

Combat or perish

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Can you see in your mind's eye, our generations to come living in an overpopulated country where most of its coastal areas had been infringed by the sea, under boiling sunlight, gathering for food, water and shelter? Looking out a window upon a barren desert, a dry wasteland unfolds as a carpet to nowhere. Abandoned cities dot the horizon, as the ruins speak volumes to the once populated extravagance of a country which lived on wealth and opportunity. Our favorite crops would not grow anywhere in Bangladesh? Everything necessary for life would be drastically reduced. The vision just described is not one out of the movie script, but one that is not only possible but probable. Truly the inevitable picture will be grimmer by the close effect of climate change. But this could even be the best of a worst situation expected in another 50 to 100 years.

Grim picture of climate change

The reality could be far worse, says Prof. Mohan Munasinghe one of the three Vice Chairs of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. "If we do not adopt our development paths now, the effects of climate change would virtually be disastrous." Climate Change is all about the drastic changes in the global climate. It will affect countries like Bangladesh. Climate Change would be disastrous in all aspects of the lives of people, be it economic, social, cultural or religious. It would affect agriculture, health and industrial sectors.

Climate change would affect all developing countries including Bangladesh. The dry zone will become drier and the wet zones will get more rain. Extreme conditions are likely to be

prevalent. Agriculture and water resources would be badly affected. The coastal areas will be severely threatened by the rising sea levels. Also diseases like malaria will be rampant. Agriculture, one of the key economic aspects that sustain the lives of the people, would be affected by global warming. The farming and climatic conditions in different regions in Bangladesh had been evolved in harmony and believes that despite the advances of technology climate is a very important factor in farming. In spite of the technological advances, weather and the climate are the key factors in agriculture.

Basically the hitherto established patterns of temperature and rainfall will be changed dramatically by global warming.

How would these changes in the established rainfall patterns and temperature affect farming? Increase in the temperature is more likely to affect directly and indirectly most of the crops such as rice, tea, rubber or potatoes, more than the pressure from the ever increasing population, poor facilities.

This is not all. The scenario is more serious since the change in rainfall patterns and the increase in the average temperature could reduce the harvest of the country's staple food, rice. High temperature injures the rice plant especially at the flowering stage resulting in a lot of unfilled grains reducing the harvest.

Although it used to be a rare event to experience high temperature as 35 Celsius in the major rice growing of the regions in the past, such occurrences are frequent in both in the dry zone and the intermediate zone especially during the farming season from November to April.

The increase in the night time minimum temperature would affect potato cultivation even in the plain lands and hills where the crop is mainly cultivated. The increase in the night time

minimum temperature would decrease the temperature difference between day and night.

Adopting development plans to face climate change

The warming of the Earth or global warming poses several other pressures upon lands available for the agriculture. The rising sea level is such a pressure which would gradually encroach lands for both agriculture and settlements in the coastal plains shrinking lands available for agriculture. Time is running short. Bangladesh needs to have devices to face climate change immediately.

We know, the richest countries of the world generated long-term climate crisis through decades of greenhouse gas emissions from fossil energy sources, chemical production and use, and industrialized agriculture. Yet the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change projects that the poorest countries will experience the worst impacts of climate change. They have the fewest resources to adapt systems to withstand rising sea level, floods and droughts, reduced water supply, and diminished food production.

Oxfam International has estimated that at least \$60 billion a year will be needed to enable developing countries to adapt to the harmful effects of climate change. Oxfam has developed an Adaptation Financing Index, recommending that the USA, European Union, Japan, Canada, and Australia should contribute over 95 per cent of the finance needed for adaptation in developing countries.

The Index budgets a responsibility for adaptation aid according to each country's responsibility for causing climate change and its capability to assist. Donor countries should not count this investment in developing country adaptation as part of normal

economic development aid to alleviate poverty. Oxfam allocates responsibility as follows:

The USA should contribute over 40 per cent;

The EU 30 per cent from the top five European generators of GHGs -- Germany, the UK, Italy, France, and Spain;

Japan, Canada, Australia, and the Republic of Korea should contribute a further 20 per cent of the finance, with Japan providing over half of that. A basic principle in adaptation planning is to integrate climate adaptation planning with the organization's overall strategic planning, that is, adaptation to other environmental, economic, and social changes. This mainstreams climate risk as a normal aspect of risk assessment and planning. Climate risk is assessed for both standard projects and projects to prepare for climate change. This also means balancing adaptation and mitigation policies, strategies and investments, and particularly avoiding projects that increase GHG emissions. Bangladesh should be ready now to adopt all facilities given by the richest countries to face climate change.

