

Global warming a threat to country's existence

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Climate change is not a 'far-off topic' any more, and the global warming is not only a 'hot topic' for a country like Bangladesh, but also a question of existence, said the speakers at a seminar yesterday.

The seminar was organised by the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) of food and disaster management ministry at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium with a view to promoting the role of media in addressing the climate risks in the country.

The panel discussants said this year the theme of the World Environment Day is 'Melting Ice-A hot topic? Ask.'

But Bangladesh has already started experiencing the effects of global warming which will be a threat to its people within two decades, they added.

Terming the global warming a by-product of economic activities, Larry Maramis, deputy country director of UNDP, stressed the north-south cooperation to achieve a low carbon economy.

He said the world community should come up with a consensus approach, so that countries like Bangladesh do not become a victim of climate politics.

Mohammad Reazuddin, director of environment department, said though people are still less concerned about the climate change, changes are taking place gradually over the years.

He said, "People are trying to adapt with changing circumstances by changing their crop pattern. People in some parts of the country have shifted from growing rice to potato and from potato to maize."

"Due to drought, flash flood and hailstorm the farmers are

facing various challenges. For erratic behaviour of weather, we could not meet the target of production, we had rice sterility this year," he added.

Reazuddin said, "Changes such as salinity intrusion, desertification and sea level rise will compound our risks in attaining national development, particularly in reducing poverty level."

In his multi-media presentation, he also showed how the earth is warming rapidly.

According to a paper that he presented, since the mid-1800s global temperature have increased by about .60°C, and scientists predict that within 50 years temperature may increase up to 2.5°C.

Besides, the sea levels have risen by 10-25 cm in last century with the 40 percent decrease of ice in the arctic.

"Within the next 50 years, Bangladesh may stand at the point of no return," he cautioned.

Dr Ahsan Uddin Ahmed, executive director of the Centre for Global Change, said since most people in Bangladesh think that climate change is a problem of future and can't see how it relates to them, they should be made aware of the situation.

"Here the media has a role to play. It can make climate change an easily understandable issue for the common people," he added.

Prof KB Sajjadur Rashid of geography and environment department of Dhaka University, and Kamrul Hasan Monju, executive director of Massline Media Centre, also spoke on the occasion.

SM Morshed, national advocacy expert of CDMP, moderated the programme.



Public works department bulldozes unauthorised shops and other structures at Kalyanpur in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Pakistani scholar Dr Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema speaks at a seminar organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) at its auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is BIIS Director General Major General Mohammad Sharifuddin.

Progress made in Indo-Pak peace process

Says Dr Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Internationally reputed Pakistani scholar Dr Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema yesterday observed that there has been much progress in the peace process between India and Pakistan and that the economic issues are now given priority over political issues.

"The long-standing issue of Kashmir, however, should be included in the India-Pakistan dialogue on priority basis," he said at a talk on 'India-Pakistan relations and peace process' organised by Bangladeshi Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIIS) at its auditorium in the city.

Dr Pervaiz, chairman of the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), said the chambers of commerce of the two neighbouring nations meet regularly, while

confidence-building measures are increasing gradually. "Trading and economic relations are very impressive."

Peoples of both the countries also support peace, which forces the leaders of Pakistan and India to hold peace talks, he said, adding that the international community's interest in and support for the peace process is also very encouraging.

Several agreements between India and Pakistan, including rail communications, have also helped strengthen people-to-people contact, he said, adding that political approach is more viable than military approach.

About the regime of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, Dr Pervaiz, author of more than 100 research articles, said a leadership with the confidence of people

cannot make unpleasant decision.

"We have a very strong parliament, strong media and the judiciary, but the only thing that an army chief of the staff is our president," he said.

Asked whether the nuclear power of both the countries is an obstacle to establishing peace between them, the political scientist said the nuclear power of Pakistan would be used as a last resort to ensure its security. Although the purpose of India's nuclear power was different initially, it is now maintained for security purposes, he added.

BIIS Director General Major General Mohammad Sharifuddin, in his concluding remarks, said the India-Pakistan conflict must be resolved for the greater interest of South Asian countries.

Russia is eager to be associated with the energy sector of Bangladesh, particularly the second phase of Siddhirganj Power Plant.

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury told reporters about the Russian eagerness after a meeting with Russian Ambassador Gennady P Trotsenko at the Foreign Ministry yesterday.

He said Russia is interested in giving technical assistance to the second phase of the powerplant.

During the meeting, the adviser said, they discussed the whole gamut of relations between Bangladesh and Russia and how to increase political and economic cooperation between the two countries.

He said Russia has always been a great friend of Bangladesh and Bangladesh has huge potentials for cooperation. "We want to utilise the opportunity," he said.

Besides, the governments of the two countries are negotiating a number of agreements, Iftekhar said.

Toll collection policy soon

UNB, Dhaka

The government will formulate an integrated toll collection policy to easily collect toll from vehicles plying various roads and bridges.

It was decided at a meeting with Communications Adviser Major General (Retd) MA Matin in the chair.

The meeting also discussed the progress of implementation of 186 projects of Roads and Highways Department, Bangladesh Railway, Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge and Accident Research Centre being implemented under the Communications Ministry.

The progress of Padma Bridge construction project also came up at the meeting for discussion. It took a number of decisions on land acquisition for the bridge, rehabilitation and formulation of DPP.

The adviser asked the authorities concerned to complete the project in time within its approved area and expenditure.



