

## PRESS RELEASE

### **5<sup>th</sup> General Forum of the Solidarity for Asian People's Advocacy (SAPA)**

*No country can feel safe without respecting human rights and democracy – NHRC Chairman*

“Today’s world has to respect human rights. No country can feel safe without respecting human rights and democracy” said Dr. Mizanur Rahman, Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh while inaugurating the 5<sup>th</sup> General Forum of the Solidarity for Asian People’s Advocacy (SAPA) today.



The Solidarity for Asian People’s Advocacy (SAPA) is a network of civil society organizations born out of common concerns about how to enhance the effectiveness and impact of civil society advocacy by improving communication, cooperation and coordination among non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating regionally, in the face of rapidly increasing and multiplying

inter-governmental processes and meetings in Asia. The SAPA network is having its 5<sup>th</sup> General Forum on 18-21 February 2011 at the BRAC – CDM, Khagan, Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Delegates from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, Japan, Indonesia are attending the two day General Forum of SAPA. Dr. Mizanur Rahman further said that the world has become a global village and can see Egypt's domino effect in Yemen, Bahrain and other countries. People are aspiring for democracy and human rights.

He emphasized that human rights are not only civil and political rights. One has to take into consideration the economic, social and cultural rights of the millions of starving people.

Equality, social justice and human dignity need to be the base of modern state. Mizanur Rahman visualize it.



Dr. Mizanur Rahman also emphasized the need for close linkages between various countries' Human Rights Commissions as they can rise above sectarian nationalism. He elaborated this by citing an incidence of killing of Felani, a 15 year old girl, by Border Security Force (BSF) of India at the Indo-Bangla Border. NHRC of Bangladesh wrote to NHRC of India but so far they have not heard from their Indian counterpart. It is necessary for NHRC of Bangladesh and

NHRC of India to work in tandem on such issues. Common approach to regional issues is the need of the hour, he added.

NHRC of Bangladesh will soon launch a nationwide campaign on human rights with the help of law students and faculty. He also requested human rights defenders and NGOs working on the issue to cooperate with the NHRC and work with it. “We all have to work together. With your expertise and knowledge, we can make a difference.”

The SAPA General Forum will be discussing three major topics today: Impunity, Peace and Security and Food Sovereignty. The speakers for the panel on Impunity are: Dr. Gopal Krishna Siwakoti of INHURED and Mr. Chalida Tajaroensuk of Peoples Empowerment. The Speaker for Peace and Security are: Ms. Mary Ann Joyce of Peace boat, Mr. Gus Mclat of the Initiatives for International Dialogue and Mr. Feroz Ahmed of Lead Trust. The speaker for food sovereignty is Mr. Jahangir Alam Jony of UBINIG.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of February the participants will visit the Central Shahed Minar, Dhaka in memory of the martyrs of the language movement in International Mother Language Day.

The 5th SAPA General Forum is being hosted locally by Odhikar and the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) Bangladesh (WARBE Development Foundation, Association for Community Development, Ain O Salish Kendra and the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit).

