Prelims and Mains focus: about Indo-Bangladesh Joint River Commission and its significance; rivers shared by India and Bangladesh

News: The India-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission’s technical-level talks that were scheduled to begin on Thursday were cancelled at the last minute, an official of the Ministry of Jal Shakti said on Wednesday.

What was the reason?

- Though the official didn’t mention any specific reason for cancellation of the talks, he said, “It was a request from the Bangladesh side.”

- However, sources said the meeting was postponed due to the delay in the exchange of data on six common rivers which was updated several years ago.

- Noting that the meeting was scheduled to be held on December 19-20, the official said the new date of the meeting has not been finalised yet.

- The cancellation of the meeting comes at a time when the country is witnessing protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act passed by Parliament earlier this month. Last week, Bangladesh Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, too, cancelled their scheduled visits to India.

Rivers shared by India and Bangladesh

- India and Bangladesh share 54 rivers and a Joint River Commission is functioning since June 1972. Besides this, technical level meetings are held regularly.

Indo-Bangladesh Joint River Commission
An Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) is functioning since 1972. It was established with a view to maintain liaison in order to ensure the most effective joint effort in maximizing the benefits from common river systems. The JRC is headed by Water Resources Ministers of both the countries. 37th meeting of the JRC was held at New Delhi from 17th – 20th March, 2010, wherein various matters pertaining to cooperation in Water Resources sector with Bangladesh were discussed.

A new chapter in the Indo-Bangladesh relations opened up with signing of a Treaty by the Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh on 12th December 1996 on the sharing of Ganga/Ganges waters. The Treaty shall remain in force for a period of thirty years to be renewable by mutual consent. For monitoring the implementation of the Treaty, a Joint Committee has been set up.

Discussions have been continuing with Bangladesh for sharing of waters of Teesta & Feni rivers besides other six common rivers namely; Manu, Muhri, Khowai, Gumti, Jaldhaka and Torsa. Govt. of India is at its endeavour to conclude the agreement of the sharing of waters of Teesta and Feni rivers with Bangladesh, which is acceptable to all parties concerned and which protects the interests of all stakeholders.

There exists a system of Transmission of flood forecasting data on major rivers like Ganga, Teesta, Brahputra and Barak during the monsoon season from India to Bangladesh. The transmission of flood forecasting information during the monsoon has enabled the civil and military authorities in Bangladesh to shift the population affected by floods to safer places.

The Teesta River dispute