



**TATHASTU**  
Institute Of Civil Services

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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**TATHASTU**  
Institute Of Civil Services



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## Topics Covered

- Punjab Floods leave farmers stranded between two seasons
- The making of an ecological disaster in the Nicobar
- Greying with grace
- India and Bangladesh to hold talks on water sharing

## Punjab Floods leave farmers stranded between two seasons

### Punjab floods leave farmers stranded between two seasons

Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Mansa, Ferozepur among districts hit, farmer outfits say 30% of paddy crop has been ruined, with the floods leaving the land unsuitable for sowing winter wheat as well; they seek compensation of ₹70,000 an acre, loan waiver

Vikas Vardhana  
CHANDIGARH

With floodwaters inundating numerous Punjab villages, 62-year-old Amrinder Singh from Kalamnagar village in Gurdaspur district faces concerns beyond his immediate paddy crop losses – the prospect of sowing wheat in the upcoming winter season now appears to be a daunting challenge.

"My entire crop has been submerged under flood water for days now and I have lost any hope of it recovering even if the water recedes. From now, there's around three to four feet of water in the field. The flood water from the Ravi river entered my field, bringing mud and debris, making the chance of crop recovery a bleak possibility," said Mr. Singh, who, along with his nephews, has sown paddy in around 60 acres of leased panchayat land.

Gurdaspur has been among the worst flood-hit districts, along with Amritsar, Mansa, Ferozepur, and Patiala, which together ac-



Massive loss: Farmers look at paddy crops submerged in floodwaters after a rise in water level of the Ravi river following heavy rain at a village near Jalandhar on August 26, 2025.

count for the bulk of agricultural losses.

"Months to rebuild"

"My loss is not limited to the current damage by floods," said Mr. Singh. "I am now concerned about the sowing of wheat, which I would be doing in the winter season. I am not sure how much time the water will take to recede. After it recedes, it will take

months to rebuild the farm for cropping. We usually sow wheat in early November here, but it appears to be difficult this time. Late sowing would eventually result in low yield, which again means loss," he said. Harjeet Singh Kalon, the Gurdaspur district president of the Democratic किसान Sabha, expressed concern about the severe agricultural losses. "Almost

the entire village land was submerged under flood water following breaches from the Ravi river a few days ago. Crops in flood-sunk areas have been destroyed, and we urge the government to immediately provide financial assistance to the sufferers," he said.

This is among the worst flood situations that Punjab has faced in recent de-

cadres, with almost 2,000 villages affected across all districts in the State. The rain has hit the Sutlej, Ravi, and Beas rivers in spate, almost four lakh people have been impacted, with 40 reported deaths till September 6. Crops on 1.72 lakh hectares have been damaged in 18 of the State's 23 districts.

"National disaster" The Samajika Kisan Morcha (SKM) has urged the Centre to declare a "national disaster" situation in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu-Kashmir, Uttarakhand, and Haryana.

Farmer outfits have demanded an immediate release of compensation. "At least ₹70,000 per acre compensation should be given for all damaged paddy crops. Farmers have lost their livestock as well. Paddy is the key kharif crop in Punjab, and floods have damaged at least 30% of the crop across the State. The muck in paddy fields has ruined the crop in thousands of acres," said Jagmohan Singh, general secretary, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU, Lucknow).

### Encroachments, climate change may have led to Punjab's worst floods in decades

Vikas Vardhana  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab, the country's grain bowl, is battling one of its worst floods in decades, which have impacted nearly four lakh people, claimed 48 lives, affected about 2,000 villages, and resulted in an estimated loss of over ₹10,000 crore.

While heavy rains and overflowing rivers remain the primary triggers, experts and official assessments stress that human interventions, including blocked drainage systems, encroachments on natural water channels, and unregulated construction activities such as road laying, have aggravated the crisis.

Punjab witnessed major floods in 2023, 2019, 2013, 2010, 2008, and 2004. Each monsoon, which brings nearly 75% of the

State's annual rainfall, floods cause loss of life and extensive damage to crops, houses, and public utilities. This year, the Sutlej, Ravi, and Beas rivers are in spate, submerging farmland, roads, and low-lying areas. With the paddy harvest weeks away, standing crops have been destroyed, compounding losses to farmers and the rural economy. Substantial livestock losses have worsened the impact.

