

'Take comprehensive plan to offset climate change impacts'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday underscored the need for taking a comprehensive working plan to offset the effects of climate change.

They also emphasised creating awareness among both mass people and policymakers to this end.

"We will not be able to stop climate change but it is possible to reduce the range of its bad effects," said Mazharul Alam, research fellow of Bangladesh Centre for Urban Studies, at the seminar held at WVA auditorium in the city.

Mazharul along with Sardar Shafiqul Alam of the same organisation presented the keynote paper at the seminar.

It is very important to increase the skill of the people who are working on it, said Mazharul at the seminar on 'What should Bangladesh do to deal with climate change' organised by Gono Unnayan Granthagar.

"We have to move towards sustainable development that requires economic and social progress and skilled manpower," said Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, chairman of Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad.

Speaking as the chief guest, he said, "If we can change our character and increase awareness, we will be able to go towards the sustainable development."

Mahfuz Ullah, secretary general of CFSU, said creating awareness is a must to fight such adverse situation, which might be caused by climate change.

Shafiqul Alam in his keynote paper said according to the Global Circulation Model, a USA-based research team, the temperature of Bangladesh will be increased by 1.3 degree Celsius by 2030 while 2.6 degree Celsius temperature will be increased by 2070.

Due to the increase of temperature the summer of the country will be long and winter will be very short and due to heavy rain within a short

time, incidents of flood and waterlogging will be increased, he said, adding that the probability of drought will also be increased due to lack of rain in a long period.

Shafiq said since the temperature of the world is increasing the sea level in the coastal areas will rise by 88 centimetres by 2100 that might cause floods in 17 per cent of the area. The flooded saline water will damage the agricultural balance of the area.

Farida Akhtar, executive director of UBINIG, said it is very important to protect the country's environment and biodiversity, which have been being destroyed in different ways.

Chairperson of Gana Unnayan Granthagar Mohiuddin Ahmed moderated the seminar.

Pirates abduct 11 fishermen for ransom

UNB, Barisal

Pirates looted 20 fishing trawlers and held 11 fishermen hostage to realise ransom for their release near Kachikhali in the Bay yesterday evening.

Barguna District Trawler Owners' Association President Golam Mustafa Chowdhury said the pirates demanded Tk 50,000 as ransom from each of the fishermen for their release.

The trawlers took shelter close to the Sundarbans because of bad weather when the pirates swooped on them and looted valuables, including fishing nets, he added.

He further said crews of FB Nasir-1 after returning to Patharghata narrated the incident.

Mustafa said he has informed the incident to the local administration and law enforcement agencies urging them for early rescue of the fishermen.



Children perform a dance number in the three-day folk festival at Zia Hall Complex in Khulna yesterday.

40 years on, NPT in urgent need of overhaul: Experts

AFP, Vienna

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT, which celebrates its 40th birthday this week, may have succeeded in keeping the number countries in possession of nuclear weapons down to a mere handful.

But the treaty, drawn up during the Cold War period, is now in urgent need of an overhaul if it is to meet present-day challenges such as the proliferation crises in North Korea, Iran and most recently Syria, experts said.

Furthermore, the United States should take the lead in bolstering the legitimacy of the NPT and the entire non-proliferation regime by dismantling its nuclear arsenal, the experts said.

Opened for signature on July 1, 1968 and put into effect on March 5, 1970, the NPT is the most universal arms control treaty in force.

Its stated goal is to stop the nuclear arms race and seek nuclear disarmament.

Five countries that had tested nuclear weapons before the treaty's completion -- China, France, Russia, Britain and the United States -- were recognised as nuclear-weapon states and obligated to pursue "effective measures" toward nuclear disarmament.

All others were designated non-nuclear-weapon states and prohibited from acquiring nuclear arms at all.

A major problem was that no specific target date was laid down for disarmament.

And with the nuclear states apparently reluctant to dismantle and destroy their nuclear arsenals, the non-nuclear weapon states see little incentive to keep their part of the bargain.

It had created a world of "nuclear haves and have-nots... which cannot be sustained indefinitely," said Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association in Washington.

"Nuclear weapons are dangerous no matter who possesses them," he told AFP.

