Energy being the lifeline of an economy, the crisis epitomises the "development" and "progress" Bangladesh has been dragged into by relying on the non-renewable energy path. The fuel import bill is over 70 percent of the country's total export earnings. The only sizable fossil fuel reserve is natural gas. Estimates vary and there is no consensus.

After closely examining various estimates, in the report, "Energy Strategy for Bangladesh: A Brief Survey with Recommendations," the Energy Panel of Bangladesh Environmental Network (BEN) determines 10.6 trillion cubic feet (TCF) to be the most reliable estimate of proven reserves.[7]

How long the reserves will last is another matter of speculation. It could be anywhere between 7 to 20 years, depending on the accuracy of an estimate and rate of consumption. A speculated additional reserve may stretch the gas supply for a few more years.

Whatever amount of gas is found, the economic feasibility and net economic benefit remain serious questions. The cost of exploration and extraction increases as reserves get more difficult to reach. Explorations by multinationals have already caused critical environmental and economic damages. Promises of adequate compensation have been grossly violated.

With the worldwide growing energy demand, the pressure to export gas has been mounting. There's been a growing opposition to export, but the power and pressure of dollars and "development" aid mean little of that gas may be available for the country's own consumption.

Currently only a small percent of the population has access to natural gas for cooking; and even that supply has become increasingly unreliable. But the answer to the crisis is not more natural gas. The use of natural gas will also contribute to climate change. Bangladesh is among the regions which are most vulnerable to this unnatural disaster. Cyclones Sidr, Nargis, Bizli and Aila -- so consistent with the IPCC projections -- at a massive human, environmental and economic cost -- are yet only samplings of what is to come -- unless there is an urgent reversal of the energy path we are on.

If economic development is the rationale for exploiting natural gas, enough is known about the potential catastrophic economic consequences of climate change, which far outweigh any economic benefit derived from natural gas. By entrenching itself more into natural gas, should Bangladesh pave the path of its own disaster? Or should it set an example by taking a stand to reverse the direction and demand from the world community that following that path of disaster is no longer acceptable -- for itself or for any other country?

As of now, Bangladesh is one of the least contributors to climate change, while being one of its most vulnerable victims. The major emitters of greenhouse gases contributing to climate change are the industrially developed countries. The US, with six percent of world's population consuming thirty-three percent of all the energy produced in the world, is the world's leading contributor of greenhouse gases, as well. China and India are on a rapid rise as they aggressively follow the western conventional, suicidal and unsustainable path of unbridled industrial development, relying mainly on the nonrenewable energy path. Both the countries have launched impressive renewable energy programs, but they amount to a mere pittance compared to the countries' aggressive pursuit of non-renewable options.

The rising sea level is drowning Bangladesh. The question is how much and how soon?

The rising sea level is drowning Bangladesh. The question is how much and how soon? If the signs and predictions of climate change with rising sea levels are correct, between one-third to the entire Bangladesh, largely situated on river deltas and coastal lowlands, will disappear under water by the end of this century.

Of course, so will a significant portion of the US Gulf Coast, New York, Boston Harbor, London, and Amsterdam, as well as significant portions of countries including Nepal, Bhutan