

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Dhaka, 24 January 2010: Minister of LGRD&C H.E. Syed Ashrafur Islam today inaugurated the first programme of the 5-day long Second Ministerial Meeting of Rural Development in Asia and the Pacific. He reiterated Bangladesh Government's strong commitment to working towards greater regional cooperation through CIRDAP for rural development and poverty alleviation. He was speaking at the inaugural session of the Twenty-Seventh Regular Meeting of CIRDAP Executive Committee (EC-27) at the Sheraton Hotel in Dhaka today.

The EC-27 meeting is the first one in the series of programmes for the Second Ministerial Meeting on Rural Development in Asia and the Pacific. The meeting is organised jointly by the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives of the Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh and the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), with contributions from the Government of Japan. The second day of the programme will see the Ministerial level Governing Council meeting, while on the third day there will be a regional policy dialogue and the fourth and fifth day will be the second ministerial meeting.

In his inaugural speech at the EC-27 meeting H.E. Syed Ashrafur Islam expressed hope that CIRDAP would play a significant role in materialising the vision 2021 of the present Government and specially contribute to achieving food self sufficiency by 2013, reducing poverty, building a Digital Bangladesh by 2021. He also urged all member countries for working together for sustainable rural development.

H.E. Advocate Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Minister of State for LGRD&C was a special guest in the occasion while Ms. Elena C. Cabanes, Director of Department of Agrarian Reform of Government of Philippines and Chairperson of EC-26, Ms. Rokeya Sultana, Secretary of Rural Development and Cooperatives Division of Ministry of LGRD&C and Dr. Durga P. Paudyal, Honourable Director General of CIRDAP also spoke at the inaugural ceremony.

H.E. Advocate Jahangir Kabir Nanak, stated that his government has started its journey with the vision of building a digital Bangladesh by 2021, which would be the golden jubilee year of independent Bangladesh and the country would like to learn from the experiences of Asia-Pacific region to achieve this goal. He also hoped that CIRDAP in Collaboration with member countries and national and international development partners would be able to come up with more viable approaches of rural development and poverty alleviation in the present and future context of the changing world.

Ms. Rokeya Sultana mentioned that Bangladesh has given utmost priority for rural development in the national development process. She stressed that the rural poor can change their own destiny and hoped that the meeting will come up with important recommendations to strengthen CIRDAP and its linkages with the member countries.

Ms. Elena Cabanes renewed the commitments of the Government of Republic of Philippines and to share the common concerns of member countries. She suggested other member countries to utilise CIRDAP's services for exchange of experiences and regional cooperation.

Dr. Durga P Paudyal, Director General, CIRDAP, in his welcome address, mentioned that CIRDAP conducted a study in 2008 to review the rural development policies and programmes in all its member countries, which found that food security is a growing concern in all these countries therefore food production must be the priority agenda for these countries. Similarly, regional cooperation has been less than adequate for cross-fertilisation of ideas and programmes among these countries and since poverty is a regional issue regional cooperation is required to address it, he added.

At the business session of the meeting Bangladesh was unanimously elected as the Chair while Islamic Republic of Iran was elected the Vice-Chair.

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