OING to the United States of America (generally called America) for whatsoever reason has become a dream to our young generation since late '70s. This Americadreaming is not only found in our country. It is also visible among the youngsters of the Sub-Continent. America has long been considered a dreamland for them. Perhaps visa restriction to go there has enhanced this dream manifold. Poverty, unemployment are also other contributing factors behind this America dreaming

in search of a better life. Being in the Foreign Service, getting the American visa even on private tour is not difficult for me. But the fact that unless any Government officer is virtually rich, he or she does not usually go on private visit to America. Like most of the Bangladeshis, I am also not a rich man. Still I went to America this summer for the first time on a private tour. There were a few reasons behind taking this decision.

First, like many others in our country, I also dreamt to go to America while I was a college student. Secondly, I thought that I might never be posted in our Missions in North America or might not go there as a member of any official delegation, since in both cases, this depends totally on the decision of the Government. But the reason that in fact compelled me to finally go there was that my wife's uncle, an engineer and his family live in New York. My wife was keen to visit them. My only 5-year-old daughter also joined her mother in finally convincing me to go there. Thanks to the European free market and to one of our wellwishers who managed cheap air tickets for us.

Though it was a private tour, I tried to make use of it from my professional point of view. When I was spending my time in New York, the last week of the 1998 ECOSOC Substantive Session was going on. I must thank our Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN for enabling me to participate in the said session. I should say that I benefited from my even very little participation in that meeting in many ways. Last year, this session was held in Geneva and I was actively involved in it. ECOSOC Substantive Session is held on alternate year in the UN Headquarters in New York and in UN Office in

Geneva. The Ellis Island - A Trajectory of America's Immigrants Ellis Island and the Liberty State Park are located in New York Harbour. As a part of a package tour one can go to Liberty State Park, Ellis Island and Battery Park in New York City (NYC) from where this package tour originates. The ferry first takes the tourists to the Liberty State Park where the Statue of Liberty is located. From there the ferry goes to the Ellis Island and finally to the Battery Park where there is a beautiful monument erected to

the memories of the American Naval soldiers who sacrificed their lives during the Second World War. There are ferries at every half an hour at all these three places. The journey while on the ferry is also an enjoyable one. This type of package tour is also available from New Jersey. We, however, took ferry from

the Battery Park in NYC. Many tourists take this trip mainly to go to the Liberty State Park to visit the Statue of Liberty. On their way back to Battery Park after visiting the Statue of Liberty, I have seen most of the tourists not getting down at the Ellis Island. They rather preferred to go back to the Battery Park by the same ferry. Personally I was charmed more by the Ellis Island than by

the Statue of liberty.

The Ellis Island stands as a constant reminder of America's immigrant history. Located a few hundred yards north of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, Ellis Island is a monument to the great traditions of freedom and opportunity in

