

POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Loss and damage from climate change: After adaptation

Saving Dhaka rivers in quandary

HC pillar demarcation order flouted

WE are outraged at the foot-dragging and seemingly attempted derailment of save the river campaign spearheaded by The Daily Star and Channel i in 2009. In that year, a writ petition to save four Dhaka rivers from unbridled grabbing and pollution resulted in an HC order with a very clear set of directives for river demarcation.

The district administrations of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Munshiganj were directed to pitch pillars along the banks of Buriganga, Turag, Balu and Shitalakkhya including their foreshores to ward off the invasive forays of grabbers and polluters. Whereas the rivers were required to be demarcated bearing in mind their highest level in monsoon, this is being done in line with the water flow in the lean season. This is in breach of the High Court ruling, according to experts.

The BIWTA started demarcation work in cooperation with and under the charge of district administrations only in April last year. This was done following the directives of the river taskforce. But the way they are drawing the lines would leave scope to existing encroachers for legalising their unlawful intrusions. To make matters worse, this could encourage fresh grabbing of huge acreage of river lands across the country.

We endorse the concerns of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, Green Voice and TIB which demonstrate a keen interest in pursuing the agenda of saving the lifelines of Dhaka. Following Bapa's detailed presentation on the irregularities in setting up the pillars, three review committees headed by deputy commissioners were said to have been constituted. We can quite sense a lack of confidence in such committees as these comprise those responsible for the 'wrong-doings'.

We have two distinct suggestions to proffer: first, recalling that the Prime Minister had initially thrown her weight behind the rallying cry for saving the rivers, may we request her to order a high powered inquiry into the present state of affairs. Secondly, let there be a committee of experts drawn from environmental rights bodies to independently oversee the river demarcation and green-belting undertaking. The major stakeholders would have to be involved in the exercise.

Risking lives while crossing streets

When will we learn?

SUCH a dangerous thing as the pictures carried by this newspaper yesterday showing pedestrians crossing a major thoroughfare in the capital by all imaginable means of physical exercise in negotiating the dividers can only occur in this country. And the picture displays persons of all gender and age choosing the dangerous option. And even barbed wires used as a fence on the road dividers, something unthinkable in any other civilised country, fails to deter our people.

Nowhere would one find human beings putting their own lives at risk to avoid taking perhaps a longer but a safer way to cross a street on which the traffic is consistently heavy. And in fact the point at which the pictures were taken had other safer alternatives nearby for these people to take.

What these people were doing is not isolated but occurs constantly on all the major streets of the capital, often with unhappy outcome. What those who opt for the shortcut fail to realise that it is not only their lives that they are putting at risk but also others using the road are potentially being put at risk too. And one of the main causes of accidents on the streets of the capital has been the pedestrians' predilection to jaywalk.

Regrettably, there is very little that the authorities can do other than consistent awareness programmes by not only the law enforcing agencies but by the social activist groups also. Alongside that, there is need to manage the over and underpasses properly. Sadly, most of the underpasses remain dark and have become dens of lumpens and petty criminals while the overpasses remain occupied by the vendors. And nobody seems to know the use of zebra crossings.

We feel that along with awareness programme actions that will demotivate people to cross roads dangerously should also be considered. Jaywalking must be made a



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THE climate talks under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bangkok ended on September 5

in preparation for the eighteenth conference of parties (COP18) which will be held in Doha, Qatar in December 2012. Although not much moved forward in the Bangkok talks, one new topic that gained momentum was the issue of Loss and Damage from Climate Change. Some of the issues with regard to this new and emerging topic are described below.

At the seventeenth conference of parties (COP17) of the UNFCCC held in Durban, South Africa in December 2011, a work programme was adopted on the topic of Loss and Damage from Climate Change which consists of a series of regional expert workshops towards preparing a decision at COP18 to be held in Doha, Qatar in December 2012.

The government of Bangladesh together with a number of leading research institutes including the International Centre for Climate Change and Development at the Independent University, Bangladesh, BRAC University, North South University and others, are also carrying out a major research exercise on this new and emerging topic.

The regional expert workshops have now been held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for Africa, in Mexico City, Mexico for the Latin America region and most recently in Bangkok, Thailand for the Asia region.

While the topic is still quite confusing and there is not yet any agreed consensus on even what the terms

should mean, nevertheless there seems to be some conceptual clarity emerging through these expert workshops. Some of these are described briefly below.

