

MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS Lack of capacity building holds back implementation

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh cannot implement multilateral environmental agreements and take advantage of global assistance in this regard due to lack of capacity building at institutional level, said the speakers at a discussion yesterday.

To sensitise and enhance capacity building at different levels including public, private and academic, they laid emphasis on the training of journalists about the priority issue of changing global environment.

The discussion titled 'Role of media in sustainable environmental governance' was organised by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Bangladesh chapter of The World Conservation Union (IUCN) under the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) project at the National Press Club in the city.

"We have signed major environmental agreements including United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity and UN Convention to Combat Desertification, but cannot implement those due to lack of our capacity," said Dr Ainun Nishat, IUCN country representative.

Although India has drawn a huge amount of money from Global Environment Facility for implementing the treaties, Bangladesh has failed to do anything in this regard, Dr Nishat said, adding that the World Bank and Asian Development Bank drew about \$50-60 million for Bangladesh.

"In stead of sending new representatives every year to environmental meetings, some experts should be given the job who will set up a depository of information on their return," he added.

Speaking as chief guest Mahbubul Alam, former adviser to the caretaker government, stressed the need for capacity building training at ministry level to work for global environmental issues.

Other discussants also noted that there is a lack of coordination in the government moves to follow up the signing of the treaties.

To equip the journalists properly for covering the environmental issues, environment experts and members of Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) proposed that training for journalists can be organised at Press Institute of Bangladesh and National Institute Mass Communication.

With Environment and Forest Secretary AHM Rezaul Kabir in the chair, NCSA Project Manager Monowar Islam presented a concept paper on the project.

Information Secretary Didarul Anwar, Joint Secretary (environment) Siraj Uddin, BSS Chief Editor Jagul Ahmed Chowdhury, UNDP Programme Officer Mamunul H Khan, journalist Mahfuz Ullah and FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury also took part in the discussion.

US Congressman Meeks supports anti-graft drive

BSS, New York

Congressman Gregory Meeks, an influential member of the House International Relations Committee, has extended his total support to the ongoing anti-corruption drive in Bangladesh led by the caretaker government.

Meeks, who was has been elected from the New York State, was talking to a delegation of expatriate Bangladeshis at a city hotel at Queens Village on Friday.

The delegation includes President of Expatriate Citizens' Committee Mahadev Sarkar, Professor Mehal Gomes and Ali Imam, Governor of New York State Eliot Spitzer was also present on the occasion.

Member of the Bangladesh Caucus, Gregory Meeks said the Bangladesh Army has been playing a commendable role in the UN peacekeeping missions. Praising the ongoing anti-corruption drive in Bangladesh, the Congressman said corruption and democracy could not go together.

"You need to uproot corruption if you want to give democracy a permanent shape," Meeks added.

He expressed the hope that a free and fair election will be held in Bangladesh in 2008. He said the United States would welcome the decisions of the people.

Governor Eliot Spitzer thanked the Bangladeshi community for the huge support extended by the American-Bangladeshi in the last US elections. He also expressed his desire to visit Bangladesh.

Bangladesh delegation told Meeks that the caretaker government had successfully tackled the floods in Bangladesh providing assistance to the thousands of flood-hit people besides carrying out the anti-corruption drive.

Palliative care service opens at BSMMU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Palliative care service for terminally ill patients should be incorporated into primary healthcare system in the country, Health Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) ASM Matru Rahman said yesterday.

The palliative care, which is almost absent in the country institutionally, should also be included in medical curriculum, he said as the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of palliative care service at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

The palliative care outpatient service was inaugurated in the country, marking the World Palliative Care Day yesterday.

Doctors and nurses should be especially trained on it and the service should be extended to village level gradually, the adviser said.

"Palliative care is the only realistic therapy in our socio-economic perspective, because it provides physical, mental and spiritual support to patients," said Dr Nazam Uddin Ahmed, project co-ordinator of Palliative Care Service, BSMMU.

Palliative care is not a new discipline in the world. Rather, there are around 8,000 palliative care centres across the globe and 1,500 of them are in South Asia, the speakers said.

Highlighting its importance in the developing countries, the speakers said the developing countries use only 10 percent of the total health resources globally, whereas 75 percent of patients with incurable disease are living in these countries.

BSMMU Vice Chancellor Prof Tahir Presid over the session while Pro-Vice Chancellor MA Majid presented the vision of Palliative Care at BSMMU.

