supply, protecting the ecosystem and environment and many other issues which are directly or indirectly linked with the availability of the waters of common rivers both in temporal and spatial teams.
- Few larger countries of the region are more powerful in all respect than a few other smaller countries which are all co-riparian of some common rivers.
- This is giving rise to inequality in many parts and some smaller countries unfortunately are not able to reap the benefits from the use of common rivers water.

## CURRENT SITUATION

- Despite all these problems there are some good news too.
- India and Bhutan are working solidly with each other to harness the waters of the Bhutanese tributaries of the Brahmaputra.
- India and Nepal had since the early part of the last century are trying to work jointly to harness to Nepalese tributaries of the Ganges. But all are not that happy as was expected.
- India and Bangladesh have signed a treaty to share the dry season flows of Ganges in 1996. But these two countries are yet to strike deals to share and manage 53 other common rivers between them.
- India and Pakistan back in the sixties have signed the Indus Treaty. But now there are reports that it has landed in trouble the waters.

## CURRENT IMPEDIMENTS IN THE WAY OF MUTUAL COOPERATION AMONGST CO-BASIN COUNTRIES

- There is a serious deficiency in the climate of cooperation amongst a few riparians.
- Dearth of confidence and trust between some neighbors.
- Big brother and small brother syndrome.
- No serious effort on the part of the international community to promote collaborative management of common river water resources in these regions.

## HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

- Promote/Develop political will amongst the common concerned, actors and governments of the region to collaborate with each other.
- To that end,
  - Increase the people to people contact
  - Increase activities by international pressure groups.
  - Help create a climate of trust and confidence and the will to collaborate.
  - Start disseminating and exchanging all water related data and information amongst all the countries of the region.

# WHAT COULD BE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS

- Basin wide collaborative management of common river waters can greatly
  - Reduce the depth, duration and intensity of floods in vast areas.
  - Significantly increase the dry season flow availabilities in many areas.
- As a result, multiple benefits will accrue to millions of people
- Millions of new jobs will be created and the national economies of many countries will flourish
- The environment and the ecosystem in the entire region will be greatly benefited
- Above all a climate of trust and confidence will be created in the region on a sustainable basis.

## CONCLUSION

In the best interest of more than a billion people in the South Asian region, the transboundary/common river water issues need to be resolved by the concern countries based on the principles of equity, fairness and no harm to any party.

Water is a cardinal resource for stability and prosperity and should be used as a force for regional integration and not division.

THANKYOU