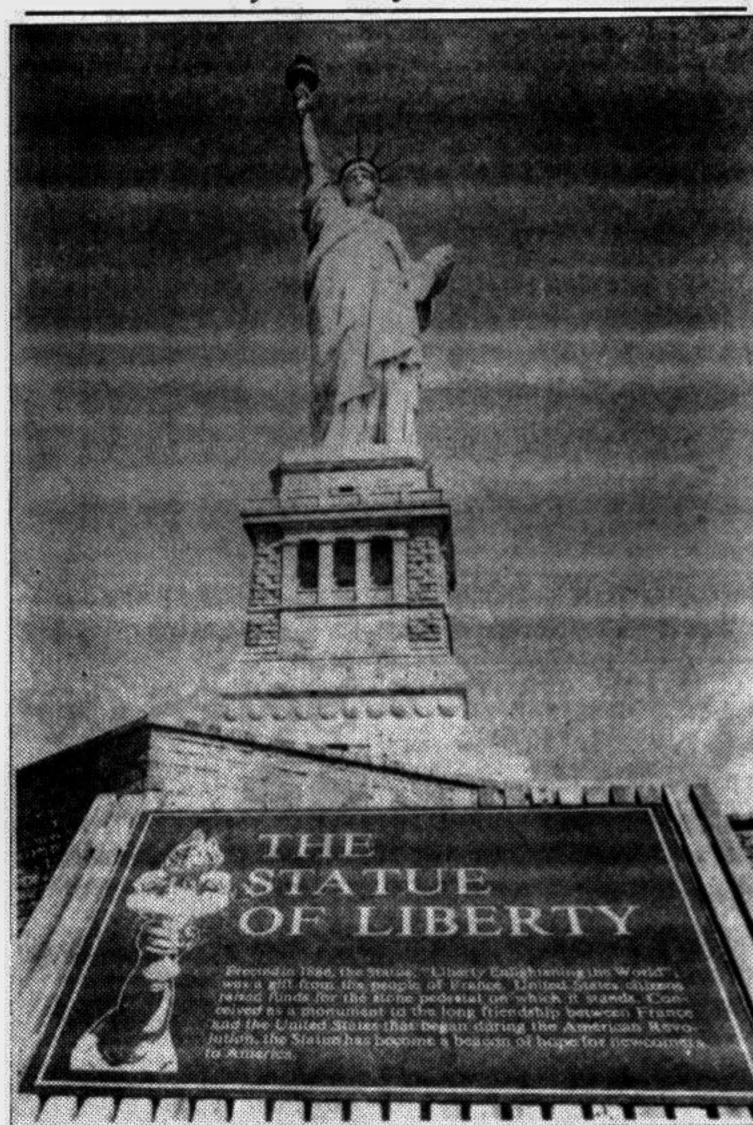
America is a rich mosaic of ethnic cultures and traditions a land made strong by its very diversity. American nation is called a nation of immigrants. Ellis Island offers the immigrants the opportunity to discover their roots. If one goes back far enough on his family tree he can find that ultimately, he too, came from some place else. The American Immigrant Wall of Honour at the Ellis Island gives the immigrants the opportunity to not only think about their families' beginnings in America, but to also honour their contribution to the American nation. An inscription on the Wall of Honour makes a great gift for their parents or grandparents and gives special recognition to their families' names at the only National Monument where they can place a name in tribute.

The Ellis Island Immigration Museum tells the story of the largest human migration in modern history. Between 1892 and 1954, 12 million immigrants were processed at the Ellis Island. Today more than 40 per cent, or over 100 million, of all living Americans can trace their roots to an ancestor who came through the Ellis Island. The Museum offers visitors a fascinating look at the total immigrant experience, using innovative displays that feature historic artifacts and photos, interactive devices, computers and taped reminiscences

of the immigrants themselves. A touching collection of artifacts donated to the museum by descendants of the immigrants who brought these treasures from their homes to America. The collection includes priceless family heirlooms, religious articles, family photos, rare and beautiful clothing and jewelry. More than 30 separate galleries are filled with artifacts, historic photos, posters, maps and accompanied by oral history and immigrant music,

by Dr. Khalilur Rahman

Many of us in our country who have not yet visited America think that those who are staying there are leading beautiful lives. Reality is different. The immigrants have to work hard to lead even a very normal life in America.



all of which tell the moving story of what happened at the Ellis Island and to the immigrants that helped settle America. It also includes an expanded Oral History Studio, Children's Visitor Center and Immigrant's Living Theatre, where the dramatic immigrant saga is brought to life. An outside terrace for dining which overlooks a spectacular vista of the New York skyline and the Statue of Liberty.

There is also the historic Great Hall, the beautiful room where millions once waited anxiously for medical and legal processing. It does include an innovative learning center whose state-of-the-art technology helps teach school children about their immigrant heritage. And finally there is the American Immigrant Wall of Honour which contains the names of over 500,000 immigrants including George Washington's great-grandfather, Myles Standish, Priscilla Alden, the greatgrandparents of John F. Kennedy, as well as the families

leprosy cases

of Gregory Peck, Cicely Tyson, Jay Leno and Barbara Streisand.

America is called the country of immigrants. Everyone knows this history. Perhaps many of us are not aware that the American society has been consistently and meticulously keeping the tracks of all the immigrants through the Ellis Island. The purpose is simple. Just to know one's roots. Through this systematic process, even after thousands of years time, one young American would be able to know who were his forefathers, where they came from and the evolution of his family. Perhaps one day, our future generation will find some names of some Bangladeshi immigrants who would make new history for the USA.