Human factors According to official estimates, crops over 1.72 lakh hectares across 18 of Punjab's 23 districts have been damaged. Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema has called it the worst flood in five decades. "More than 22,000 people have been evacuated. The final report of damage



Swinging into action: Residents and Army personnel rescuing cattle at Mand village in Kapurthala district; night on a view of inundated roads in Jalandhar. ICL Photos

can be prepared after floods recede, but the Union government should promptly release the State's pending dues amounting to ₹60,000 crore, besides additional financial aid," he said.

"The Water Resources Department's Flood Preparedness Guidebook 2024 highlights heavy monsoon

rain as the most common cause of flooding, but also underscores man-made factors. It warns that physical barriers impede natural drains, while unregulated development, including construction along riverbanks, obstructs water flow. The report also notes that while reservoirs and embankments have miti-

gated flood risks on the Beas, Sutlej, and Ravi, threats persist due to heavy releases from reservoirs, as well as breaches in embankments. Union Agriculture Minister Shriyati Singh Choudhary, during a visit to the State on September 4, blamed illegal mining. "When [late] Atal Bihari

Vajpayee was the Prime Minister and [late] Prakash Singh Badal was the Chief Minister, embankments along the Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, and Ghaggar rivers were strengthened and raised to protect crops from floods. However, due to illegal mining, they weakened and water entered the villages," he said. The Finance Minister dismissed Mr. Choudhary's claim, calling it a "blatant display of bias" against Punjab.

Pattern of neglect Experts argue that unregulated construction and mining have amplified the State's vulnerability. S.K. Saluja, former chief engineer with the Ranjit Sagar and Shahpurkandi dam projects, said, "Encroachments through settlements close to rivers and rivulets have been

happening for years. Successive governments have failed to control them." Construction works done in an unscientific way also obstruct water flow. Mr. Saluja said, adding that rampant sand mining in riverbeds is a huge problem in Punjab.

Since the onset of monsoon on June 24, the State has received 591.8 mm of rainfall, 53% above normal, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The current floods are being compared to those of 1988, when over 500 people lost their lives.

"Matter of concern" Suresh Kumar Paul, scientist and IMD director at Chandigarh, said the impact of climate change is evident. "The change in weather patterns is visible owing to climate change. Over the

last decade, rainfall has become more inconsistent in Punjab. The monsoon is not uniform, which is a matter of concern," Mr. Paul said.

Climate expert Soumya Dutta, trustee of MAUSAM (Movement for Advancing Understanding on Sustainability and Humanity), told The Hindu that global warming is directly intensifying rains.

"The primary driving factor behind heavy rains in Punjab and the northern floods are being compared to those of 1988, when over 500 people lost their lives. This is the new normal," Mr. Dutta said. She added that the management of hydropower dams must be improved.

FARMERS STRANDED PAGE 10

## Key Takeaways from the Article

### Latest Flood Situation (2025)

- All 23 districts of Punjab declared floodhit
- Impact:
  - ◆ 1,900 villages, 3.8 lakh people, 11.7 lakh hectares farmland affected
  - ◆ 43 deaths reported
  - ◆ Gurdaspur worst-hit
- Pakistan's Punjab also displaced 9 lakh people → cross-border dimension
- IMD: 45% excess rainfall in Punjab, Himachal, J&K this year

### FIELDS FLOODED, PEOPLE DISPLACED



| District   | Population affected | Crop area affected |
|------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Gurdaspur  | 1,45,000            | 40,169             |
| Amritsar   | 1,35,880            | 26,701             |
| Kapurthala | 5,728               | 17,807             |
| Fazilka    | 24,212              | 17,786             |
| Ferozepur  | 38,594              | 17,221             |
| Tarn Taran | 60                  | 12,828             |
| Mansa      | 178                 | 11,042             |

Crop area in hectares; situation on Friday



## Rivers: Boon & Bane

- **Boon:**
  - ◆ Ravi, Beas, Sutlej (perennial) + Ghaggar, choes (seasonal)
  - ◆ Fertile alluvium → Punjab = “*Food Bowl of India*” (20% wheat, 12% rice)
- **Bane:**
  - ◆ Monsoon floods overwhelm embankments (dhussi bundhs)
  - ◆ Historical floods: **1955, 1988, 1993, 2019, 2023, 2024, 2025**

