

## Regional cooperation vital for sustainable rural livelihoods

Speakers says at pre-Saarc dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Regional cooperation is needed in the energy and water sector for sustainable rural livelihood of millions of South Asian poor against the backdrop of global climate change, speakers said yesterday.

At a 'Pre-Saarc summit dialogue with journalists', they said the upcoming 16th SARRC Summit must focus on the regional cooperation in those sectors.

They said the upcoming Saarc summit due to be held in Bhutan on April 28 and 29 must reflect political will of regional cooperation in sharing common resources like the water and energy to ensure food security and livelihood of rural people who rely heavily on agriculture.

The dialogue was jointly organised by Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods (CSRL) in collaboration with

Diplomatic Correspondents' Association Bangladesh (DCAB), Climate Action Network South Asia, Imagine a New South Asia, Unnayan Onneshan and Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) at a city hotel.

BUP Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiuzzaman Ahmed chaired the dialogue while Chief Whip Abdus Shahid was present as the guest of honour. Experts, politicians and journalists spoke at the dialogue.

Dr Ahsan Uddin Ahmed, convener of CSRL, Zahirul Alam, president of DCAB, and Sabihuddin Ahmed, former secretary and high commissioner to the United Kingdom, participated in the dialogue as panel discussants.

Associate Prof Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir of Development Studies of Dhaka University presented a keynote speech at

the dialogue.

The chief whip of Jatiya Sangsad said without political will of the Saarc members bilateral or regional problems could not be solved.

Though a number of declarations were made in the previous summits, no effective steps have been taken to materialise the declarations, he added.

Dr Kholiuzzaman said trust among the Saarc members is needed to resolve problems.

"Getting positive outcome will not be possible if the high-ups of the Saarc countries fail to reach consensus on vital issues like climate change, water management, energy security, food security and livelihood security."

He called on the stakeholders of South Asian countries to make a firm decision in this connection.



Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia addresses a huge public meeting at Babri Square in Khulna yesterday. (Story on Page 1)



When the Maritime Safety Week 2010 is being observed pompously, women and children as well as elderly people along with their belongings land on the Sadarghat launch terminal in the city risking their lives. The photo was taken yesterday.

## SADARGHAT LAUNCH TERMINAL

# Leasing to be withdrawn to lessen passengers' suffering

Says shipping minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan yesterday said the government has decided in principle to withdraw the leasing system of Sadarghat launch terminal from next July to lessen harassment of passengers as well as to provide better services.

"Leaseholders harass passengers in different ways, especially charging huge tolls from them, who carry goods through the launch terminal. It has tarnished the image of the terminal. So, we've taken a decision in principle to withdraw the leasing system of Sadarghat terminal."

He further said that the lease system would be withdrawn and the controlling power of the terminal be handed over to Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

The minister said this as the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of 'Maritime Safety Week 2010' jointly organised by BIWTA and Department of Shipping at

Sadarghat in the city yesterday.

The theme of the week this year is 'Security in waterways will bring success in the country'.

Saying that leaseholders deprive workers of their just wages, he said the government would introduce a new system by 2010 through which BIWTA will appoint workers, enlist them and will fix the rate of carrying goods.

About dredging of rivers, Khan said the government plans to procure 17 more dredgers soon for digging river beds to restore navigability of the waterways across the country.

"We need 50 dredgers to dig all the rivers. We have already started the process of procuring three dredgers and planning to procure 17 more dredgers. We are encouraging the private sector to procure dredgers," he said.

Pointing out different positive initiatives of the government, he said: "The government has allocated Tk 22.64 crore

for making the rivers pollution-free and digging the river beds. We have started dredging in this connection and are hopeful to achieve success gradually."

The minister emphasised arrangement of training for shipmasters, proper monitoring of fitness survey of ships, making all the ships mandatory to be registered and public awareness to ensure maritime safety.

Presiding over the session, Shipping Secretary Abdul Mannan Hawlader said their major aim was to ensure security in the waterways across the country and the government was working hard for that.

He also called on all involved in this sector to work together to ensure safe waterways.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) Chairman Golam Mostafa Kamal, BIWTA Chairman Abdul Malek, Department of Shipping Director General Rear Admiral (ret'd) Bazlur Rahman and representatives from different water transport bodies also spoke.

## Govt defers DCC polls to avoid defeat: Moudud

DU CORRESPONDENT

BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed yesterday said the government and Election Commission (EC) have deferred the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) election to avoid the defeats of the pro-government candidates in the race.