Unfortunately in our own country we even do not have a systematic and effective mechanism for birth registry. Compulsory registration of birth and death is necessary for our future generation and for mak-

The end of

ing a proper national history. We, however, do have our own laws for these purposes. The only problem is to implement them adequately and effectively. Newly established Village Council may be given this responsibility. The data on birth and death should finally go to the District authority where computerised system should be introduced for this purpose. All districts centres should then be connected with the national centre. While registering the birth, the village council authority may also collect the information on the forefathers of the child as much as possible. They may also include the past migration his-

tory of that particular family.

Living in America sounds good in our country. Many of us in our country who have not yet visited America think that those who are staying there are leading beautiful lives. Reality is different. The immigrants have to work hard to lead even a very normal life in America. Their hard work should, however, be acknowledged. They are trying hard for their own survival there and at the same time they are sending money back home for their families. I, however, observed that by using their skills and acquiring knowledge in computer technology, these Bangladeshi im-. migrants could perhaps earn more money with less physical labour and thereby could lead better lives.

Every year, American companies recruit thousands of foreigners having expertise in computer technology. They are also given good salary. Moreover, these companies arrange for their visa on their own. Therefore, those of our countrymen who go to America with valid visa, for example under Diversified Visa Programme. should learn various computer programmes before going there. Learning computer programmes in America costs much and is a time consuming

Our students can also get admission in basic computer courses in any college or university in America. These are basically two-year period courses. Once they start their courses in America, after some time they are given temporary work permit and then they can easily maintain themselves there without taking money from back home. After successful completion of these courses. they are likely to be recruited by American companies. I also encountered few Bangladeshi students who went there on longterm tourist visa and got admitted into computer courses. Their visa was later converted into student visa. Now they have temporary work permit and are maintaining themselves on their own without the support of their families from the country.

The Liberty State Park and the Statue of Liberty The Liberty State Park is magnificent for it's view and beauty. It is really enjoyable to walk along the great liberty walk way over looking the Hudson river. One can also enjoy in visiting the magnificent Central Railroad Terminal and the new Liberty Science Center.

The Statue of Liberty is a landmark monument not only in New York State but also in the whole America. It is just beautiful. The construction of the Statue began in France in 1875. The title of Statue was "Liberty Enlightening the World". Auguste Bartholdi was the sculptor and Gustave Eiffel was the structural engineer of this Statue. The construction was completed in Paris in June 1884. Thereafter, it was dismantled and shipped to the US in early 1885 by French frigate "Isere". On the other side, the construction of the pedestal was completed in 1884. The architect was Richard M. Hunt. President Grover Cleveland officially accepted the Statue on 28 October 1886. It was designated a National Monument on 15 October 1924.

The height from base to torch of the Statue is 151' 1". The number of windows in the crown is 25. These windows in the crown represent "natural minerals" of the earth. There are seven spikes in the crown. They represent either Seven Seas - Arctic, Antarctic, North and South Atlantic. North and South Pacific, Indian or Seven Continents — North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Antarctica, Australia. On the other hand, Toga represents the Ancient Republic of Rome, Torch represents Enlightenment and Chains underfoot represent Liberty crushing the chains of slavery. Left hand of the Statue holds tablet and the Inscription on tablet is "July 4, 1776" (in Roman numerals), the Day of America's Independence from Britain.

I conclude this write-up by the Statue Inscription:

The New Colossus Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame, with conquering limbs astride from land to land; Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand a mighty woman with a torch whose flame is imprisoned lightning. and her name Mother of Exiles.

From her beacon-hand glows world-wide welcome: her mild eyes command the air bridged harbor that twin cities frame. "Keep ancient lands your storied pomp!" cries she with silent lips.

"Give me your tired your poor, your huddled masses of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden

 Emma Lazarus (1849-1887) The writer is Counsellor in the Bangladesh Permanent Mission, Geneva.

Keeping a Watch on the Centripetal Forces

A Husnain

BAngladesh is in the grip of several types of centripetal forces (CF) which need to be analysed by the experts to enable the country to develop faster. The centrifugal forces emanate from the centre and fly outwards. The centripetal force is just the opposite, flowing in-wards towards the centre, as during the formation of a tropical cyclone. Other examples may be cited from the areas of politics, leadership, and urban migration, to generate public interest.