## Role of Dams in Flooding

- **Major Dams:**
  - ◆ Bhakra (Sutlej) – Himachal Pradesh
  - ◆ Pong (Beas) – Himachal Pradesh
  - ◆ Thein / Ranjit Sagar (Ravi) – Punjab-J&K border

**Management:** Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB, Centre-controlled)

## Issues:

- ◆ High water storage in July–Aug → little cushion for heavy rains
- ◆ **Sudden releases without timely warnings** → downstream flooding
- ◆ **Madhopur barrage gate collapse (2025)** → catastrophic floods in Pathankot, Gurdaspur

## Governance Failures

### Centre-State Tensions:

- BBMB prioritizes irrigation & power over flood control
- Punjab has limited say in decisions
- 2022 amendment: officers from any state can lead BBMB → Punjab feels sidelined

### State Failures:

- Poor maintenance of bundhs, weakened by **illegal mining**
- Weak coordination between Irrigation Dept. & dam authorities
- Delay in local warning & evacuation measures

## Key Challenges

- Climate change → erratic & high-intensity rainfall
- Dams designed for power/irrigation, not **dynamic flood management**
- Encroachments & sand mining weaken natural flood plains
- Lack of integrated flood management between Centre & States
- Inadequate disaster preparedness at district level

## Way Forward Institutional Reform:

- BBMB mandate must integrate **flood management** as core objective
- Greater representation of Punjab in decision-making

## Technical Measures:

- Dynamic rule curve based on real-time weather forecasts
- Modernizing barrages & strengthening embankments
- River basin-wide approach (Punjab, Himachal, J&K coordination)

## Governance:

- Early warning systems with community-level dissemination
- District disaster management plans → drills, flood shelters
- Environmental Safeguards:
- Ban illegal mining, restore wetlands & natural drainage
- Promote flood-resilient agriculture in low-lying areas
- Long-term: National framework for Integrated Flood Management (IFM)

## The making of an ecological disaster in the Nicobar

## Syllabus :

### GS 3 : Environment & Ecology

### GS 2 : Governance

### GS 1 : Indian Geography

## The making of an ecological disaster in the Nicobar

**T**here has been no shortage of half-baked and ill-conceived policymaking in the last 11 years. The latest in this series of planned misadventures is the Great Nicobar mega infrastructure project. The totally misplaced ₹72,000 crore expenditure poses an existential danger to the island's indigenous tribal communities, threatens one of the world's most unique flora and fauna ecosystems, and is highly susceptible to natural disasters. Nevertheless, it is being insensitively pushed through, making a mockery of all legal and deliberative processes.

### Uprooting tribals

The Great Nicobar Island is home to two indigenous communities, the Nicobarese tribe and the Shompen tribe (a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group). The ancestral villages of the Nicobarese tribals fall in the project's proposed land area. The Nicobarese were forced to evacuate their villages during the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. This project will now permanently displace this community, ending its dream of returning to its ancestral villages.

The Shompen face an even greater threat. The Island's Shompen Policy, notified by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, specifically requires the authorities to prioritise the tribe's welfare and "integrity", when considering "large scale development proposals." Instead, the project denotifies a significant part of the Shompen tribal reserve, destroys the forest ecosystems where the Shompen live, and will cause a large-scale influx of people and tourists on the island. Ultimately, the Shompen will find themselves cut off from their ancestral lands and unable to sustain their social and economic existence. Yet, the Government is stubbornly adamant and shockingly insistent.

The Constitutional and statutory bodies set up to preserve tribal rights have been sidestepped throughout this process. As in Article 338-A of the Constitution, the Government should have consulted the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. It has failed to do so. The Government should have consulted the Tribal Council of Great Nicobar and Little Nicobar Island. Instead, the Council Chairman's plea that the Nicobarese tribals be allowed to return to their ancestral villages has been neglected. A



**Sonia Gandhi**  
is the Chairperson,  
Congress  
Parliamentary Party

The Great Nicobar Island Project is a grave misadventure, trampling on tribal rights and making a mockery of legal and deliberative processes

Letter of No Objection was secured from the Council, but it has since been revoked, with the Council noting that the authorities had "rushed them" into signing the letter.