K. Subrahmanyam, a former director of the Indian Institute for Defence Studies, agreed.

"It cannot be legal for some countries to possess a category of weapons while it is illegal for others to do so. A regime that is based on such inequity cannot be expected to be stable or secure against further proliferation," Subrahmanyam wrote in a recent article for the Arms Control Association.

Perhaps one of the NPT's biggest flaws is the limited power there

is to enforce it.

Inspections, carried out by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, are voluntary and countries largely control inspectors' movements.

Furthermore, there are no penalties for breaking the NPT, apart from being reported to the UN Security Council.

Experts acknowledge the NPT's success in curbing the number of states in possession of nuclear weapons.

"In 1960, (US President) John F. Kennedy warned as many as 20 nations could acquire a nuclear weapon in less than that decade. They didn't," said Joe Cirincione, President of the Washington-based Ploughshares Fund.

"There are only nine countries with nuclear weapons today. Why? A big part of the reason is the bipartisan, multinational effort that led to the NPT," Cirincione told AFP.

Thanks to the NPT, "there are now far fewer countries that have nuclear weapons or weapon programmes than there were in the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s," the experts said.

Nevertheless, the non-proliferation regime had suffered important setbacks, notably the cases of North Korea and Iran, and more recently Syria.

Lok Utshab ends in Khulna

Lok Utshab, a three-day annual folk festival, ends in Khulna yesterday, says a press release.

The festival was inaugurated by acting Mayor of Khulna City Corporation Moniruzzaman Mon as the chief guest and Banglalink Regional Commercial Head Babul Huq as the special guest at Zia Hall Complex on June 27.

The event was organised by Lok Sangeet Academy-Khulna, Radio along with the local cultural organisations in partnership with Banglalink. Artists from the ten districts of the region displayed their own cultural activities during the event.

The main objective of the carnival was to showcase the traditional cultural heritage of the Khulna region as well as make them popular among the younger generation.

Khulna has a heritage of popular Lalon music, Gazir Gaan, Royani Gaan, Potgaan and other such folk music and dances.

Apart from cultural performances, three veterans were accorded reception for their contribution to cultural movement in their respective fields in Khulna, including Ustad Sheikh Ali Ahmed for his contribution to folk music.

A discussion on 'Folk music of the Khulna region' was also held at the same venue which was conducted by Prof Golam Mostafa.

Iftekhar greets new Canadian foreign minister

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday extended his heartfelt congratulations to David Emerson on his appointment as the foreign minister of Canada.

In a letter to David Emerson, Iftekhar said, "I look forward to working closely with you in fostering a greater degree of cooperation between our two friendly countries".

On the eve of his departure on the two-week, three-nation Asian tour, Ban said he would press the G8 leaders at their summit to tackle the world food crisis, climate change and the flagging fight against global poverty.

Ban will join the G8 leaders during the outreach sessions of the meet.

Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, whom Ban will meet on Monday, previously said the summit will not set a mid-term goal on slashing emissions, while stressing the need to agree on some goal on climate change.

Ban called on world leaders to work harder and closely to tackle the issue, saying political will was lacking, not technology and resources.

Ban urges Japan to take lead on tackling climate change

AFP, Kyoto

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon yesterday urged Japan to take a greater lead in the fight against climate change, as the nation prepares to host next month's Group of Eight summit.

In a speech at Kyoto University, Ban said Japan, the world's second largest economy and a leader in green technology, had a "moral and political responsibility" to play a bigger role in tackling climate change.

Japan should share its environmental technology with other nations to help reduce their levels of greenhouse gases which cause climate change, as well as help setup active trading schemes for carbon emissions, Ban said.

"Japan can play a leadership role in realizing the potentials of

these market-based mechanisms, now and in the future," Ban said in Kyoto, where the landmark protocol on combating greenhouse gases was forged.

"For technology, Japan has been a leading country in technological innovation," he said, encouraging Japanese businesses to share their knowledge and skills with the rest of the world.

"Therefore, you have a political and moral responsibility to do that."

"As the number two economic power, Japan has again moral and political responsibility in actively participating in financial mechanisms" to fight climate change.

