

World Water Day: Brahmaputra Riparian Countries Should Look Beyond Political Interests To Realise River's Potential

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Brahmaputra is a unique river system and if managed well, it can be the engine for economic and regional development. However, it requires an integrated basin-wide approach combined with social, economic, political, cultural and legal considerations along with a scientific and technological paradigm. This is only possible if the basin countries communicate and interact with each other to foster a spirit of cooperation.

The Yarlung Tsangpo–Brahmaputra–Jamuna river basin (henceforth to be referred as Brahmaputra basin) is one the most important river systems of South Asia. Originating from a Tibetan glacier, the river links Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and India, before reaching the sea at the Bay of Bengal. The Brahmaputra basin, which supports more than 100 million people, has a huge potential for irrigation development, livelihood opportunities, and infrastructure-related operations such as navigation and hydropower (Biswas 2011) and is a vital resource base for poverty alleviation and economic advancement (Bandyopadhyay 2002). But, the development potential of the basin has been hindered by significant natural and anthropogenic challenges (Ray et al 2015).

The basin has been described as “plagued by floods and droughts” and land-reshaping sedimentation in the rivers and floodplains (Babel and Wahid 2011) that brings uncertainty and impoverishment to the lives of the basin communities.

Currently, there is a growing consensus that the perils of the rivers can be turned into prosperity. The river has been therefore a subject of discussion between governments of the region, to formulate and implement cooperative strategies, to improve the economic condition and living standards of the basin community (Bandyopadhyay 2002; Biswas 2011; Ray et al 2015; Barua et al 2017).





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