A planning process for climate adaptation

The basic steps in a regional process to plan adaptation to the impacts of climate change include:

1. Develop an organizational structure for planning.
 2. Assess system vulnerability, risk level, and capacity.
 3. Assess likely climate impacts.
 4. Develop strategic plan for adaptation.
 5. Implement the plan.
 6. Evaluate performance and changes in risk patterns.
- Who needs to be involved in climate adaptation planning?
- Public agencies, business associa-

tions, major companies, and non-governmental organizations with responsibilities and interests in:

- Water and energy resources;
- Coastal, bay, and estuary regions;
- Biodiversity and habitat;
- Agriculture, fisheries, and food processing;
- Forestry; Human health care;
- Tourism; The built environment, infrastructure and planning;
- Natural disaster management.

The planning process in detail

1. Develop an organizational structure for planning.
2. Identify the organization that will act as home base for the adaptation process and recruit an initial set of stakeholder organizations from public and private sectors.
3. Determine the level of capacity for adaptation planning in the system and the means for capacity building.
4. Develop channels of communication and action to involve people and stakeholder organizations in the planning and action processes of adaptation.
5. Include a web site, speaker's bureau, and town meetings, involvement of schools and colleges, and media briefings.
6. Assess system vulnerability, risk level, and capacity.
7. Assess the capacity of natural systems to adapt to climate change.
8. Identify current stresses affecting the region and its natural resources. This baseline vulnerability assessment studies issues such as deforestation, water scarcity, air quality, soil degradation, loss of wetlands, and exhaustion of aquifers.
9. Assess the capacity of current human systems to adapt, such as

economic sectors, the transportation, water, and energy infrastructure, county and city master plans, and building codes.

10. Assess likely climate impacts.

11. Identify and prioritize likely impacts of climate variability and change that will either amplify or lessen current stresses, or create new ones. This can be done at two levels;

- a) Stakeholders identify climate impacts based upon their working experience and history of climate events and trends; and
 - b) Interdisciplinary teams of experts and stakeholders conduct a scenario planning process based upon regional application of climate change models.
12. Create alternative scenarios for best case, middle case, and worst case possibilities for all key variables.

Strategic plan for adaptation

1. Identify adaptation strategies that will address the likely impacts of climate change as well as the current stresses analyzed in step 3.
2. Link these strategies with other important trends, like the transition to sustainable farming, energy and water efficiency, the implementation of renewable technologies, and sustainable land use master plans.
3. Prioritize adaptation strategies, projects, and plans according to the likelihood, intensity, and cost of climate impacts they address.
4. Determine an appropriate balance between the effort and budget devoted to climate adaptation and mitigation activities.
5. Choose policies, investment strategies, and action plans in each of the major areas of adaptation to climate change.

6. Identify the early no-regrets actions that will pay off, however climate change unfolds.
7. Look for interventions that will achieve both climate adaptation and greenhouse gas reductions.

Implementation of the plan

1. Assess the organisational structure and communication channels to assure clear responsibility for oversight and coordination of stakeholders.
2. Start with no regrets actions and steps responsive to climate impacts the system is already experiencing.
3. Evaluate performance and changes in risk patterns.
4. Set up an evaluation system with indicators of both the critical climate impacts and of your adaptation responses.
5. Modify and update plans, based upon the input from this monitoring and from scientific studies and scenarios.

It doesn't matter what final "Roadmap" - "an historic breakthrough" has been adopted in the Bali climate conference, it is unambiguous that each country has to design and develop national plans to counter the climate change challenges, and that such a plan must principally involve each Ministry, authority and department. The crusade against climate change is no longer only an environmental affair, but is now principally an economic policy issue, and one that involves energy, infrastructure, industry, transport, construction, households, services, water supply, agriculture and last but not least, a major transformation in lifestyles.

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