

Rohingya plight must not fall off int'l agenda

Says British minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

British Minister for International Development Penny Mordaunt has stressed the need for voluntary repatriation of Rohingyas to their place of origin in Myanmar, making sure that they are protected after their return.



Penny Mordaunt

"The plight of the Rohingya refugees to return home must not fall off the international agenda and they must be given justice," she said, according to a press release issued yesterday by the British High Commission in Dhaka.

She said the international community must make sure that Rohingyas' right to return remains high on the agenda.

Mordaunt, also the UK's minister for women and equalities, arrived in Dhaka on Sunday on a three-day official visit. On Monday, she met Rohingya refugees at a food distribution centre in Kutupalong camp of Cox's Bazar.

During a meeting with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahrar Alam at the capital's state guesthouse Padma yesterday, the British minister said she would push for the changes needed in Burma to help the Rohingya return to their homes.

She said now was the time to look beyond short-term life-saving assistance support, to give them the skills they need to create sustainable lives both for themselves and their families.

"This major man-made humanitarian crisis has been ethnic cleansing on an industrial scale and I urge the Government of Burma to create the necessary conditions that would allow those Rohingyas currently living in Bangladesh to return."

Talking to a small group of journalists at the residence of the British high commissioner in Dhaka yesterday afternoon, the minister said they wanted to see that Rohingyas' desire to return home was fulfilled.

Mordaunt, the first UK minister to visit Bangladesh since the December 30 national election, emphasised on unceasing joint efforts to protect both Rohingyas and the host communities in Bangladesh.

She said the UK would remain at the forefront of the efforts to try and get required conditions in Myanmar.

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Three killed as bus collides with 3-wheelers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Three people were killed and seven others injured when a bus collided head-on with a three-wheeler in Lalmonirhat Sadar last night.

The identity of the dead, who were all passengers of the three-wheeler, could not immediately be known. The injured were also passengers of the same vehicle.

The accident occurred around 9:30pm at Borobari Khedabag area on the Rangpur-Kurigram highway when the Dhaka-bound bus rammed the three-wheeler approaching from the opposite direction.

Quoting witnesses and the injured, officer-in-charge (OC) of Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station Mahfuz Alam said the bus driver's reckless driving led to the accident. All the injured were rushed to Kurigram Sadar Hospital.

Police seized the bus but its driver and other staffers fled, the OC said.

Film activist

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deteriorated and was admitted to Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital. His body will be kept at the Teacher-Student Centre of Dhaka University today from 11:00pm. His namaz-e-janaza will be held at the university's central mosque after Zohr prayers.

He will be laid to rest in Mohanpur village. Khasru was renowned for his editorship of the "Drupodi" magazine and had been involved with the film industry for more than five decades.

His efforts led to the formation of the Film Studies Centre under the supervision of the Bangladesh Film Society Association. He led the movement which helped establish Bangladesh Film Federation of Film Societies and the National Film Archive.

He was honoured with a lifetime achievement award of Dhaka University Film Society in 2017.



Devotees taking risky ride on trains from Tongi Railway Station to go home after attending the Akheri Munajat on the last day of the five-day Biswa Ijtema on the bank of Turag yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Blessings sought for mankind as Ijtema ends

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Saad Kandhalvi, led by Syed Wasiful Islam in Bangladesh, took part in the Akheri Munajat yesterday.

On Saturday, the first Akheri Munajat was administrated by

Maulana Zubair Hassan, imam of Kakrail Mosque in Dhaka and the leader of another faction.

The congregation was scheduled to end on Monday but was extended by a day for rain.

Around 1,200 foreigners from 36 countries and approximately "eight lakhs" people from Bangladesh participated in Ijtema this year, Abul Kalam Azad, a leader of the Tablighi Jamaat, told The Daily Star.

A total of six devotees died at the Ijtema venue this year, mostly because of sickness.

Tablighi Jamaat has been organising the congregation at the venue since 1967.

Push for the third submarine cable

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China Telecom Global, China Telecom, True Thailand, Ni2i of Mauritius, and companies from Singapore, India, Sri Lanka, and Saudi Arabia were present.

BSCCL did not attend the meeting but they have been in touch with the consortium via phone and email. Things were in the preliminary stage and if everything went well, Bangladesh would be connected by 2022, said a BSCCL source.

Telecom and ICT Minister Mustafa Jabbar said definitely cost would be considered but at the same time the country needs to consider the growing demand.