Due process and regulatory safeguards set up to protect local communities have been evaded. The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) conducted as per the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 should have considered the Nicobarese and Shompen as stakeholders of the process and evaluated the project's impact on them. Instead, it omits any reference to them altogether. The Forest Rights Act (2006), which empowers the Shompen as the authority to protect, preserve, regulate and manage the forests, should have underpinned any policy action. Instead, the Shompen have not been consulted on this issue – a fact which the Tribal Council has now confirmed. The country's laws are being mocked wholesale. Unconscionably, one of the country's most vulnerable groups may have to pay the ultimate price for it.

### The farce of compensatory afforestation

Ecologically, this project is nothing short of an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe. The project will require the cutting down of trees on an estimated 15% of the island's land, decimating a nationally and globally unique rainforest ecosystem. The Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change estimates that 8.5 lakh trees may be cut. This is a depressing figure, but it may also be a gross underestimate – independent estimates have suggested that 32 lakh trees to 58 lakh trees may eventually be cut.

The Government's solution to this indiscriminate tree felling is that of 'compensatory afforestation', a rather poor substitute for the loss of natural, old-growth forests. Inexplicably, the planned afforestation is in Haryana, a State that is thousands of kilometres away, and in a decidedly different ecology. In a tragedy bordering on farce, a quarter of this land planned for afforestation has now been auctioned off by the Haryana Government for mining. In any case, compensatory afforestation may help assuage a guilty conscience but is simply no substitute for

the destruction of multi-species, biodiversity-rich natural forests. The planned port site is also controversial with some of it falling under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) IA. Port construction is prohibited in CRZ IA areas due to the presence of turtle nesting sites and coral reefs.

Despite abundant evidence confirming the same, which includes a National Green Tribunal order, the Government has contrived ways to manipulate this truth through a high-powered committee (HPC). The report of this HPC and the ground-truthing exercise it conducted to reclassify the port site out of CRZ IA has not been made public.

### Flaws in methodology

From a wildlife stand-point too, the project raises serious concerns. Primatologists have written to the Government expressing grave concerns about the project's impact on the Nicobar long-tailed macaque. These concerns have been ignored. The biodiversity assessments for the projects have come under questioning for critical methodological flaws. The assessment of sea turtle nesting sites was conducted in the off-season for nesting. Drones were employed to gauge the project's impact on dugongs, but these drones have limited capacity and can only assess shallow areas. Evidence has emerged that the institutes were made to conduct these assessments under highly unusual conditions, bordering on duress.

