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Call for closer SAARC efforts to promote science

The two-day sixth meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Technical Committee on Science and Technology began here Wednesday with a call for increased cooperation in the field among the member states to improve the quality of life of over one billion people of the region, reports BSS.

It was noted that the proper use of science and technology in the development world helped in making the life of its people comfortable and the SAARC member states should support one another in attaining self-reliance in the field for giving improved standard of life to the South Asian people.

Inaugurating the meet, First Lady Begum Raushan Ershad underscored the need for the promotion of science and technology to achieve the region's socio-economic development.

She said, "science and technology are the necessary prerequisites for the overall development planning process of a country."

The inaugural session was also addressed by Education, Science and Technology and Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud as the special guest, Secretary of Science and Technology Division and Chairman of the Technical Committee Ahmed Farid and Joint Secretary of Science and Technology Division, M.A. Mujib Chowdhury, Deputy Prime Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed, ministers, secretaries, diplomats and high officials were present.

SAARC Secretary General Abul Ahsan also spoke on the occasion.

Twenty-six delegates from the seven SAARC countries are participating in the meeting.

Begum Ershad said Bangladesh has constituted a National Council for Science and Technology (NCST) headed by President Hussain Muhammad Ershad to coordinate policies in the field and their appropriate application. The council envisages to attain scientific

and technical competence and self-reliance, to increase production and employment in economic sectors and to strengthen cooperation in science and technology between the developed and developing countries, particularly among the developing nations, she said.

The First Lady said collective efforts of the developing countries, particularly the SAARC member states, could greatly reinforce efforts to achieve self-reliance in the field of science and technology. Priorities have been identified to help SAARC members to achieve the objectives, she said.

Education, Science and Technology and Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud said there was an urgent need for initiating long term flood measures and proper water management technology. But, he said, Bangladesh could not do that independently and regional cooperation was essential to deal with recurring phenomenon.

Mr. Mahmud said that some joint projects on the field were raised in the fifth meeting of the committee last year. "With the collaborative spirit, proper solution of this problem can be evolved at a very early stage," he said.

AHSAN

Regional cooperation on natural disasters and the environment within the SAARC framework would be a step forward toward making the organisation viable and strong, SAARC Secretary General Abul Ahsan said.

The decision of the third summit about the commissioning of studies for identifying the scope for regional cooperation in the core areas of natural disasters and environment as well as on trade, industry and finance deserved special mention.

Mr. Ahsan said on the eve of the fourth SAARC summit, due soon in Pakistan, the organisation was thus poised for another important transformation.