"More and more new technologies are hitting the market, fuelling growth in data consumption," he said.

The minister said the growth rate was flying and Bangladesh would exhaust its bandwidth capacity within the next year. It would not be possible for the BSCCL to meet demand unless an alternative source of internet was in place, Jabbar said.

"For the next one, we will get huge bandwidth. I am not sure but it might have 10 Tbps [terabit per second] of

ultimate capacity, and we can then look into exporting bandwidth to neighbouring landlocked countries as well."

The cable's capacity is usually determined by the ability of the equipment used for transmitting and receiving data through it. The equipment can be upgraded to obtain more bandwidth until the cable's ultimate capacity is reached.

Jabbar said in October last year, ICT adviser to the prime minister Sajeeb Wazed Joy also opined that a third undersea connection was needed.

Mashiur Rahman, managing director of the BSCCL, said the government is very serious about the country's third submarine cable and the BSCCL is looking into several options for undersea connectivity.

Industry insiders said the introduction of 4G mobile services in Bangladesh helped push the bandwidth demand into 1,000 gigabits per second (Gbps) from 550 Gbps of late 2017. Demand from users of wired broadband internet had been increasing as well, they said.

As carriers are now prepping for 5G

in the developed world, it will not be too long before the fifth-generation mobile internet service is made available in Bangladesh, sources said.

Another reason for considering the third submarine cable is that the first cable is nearing the end of its 20-year life, said a BSCCL official.

"It is not possible to expand the capacity of the first undersea cable much and its maintenance cost is also increasing every year," the official said.

With the two existing cables, the BSCCL can deliver 1,800 Gbps but is actually using about 650 Gbps. Bandwidth imported from India is used for meeting the rest of the demand.

BSCCL also exports about 10 Gbps to eastern parts of India.

"Import of bandwidth from India is gradually decreasing as our undersea cables are supplying plenty of bandwidth," said BSCCL MD.

Where the third cable would land is yet to be decided. The first cable landed in Cox's Bazar and the second one in Kuakata.

Sumon Ahmed Sabir, chief technology officer of Fiber@Home, the leading wholesale bandwidth supplier

in the country, said the country was moving towards digitalisation and that was why data use grew so much in the last few years.

"People are now watching more and more video content and that's why they are consuming so much data."

He, basing it on trend, predicted that Bangladesh would be using 2,000 Gbps this year. Bangladesh is very late in deciding to join a third submarine cable, said Sabir.

Sri Lanka is a small country but it is connected to six cables and the SEA-ME-WE 6 will be their seventh and it will not face scarcity of bandwidth in decades, said a market analyst.

Bangladesh has around 9.13 crore internet accounts as of December 2018, according to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

According to the BTRC, there are 59 lakh broadband internet connections and internet service providers claim that these 59 lakh connections consume 70 percent of the total bandwidth.

Google says Bangladesh has about 3.5 crore unique internet users.

CID probe on, Farashuddin report can't be disclosed

Says finance minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government cannot disclose the Farashuddin-led committee's investigation report on Bangladesh Bank reserve heist so that probe by the Criminal Investigation Department is not "influenced", Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal told parliament last night.

He said, "The investigation process of CID is still continuing. The report of Dr Farashuddin is yet to be disclosed so that it does not influence the CID probe."

Hackers stole \$101 million from BB's account with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York by using fake orders on the SWIFT payment system in February 2016.

Later, \$81 million was sent to accounts in Manila-based Rizal Commercial Bank Corporation (RCBC), from where it disappeared into the casino industry in the Philippines.

So far, Bangladesh has been able to retrieve \$15 million from the Philippines. Bangladesh has also recovered \$20 million sent to a bank in Sri Lanka.

On May 30 that year, former central bank governor Mohammed Farashuddin-led committee handed its full report to former finance minister AMA Muhith.

On that day, Farashuddin, head of the body that probed the \$101 million cyber heist, told reporters that they found SWIFT, among others, "responsible" for the heist.

On several occasions, Muhith told journalists that the probe report would be made public.

A US law firm on behalf of Bangladesh filed a case with a US court in January this year, and the process of recovering the rest of the heist money is still going on, said Mustafa, adding that he would inform the House if any progress was made in this regard.

The minister said immediately after the reserve heist, the government took all possible measures to recover the money, identify the people and organisations involved in the cyber heist and

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Man shot dead in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

A battery-run rickshaw driver was shot dead by unknown miscreants in Narankhia area in Khagrachhari yesterday evening.