"We were totally prepared to face the scheduled election to DCC but the government and EC had differed it to avoid the government's defeat," he said, adding that the countrymen will protest the move one day.

Speaking at a roundtable as the chief guest, the BNP leader said the government would not be able to avoid its defeat in the DCC election even after deferring it as the phases of the government's defeat have begun in the country.

National Youth Forum, a social organisation, organised the programme at Dhaka Reporters' Unity marking a foodfight between members of BDR and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at Boraibari on April 18 in 2001

that left three BDR men killed.

Moudud said the government has kept the borders insecure since the bloody carnage occurred at BDR headquarters in the city in February last year.

"The independence and sovereignty of a country does not exist when its borders remain insecure."

Though a year has passed since the carnage at BDR headquarters, the government is yet to give any statement regarding the border security, the BNP leader said.

Quoting a letter sent to him by a resident of Kurigram, he said no BDR member stays at three camps situated at the letter sender's area. A few members of police, Ansar and Rab control the camps.

He criticised the government's initiative to change the name and dress of BDR and said that such move cannot be acceptable.

BNP leader Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, former BDR director general Maj Gen (ret'd) ALM Fazlur Rahman and former lawmaker ATM Gias Uddin also spoke.

## Huji leader Mostofa was adviser to Bhola madrasa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained UK unit chief of banned militant outfit Harkatul-Jihad al-Islami (Huji) Golam Mostofa was a close aide to another fugitive Bangladesh-born UK citizen Mustafa Faisal and an adviser to his Green Crescent Madrasa in Bhola.

The London police also picked up Golam Mostofa several times for interrogation after they arrested Mustafa Faisal, who was declared a terror suspect in 1996 and 2002 by British courts.

Bangladesh-born British citizen Mostofa, who was arrested in Sylhet on Thursday, disclosed this to the detectives during interrogation yesterday, the second day of his four-day remand, said a Detective Branch (DB) official. Mustafa Faisal had also been arrested by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in April last year but he came out on bail later. He has reportedly left Bangladesh.

During the interrogation, Golam Mostofa, who came to Bangladesh after the British police filed a case against him on charges of terror financing, said he had visited Bhola several times as he was an adviser to the Green Crescent Madrasa, Assistant Commissioner ASM Rafiqul Islam said.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Mahub Alam of DB told The Daily Star that Golam Mostofa would be sent to TFI cell for interrogation today.

Earlier, the terror suspect admitted that he had sent over Tk one crore to different militant organisations.

DB sources said his elder brother Golam Rabbani had helped collect the money.

Afghan war veteran Mostofa, who was sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment in an arms case filed in 2007, was trying to reorganise Huji activities after coming out of jail on a High Court bail around 14 months ago.

## President for quick appointment of lower court judges

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman yesterday asked the Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission to take initiatives to make quick appointments to the vacant posts of lower court judges.

The president gave the directive when newly appointed Chairman of the Judicial Service Commission Justice ABM Khairul Huq called on him at Bangabhaban.

The president said it is necessary to

fill up the vacant posts of the judges for reducing loads of cases in the lower courts to ensure justice for the common people.

He urged the newly appointed chairman to maintain highest neutrality and transparency during the recruitment of judicial officials for the greater interest of the country.

Justice Khairul informed the president that some 101 posts of judges have been lying vacant due to retirement, promotion to the higher court and fail-

ure to fill up the freedom fighters' quota.