Kafiluddin Khan speaks at a roundtable on teacher & student politics at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right are Peter Halder and ABM Osman Gani and on his left are Maj Gen (retd) Golam Kadir and Dr Abdul Latif Malik. Bangladesh Nagorik Samaj organised the event.

Chittagong urea factory shut down due to technical glitch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Urea production at Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUL) came to a halt yesterday morning due to a technical glitch developed in the compressor of its ammonium plant.

Sources said the factory authorities suspended fertiliser production at around 9.00am immediately after they noticed the fault.

It requires at least two days for resumption of production and the factory incurs a loss of around Tk 72 lakh a day for the production halt, sources added.

Though the factory has the capacity of producing 1,700 tonnes of urea a day, it could produce a little above 1,500 tonnes currently.

Disruption or shortage of gas supply and low pressure is common in the factory launched operation in 1987.

The factory suffered a Tk 35 crore loss in just four months of the last year due to disruption in gas supplies, sources said.

SIDDHIGANJ PLANT Russia keen to be associated with 2nd phase

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MODEL DEMONSTRATED ON DU CAMPUS

Harnessing solar energy for supply to grid

STAR CORRESPONDENT

Department of Applied Physics, Electronics and Communication Engineering of Dhaka University yesterday demonstrated a model to harness solar power and supply it to the grid.

Prof Rezaul Karim, principal investigator of the project, demonstrated the solar photovoltaic system at a ceremony at Mokarram Bhaban auditorium of the Dhaka University.

The project titled 'Rooftop Grid-Connected Solar Photovoltaic System' was undertaken in 2005 by this department with the financial support of the Ministry of Science, Information and Communication Technology.

The traditional solar power system can be used only to supply

power to a particular household in isolation while this system is connected to grid and when the system produces more power than the household needs, the surplus power is supplied to the grid in daytime.

Similarly, if the power that is produced through the system is less than the household demands, the system will get electricity from the grid, said Prof Karim.

Producing per watt power through this system costs Tk 17 whether the government sells power for household usage at between Tk 3 and 4 only. That is why this model is still not feasible, the organisers said in the seminar.

The government also spend around Tk 17 for producing per watt power but the fact is it provides Tk 11-12 subsidies for every

unit. So our model is still not feasible", said a person involved with this project. Mass-scale production through this system will also halve the production costs, he added.

This system is used in many countries of the world, including Germany and Japan, but this is the first time the project is successfully done in Bangladesh.

In the prevailing energy crisis this system could be an eco-friendly and fuel-free alternative power source for the country to minimise the power shortage, Rezaul said while demonstrating his system.

Speaking as the chief guest, DU Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz said the conventional energy stored in the world would finish by 2050. So the time has come to search for alternative energy

sources.

The solar energy is an important source of alternative energy, he added.

Prof AFM Yusuf Haider, vice-chancellor of DU, told the seminar that the conventional energy of the country will end in the near future so the country should install nuclear power generation systems for ensuring energy security.

He also urged the government to implement Rooppur Nuclear Power project, undertaken by the country after the Independence.

Other associate partners of the project were Prof Saiful Haque and Prof Subrata Kumar of the department and some other research associates.



Former state ministers Rafiqul Islam, left, and Fazlur Rahman Patal, middle, and CBA leader of Water Development Board Abul Kalam Azad, right, are being taken to CMM's Court in the city yesterday.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Training of hospital, fire service men stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts at a workshop yesterday underscored the need for proper training of hospital and fire service personnel about disaster preparedness and management.

They also stressed providing disaster management training to schoolteachers and school children in order to reduce sufferings of people during any disaster.

The workshop titled 'Community Based Disaster Risk Management Project, (CBDRMP) Bangladesh: Lessons Sharing Workshop' organised by Oxfam GB was held at Biam auditorium in the city.

In his speech, Oxfam Programme Officer Shofiqul Alam said people know that service

providing agencies like hospitals and fire service and civil defence department would deliver services in times of crises, but it should be ensured that such agencies are well prepared to quickly respond to natural disasters.

The government should also ensure compliance with the national building construction code to reduce risk of earthquake in the cities, he said.

Mentioning that rural communities in Bangladesh had shown great resilience in combating floods, they are yet to develop their own risk reduction action plan which suits best to the local needs to reduce flood hazards, he said.

Such practice needs strengthening of local government bodies, added Shofiqul.

He also underscored the need for proper linking of local communities with the service providing agencies. Accountability and transparency of these agencies should also be ensured, he added.

The organisers, however, said community based risk minimisation approaches do not fit in the urban context as the urban people are loosely connected with one another. Researchers should devise new approaches in this connection, they observed.

Oxfam GB along with its five partner organisations AKK, BDPC, FIVDB, RPDS and SHARP shared views after the completion of their 15-month project that was conducted with financial assistance from Third Disaster Preparedness European Commission Humanitarian Aid (DIPECHO)

Action Plan for South Asia.

Organisers said during 15 months' field work in six districts and in Dhaka and Sylhet divisions, they launched awareness campaign in 72 communities and among students of 200 schools.

They also formed community preparedness and response task force and trained 56 flood-prone and 16 earthquake-prone communities.

DIPECHO Project Manager Tanja Berretta conducted the programme while Oxfam GB Country Representative Anil Thumbay and Programme Manager (Rural Livelihood and Disaster Risk Reduction) Farid Hasan Ahmed also spoke on the occasion.