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Q5(c)

Discuss the steps required to realise hydro-co-operation between India and Bangladesh.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · PSIR GS 2 · 10 marks · India and South Asia

India and South Asia: Regional Co-operation; South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation; South Asian Economic cooperation; Impediments to regional co-operation; India and the Look East / Act East policy.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the steps required to realise hydro-co-operation between India and Bangladesh
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

The 1996 Ganga Treaty is the working model of dry-season sharing.

The **Joint Rivers Commission** is the institutional means.

Teesta remains the political missing piece.

Flood data, Brahmaputra transparency, and inland navigation are the next hardware steps.

Indian federal politics is as decisive as diplomacy with Dhaka.

Introduction

India and Bangladesh share the Ganga-Brahmaputra-**Meghna basin**. Hydro-cooperation is water-sharing, navigation, power, and flood data. Treaties exist. **Teesta** and some upstream projects still wait.

Body**What is already in place**

- The 1996 Ganga Water Sharing Treaty at Farakka set a dry-season formula for thirty years and a **Joint Committee**.
- The **Joint Rivers Commission**, from the 1970s, is the standing bilateral body for fifty-plus shared rivers.
- Power trade, the Sundarbans, and inland protocol routes show that water is also electricity and cargo, not only a barrage dispute.

Steps still required

- Conclude a **Teesta** arrangement that West Bengal's politics can live with, or a creative package of storage, canals, and seasonal guarantees.
- Share flood and monsoon data in real time; climate extremes make last-minute warning a humanitarian step.
- **Joint basin** planning on the Brahmaputra and Barak, including transparent talk on Tipaimukh-type projects, to cut Dhaka's fear of upstream control.

- Navigation protocols, dredging, and last-mile inland ports so Bangladesh gains transit value, not only water volume.
- **Sub-regional hooks:** BBIN and BIMSTEC energy so Bhutanese hydropower and Indian grids include Bangladesh as a paying partner.
- Domestic federal coordination in India, because water is a State subject in practice at the political bottleneck.

Spirit

- Hydro-cooperation needs Panchsheel-style non-harm plus engineering. A treaty without federal buy-in will not flow.

Flow diagram

Ganga Treaty 1996 -> Joint Rivers Commission
Teesta deal -> Hydro-cooperation
Data navigation power -> Hydro-cooperation
Joint Rivers Commission -> Hydro-cooperation

Conclusion

India-Bangladesh hydro-cooperation needs a **Teesta** settlement, live flood data, joint basin planning, navigation and power links, and Indian federal consensus. The 1996 Ganga Treaty is the template. Completing the unfinished rivers is the step that still defines the relationship.

Facts & figures

Ganga Treaty 1996

Thirty-year Farakka sharing formula between India and Bangladesh with a joint committee.

Teesta

A major unagreed sharing file; West Bengal's consent has blocked a ready central text.

Joint Rivers Commission

Bilateral body to discuss shared rivers, data, and projects.

Tipaimukh debate

Proposed Manipur project on the Barak that Bangladesh has feared as an upstream control risk.

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