EWU ranked first among private universities

BSS, Dhaka

East West University (EWU) has been ranked as the top private university and the third among public and private universities in the country.

The EWU authorities formally announced this ranking at a press briefing at the university's administrative building at Mohakhali in the city yesterday.

EWU Vice-Chancellor Professor Mohammed Sharif addressed the press briefing while President of Governing Board Jalaluddin Ahmed, Member of Governing Board and Founder Vice-Chancellor Dr Muhammad Farashuddin, Rafiqul Huda Chowdhury and a good number of faculty members were present.

The Webometrics Ranking of world universities was conducted by Cybermetrics Lab in July 2007, as part of European Union funded project located in Spain and more than 11,000 universities of the world were considered in it.

Two public universities—Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and Dhaka University were ranked as the first and second universities among the public and private universities in Bangladesh.

The ranking was based on research activities, international visibility, volume of the scholarly documents created and published, and size and the impact of the web presence.



Prof Muzafer Ahmad speaks at a discussion at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left is Dr Md Abdul Matin.

Protect rivers from pollution

Speakers say at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called on the government to take steps to protect the rivers from pollution in order to ensure a healthy environment for the people.

Almost all the rivers in the country are being polluted, adversely affecting the environment, biodiversity and the climate, they said and urged all to come forward to combat the pollution of rivers.

Speaking as the chief guest, Prof Muzafer Ahmad said the rivers need to be dredged, but the government does not spend money on

such projects to protect the rivers.

Stressing the need for the government's active initiative to save 163 rivers, he also urged the business organisations to come forward to protect the rivers from pollution as part of their 'corporate social responsibility'.

Dr Md Abdul Matin, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), placed some recommendations while presenting the keynote paper.

The recommendations include putting an end to dumping of garbage into rivers, setting up effluent plants in all industrial

units and introducing cleaner production system.

The speakers also said that setting up latrines on the river should be stopped and using compressed natural gas (CNG) should be made compulsory for the water vessels and the rivers should be made free from illegal encroachment.

They called on the ministries concerned, Wasa, BWIA, Water Development Board, city corporations and municipalities to formulate river-friendly policies.

The discussion was held at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) auditorium.

'Ban use of religion in politics ahead of election'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad yesterday urged the Election Commission (EC) to ban the use of religion and communalism in politics ahead of the election.

They also urged the EC to formulate specific policy for cancelling the membership of those who will be elected using religion.

The demands were placed at a meeting of the Parishad in the city presided over by Siril Sikdar, one of the presidents and a former ambassador.

The meeting demanded release of Dr Neem Chandra Bhounik, general secretary of the Parishad, along with other university teachers on the occasions of Eid and Puja.

The Parishad leaders also expressed concern over the filing of case by a quarter against noted economist Prof Abul Barakat for his research paper.

Advocate Rana Dasgupta, acting general secretary of the Parishad, Maj Gen (Retd) CR Dutta Bir Uram, Maj Gen Lalit Mohan Nath, Chitta Ranjan Sarker, Advocate Subrata Chowdhury, Kajal Devnath, Prof Kajal Krishna Banarjee and Advocate Priya Ranjan Dutta also spoke at the meeting.

Novartis BioCamp kicks off in Tokyo

NAIMUL HUQ, from Japan

A three-day international conference on biotechnology kicked off in Tokyo yesterday bringing together the industry experts, renowned academics and top bioscience and business management majors including two from Bangladesh.

Started as Novartis Biotechnology Leadership Camp 2007 (BioCamp), it offers a talented crop of university students from across the globe an opportunity to mingle with those who are leading the biotechnology sector and gain insights into the recent trends in the field.

The participants had to go through screenings and contests in their countries before reaching the Japanese capital.

Novartis and its affiliates have been organising the event since 2004. The first one took place in Taiwan.

Bangladesh, for the first time, is taking part in the BioCamp.

The team consists of Sagar Sen, an MBA final semester student of the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), and Sadia Mahboob, a part III student of

Bachelor of Pharmacy (Hons) at Dhaka University.

They hoped that the BioCamp would give others too in future the rare chance to be close and personal with the Who's Who of the industry.

Hironuki Mitani, president and CEO of Novartis Pharma KK (Japan), delivered the welcome address at the opening ceremony of the yearly gathering arranged by his organisation in association with Novartis Foundation (Japan) for the promotion of science.