The dead is Tushar Chakma, 25. Sadat Hossain Tito, officer-in-charge of Khagrachhari Sadar Police Station, confirmed it to The Daily Star.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Khagrachhari District Sadar Hospital for an autopsy, he added.

Extreme events to get more extreme

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agreement to 1.5 degree Celsius, the assessment said.

And if governments fail to rein in greenhouse gas emissions, the region could heat up by 4.4 degrees Celsius by this century's end resulting in the meltdown of two-thirds of the ice caps, according to the assessment report of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development released on February 4.

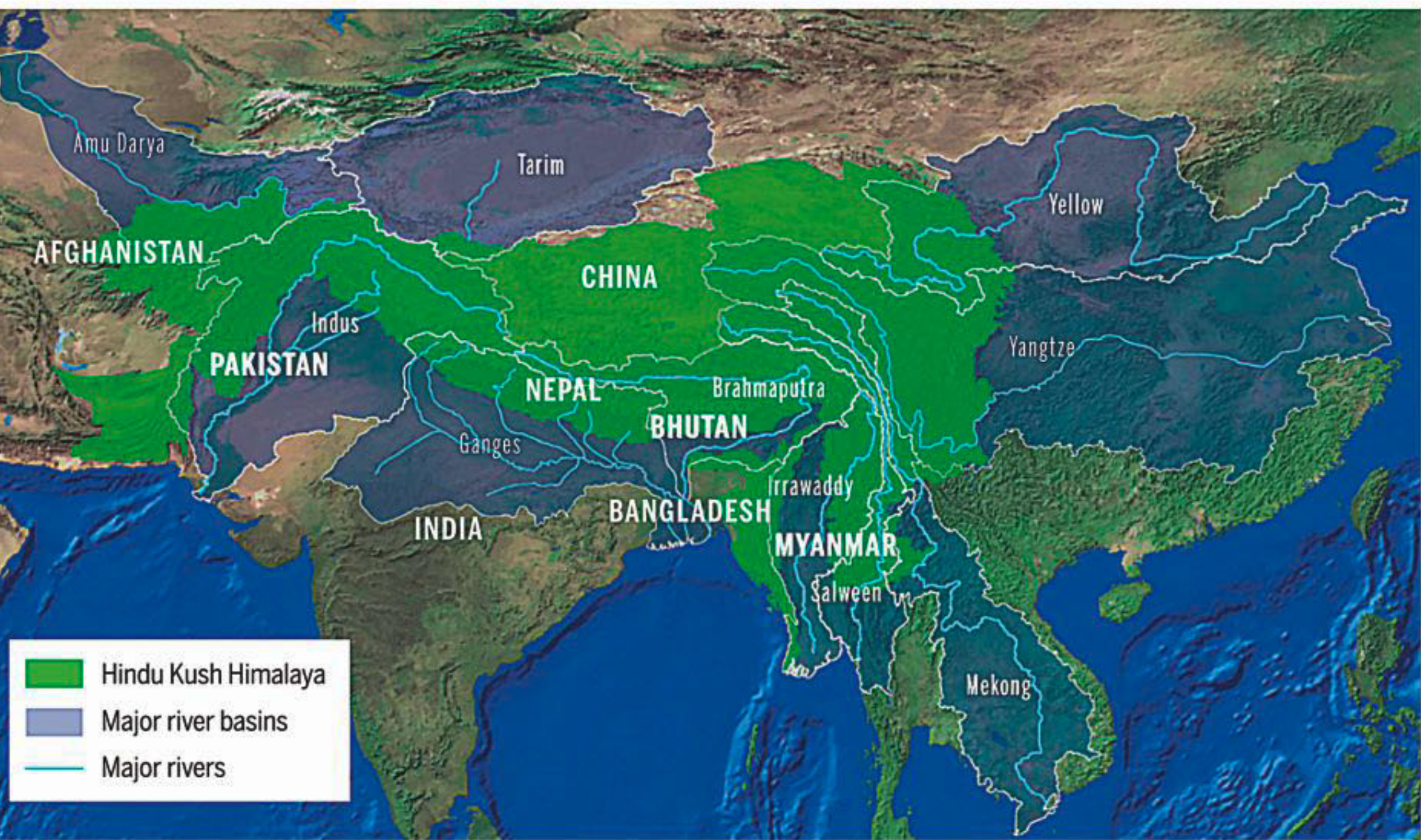
Glaciers in the HKH region, which spans over more than 2,000 miles of Asia, are critical water source for the 250 million people who live there, and 1.65 billion people who rely on the great rivers that flow from it into India, Pakistan, China, Bangladesh and other countries.