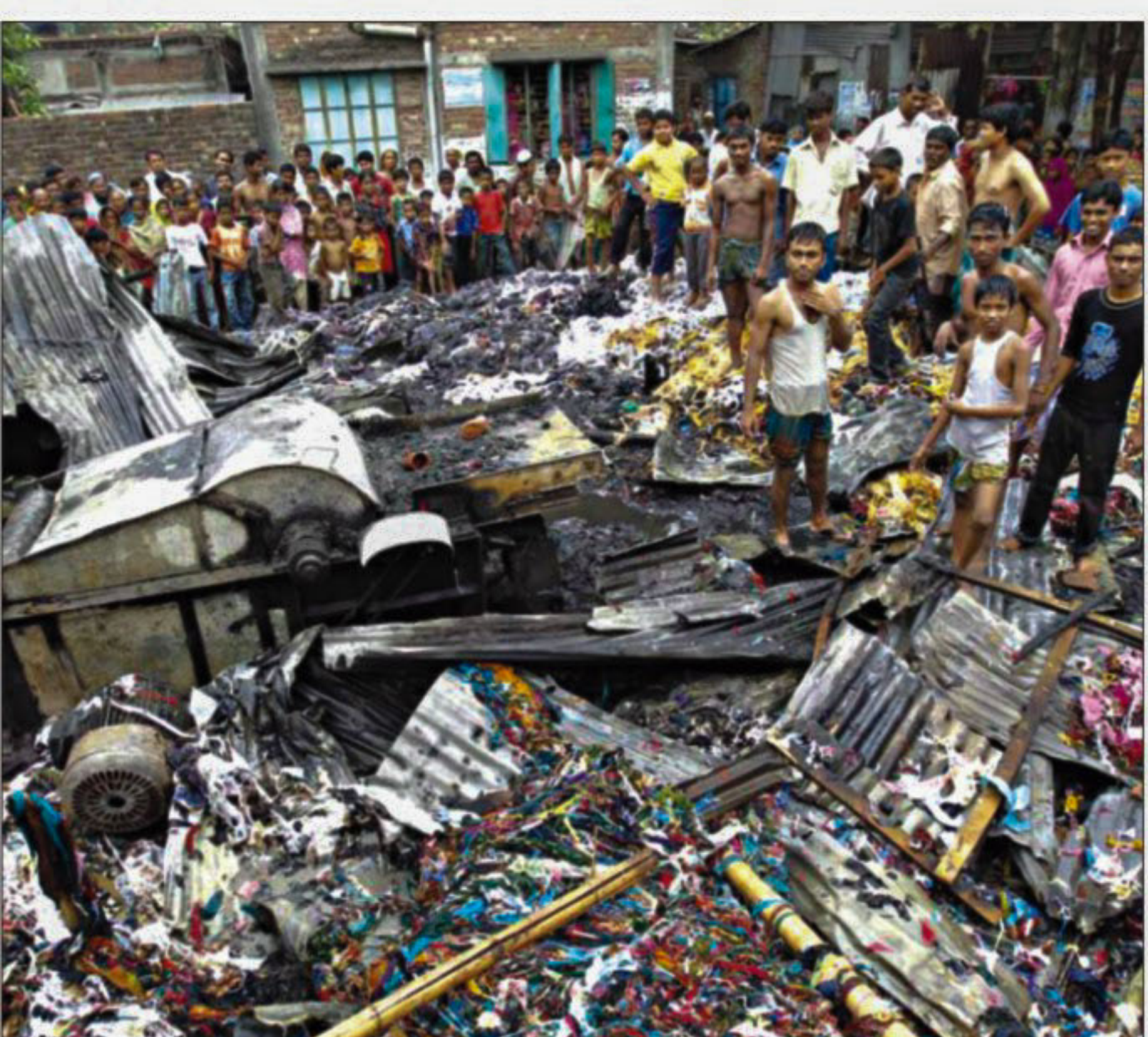
He sought the president's cooperation to bring all existing three offices of the judicial commission at one place for expediting their work.

President Zillur Rahman gave him a patient hearing and assured him of his all-out support for further development of the Judicial Service Commission.

The newly appointed chairman was accompanied by Commission Secretary Farid Ahmed Shibly.



Newly appointed High Court judges pose for photograph with Chief Justice Mohammad Fazlur Karim after taking oath at the Judges' Lounge of the Supreme Court yesterday.



A devastating fire devours a plastic goods manufacturing factory at Kamrangirchar in the city yesterday.

## Call to eliminate child labour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Elimination of child labour is vital to ensure education of children and development of human resources, speakers at a national consultation said yesterday.

The consultation titled 'Country Responses to Child Labour and Way Forward' was held at a city hotel, jointly organised by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Presenting a paper, Dr Rushidun Islam Rahman, Research Director, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said the rate of youth

unemployment is high in the country and that the elimination of child labour can help the youth to be absorbed into labour force.

Training policies must also be adopted for children, especially from low income group, who are not studying and are likely to join work, she said and stressed the need for their engagement in non-formal education.

Prof Dr Monirul Islam Khan said child labour leads to lower wage level and high rate of adult unemployment, resulting in low national income and low productivity.

Child labour has no occupational

mobility, it also tarnishes international image and with 70 percent working children facing serious hazards at work, they gradually become physically inactive, he said.

The government must ensure education for these working children to eliminate child labour, he said.

Speaking as the chief guest, Secretary to the Ministry of Labour and Employment said poverty is the main obstacle to eradicating child labour.

Dutch Ambassador AJAJMG Hennekens, and Gagan Raajbhandari, director, a.i, ILO, also spoke at the programme.