The circulation of money is suffering from the CF effect, being concentrated in the metropolis and big cities, depriving the rural economy — the isolated grandeur of individuality grappling with the anony-mous materialistic trappings of the cosmopolis. The minutehand of the watch replaces the sundial of the country courtyard. Few can get out of this

Brigid Brophy, in her essay 'The Menace of Nature', calls it the homo artifex's tendency to make things artificial (from the natural). Thus the greenhouse effect has overtaken us before the 20th century is out (this 'scientific' effect has to be read with

some discount). In the village, the neighbours are invaluable company, not the target of philanthropy. The human touch is there, and the heart feels without delayed action. While man retains his individuality, the Western cult of ruthless individualism is missing as yet in Sonar Bangla, which is still a little away from the madding crowd's ignoble strife. But the IT culture will level the morals to 'modern'

In the developed countries after two centuries of city life, centrifugal forces, acting on the affluent society, encourage suburban migration, spilling into rural homes in the countryside (notice the horizontal living is preferred to the vertical aloofness of the apartments). The house rent in the cities are not equivalent to a couple of months' monthly wages as found in Dhaka. The high-speed construction boom here of fragile and 'instant' multi-storied buildings awaits a mere earthquake to topple the economics and lengthen the list of bank loan defaulters. With ruthless greed, discipline dilates to the stretching point.

In the developing countries the urban centripetal forces lure urban migration to the distant horizons; balanced by the centrifugal forces in the rural area. Both these seemingly complementary forces act in tandem (push-pull) and control the bigger cycle of the movement and behaviour pattern of societies in transition.

Several circulatory currents

and identification (on both sides) blur at increasing speed: reinforcing isolation and communication gap in this Information Age. The factory workers start a chain of remote services in the industrialised societies. The family is separated from the raw materials and domestic help, as finished products reach the distant consumers in the remotest corners of the country, establishing the boring efficiency of conformity packaging, canning, and fast distribution; plus the microoven for cooking in minutes instead of in hours. The kitchen, drawing and the living/drawing rooms become 'seamless'; and bedrooms enjoy limited service hours. What is done with the time 'saved'?

control these two forces:

money, transport and commu-

nication. Today's 'successful'

families carry a few symbols: a

home (may be on mortgage),

personal transport (car in the

garage from a converted cow-

shed); and cellphone, thanks to

name of the game. Recognition

Mobility and speed is the

BTTB's efficiency.

Specialisation is freedom from the routine chores of daily life, concentrating on one's own task (the micro bit in a macro system), and enhancing the comforts, and pushing ahead civilisation through newer applications of technology - a sad mechanisation of the natural philosophy of life. The leisure hours, creative or entertaining, are 'enjoyed' with more concentration, sending parts of the society into spins, centrifugal or petal. The toll on mother nature is studied later, now name the greenhouse effect for air pollution only, forgetting the domestic home life. What a waste of huge road space considering one person-driver travelling alone in millions of private cars!

In this dehumanising process, new centrifugal forces start disintegrating the family; that is, the society. The eclipse of civilisation follows. The confucian core of family bondage is disturbed (Singapore is using the sage's philosophy to set things right - perhaps too late). Thus the weeds of mother nature sprout through the cracks of civilisations (the Mayas, the Incas, Angkor, Barabador). To come to the main theme

of this commentary: the political forces working in the developing countries appear to be centripetal in nature, drawing nurture inwards from the huge masses of the poor society for the strengthening of political machines and systems. With strong, dedicated and visionary leadership, the centrifugal forces go out to improve the society and accelerate the development of the country. Are we well aware of the CF

in current local political cul-

Leprosy Target 2000 May Be Missed

For the past decade, the number of people with leprosy has rapidly, and steadily, declined. But as Gemini News Service reports, efforts to eliminate the disease by the World Health Organisation's target date of 2000 are encountering some stiff obstacles. Mike Crawley writes from London

TOPE is fading that health workers will conquer Leprosy, one of the world's oldest diseases, by their stated goal of the year 2000.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) set the turn of the millenium as the target date for reducing the prevalence of leprosy to one case per 10,000 population, a figure that epidemiologists say would mean the disease is no longer a public health problem.

In 1991, when the target was announced, the overall prevalence in the 32 countries where leprosy is endemic was 11 per 10,000. The most recent statistics put the prevalence at 3.2 per 10,000, a vast improvement but still short of the mark.

