

INT'L CONFERENCE ON WATER, FLOOD MANAGEMENT BEGINS

Water sharing deal with India for Teesta stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque yesterday said the government is trying to sign an agreement on water sharing with India for the river Teesta.

Not only the trans-boundary rivers or distribution of water with India, but the government has also a complete package of issues to be settled regionally, he added.

The minister said border, transit, distribution of common natural resources, maritime boundary and coordination against terrorism are

among the key issues to be prominent in the negotiations.

Razzaque told reporters on the sidelines at the three-day second biennial 'International Conference on Water and Flood Management' organised by Institute of Water and Flood Management of Buet at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city.

Speaking as the chief guest, he said being a small downstream country of a mighty river system, the country has little control over its water resources.

About India's stance on the issues, he mentioned the

comments made by Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee during his recent visit to Dhaka that all the issues would be settled after the upcoming general elections in India.

The minister said, "Problems may be sensitive and awkward, but will have to be solved on the negotiating table. We are taking preparation to settle the issues with neighbours."

Among 57 trans-boundary rivers, the country has agreement for sharing only one that is the Ganges.

Buet Vice Chancellor Prof AMM Safiullah mentioned the challenges facing the country

for management and the complexities of its water resources system.

He said the system is largely dependent on the intricate river network with fluctuating sediment and flow, delicate groundwater system severely contaminated by arsenic and large areas of natural depressions locally called 'Haor', 'Baor' and 'Beel', adding that the priorities and scales of problems are very different in nature in the rural setting and rapidly growing urban centers.

Fritz Meijndert, deputy ambassador and head of Development Cooperation at Dutch embassy, also addressed the programme and put emphasis on the river erosion management and the concept namely 'Building with nature'.

He said Bangladesh has a climate change strategy, but it lacks the broader vision and commitment which is needed to properly address the issues in the coming 10 or even 50 years.

Absence of common approach and long-term vision bears a high risk, the envoy added.

Prof Abul Fazal M Saleh, chairman of the organising committee, and Prof Anisul Haque, director of the institute, also addressed the ceremony.



(From right) Prof Anisul Haque, Prof AMM Safiullah, Abdur Razzaque, Fritz Meijndert and Prof Abul Fazal M Saleh are seen at a three-day conference at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday.



Traders stage a demonstration in the city yesterday demanding eviction of hawkers from in front of the Baitul Mukarram Market.

DMCH only hope for burn patients in city

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

The city clinics and hospitals except Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) have no burn units to treat the burn patients.

The victims of severe burn injuries have no way to receive treatment from nearby hospitals immediately as the hospitals and clinics have no burn management mechanisms.

"Management of burn injury is very expensive and we just refer the patients to the DMCH Burn Unit as we do not have facilities to treat the burn patients," said a physician of Suhrawardy Hospital in the city preferring anonymity. He

also said in case of moderate burn injury the department of surgery tries to handle it.

Burn management needs special set up with operation theatre, intensive care unit and more manpower and beds. Suhrawardy Hospital lacks these facilities that leads the burn patients to be deprived of treatment there, he added.

While talking to The Daily Star Holly Family Red Crescent Medical College and Hospital Director Prof Siddiqur Rahman said they have a physician to manage burn patient but there is no burn unit in the hospital that is why they normally refer the burn

patients to the DMCH Burn Unit.

After the Bashundhara Shopping Mall inferno recently, 14 people were rushed to the nearby Shamaria Hospital, which also does not have any burn unit. The hospital authorities called out burn and plastic surgery specialist from the DMCH to treat the burn patients.

Dr Samantlal Sen, project director of the DMCH Burn Unit, who treated the burn patients at the Shamaria Hospital told The Daily Star that it could be managed there, as the severity of the patients receiving burn was

low.

He said the DMCH Burn Unit is burdened with five times more patients than its capacity. Treatment of burn injury is very expensive and private clinics and hospitals cannot afford it that is why the government medical colleges and hospitals should have a burn unit to treat the burn patients.

One percent of the people across the country fall victim of burn injury every year, 1.4 lakh of them with major injuries, and the 50-bed burn unit of the DMCH is the only government centre to provide treatment to this huge number of patients.

Protect Bangladeshi workers' rights

AL, BNP labour leaders' joint plea to Malaysian counterpart

UNB, Dhaka

The labour wings of ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP expressed concern over the cancellation of visas of Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia and made a joint plea to the authorities in Kuala Lumpur to reverse the decision.

Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal (BISD) President Nazrul Islam, also EC member

of ITUC-AP for 2010-11, and Jatiya Sramik League (JSL) General Secretary Roy Ramesh Chandra, EC member of the ITUC-AP for 2008-09, jointly wrote a letter to G Rajasekaran, president of the ITUC-AP and secretary general of the Malaysian Trade Union Congress, requesting them to protect the rights of the Bangladeshi workers.

They in the letter noted that a few days ago the Malaysian

government suddenly cancelled visas of around 55,000 Bangladeshi workers. And, during last few days, hundreds of Bangladeshi workers were either arrested in Malaysia or sent back home.

"A huge number of Bangladeshi workers were thrown out of employment without notice and are being forced to return home empty-handed," they said in the letter.

On the other hand, hun-

dreds of Bangladeshi workers, who arrived in Kuala Lumpur with valid legal documents, were not allowed to go to their workplaces and detained in custody of the immigration authority.

"Few of them somehow managed to return to Dhaka and narrated their immense sufferings they faced, under custody," reads the joint letter.

"We would request you and your esteemed organisation, well-known for protecting human and trade union rights of the working people, to look into the issue and take immediate necessary action to protect the rights and interests of the Bangladeshi migrant workers in

Malaysia," the government-opposition labour coalition pleaded.

Citing the global economic recession, the Malaysian government has cancelled the work visas of 55,000 Bangladeshis. They had already been approved for work in Malaysia and had paid \$12,000 (\$3,226, £2,357) in fees. The Malaysian government said it would try to refund the fees.

Malaysian Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar said Bangladeshi workers who had visas approved in 2007 but who had not yet arrived in Malaysia would not be allowed to take up employment over there.

"This is due to the current scenario in the country, in that there is no need for foreign labour except for certain sectors identified by the government," he told a news conference on March 10, according to state news agency Bernama.

In January, the government banned the hiring of new foreigners after a report forecast 45,000 Malaysians losing their jobs in the next few months.

Estimates suggest that about 500,000 Bangladeshis are among up to three million Asian migrant workers working in Malaysia.



Nijera Kori Executive Director Khushi Kabir speaks at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday ahead of the 4th National Conference of Sex Workers.

FOURTH NAT'L CONFERENCE BEGINS TODAY

'Ensure budgetary allocation for development of sex workers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fourth national conference of the sex workers begins at the Gonoshasthya Kendra in Savar today with a call for ensuring budgetary allocation for the development of sex workers and their children and sex workers' representation in the Jatiya Sangsad to uphold their demands.

With the support of ActionAid Bangladesh, Sex Workers Network of Bangladesh (SWNB) is organising the three-day conference.

Ahead of the conference, SWNB leaders placed an eight-point demand before the government at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday.

They demanded transparency and accountability in all aspects of the development activities of the sex workers.

The other demands include inclusion of sex workers in national women movement, announcement of social rehabilitation on sex workers and their children from prime minister, stopping eviction of brothels without effective and permanent alternative life and livelihood and ensuring sex workers' participation while making these decisions.

SWNB President Mamta Begum presided over the conference.

She said the existing laws did not ban sex work, but it says in the Article 18, Clause 2 of the constitution that the state will take effective steps to eliminate prostitution and gambling. This kind of ambiguity in laws eventually provokes the tyrants to exploit the sex workers, she added.

She urged the government to take measures to clarify the ambiguity in the existing laws relating to sex workers.

Executive Director of Nijera Kori Khushi Kabir said the constitution has given equal rights to all citizens. So, everyone should get equal opportunity irrespective of his/her profession, cast or religion.

"We should change our mindset towards sex workers to establish their social and human rights," she said, adding the dual social position has to be changed.

ASM Atiqur Rahman, professor of Social Welfare Institute of Dhaka University, called on the social welfare ministry to take steps to make specific action plan on the sex workers' issue.

Urging the government to bring the issue related to sex workers under local government to deal the issue properly, he said the women organisations should raise their voice to bring about changes.

"Religious leaders specially

the Imams can play a vital role to create awareness among the general people about the rights of sex workers," he added.

SWNB General Secretary Shahnaz Begum and Joya Sikder, treasurer of SWNB, also spoke.

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