The UN chief gave the address ahead of the G8 summit in the northern Japanese resort town of Toyako from July 7-9 when climate change is set to be among the top

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Major G8 tech investment to fight global warming

AFP, Tokyo

The Group-of-Eight industrialised nations will jointly invest more than 10 billion dollars a year on research and development of technology to combat global warming, a report said yesterday.

The plan, including research on underground storage of carbon dioxides, is included in a draft joint statement on economic policy to be adopted at the G8 summit scheduled for July 7-9 in Japan, the business daily Nikkei said.

Climate change will dominate the summit which will bring together leaders from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United States to the northern Japan lakeside resort of Toyako.

The Nikkei said it had obtained the outline of the draft statement.

According to the draft, the G8 leaders will also seek an agreement on setting country-by-country goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions over the medium term from 2013, the daily said.

They will also express their determination to avert a global economic crisis through coordi-

nated efforts to deal with the impact of soaring oil and food prices, it added.

On July 9, the Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change (MEM), a 16-nation forum including China and India, will be held on the sidelines of the G8 summit and issue a separate statement, the daily said.

The draft of the G8 economic statement points to the importance of imposing a long-term goal for cutting global emissions.

But, because Japan and Europe differ with the United States over long-term numerical targets, a final decision on the question may be left to the G8 leaders when they meet at Toyako, the daily said.

Japan and Europe want gas emissions to be halved around the world by 2050, while the United States is cautious about establishing such an ambitious goal, it added.

The Nikkei said that the joint statement will clearly state the commitment of the G8 nations to setting quantitative goals in the future although it is unlikely to contain specific figures.

EU plans to ease rules for cross-border patients

AFP, Brussels

Europeans will be able to get medical treatment elsewhere in the EU without prior authorisation, and get refunded, under draft rules which the European Commission will put forward this week.

As part of a wider "renewed Social Agenda", patients would also be allowed easier access to information on cross-border healthcare.

The plans will also make it easier for patients to receive medication prescribed abroad after they return home.

The agenda, to be unveiled by the European Commission on Wednesday, is part of a "social" push by the EU, often criticised as being too distant from the real needs and concerns of its almost half a billion citizens.

Under the cross-border health scheme draft, seen by AFP, a patient would have to pay for treatment in another EU nation up front, but would have those costs paid back up to the level of reimbursement for the same treatment under their own national health system.

The latter point is key, especially to countries such as Britain which are concerned that the new rules will open the floodgates for medical tourism, leaving them to fork out for expensive treatment received elsewhere.

The "community framework"

draft plans are clear.

"Any non-hospital care to which citizens are entitled in their own member state, without prior authorisation, and be reimbursed up to the level of reimbursement provided by their own system," the draft says.

For hospital care, the commission's directive says that if Britain, or any other member state, can provide evidence that the outflow of patients resulting from the new rules might seriously undermine hospital planning then a system of prior authorisation could be employed.

Nor would a country be obliged to reimburse treatment abroad which is not offered by its own national health service, meaning the new rules would not be a way for someone to get free plastic surgery or hydrotherapy if it is not on offer at home.

The goal is to increase the opportunities and guarantees to patients without hitting the sustainability of national health systems.

It is aimed at bringing the EU rules into line with, and dealing with concerns raised by, European court rulings such as one in 2006 when Britain's health service was told to pay thousands for a hip replacement for Yvonne Watts who travelled to France for the operation.

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Programme Schedule

01st July 2008, 11.00 am to 05.00 pm, Meeting Room, British Council, Dhaka

03rd July 2008, 12.00 pm to 06.30 pm, Auditorium, British Council Chittagong

10th July 2008, 11.00 am to 05.00 pm, British Council Project Office Sylhet

For further information and appointments:

Bangladesh Liaison Office : Room L 361, 2nd Floor, Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Dhaka 1215

Direct : 0088 02 9122404, Facsimile: 0088 02 9121028, Mobile: 0088 01919101234

Email : bangladesh@londonmet.ac.uk

British Council : 5 Fuller Road, Dhaka 1000, Direct: 8618905-7, 8618867-8

British Council Chittagong : 77/A East Nasirabad (Behind Chittagong Shopping Complex), Chittagong, Direct: 031 657884-6

British Council Project Office Sylhet : Al-Hamra Shopping City (6th Floor), Zindabazar, Sylhet 3100, Direct: 0821 814925

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