He said the rationale for organising such camps is to help prepare the future leaders in bioscience through peer networking, and exchange of ideas, knowledge and expertise.

Dr Robert Horvitz, professor of MIT and winner of the Nobel Prize in physiology (medicine) in 2002, is among the speakers.

During the three-day deliberations, 43 young researchers, post-graduate, graduate and undergraduate students from 15 countries will be engaged in presentations, interactive question-answer sessions and active 10-hour group workshop.



Prof Anu Mohammad, member secretary of the Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Electricity and Port, addresses a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right are Committee Convener Engineer Sheikh Mohammad Shahidullah and member Justice Golam Rabbani. They demanded expulsion of Asia Energy from the country.

Two soldiers, 4 militants killed in Kashmir battle

AFP, Srinagar

Two soldiers and four militants died in the south of Kashmir, Mathur said. The latest casualties came three days after two army majors and nine militants were killed in one of the fiercest gunfights in months.

The fresh fighting also coincided with the beginning of a two-day visit to the region by India's new army chief General Deepak Kapoor. He was slated to meet senior army, civil and paramilitary officers.

Indian Kashmir routinely witnesses a spike in violence during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan because militants believe those killed fighting during the holy month earn extra heavenly rewards.

In one incident, "alert army soldiers shot dead three militants after they crossed into our Kashmir from across the Line of Control," army spokesman Anil Mathur said, confirming a soldier also died.

The Line of Control is the heavily militarised border dividing Kashmir between India and Pakistan.

The rebels were offered a chance to surrender but "they instead chose to fight," Mathur told AFP.

In a separate firefight that was

Rly workers assault journo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some workers of Kamalapur Railway Station assaulted a reporter of 'Radio Today', a private radio channel, yesterday for taking interviews of two station staffs who were held by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members on charges of selling tickets in the black market.

The Railway authorities temporarily suspended the two staffs, Assistant Controller of Kamalapur Railway Station Alauddin Khan and the station's Data Entry Officer Sirajuddoula, said Station Manager Abu Sayeed Ahmed.

He also said that a committee would launch a departmental inquiry into the incident.

Plainclothes members of Rab-3 held Alauddin Khan and Sirajuddoula as they were allegedly selling tickets on the station premises yesterday noon, witnesses said.

Some reporters, including Anwarul Haq of Radio Today, then interviewed the two staffs amid objections from other station staffs, they said.

When Anwar was leaving the station, some unknown staffs beat him.

However, Station Manager Abu Sayeed Ahmed, quoting other staffs, said Rab members held the two when they collected several tickets for their family members without standing in the long queue of ticket buyers.

Anwar, a senior reporter of Radio Today, filed a general diary with Kamalapur GRP (government railway police station). Police could not arrest anyone in this connection until 8:00pm.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Crime Reporters' Association yesterday condemned the attack on Anwar and demanded arrest of those involved within 48 hours.

Seaports advised to hoist cautionary signal 3

BSS, Dhaka

The maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla were advised by the met office yesterday to keep hoisted local cautionary signal number three as squally weather is affecting the sea and ports due to deep convection with thunderclouds forming over the north Bay of Bengal following a well-marked low pressure.

Met sources said BSS the well-marked low which formed off a low pressure area in the west central Bay and adjoining north Bay on Thursday have been roosting there without any movement.

The met office has also advised the fishing boats and trawlers in the north Bay to keep close to the coast and proceed with caution. They have been warned not to venture into the deep sea.

6 criminals held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested six criminals from different places of Rajoir upazila in Madaripur on Friday.

They were identified as Nader Shikder, Shahed Molla, Md Rabiul, Md Obaidul, Mahbub Molla and Md Asad.

According to a press release issued by Rab, the arrestees were involved in realising toll from different government and non-governmental officials and businessmen of different districts of southwestern region in the name of Janajuddho faction of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP).

The press release further said that the arrestees were also wanted in several murder and crime cases. They used to give death threats to those who refused to pay tolls.

Rab recovered 15 SIM cards from them, which they used in their criminal activities, the press release added.

Obituary

BSS, Dhaka

Major (ret'd) Dr Abul Kashem, an expatriate Bangladeshi physician, passed away due to old age complications at Square Hospital in the city on September 29 at the age of 84.

He left behind his five sons, four daughters and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at army graveyard at Banani after namaz-e-janaza at Azad Mosque on October 1, family sources said yesterday.