'By and large we'll reach the goal, with the exception of about four or five countries," says Dr Sheik Noordeen, senior advisor to the WHO action programme for the elimination of

leprosy The target will likely not be met in India, Brazil, Madagascar and in places where war has nampered elimination efforts, such as Mozambique, Listan and Sudan.

Having a goal of the elimination of leprosy as a public health problem has been very effective in that it mobilised the resources and mobilised the governments' says Terry Vasey, director of the British Leprosy Relief Association (Lepra).

But he adds, "I think the goal was slightly unrealistic when you consider the size and the logistics of the problem."

By any measure, the progress in fighting leprosy has been remarkable. The number of cases in the endemic countries

in 1985 was four million; now it's down to 770,000.

Hampering progress, however, is the fact that the number of new cases identified each year is not dropping. An average of 600,000 new leprosy victims were identified every year in the 1990s and the trend shows no sign of changing.

The harder that health workers look, the more cases they find. In India — home to two-thirds of the world's leprosy cases — close to one million volunteers were trained for a massive search campaign in 1997. It covered the country and found 450,000 previously unidentified leprosy cases.

reducing leprosy's prevalence a lot like mountain climbing: the last stretch before reaching the summit is the toughest part. "The remaining task is quite

All this makes the task of

formidable because we are getting into the most difficult parts," says Noordeen.

What has to happen next, says Noordeen, are more massive search campaigns like the one in India, and a big push to give communities the training, the resources and the drugs they

The success of the past decade has come as a result of a multiple-drug therapy (MDT) that costs only \$36 and works wonders for curing leprosy. In addition, there has been huge financial backing for the fight against the disease, allowing MDT to be delivered to patients for free. Much of the funding has come from one source, the Tokyo-based Sasakawa Foundation, which has given over \$100 million to WHO's anti-leprosy efforts in the past decade.

leprosy? per 10,000 people 21.1 Prevalence of leprosy worldwide has dropped significantly since 1980s, but goal of eliminating disease by 2000 is in eprsyleprosy doubt prosyleprosy osyle rosyleprosyl psyleprosylepro yleprosylepro rosylepros 1987 1995 1989 1991 1993 What is leprosy? caused by a contagious bacterium leaves victim with lumps and blotches on the skin damages nerves in hands, feet, face nerve damage leads to disabling injuries and deformities

Vasey, who is also incoming president of the Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations, is worried about what he calls WHO's "triumphalist attitude" over the dropping prevalence rates. His concern is that it could backfire, prompting policy-makers and funders to believe that leprosy is no longer

leprosy is curable

If anti-leprosy work gets put on the back burner, there's a fear that leprosy could stage the same kind of comeback as tuberculosis, which health, workers once thought they had con-

an issue.

quered.

numbers that were so horrific a few years ago," says Vasey

He's supported in this view by Dr Colin McDougall, a retired British leprosy specialist. He believes there's a short window of opportunity in the next few years to knock leprosy to the mat.

If our efforts flag now, it's just possible that the moment may pass and we'll face a problem in the next century," says McDougall. He says efforts "should be in-

tensified and backed with appropriate funding." The writer is a Canadian

"It wouldn't take much for journalist in London. leprosy to creep back up to the

sibilities to Annex I (industrialised) countries according to their contribution to climate change has been a critical issue haunting climate

THE assignment of respon-

negotiations. It was first proposed by Brazil at the Ad Hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate (AGBM) meet held in July-August 1997, and was subsequently addressed to at length at the Third Conference of Parties (COP-3) held in Kyoto in December 1997.

The proposal puts "differentiated responsibilities" on large emitters and defines quantitative emission limitation and reduction objectives (QELROS). It limits greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by Annex I countries to the 1990 level in the period 1990 to 2000. This is the "effective emissions reference". The emissions are to decrease regularly from 2000 to 2020, reaching a level 30 per cent lower than 1990 level in 2020. This is the "effective emissions ceil-

Reduction targets for Annex I countries, for each of the periods — 2001-2005, 2006-2010, 2011-2015 and 2016-2020, is equal to the difference between the effective emissions reference and the ceiling. The calculation criterion is "differentiated responsibilities" as opposed to a "flat rate", fixed to 1990 baseline. It was argued, the flat rate criteria would penalise countries that have maintained relatively low emissions.

