



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies
1/46, Old Elephant Road, Eskaton, Dhaka-1000

Regional Conference
On

**Development and Management of River Basins: The Case of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-
Meghna (GBM)**

organised by
Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)
In collaboration with
Regional Program SAARC of the Konrad-Adenaur-Stiftung (KAS)
Dhaka, 05-06 September, 2012

Welcome Address
Major General Muhammad Imrul Quayes, ndc, psc
Director General, BIISS

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim.

Hon'ble Chief Guest of the Inaugural Session, **Air Vice-Marshal A. K. Khandker, BU, MP,**
Hon'ble Minister , Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Dr. Ralf Reusch, Charge d' Affairs, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to
Bangladesh

Mr. Tomislav Delinic, Director, Regional Programme SAARC, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
(KAS), New Delhi

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Learned Participants form home and abroad,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and Good Morning,

It's my great pleasure and privilege to welcome you all to the Regional Conference on **“Development and Management of River Basins: The Case of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM)”** organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) in collaboration with Regional Programme SAARC of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) .

We are indeed very grateful to the Hon'ble Chief Guest for her kind presence as the Chief Guest to inaugurate the Conference despite his busy schedule.

I express my gratitude to **Dr. Ralf Reusch**, Charge d' Affairs, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to Bangladesh, for being here with us today as the Special Guest.

I also thank **Mr. Tomislav Delinic**, Director, Regional Programme SAARC of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), New Delhi for collaborating with us to organise this Regional Conference.

I also extend a warm welcome to our foreign participants from China, India, Nepal and Thailand who have kindly come to participate in this Conference at our invitation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The water issue is becoming increasingly complex and difficult with increasing population and accelerating. This is being further compounded by the intensifying climate change. GBM river systems constitute the second largest hydrological region in the world. The total drainage area of the GBM region is about 1.75 million sq. Km. Stretching across five countries. The countries over which this river system flows over are Bangladesh (7%), Bhutan (3%), China (18%), India (64%) and Nepal (8%). Among the rivers of this river system Bangladesh and India share all the three rivers, China shares the Brahmaputra and the Ganges, Nepal only the Ganges and Bhutan

only the Brahmaputra. The three basins constitute only about 0.12% of the world's total landmass but are home to about 10% of the world's population and over 40% of the poor of the developing world. GBM river system is characterised by excessive water in the rainy season which causes flood and scarcity of water in the dry season. Bangladesh suffers the most as it is the lowest riparian of the mighty GBM river system.

Learned Participants,

By universal standards, good management of water resources has been identified as a fundamental dimension of poverty alleviation, agricultural growth and food security. Although the GBM river basins comprise about 80 per cent of Bangladesh's land area, it occupies only about 7-8 per cent of the total catchment areas of the three rivers combined. Most part of these basins covers Bhutan, China, India and Nepal. Arguably, Tibet's vast glaciers and high altitude have bequeathed China with the world's greatest river systems. Its river waters are a lifeline to the world's two most populous nations – China and India, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. These countries make up 47 per cent of the global population.

About 263 river basins in the world are international in scope. They represent nearly half of the world's total land surface and a significant share of the world's available supply of freshwater. They include many of world's largest and most important rivers such as the Ganges, Mekong, Amazon, Congo, Danube, Nile, Rhine and Tigris-Euphrates. According to a World Bank report titled "Reaching Across the Waters: Facing the Risks of Cooperation in International Waters", today 40 per cent of the world's population lives in international basins which account for 80 per

cent of global river flow. 90 per cent of the global population lives in countries with international basins. To share water of these basins on win-win basis, cooperation is essential. Total basin management in respect of any transboundary river is now recognised to be the best approach for the best possible development of water resources for equitable benefit of all riparians.

Distinguished Guests,

Against this backdrop, BISS has organised this Regional Conference to understand the international norms of transboundary rivers development and management, how the transboundary rivers are managed in different parts of the world, to share the experiences of a successfully managed transboundary river basin i.e. the Mekong river basin and explore how could the Mekong river basin management mechanism be beneficial for the GBM river basins and to address a set of fundamental questions with fresh insights from the participants. The questions that we will try to find answers are:

- What are the challenges and problems of common water management in the GBM river basins?
- What are the prospects for and options of common water management in the GBM river basins?
- What about the state and nature of transboundary water politics pursued by Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India and Nepal vis-à-vis the GBM river basins?

It is clear that regional cooperation is necessary for common water management in the GBM river basins. The important questions related with regional cooperation are:

- What are the existing mechanisms of cooperation?
- What should be the areas of cooperation?

- What lessons can be drawn from the development and management of river basins (e.g. the Mekong river basin) beyond the GBM basins?

The Conference paper themes include:

- i. Development and Management of Transboundary Water in the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna Basins
- ii. Adaptation to Changing Water Availability Scenario in Ganges Basin
- iii. Management of the Ganges River Basin: The Role of Nepal
- iv. The GBM River Basin and China: Issues and Outlook
- v. Management of Bangladesh-India Common Rivers
- vi. The Crisis and Challenge of Water Management in North-east India's Brahmaputra Valley
- vii. The Hydro-politics of Cooperation and Contestation on the Mekong River

Learned Participants,

Let me give you a brief introduction of the organisers of this Conference:

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) is a statutory and autonomous institute for collaborative research, networking and interaction on strategic and international issues pertaining to Bangladesh and South Asia. Contemporary issues of South Asian politics, security and development are the focus of research activities of BIISS. Every year BIISS holds a number of national and international seminars, workshops and brain storming sessions on issues of topical and national interests. It has established institutional linkages with a number of similar academic and research institutions both within and beyond South Asia.

The collaborating organisation **Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)** is a political foundation, named after the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967). Freedom, justice and solidarity are the basic principles underlying the work of KAS. The European and International cooperation of KAS is committed to fostering democracy and the rule of law, to implementing social and market-economic structures and to promoting human rights. With its worldwide networks to the political and social elites and with its long-term partner structure, it participates in shaping policy in developing and emerging countries. The Regional Programme SAARC of KAS supports conference, seminars, publications through its partners in the SAARC region. Its objectives are to enhance the integration of the SAARC region and to intensify the dialogue between Germany/Europe and the SAARC region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The papers and proceedings of the Conference will be published immediately after the Conference.

With this I thank and welcome you all once again for participating in today's Conference.