

Saber Chowdhury urges stronger South Asian environmental cooperation

The outgoing Chair of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Saber Hossain Chowdhury, called for enhanced regional cooperation, coordination, and connectivity. He said that environmental pollution and degradation are transboundary issues requiring collaborative solutions. Minister Chowdhury emphasized the critical need to tackle environmental degradation, pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change in South Asia.

Environment Minister said this while delivering speech as the outgoing chair of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) in the 16th meeting of Governing Council on 26 June held in Thimphu, Bhutan.

Minister Chowdhury lauded the visionary leaders who established SACEP in 1982 under the Colombo Declaration, before the Earth Summit in 1992 and noted its remarkable achievements across various crucial areas. Highlighting South Asia's rich geographical, historical, political, ideological, and cultural identity, Minister Chowdhury expressed hope that SACEP would serve as the common platform for addressing environmental issues and become the focal point for all environmental perspectives in the region.

Saber Chowdhury mentioned SACEP's ongoing projects include combating plastic pollution through 12 Regional Grant Projects and 18 Innovation Grant Projects across Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. These initiatives support the private sector, entrepreneurs, academia, and ensure women's participation. SACEP also assists public

sectors with technical support for national policies, strategies, and capacity building.

Minister Chowdhury noted despite contributing only 0.48% of global greenhouse gas emissions, Bangladesh remains highly vulnerable to climate change. He pointed out the melting glaciers in the Hindukush Himalayas, rising sea levels, and the existential threat posed to living beings. Emphasizing the need to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, he called for targeted control of greenhouse gas emissions.

Environment Minister highlighted Bangladesh's commitment to combating environmental degradation and pollution with significant achievements made under the current government's leadership over the past 15 years. He mentioned the establishment of the Bangladesh Climate Trust Fund and the recent formation of the Bangladesh Climate Development Partnership, which exemplify the nation's proactive approach.

As the outgoing chair, Environment Minister handed over the Chairmanship to Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of Bhutan Gem Tshering and congratulating him Environment Minister expressed that under his leadership SACEP would significantly enhance mutual efforts and strategies to combat environmental challenges.