Measuring loss and damage: This is a thorny topic as there are a number of metrics for measurement which include physical metrics (e.g. damage to infrastructure, loss of human life and livelihood, etc) only some of which can be estimated in economic or monetary terms. This makes it difficult to measure.

the potential adverse impacts (and hence resulting loss and damage) from a global temperature rise of 4 degrees (which is where we are headed at present) or 2 degrees (which still possible if concerted global efforts are mobilised over the next decade).

The global loss and damage under a 4 degree scenario will be at least an order of magnitude greater than under a 2 degree scenario.

Loss versus damage: It is still not clear what the difference is between the two terms, "loss" and

rate loss and damage from adaptation by considering the latter to include "loss and damage after adaptation." In other words, even with ideal levels of adaptation, there will still be some "residual impacts" leading to loss and damage. There are also limits to adaptation which will result in such residual loss and damage.

Hence, for the time being at least, it is useful to consider loss and damage to refer to "loss and damage after adaptation."

Slow onset and rapid onset climate events:

The recent UNFCCC regional workshop for Asia held in Bangkok focused particularly on the topic of slow onset events which include sea level rise, salinity intrusion in low lying coastal areas, loss of biodiversity, and increased temperature, which are different from the more familiar rapid onset climate events such as floods and cyclones. Of course, there are links between slow onset and rapid onset events. For example, higher sea surface temperatures are likely to result in higher intensity of cyclones in future.

Expected outcomes from COP18: The outcomes from the regional expert workshops and results from research as well as submissions from countries will be considered at COP18 in Doha in December and it is expected that further decisions will be adopted there. Although it is not possible to predict what those decisions will be, it is clear that this topic is growing in importance and that further work on it will almost certainly be supported. Bangladesh has an opportunity to lead on this topic which of concern not only to Bangladesh but to all vulnerable developing countries.

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It is very clear that the efforts to deal with potential future loss and damage from climate change will overlap considerably with adaptation to climate change, so it is perhaps useful to separate loss and damage from adaptation by considering the latter to include "loss and damage after adaptation."

Past, current and future loss and damage:

There is already a long history of assessing loss and damage from natural climate events, such as floods, cyclones and droughts around the world, both in terms of human lives lost as well as economic metrics. These historical data-sets are available for most countries as well as globally. The difference between such climatic events of the past and present is the additional incremental attribution from human induced climate change, which although not quantifiable yet, is certainly no longer zero.

With regard to future loss and damage over the next five to ten decades, there is another factor that must be considered, which is the level of mitigation that is achieved over the next two to three decades. In other words,

"damage." One way of thinking of this difference is to consider "loss" to mean the "complete loss" of something (e.g. human life or biodiversity, or land that goes under water, etc). These losses are in fact irrecoverable.

"Damage," in contrast, can be considered to refer to "partial loss" or "partial damage," such as to infrastructure and human livelihoods, which can be repaired.

These distinctions are of course not watertight compartments, as there will still be some overlaps between loss and damage, but it is worth keeping these terms separate in this context.

Links to adaptation:

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PRAFUL BIDWAI COLUMN

Big blow to Narendra Modi



PRAFUL BIDWAI

A Gujarat judge has struck a blow for the victims of the communal carnage of 2002 by convicting 32 people for the

Naroda-Patiya massacre. Prominent among them are lawmaker-former minister Maya Kodnani, and Babu Bajrangji, who deluded himself that he acted like a war hero by leading violent mobs.

Kodnani, a confidant of Chief Minister Narendra Modi, was the lynchpin in the premeditated killing of 35 innocent children, 32 women and 30 men, who were targeted for no other reason than that they were Muslims. A gynaecologist who knew the Patiya neighbourhood well, she identified the victims and distributed arms and kerosene to the rampaging mobs.

Seen in perspective, Kodnani's crime was no less than that of Ajmal Kasab, who with a fellow-terrorist, gunned down 58 people in Mumbai. Both knew the victims were innocent.

The awarding of 28 years' imprisonment to Kodnani -- including 10 years for causing grievous hurt, followed by 18 years for murder, conspiracy, etc -- and of life terms to 31 others, sends out a message: violence won't be rewarded even in Gujarat. Society won't condone the Naroda-Patiya brand of politics.

The Indian judiciary is slow to deliver justice. But in the present case, it showed a determination to enforce the rule of law against important political figures -- despite police support for them.

With Naroda-Patiya, as many as 117 persons stand convicted in Gujarat for various cases of barbaric anti-minority violence. The convictions happened even though the police didn't file accurate FIRs or collect enough evidence. More convictions are likely.

