

## No impropriety by Indian envoy: Bangladesh minister

The Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh has not committed any diplomatic impropriety while speaking 'frankly' during a discussion on the Tipaimukh dam project, a minister has said.

The Indian high commissioner had allegedly called Bangladeshi water resources specialists protesting India's Tipaimukh dam project 'so called experts' June 3.

'The Indian high commissioner, as the representative of a friendly neighbouring country, has expressed his opinion and views frankly,' Syed Ashrafur Islam, minister for local self-government (LGRD) and cooperatives, also the ruling Awami League's spokesperson, told media Thursday.

In doing so, he differed with Foreign Minister Dipu Moni who had earlier this week expressed her 'personal view' that High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty 'may have stepped out of line' while participating in a discussion.

Political analysts said that the minister's view was part of the damage control ahead of the visit of a Bangladeshi parliamentary delegation to the site of the proposed dam at Tipaimukh in India's Manipur state.

Envoys of different countries, including the US and China, at different times had talked openly about internal issues of the country, New Age quoted Ashrafur Islam as saying.

Accepting an Indian proposal, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Tuesday had said that a parliamentary delegation would include members from the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) that is lending political support to the protests over the Tipaimukh project.

Environmentalists and NGOs say the proposed dam on Barak river, 200 km north of the border with Bangladesh, will deprive the lower riparian neighbour of its due share of water and hurt ecology on both sides of the border.

Participating in a discussion June 3 in the presence of Moni, Chakravarty had deplored the 'so-called experts' in Bangladesh who did not have even basic data while protesting the dam project.

Main opposition BNP called this 'interference' in Bangladesh's internal affairs and demanded the envoy's withdrawal.

BNP chief Khaleda Zia has addressed a letter to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh asking him to desist from building the dam.

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