

## Cooperate on food security, Dhaka urges BIMSTEC, D-8 Summit

Bangladesh has asked two major international groupings to plan for food security and environmental protection, urging them to take a cue from its own woes after being hit by floods and cyclones at home last year.

Bangladesh's Finance Adviser (minister) Mirza Azizul Islam called for effective regional cooperation among Bimstec (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) member countries to ensure food security and prevent negating the gains already achieved in poverty alleviation.

'The sheer availability of food is under strain, in part, because of the impact of climate change to which the member countries of Bimstec have contributed little,' the official said while opening the Bimstec senior officials' meeting in Dhaka Tuesday.

Bimstec ministers -- from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand -- are meeting here Wednesday to discuss poverty alleviation.

The finance adviser said the recent global scenario has become highly unfavourable for the poor due to the dramatic increases in the prices of food grains, fuel and fertilizer, giving rise to 'ugly inflation.'

He apprised the meeting of Dhaka's efforts in mitigating the sufferings of the people due to inflation through social safety net measures and employment creation programmes, United News of Bangladesh (UNB) news agency said.

Speaking in a similar vein at Kuala Lumpur at the D-8 Summit of Islamic nations, Bangladesh's Chief Advisor Fakhruddin Ahmed mooted a five-point recommendation for effective cooperation among the D-8 member-states in areas of energy, food, trade, climate change and migration.

He proposed to establish financing mechanisms to ensure a steady supply of affordable energy and focus on renewable energy as, he said, energy security was a must to realise the development potential the member-nations held.

'We need to develop mechanisms, not only to address short-term supply-side shocks but also strengthen cooperation to increase agriculture productivity. This is a must to prevent hunger and malnutrition,' he told the summit meet at Hotel Hilton, mentioning that it was a key priority of the UN-designated Millennium Development Goals.

The D-8, a part of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), includes Malaysia, Bangladesh, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, Turkey, Egypt and Nigeria.

Meanwhile, back home, Chief Advisor Fakhruddin Ahmed's interim government Tuesday decided to regulate the rice mills and secure supply of the staple to food warehouses amid a slump in the official procurement of rice.

The Rice Procurement and Control Order 2008 issued through a gazette notification July 6 replaces the British era's Bengal Rice Mills Control Order 1943 and empowers the authorities to compel the

mills to supply the agreed quantity of rice at officially fixed rates, officials told The Daily Star newspaper.

Food officials are worried about the achievement of the crop procurement target of 1.2 million tonnes as most of the millers are declining to sell rice to the government citing higher market prices than official rates.

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