The report, requested by Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan, was put together over five years by 210 authors. The report includes input from more than 350 researchers and policymakers from 22 countries.

The regional impact assessment based on the findings of the report is yet to be done. But experts believe Bangladesh, one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, may have to endure more frequent and longer floods in the monsoon and severe drought spells in the dry season.

"In the initial period, let's say in [the next] 30 to 50 years, the glaciers will melt rapidly and consequently floods in the country is expected to increase. After 50 years, due to lack of ice, the glacier melting will decrease considerably, reducing water flow in the country's river systems," A Atiq Rahman, one of the lead authors of the assessment, told The Daily Star.

Atiq said variability of water flow, from the source up in the north of the country, would put the hydrological cycle of Bangladesh into more uncertainty and this would have severe impact on our agricultural productiv-



The Hindu Kush and Himalayan river basins. PHOTO: HI-AWARE

ity, poverty alleviation efforts, and biodiversity as a whole.

Only 7-8 percent of the water that goes into the Bay of Bengal through Bangladesh are received from rainfall within its territory. The rest comes from sources outside its boundary.

The study projected major disruption in the water systems of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, the two mighty rivers that originate in the HKH region and flow over Bangladesh into the Bay of Bengal. The rivers depend on the water from the glaciers, especially in the off-monsoon seasons when water is most needed for crop cultivation.

At least 22-28 percent of the water of the Ganges are from melted ice and snow while the percentage is between 10 and 13 for the Brahmaputra, experts said. The flow of the Ganges drops to a sixth during the dry season.

The report projected a pattern of heavy downpour and drought in the region. Rainfall will decrease in the northwest and southwest region of the country. This means the drier part of the country is going to get even more dry.

Abu Saleh Khan, deputy executive director of the Institute of Water Modelling, agreed.

"The situation will be grave for Bangladesh especially in the dry season. There is a huge possibility of drought in the Barind region due to reduced water flow," he added.

Monsoon in Bangladesh, which regulates its climate cycle, is heavily dependent on the Himalayas and its glaciers, said Abu Syed, an author of the HKH assessment.

The warm and humid wind from the Bay of Bengal gets condensed in contact with the cooler air of the glacier covered region and causes rain and snowfall, which also helps glaciers. A warmer HKH region will disrupt this cycle, he noted.

Syed said rising temperature in the HKH region risks altering the arrival and departure of monsoon causing erratic rainfall - which means heavy downpour as well as droughts - affecting agriculture and livelihoods of millions in Bangladesh.

"Extreme weather events will be more extreme," he added.

This would pose as a serious challenge for Bangladesh in achieving the goals to become climate change resilient by 2030, he opined.

Syed, also a fellow at the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies, said the overall rainfall in the country might not decrease but the change in climate might affect the seasonal and regional distribution of rainfall. The Chattogram Hill Tract and Sylhet region will have increased downpours and suffer the most.

Moreover, the variability of water flow would complicate sediment flow

and hydrodynamics of the rivers, said Syed, noting that more research was needed on this.

He urged the authorities to take note of the report and incorporate necessary risk-management measures into Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, which is scheduled for a review later this year.

Because of their huge volume, HKH's melting glaciers are going to add to sea-level rise, compounding problems for Bangladesh, experts said.

Scientists have already issued warnings over melting Arctic, Antarctica and Greenland. They said the melt caused sea level to rise 1.32cm over the last four decades and could contribute to 25cm more rise by 2070.

The Arctic ice loss has tripled since the 80s.

"Bangladesh has already been affected by sea-level rise. If the trend continues, salinity intrusion and ingression will increase and make more land in coastal areas less productive," Atiq said.

The amount of salinity affected land in Bangladesh was 105.6 million hectares in 2009 and continues to increase, according to the country's Soil Resources Development Institute. In the last 35 years, salinity increased around 26 percent in the country, spreading into non-coastal areas as well.

"Glaciers in the Himalaya will melt and it is inevitable, and downstream people of the region, including Bangladesh, will be affected," Saleemul Huq, Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development, told The Daily Star.

"All the eight countries in the region should come forward and make preparations to face the situation collectively," the noted environmentalist said.

Mentioning Bangladesh's insignificant carbon footprint, Atiq Rahman called on the big greenhouse gas emitters to take the responsibility and extend help to the affected countries.