



পরিবেশ সংক্রান্ত সংস্কারের প্রয়োজনীয়তা এবং করণীয়

*'National Conference on Environmental Reforms: Necessity and Way Forward'*

বিষয়ক জাতীয় সম্মেলন- ৯-১০ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬

কৃষিবিদ ইন্সটিটিউশন বাংলাদেশ (KIB), কৃষি খামার সড়ক, ফার্মগেট, ঢাকা ১২১৫

## National Conference on Environmental Reforms: Necessity and the Way Forward

Organized by:

**Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA)**

**Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN)**

In association with

Universities, research institutions, and pro-environment organizations and networks in Bangladesh

**Date:** January 9–10, 2026

**Venue:** Krishibid Institution Bangladesh (KIB), Khamarbari Road, Farmgate, Dhaka 1215

### Background

Various reform commissions formed by the Interim Government have developed recommendations based on monitoring and review within their respective sectors, and steps are now being taken toward their implementation. However, since no dedicated **Environmental Reform Commission** has been established, there has been no comprehensive assessment or monitoring of the environmental situation of the country, nor has any well-conceived road-map been prepared for the future. Yet, the necessity for environmental reform in Bangladesh is especially urgent.

Over the past decades, a combination of flawed policies and inefficient as well as corrupt implementation has led to the accumulation of numerous environmental problems across different sectors. Addressing these requires not piecemeal efforts but rather a **comprehensive paradigm shift**. Such transformation demands a well-formulated framework for change. In the absence of an official environmental commission, it is essential to fill this void by developing a people-led, knowledge-based blueprint for reform.

The upcoming national election in February makes this endeavor even more urgent. It is crucial that environmental issues receive due emphasis in the **manifestos of political parties**, along with clear commitments to resolving key environmental problems.

To address these pressing needs, **Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA)** and **Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN)**, in collaboration with environmentally conscious universities, research institutions, NGOs, professional and civic organizations, and individual experts, are organizing a two-day national conference in Dhaka on **"Environmental Reforms: Necessity and the Way Forward."**

### Rationale

BAPA and BEN recognize that environmental reforms in Bangladesh must proceed along two interlinked paths:

1. **Policy Reforms**, and
2. **Institutional Reforms**.

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The need for both is evident from a number of key examples across sectors.

In **water resources management**, BAPA, BEN, and other environmental organizations have long advocated replacing the prevailing “*embankment (cordon) approach*” with an “*open approach*.” Despite this, the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) continues to adhere largely to the embankment model. Recently, through persistent advocacy by BAPA, BEN, the Baral River Protection Movement, and others—culminating in the initiative of the Interim Government’s Advisor for Water Resources—the sluice gate established in 1984 at the mouth of the Baral River in Charghat was removed. This small step has rejuvenated the river, allowing a strong flow from the Ganges into the Baral and Chalan Beel area. After four decades of stagnation, this restoration is being hailed by local communities as a near-miraculous event, drawing large crowds to witness the revived river.

Yet, despite this visible success, some within the Water Development Board appear eager to reinstall the gates. This clearly shows that **policy reform alone is not sufficient**—the **institutions** and their **incentive structures** must also be reformed. Officials and agencies must be motivated and structured toward sustainable, rather than profit-driven, interventions.

A similar situation exists in the **energy and power sectors**. Despite longstanding advocacy by BAPA, BEN, and other organizations—such as the “Coal, Gas, Power, and Port Protection Movement”—for prioritizing renewable energy over coal, the government’s *Power System Master Plan (2008, revised 2016)* aimed to raise coal’s share in the national energy mix from 1% (2016) to 40% by 2030. Consequently, several large coal-based power plants were built, leading to overcapacity—nearly 30% of total installed capacity now remains unused—while the government continues to pay enormous **capacity charges** and import expensive electricity from India.

Moreover, while the 2008 energy policy targeted 10% renewable energy use by 2020, the actual achievement has been less than 1%. These failures demonstrate that both **policy** and **institutional transformation** are needed to ensure efficient and environmentally sustainable energy management.

The same holds true for **urbanization and transportation**. For years, BAPA, BEN, and other groups have argued that Dhaka’s problems cannot be solved through city-centric interventions alone. The explosive population growth in Dhaka has been driven largely by migration rather than natural increase. Without **balanced regional development and urban planning**, minor changes in the city’s *Detailed Area Plan (DAP)* or *Floor Area Ratios (FAR)* will not solve the underlying problems. Questions remain: Why such persistent Dhaka-centric development? Why does RAJUK not limit its role strictly to regulation rather than acting as a developer itself? These issues illustrate the urgent need for both **policy and institutional reforms** in urban management as well.

In short, across nearly all sectors of environmental governance, **a fundamental paradigm shift in both policies and institutions is indispensable**.

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### Topics of the Conference

The upcoming **National Conference on Environmental Reforms: Necessity and the Way Forward** will discuss the necessity, nature, and implementation strategies of both policy and institutional reforms across key environmental sectors.

Special focus areas include:

1. Water resources (rivers, canals, wetlands, ponds, groundwater)
2. Energy and power
3. Urbanization, physical planning, and transportation
4. Agriculture, soil, and food contamination
5. Air, sound, and water pollution; waste management
6. Forests, hills, wetlands, and biodiversity conservation
7. Coastal, port, and marine environment protection
8. Other emerging environmental concerns

### Call for Papers

Papers are invited for presentation at the conference on the above themes. Submissions may be written in either **Bangla or English**. Papers should focus on Bangladesh's environmental reform needs, but may include comparative or international insights where relevant.

#### Submission Schedule:

- **December 25, 2025: Abstract submission**
- **December 31, 2025: Full paper submission (maximum 10,000 words)**
- **December 27, 2025: Notification of paper acceptance for presentation**

### Submission Contacts

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### Conference Secretariat and Communication

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#### Join Hands to Make the Conference a Success!

Like all past BAPA-BEN conferences, this event will be organized **without any government or foreign donor funding**—ensuring its **independence, courage, and integrity**. The conference will review existing environmental policies and institutions, identify necessary reforms, and propose concrete actions for implementation.

It is expected that political parties will draw valuable recommendations from this conference for inclusion in their upcoming election manifestos—thereby shaping the future of Bangladesh's environment.

BAPA and BEN call upon all environmentally conscious citizens, institutions, and organizations to participate and support this national initiative.

**Let us all join hands to make this conference a great success!**

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