The number of convictions is small

in relation to the magnitude of the butchery, but impressive given that there have been very few convictions in India in communal violence cases for 40 years, including the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom and the post-Babri demolition violence.

Although nobody has been punished for mass rape, the Naroda sentences do deliver partial justice. They also reaffirm secularism, and restore the citizen's faith in democracy and the state's ability to defend rights.

These convictions couldn't have come about without the Supreme

"action-reaction" rationalisation of the violence. But its final report declared that there was no evidence to prosecute the functionaries, including Mr. Modi.

So contradictory was this that the Supreme Court appointed senior lawyer Raju Ramchandran to evaluate the evidence independently. He found strong evidence that Mr. Modi instructed his officers to allow the "revenge killings."

The SIT played yet more mischief in the Naroda-Patiya case by not submitting, in defiance of Judge Yagnik's

Ten years on, the ghosts of 2002 have returned to haunt Mr. Modi. He remains a deeply divisive and singularly nasty figure, who faces opposition from within the Parivar and BJP allies like the Janata Dal (United).

Court's intervention under the pressure of secular public opinion. This implicitly acknowledged that the Gujarat violence was a national disgrace and a crime against humanity.

That intervention, including the appointment of a Special Investigation Team (SIT), became possible only because more than 40 inquiries by citizens' commissions and eminent intellectuals documented the involvement of high state functionaries in instigating or permitting the violence.

Civil society activists like Teesta Setalvad and Mukul Sinha indefatigably pressed the state not to brush the pogrom under the carpet. They doggedly pursued various cases.

Although partial, justice for the Gujarat victims represents a civil society triumph. Credit is also due to conscientious bureaucrats and policemen such as Rahul Sharma (who prepared a CD logging mobile-phone calls made by prominent people).

However, the SIT was a disappointment. It produced a reasonable preliminary report indicting numerous state functionaries. It dismissed Mr. Modi's

orders, a full report on politicians' and policemen's role in the violence.

Now, the telephone log, selectively used to establish Kodnani's presence in Naroda-Patiya, also clearly implicated other high functionaries, including then junior home minister Gordan Zadaphia and Chief Minister's Office (CMO) personnel. The log records four phone calls between Kodnani and the CMO on February 28 and March 1, with duration between 75 and 179 seconds. There were calls between her and Mr. Zadaphia and several police officers too. The SIT ignored this.

Logically, such evidence must be assiduously collected and used to punish state functionaries entrusted with the responsibility of protecting citizens' fundamental rights. Mukul Sinha is planning to do just this and put various functionaries on trial.

The case could get uncomfortably close to Narendra Milosevic Modi -- just when the Gujarat Assembly elections are barely 100 days away, and he faces opposition from within the Sangh Parivar and the powerful Patel

community because of his autocratic behaviour, and refreshingly, from the Congress, which is reportedly becoming combative at least on election promises.

One thing is clear. The Naroda-Patiya judgment is a big blow to Mr. Modi, not merely because his close associate Kodnani, whom he appointed as minister for women and child welfare, has been found guilty of mass murder.

More important, the verdict is a political game-changer. It will strengthen the demand for accountability and justice in communal violence and empower secularists and Gujarat's humiliated Muslims.

Mr. Modi will find it impossible to wash away the blood stains from independent India's worst state-sponsored pogrom. His image will remain sullied no matter how many *Sadbhava* campaigns he organises to soften up Muslims and in how many interviews he declares his love for them and says that he too should be punished if found guilty.

India failed to punish Mr. Modi politically for the 2002 pogrom. The Vajpayee government refused to impose central rule on Gujarat despite a manifest breakdown of constitutional order there. The opposition didn't run a sustained campaign demanding his dismissal.

Mr. Modi was twice returned to power in a communally polarised situation. Big Business, on whom he showered favours, lionised him as an ideal "development"-minded chief minister. Many others urged the public to let bygones be bygones.

Ten years on, the ghosts of 2002 have returned to haunt Mr. Modi. He remains a deeply divisive and singularly nasty figure, who faces opposition from within the Parivar and BJP allies like the Janata Dal (United). One can only hope that the opposition scuttles Mr. Modi's bid to play a role in national politics.

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THIS DAY IN HISTORY

September 10

1919 Austria and the Allies sign the Treaty of Saint-Germain recognizing the independence of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

1939 World War II: Canada declares war on Nazi Germany, joining the Allies France, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia.

1943 World War II: German forces begin their occupation of Rome.

2007 Former Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif returns to Pakistan after seven years in exile, following a military coup in October 1999.

2008 The Large Hadron Collider at CERN in Geneva, Switzerland.