DHAKA TODAY

Discussion

BCS Cooperative Association organises a discussion on role of cooperative in poverty alleviation. Venue: Cooperative building, Agargaon. Time: 4:30pm.

Launching ceremony

Panos Bangladesh organises a launching ceremony of a joint publication of UNDP and Panos titled 'Miles to go... HIV/AIDS: Experiences from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka'. Venue: Bengal Gallery. Time: 6:30pm.

Audio album

Nari Paksha will launch a mixed audio album. Venue: WVA auditorium. Time: 4:15pm.

No legal bar to hold election during emergency : PDP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) Convener Ferdous Ahmed Qureshi yesterday said there is no legal bar in holding national election during emergency.

At a press briefing at his office in the city he said there is no need to lift emergency formally.

"If necessary, state of emergency might be relaxed," he added. Qureshi said if Truth Commission is formed corrupt businessmen will be escaped.

He also called for building unity among the followers of all religions. Nur Mohammad Khan, Tajul Islam Chowdhury, Maj Gen (Retd) Rafiqul Islam Hossain, and Col (Retd) HMA Gaffar were present at the briefing.

Road accident kills policeman

UNB, Savar

A policeman was killed and four others were injured in a road accident at Jamgara on Ashulia-Abdullahpur road yesterday.

Police said the accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound bus hit a police van in front of Sarker Market at around 4:00pm, killing hawilder Joyal Abedin, 54, on the spot and injuring four others.

Joyal, who hailed from Dhaurah in Netrakona, was to go on retirement next year.

Two of the injured were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition while two others to a local clinic.

China braces for Typhoon Krosa

AFP, Beijing

Chinese authorities yesterday issued a flood alert, relocated 138,000 east coastal residents and recalled 27,000 fishing boats as the country braced for Typhoon Krosa, state media reported.

Authorities ordered the coastal provinces of Zhejiang and Fujian to closely monitor the typhoon, which was pounding northern Taiwan with powerful winds and torrential rains, said Xinhua news agency.

Local meteorological offices said the typhoon, expected to land in China between Sunday midnight and Monday night, was 560 kilometres (347 miles) off Zhejiang as of early Saturday and was heading northwest at 15 kilometres an hour.

Call to write off country's external debts

BSS, Dhaka

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called for writing off the country's external debts, saying that most loans have failed to reach the poor and ensure sustainable development.

The Equity and Justice Working Group (EJWG) as part of a global campaign organised the roundtable at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

The campaign now taking roots in most parts of the world and spreading all over argues that donors and the multinational agencies in the past disbursed the loans to different countries, including Bangladesh, without approval of parliament. Most of these loans in many parts of the world are in fact 'illegal' without such approval. However, the burden of repayment now falls on the poor.

Md Shamsuddin and Rezaul Karim Chowdhury of EJWG made the arguments in their keynote paper justifying the global debt relief campaign, particularly for Bangladesh.

The country now has a total debt of 13.2 billion US dollars, they said and wondered why Bangladesh has been put out of

the debt relief basket.

They termed the 'export to debt ratio' criteria for debt relief unjustified for Bangladesh as the country is now facing the uphill task of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

They also emphasised the need to support the countries facing threats from global climate change. Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to sea level rise due to global climate change, they added.

Former BNP MP Lt Gen (Retd) Mahbubur Rahman, Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon, Jatiya Party leader GM Kader and Awami League leader Mahmudur Rahman Manna took part in the discussion.

The discussants said the present global system and the multi-lateral institutions such as World Bank, IMF and World Trade Organisation (WTO) are working to destroy the industrial and financial base of the poor and developing countries.

Bangladesh should oppose it, they said, making a strong case for working towards achieving the debt relief and removal of factors, which might bring additional loan burden to the country.



Fall in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet and Chittagong divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy falls are also likely at places over Chittagong and Barisal divisions.

Day temperature may fall by 1-2 degree Celsius at Chittagong and Barisal divisions and may remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 36.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 23.5 degree Celsius at Chittagong.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:40pm today and rises at 5:53am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	35.6	28.8	69	61
Chittagong	31.0	23.5	83	89
Rajshahi	35.5	27.0	88	81
Khulna	34.2	27.4	89	81
Barisal	35.0	26.5	96	96
Sylhet	34.7	26.0	66	70
Cox's Bazar	31.6	24.2	81	79