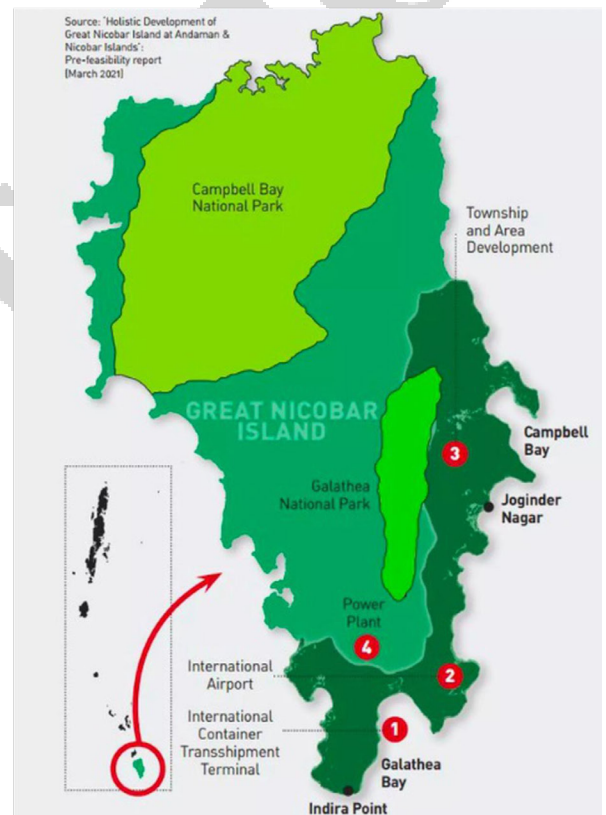
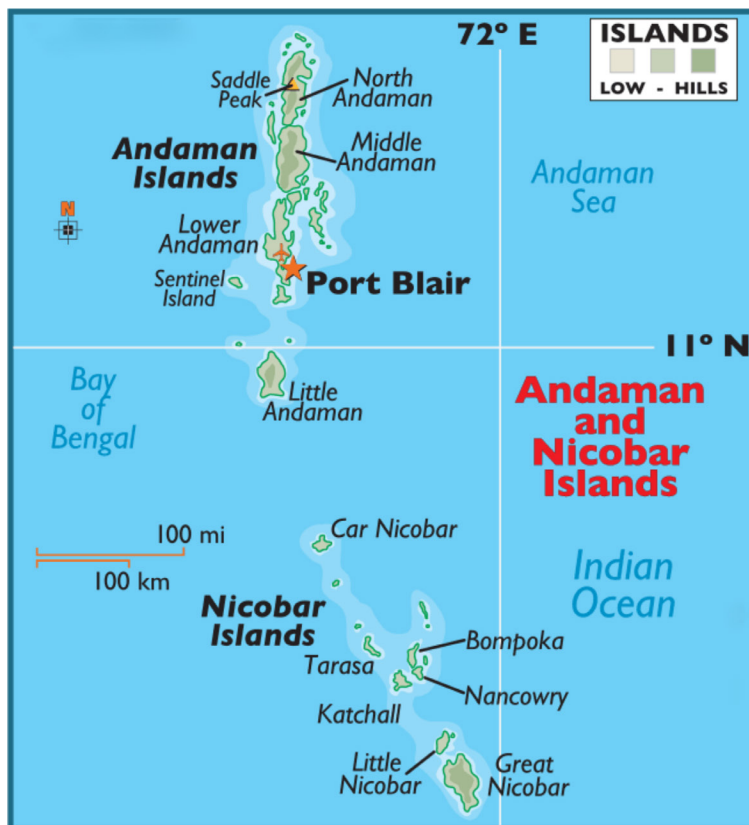
Finally, the project – including the port – is coming up in a seismically sensitive earthquake prone zone. The tsunami of December 2004 saw a permanent land subsidence of about 15 feet. The 6.2 magnitude earthquake in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in July 2025 only reminds us of this ever-present threat. Locating such a massive project here deliberately jeopardises investment, infrastructure, people, and the ecology.

Our collective conscience cannot, and must not, stay silent when the very survival of the Shompen and Nicobarese tribes is at stake. Our commitment to future generations cannot permit this large-scale destruction of a most unique ecosystem. We must raise our voice against this travesty of justice and this betrayal of our national values.



## Great Nicobar Project

- Mega project at southern tip of Andaman & Nicobar Islands
- Components:
  - ◆ **Trans-shipment port** (Galathea Bay)
  - ◆ **Greenfield International Airport**
  - ◆ **Township development**
  - ◆ **450 MVA Gas + Solar Power Plant**
- Implemented by ANIIDCO, based on NITI Aayog report
- Location: Near **Malacca Strait** – vital maritime chokepoint



### Strategic Importance

- Enhances **military deployment**: warships, aircraft, missile batteries
- Close surveillance of Bay of **Bengal & Indian Ocean**
- Counters **Chinese naval presence** (Malacca, Sunda, Lombok Straits, Coco Islands)
- Trans-shipment hub → integrates India into **regional & global maritime trade**

### Challenges

#### Impact on Tribes

- Shompen & Nicobarese (PVTGs) at risk
- Violation of Forest Rights Act (2006)

### Ecological Concerns

- Nearly **1 million trees felled**
- Threat to **coral reefs, Nicobar Megapode bird, leatherback turtles**
- One of India's **largest forest diversions**

### Seismic Vulnerability

- Located in **earthquake-prone zone** (2004 tsunami subsidence)

### Governance Issues

- Lack of **adequate consultation** with Tribal Councils
- NGT (2023) upheld clearances but called for **High-Power Committee**

