

Environment

Environment and Development Linkages

by Dr A Atiq Rahman and Dr Saleemul Huq

BANGLADESH is faced with rampant poverty, high population density and recurring natural disasters and a dwindling natural resource base.

Development Challenges

With a population of about 119 million confined within 1.44,000 sq km Bangladesh's population density is the highest in the world.

Main Environmental Issues and Problems

The current situation of environmental management in Bangladesh is one of transition, uncertainty and paradox. The most important issues relating to environment and development are: mass poverty, low resource availability, population pressure, institutional weakness, poor information base and lack of comprehensive planning and implementation.

cluding fertilizers and pesticides damaging ecological balance. Shortage of water in the river system during the dry season is thought to be causing the saline belt to move northward.

ous loss of valuable mangrove forest in the Sundarbans. Fish is the major provider of animal protein covering 80 per cent of the domestic demand.

exceeded. The current population pressure argues for careful assessment of the use and management of the natural resources. Many people are using them for their livelihood and damaging the ecological balance of Bangladesh.

strengthened for achieving sustainable development in a low-resource but high-population ecosystem. Efforts must be made to use resources with a view to future generation capacity to access and use the same resources.

- Low involvement of people in decision making at local and central levels;
• Unrestricted access to resources such as fish, forests, water etc;
• Low capacity of local government to take actions and make decisions;

If ownership and control of resources remain with the wealthy and the influential, development from bottom-up and improved sustainable utilization of existing resources will continue to be difficult.

There is a lack of strong institutional mechanism within the government of Bangladesh exercising authority to promote sound environmental development.

production and this encourages overfishing. The uncontrolled withdrawal of groundwater have both led to a lowered ground water table and increased salinity in certain areas of Bangladesh.

activities relating to environment, particularly in the last few years with growing NGO involvement, government's initiatives, expert manpower, donor interest and indigenous knowledge base.

their short-term needs causing long-term depletion and degradation of the resource base and environment. The poor are often most vulnerable and unable to cope with the environmental changes.

Linkages Between Environment and Development

There are at least two major issues relating to environment and development nexus where population plays a vital role. First, population pressure has led to overuse of natural resources causing decline in the productivity of those resources and the second, there should be a definite limit to population growth and development.

The linkages of poverty, environment and development call for a careful analysis of alternative means to alleviate poverty and promote development safeguarding environment. Some NGOs like BRAC and Proshika are examples which have trained and enabled the poor to manage and use these limited resources for more sustainable, and productive livelihood.



Hills on the vanishing act: Would you be surprised if a hill that you have seen just the other day is no longer to be found there the day after? You would definitely think that it's a miracle. But this photo above shows that it is no miracle but the greed of man that constantly makes hills disappear in our country.

Sea Wolves Resist 'Disastrous' Anti-pollution Move

John Carr writes from Athens

TALK about protecting the marine environment to the average Greek shipowner and you are likely to get a mixed reception. Though the Greek magnates, who control 120.7 million deadweight tons — the biggest single merchant marine power in the world — have taken vigorous initiatives to clean up Greece's own seas.

goes from place to place wherever they are needed, with no fixed itinerary — rather like a marine taxi-truck service. Aggressive free traders, they were always wary of any rules that could cramp their style.

Greek shipping. A dry bulk carrier of average size carries up to 5,000 tons of fuel in its tanks; it requires that amount because a single day's voyage consumes up to 60 tons. Even the contents of an average ship's fuel tanks could cause severe pollution in case of accident.

Most Greek shipowners, who handle one out of every six tonnes of the world's cargo-carrying capacity, are resisting a US measure to stem coastal oil spills.

Big is beautiful. Oil tankers are getting bigger: the Jahre Viking is 1504ft (465m) long. The world's biggest living creature, the Blue Whale, can reach 110ft (33m), and weigh 190 tonnes. At a height of 965ft (300m), the Eiffel Tower is two-thirds the length of a supertanker. The largest dinosaur on record, based on bone relics, was Seismosaurus halli, up to 170ft (52m) long. Longest bridge span is over the Humber river in Britain, 4,626ft (1,410m).

Red Marks on Green Plan

Environmentalists call anti-global warming plans prepared by the United States as nothing but hot air. Pratap Chatterjee of Inter Press Service reports.

While US Vice President Al Gore congratulated business leaders bear the White House for their plans to slash greenhouse gas emissions one day in April, his boss Bill Clinton appeared to be outside rubbing shoulders with balloon-blowing Greenpeace protesters.

lished his book Earth in the Balance. He has since spent much of his time since jetting around to promote environmental causes. In April Gore was in Marrakesh, Morocco, where he chided free trade negotiators for not taking into account the depletion of the earth's natural resources — such as fish stocks — caused by unchecked trade.

Outside the white tent that was erected for the purpose, however, was a group of Greenpeace protesters. They were unconvinced by the government's proposals for climate change, which are completely voluntary.

the scheme says nothing about the transportation sector, which is responsible for most of US greenhouse gas emissions. Many other environmental groups agree with Greenpeace. Indeed, a new study by the Union of Concerned Scientists says the reason the Clinton administration's plan have failed is because they were based on incorrect assumptions.

But Greenpeace spokeswoman Beth Zilbert says far from slowing down, US emissions have risen sharply — hitting 1997 levels this year.

But back home, Gore was less critical of US industry leaders who had gathered one sunny April day at George Washington University a few blocks from the White House, to listen to him at a special conference on Climate Change.

Earlier this year, the League of Conservation Voters graded the White House a 'D' for its low environmental budget levels and a 'C minus' for failing to keep its promises.

The League cites as examples the government's backing away from a planned energy tax and a proposal to restrict grazing and mining on western lands. It also lambasts the Clinton administration for not taking a strong enough stance against proposals to weaken existing drinking water standards.



Stop this Urban Pollution, Please

by Aeman Tehseen Ansari

HOW Environment is being polluted? Oil spill from a tanker into the sea or ocean, chemical leakages from the reactor or dumping of chemical wastes are the most serious threat to environment pollution. But in a developing country like ours, environment is mainly being polluted by two different ways.

On the other hand, we, the city-dwellers should have to be more hygienic conscious. We always dump garbage on the roads and footpaths. This is not only indecent but also injurious for the environment around us.

Even owners of non-tanker vessels are protesting. OPA 90 is a disastrous piece of legislation, says bulk carrier operator Nicholas Eftymiou. A map in his seventh-floor office in Piraeus port shows the positions of his ships from day to day.

All the big Greek shipowning firms are in the hands of a couple of dozen wealthy families. "Take the instinct out of shipping and that will be end of it," argue Eftymiou. JOHN CARR has lived in Athens for many years, working as a freelance broadcaster and writer.