by the developed countries.

While it is understandable that a major portion of the climate change funds will go towards mitigation and some towards environmental adaptation, it would be a big mistake if a substantial amount is not reserved to build the S&T capacity needed to produce food crops resistant to environmental stresses and for the adoption and roll out of green technologies that reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

And not all technologies need to be either high end or long term. The main objectives of all these technology-driven development activities should be to permanently alleviate poverty and help the people living on the land.

Most of the people in Bangladesh live in villages and in small country towns and it is their sweat and labour that forms the backbone of our economy. Undeniably there has been some reduction in poverty over the years.

But even now a substantial portion (44 per cent) of the rural population lives below the poverty line. Lack of land, periodic harvest failures, frequent natural and environmental disasters, and lack of employment opportunities have forced many rural Bangladeshis to migrate to the already overcrowded cities or seek employment in foreign countries.

A very substantial proportion (about 40 per cent) of the urban population is also classified as poor and most of them have been forced out of their village homes because of lack of development in rural areas.

An overwhelming majority of city-based garment workers (mostly female) and migrant labourers, who are responsible for almost all of our foreign exchange earnings, originate from the rural areas and for family and social support would prefer to live and work in or near their village homes.

Pockets of extreme poverty (landless, unemployed and casual labour) exist within the populations of the rural and urban poor and employment opportunities need to be created for them in their own rural setting.

Considering the above it makes sense that a majority of the development activities, including technology-driven ones, are decentralised not only to create employment in the rural communities but to also save the cities, especially Dhaka, from self-strangulation.

In spite of the doubling of the population since independence and drastic decrease in arable land due to urbanisation, Bangladesh remains almost self sufficient in food production due largely to the very hardworking and resourceful farming community and the development and introduction of high-yielding hybrid varieties of food crops by our agricultural scientists.

The prime minister has called upon the agricultural scientists to make use of technology to increase food production so that Bangladesh becomes a net exporter of food in the near future. It is really encouraging for the research community to have the prime minister's moral support.

However, I do not know how far she has been made aware of the inadequacy of contemporary



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