### UPSC PYQ 2014

#### Q. Which of the following have coral reefs? (2014)

1. Andaman and Nicobar Islands
2. Gulf of Kachchh
3. Gulf of Mannar
4. Sunderbans

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

### UPSC PYQ 2014

#### Q. Which one of the following pairs of islands is separated from each other by the 'Ten Degree Channel'? (2014)

- (a) Andaman and Nicobar
- (b) Nicobar and Sumatra
- (c) Maldives and Lakshadweep
- (d) Sumatra and Java

### UPSC PYQ 2009

#### Q. In which one of the following places is the Shompen tribe found? (2009)

- (a) Nilgiri Hills
- (b) Nicobar Islands
- (c) Spiti Valley
- (d) Lakshadweep Islands

## Greying with grace

### Syllabus :

**GS 1 : Indian Society**

**GS 2 : Social Justice**

### Greying with grace

Changing population dynamics require a policy reorientation for governments

**I**f there was any doubt about India going through the throes of a demographic change, confirmation came with the Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report indicating a fall in the country's Crude Birth Rate (CBR) and Total Fertility Rate. As per the SRS data for 2023, India's CBR, defined as the number of annual live births in a population per 1,000 people, had declined to 18.4, a drop from 19.1 in 2022. The country's TFR had also fallen to 1.9, after hovering at 2.0 in 2021 and 2022. The TFR indicates the average number of children a woman will have in her lifetime to replace that generation, and a TFR of 2.1 births per woman is considered replacement-level fertility, translating to a stable population over time. Any figure over 2.1 suggests a growing population while rates below 2.1 signify a clear trend towards population decline and aging. Of course, as usual, for a country of this size and diversity, there were vast regional differences. The highest CBR was in Bihar at 25.8, and the lowest was in Tamil Nadu at 12. Bihar also reported the highest TFR (2.8) and Delhi, the lowest (1.2). Eighteen States and Union Territories had a TFR below the replacement level, and all States reporting higher than replacement level TFR were in northern India – Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh. Following Delhi, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra too have a TFR below 2.0. Simultaneously, as expected from such a demographic shift, SRS data indicated the proportion of people above 60 rose by 0.7 percentage points in a year to 9.7% of the population. Kerala has the highest proportion of elderly population, at 15%, while Assam, Delhi and Jharkhand reported the lowest proportion of their population over 60 years.

It will be foolhardy to look away from the writing on the wall. As the most populous nation, home to over 1.46 billion people, the current declining trend will admittedly take several years to have an impact on the population. However, there is no doubt that the nation, having, at least theoretically, prepared for 'more' all these years, should now prepare for a different future, while continuing to leverage the demographic dividend it still possesses thanks to a relatively young workforce. A greying nation will come with its own attendant concerns and needs – financial, universal access for reduced mobility, physical and mental health-care facilities and social support services. A 'young' nation, after all, will require a massive realignment to be ready to serve the needs of a growing population of the elderly.

## India and Bangladesh to hold talks on water sharing

### Syllabus :

GS 2 : International Relations

GS 1 : Indian Geography

### India and Bangladesh to hold talks on water sharing

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

The India-Bangladesh Joint River Commission is set to meet in Delhi on Tuesday, sources said, amid ongoing tensions between the two countries. Dhaka plans to send a 10-member team to raise its concerns about water sharing of 14 cross-border rivers.

Sources said that Bangladesh plans to use the discussion as a warm-up for talks on the Ganga Waters Agreement of 1996 that will come up for renewal next year, when Bangladesh will also hold its first election since the overthrow of the Sheikh Hasina government in August 2024.

The treaty was signed during Ms. Hasina's first term in power in 1996, when it was decided that the treaty would be considered for renewal 30 years later. It is understood that Bangladesh will now demand a longer time frame before the next renewal of the treaty. It is also seeking some changes in the use of the river's water on the Indian side.

Diplomatic sources said that Dhaka is expected to ask for a special vehicle to manage the waters of 14 rivers, including the Muhuri, Khowai, Gomti, Dharla, and Doodhkumar.

Bangladesh also wants India's support to create a joint flood forecasting mechanism, sources said.