

Phase II Implementation of Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention
of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia

National Stakeholders Forum
25 February 2004

Speech of the Chief Guest

Syed Tanveer Hussain
Secretary
Ministry of Environment and Forest

Meeting Room # 1
IDB Bhaban
Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka 1207

**Representative of South Asia Cooperation Environment Programme,
Representative of, United Nations Environment Programme, Regional
Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific
Representative of Stockholm Environment Institute,
Mr. Chairperson, Khan M. Ibrahim Hossain, Director General, Department
of Environment,
Mr. Quazi Sarwar Imtiaz Hashmi, Project Director, Phase II Implementation
of Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely
Transboundary Effects for South Asia
Distinguished Participants
Technical Paper Presenters & Experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Assalamualaikum,

It is in deed a great pleasure for me to be in the midst of this distinguished gathering in the inaugural session of the National Stakeholders Forum under Phase II Implementation of Malé Declaration of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia, organized by the Department of Environment, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), and Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI).

Distinguished Guests,

As you know, Air Pollution is one of the major environmental problems in Bangladesh, especially in Urban areas, due to rapid expansion of cities, rapid rural urban migration, lack of sufficient road network, increasing number of vehicles having large number of aged vehicle fleet. Industries in and around the cities and towns also contribute to the pollution problem. This picture can be seen in most of the major cities of the developing countries. As air pollution cannot be bounded within a boundary, transboundary air pollution too is a cause of concern for all of us.

Distinguished Guests,

Although pollution within one Nation can be contained or lessened by initiating actions, but one has little or no control over transboundary air pollution. The cooperation for that reason is so vital. But for that at our national level we have to be aware of what is going on, and what could be done. This National Stakeholders Forum assumes considerable significance in view of the initiative and measures being undertaken throughout our region toward implementation of the Malé Declaration, where it has been stated the need for countries to carry forward, initiate studies or programmes on air pollution in each countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I was informed that during the last few years DoE, in close collaboration with UNEP, SACEP and SEI is working hard for the implementation of the Malé Declaration. I came to know that the 7th Governing Council Meeting of SACEP adopted the declaration. I on behalf of Ministry of Environment and Forest want to convey that I shall do whatever possible for the smooth implementation of the Declaration on our part.

Distinguished Guests,

I am pleased to know that the stakeholder's forum has 3 main aims; **firstly**, increase the awareness on the transboundary air pollution; **Secondly**, Share stakeholder's views and ideas on the implementation of Malé Declaration; and **finally**, improve the information exchange between information generators and users. I hope the discussion and share of information would be interactive.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the day's session different experts especially in the Health Sectors would present three technical papers. Impact of air pollution on human health should be more rigorously studied. Moreover, there is no special study on impact of Air Pollution on soil or agriculture in Bangladesh. New studies should be carried out to find out whether air pollution has impact on soil and agricultural productivity. I hope that stakeholders Forum will end up with some implementable recommendations and suggestions for the proper implementation of the Malé Declaration.

Distinguished Guests,

I would like to draw the attention of the representatives of UNEP, SACEP and SEI regarding Top dieing of Sundarban Forest, the largest Mangrove Forest in the World and one of the World Heritage Sites. Although it is thought that increasing Salinity in the rivers is the main cause of the top dieing of Sundry Trees, the predominant species of the Forest. But studies should be undertaken to find out whether transboundary air pollution also contribute to the top dieing of these plants. Effective Regional Cooperation is vital to tackle such kind of problems. I wish the discussion would be very fruitful for the participants, which would also contribute to enhance the general awareness among the people through you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With this few words, I declare the National Stake holder's forum open.

Thank you.
Allah Hafiz.

(Syed Tanveer Hussain)
Secretary
Ministry of Environment & Forest