The proposal recognises "net anthropogenic emissions" as the difference between humaninduced emissions and humaninduced removals by sinks of a given GHG in a year. And "effective emissions" in a given period is defined as the increase in global means surface temperature resulting from an increase in the net anthropogenic emissions of a particular set of gases in a year.

The increase is to be over the initial concentration of gases as at the beginning of the calculating period. In this way the relative responsibility of each Annex I country would be calcu-

A Brazilian Whisper by Nikhat Jamal Qaiyum

lated to equal its effective emis-

The proposal grants some llexibility to Annex I countries by allowing them to achieve targets individually or jointly The difference between the emission ceiling and the actual emissions can be used as a measure for trading among them selves. These provisions sought to limit mitigation efforts to domestic action by an Annex I country or Joint Implementation (JI) among each other.

A penalty, \$3.33 for each effective emission unit higher than the ceiling limit, would be slapped for non-compliance. The money thus collected would go into the Clean Development Fund (CDF) and will be used for climate change mitigation projects in Non-Annex I countries. The financial resources al-

lotted to the latter would be in proportion to their effective emissions which will be calculated as it is done for Annex countries. It is often implied that Non-Annex I emissions in the future

will tend to grow more rapidly than Annex I emissions. The year when the Non-Annex emissions equals those of Annex I Parties is being taken as the year when the respective responsibilities become equal. However, this approach does not take into consideration the different historical emission paths resulting from the dawn of industrialisation. The Inter-governmental

Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), taking the 1992 levels estimated that whereas annual emissions from the South will equal the North by 2037, the resulting human-induced change in temperature are estimated to be the same only in 2147. However, Non-Annex I par-

ties stand most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. Hence it is important that the developing countries realise that they have a stake in the discussion on "differentiated responsibilities" and methods likely to be adopted by Annex I countries to achieve their targets. In Kyoto, the Brazilian proposal seemed to find support

from many quarters, but the very nations who had seconded it ardently were to rewrite the proposal altogether. A group of negotiators from the US. Japan. European Union (EU). Brazil, China and other developing countries was set up to draft the outline of the programme. The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), as it finally emerged. was just a bank for carbon credits.

Under the CDM, the climate change secretariat will establish a special body with functions similar to a stock exchange. But instead of stocks. "carbon credits" will be sold and bought. Annex I countries or private companies from the North will undertake sustainable projects aimed at reducing GHG levels, mostly in developmg nations

When such projects succeed in reducing emissions, the amount of the reduction will be counted as carbon credits. Developing countries can bank their credits at the "carbon credit exchange" which can then be purchased by the North to meet their reduction targets. The purchased carbon credits will be included as emission reductions in the developed coun-

The CDM, therefore, is nothing but an extension of Jl. The basic difference being that, under JI, credits are granted for investments in projects only in developed countries. Under CDM, nations have the option of earning credits by financing emission reduction projects in developing countries from the year 2000. Another difference is that under the CDM, even private companies are allowed to invest in projects. Also, the CDM does not define "sustainable" projects that are to be undertaken in the South.

"The Clean Development Fund as has been defined in Kyoto would actually allow de-

veloped countries to gain credit for investing in developing countries," said Saifuddin Soz, India's former environment minister, without doing much

in the domestic front. In simple terms, the purpose of the CDM is only to make the South assist the North in reducing emissions. Like JI, CDM projects would mean reducing developed countries' emissions where it is economically the cheapest, and it would give no credits to the developing countries. Moreover, once developing countries come to accept reduction targets, developed countries will have no incentive to invest there either.

In Kyoto, many developing nations voiced apprehension over the CDM proposal. South Africa pointed out that there was no limit on how much emission reduction activities could be undertaken in other countries, and how much had to be done at home. India, too, opposed the mechanism. But with the South pressing for the proposal, and Latin American and small island nations showing support, it was decided to let it

An important lesson that emerged from the Kyoto talks is that South's lack of preparedness may mean that it will have no negotiating counters at a critical moment. Much of the South went to Kyoto with the belief that it would have to stand firm against any involvement of developing countries as agreed in the Berlin Mandate of 1995. But it soon found itself facing a proposal for a CDM.

At the eighth meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) held in Bonn in June 1998. Brazil reiterated its earlier proposal for CDF. It argued that the proposal contains scientific aspect that establishes a methodology for linking the responsibility for increasing global temperature with the responsibility for lowering it.

CSE/Down To Earth Features







