

## Casualties of earthquake

### What will jolt us into action?

It is with a heavy heart that we offer our sincerest condolences to the families of those who have lost their dear ones during a devastating earthquake in southwestern Japan. The 6.2 richter magnitude earthquake, which knocked down buildings, destroyed roads and cut power supplies, killed at least nine persons and injured around 1000. With search operations still ongoing, it is feared that the casualty figures will only increase. We can only hope that the worst is over for the people of Japan.

Closer to home, an earthquake on Wednesday evening, which originated in Myanmar, jolted us Bangladeshis – and hopefully our policymakers, too. Although no casualties were reported, the earthquake reminded us, once again, of the precarious situation of many of our densely populated urban areas, with poorly and illegally built structures on low lands that will not survive an attack of the magnitude that hit Japan or Nepal last year. Wednesday's earthquake alone tilted nine buildings; we can only imagine how many more such at-risk buildings there are around the country. The government does not seem to be doing nearly enough to identify these structures, make necessary structural adjustments, and ensure enforcement of the national building code. It is unfortunate that we are yet to adopt a national strategy of how to go about instituting building standards.

Dealing with the aftermath of an earthquake requires a multi-sectoral emergency response necessitating coordination between different bodies, from rescuing victims to providing medical care, from switching off the gas and power supplies to systematically removing the debris. Without any delay, we need to put in place a contingency plan in case of a destructive earthquake and designate a body that can command, control and coordinate the search and operations of different government agencies such as to minimise casualties.

## Water crisis tormenting city dwellers

### Wasa needs to do more

THE summer heat is excruciating enough without having to suffer through an acute water crisis. It is horrifying that, in this intolerable weather, many Dhaka dwellers are being forced to make do without even a single drop of any water for days on end. In Bepari Goli of the capital's Moghbazar area, for instance, residents have no choice but to buy water in order to survive, or go to relative's houses to take showers, as there has been no water supply in the area for the last one month. It seems that the pleas for respite of the frustrated city dwellers are falling on deaf ears of the authorities.

This is the unfortunate situation in many parts of the city, particularly in Rampura, Moghbazar and Jatrabari. The authorities state that a major reason for this shortage is the excessive heat. But given that this is the condition every year in the summer months, we ask, can Wasa not plan ahead to ensure adequate water supply during these months when people's suffering exacerbate due to the heat? Every year, we confront the same problem and in response, encounter the same set of rhetoric and excuses from our respected authorities.

It is high time that WASA undertakes and implements a medium to long term plan to resolve the rising water crisis in a sustainable manner, and utilise rain and floodwater to ease the pressure on groundwater, and do so without any bureaucratic delays. And in the meantime, we urge Wasa to increase the immediately capacity to deliver water to the water-starved segments of the capital city.

## COMMENTS

### "Obama's greetings on Pahela Baishakh"

(April 14, 2016)

Mortuza Rento

Thanks for his sense of courtesy. It is a matter of pride for Bangladeshi people.

### "3 tilted Ctg buildings dangerous"

(April 15, 2016)

Munna Hamza

The city authority should find other vulnerable structures immediately.

Shahinur Alam

Don't worry! We have bamboos.

### "Cop apologises for discourteous behaviour with DU female student" (April 16, 2016)

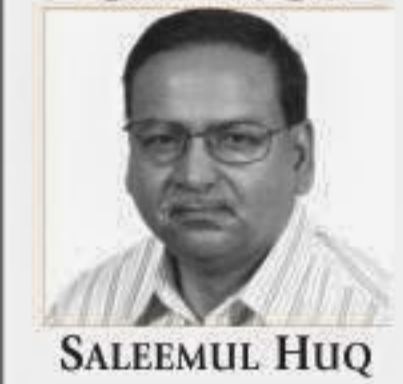
Shohel Mahmud Sajib

That's great. Last year it was unidentified miscreants, this year police!

# Climate finance in Bangladesh

## Learning from experience

### POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



SALEEMUL HUQ

OVER the last decade in Bangladesh, we have spent almost a billion US dollars on several hundred projects and activities to tackle climate change. Most of these projects have been

on adaptation but a few have also been on mitigation.

As tackling climate change is a new issue for us, there is no pre-existing methodology to follow, and hence, mistakes were bound to happen. As we move forward to investing more money in future, it is important to first acknowledge our mistakes and then learn from them so that we do not repeat them.

Making mistakes is not a waste of money unless we fail to learn from the mistakes; not learning from mistakes and then repeating them is the real waste of money.

Hence, in the spirit of acknowledging mistakes and trying to learn from them, I will analyse our experiences in the realm of allocating finances to tackle climate change (I will discuss the associated issue of utilisation of funds in a separate article later).

I should start by saying that my impressions are based not on inside knowledge of any of the funding mechanisms I will review, but what is publicly available. Some data may not be accurate but I hope the analysis is still valid.

I will review the allocations of finances through the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund, the Bangladesh Climate Resilience Fund, the Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation and the Pilot Project on Climate Resilience, as well as talk about the Green Climate Fund, which will be the new global fund for tackling climate change.

### Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF)

The setting up of this fund under an Act of Parliament and the Government of Bangladesh funding it from its own resources over a number of years was a groundbreaking and laudable initiative.

It also set up good systems (at least on paper) of reviewing proposals and allocating resources to projects. Over the last six years or so, it has disbursed several hundred million US dollars to several hundred projects in different ministries of the government as well as to NGOs.

However, unfortunately over time, a number of instances of misallocation were brought to light by journalists and NGOs such as Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

From the point of view of the government, it is not important whether the exact facts in the reports were accurate or not, rather the focus should be on the fact that the overall impression of this project fund was quite negative; it should

be remembered that once reputation is lost, it becomes very hard to regain it.

### Bangladesh Climate Resilience Fund (BCRF)

This fund was set up alongside the BCCTF but with international funds from development partners such as the United Kingdom, the European Commission, Denmark and others. It had a different governance structure with the donors represented in its governing board and was also managed by the World Bank rather than the government.

It also allocated funds to somewhat larger projects than the BCCTF and had a more robust evaluation system. It managed a few hundred millions of US dollars that were being allocated to fewer (but bigger) projects than the BCCTF. However, it was quite slow in disbursing funds and it is now being wound up with money left unspent,

From a simple review of the information provided on allocation of funds at their respective websites, PKSF is by far the most transparent and, by all accounts, the best run of the various funds.

### Pilot Project on Climate Resilience (PPCR)

This was a separate fund from the World Bank in Washington, as it was managed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Bangladesh, and involved the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to bring in the private sector to tackle climate change. The task of involving private sector in mitigation is relatively easy but bringing them into adaptation is not. So it has not been easy to find private sector interest here.

### Green Climate Fund (GCF)

This is the new fund set up under the

Designated Authority (NDA) for the GCF.

Additionally, ministries across the government have now acquired enough knowledge of climate change to enable them to start mainstreaming it into their regular development plans.

Moreover, the need for Bangladesh to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) over the next fifteen years allows climate change finance to be well integrated across the SDGs as well.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, we need to focus on the need to put in robust systems of transparency of climate fund allocations by governments and other donors, along with robust systems of oversight and accountability by both the sectors of government responsible for those functions, such as the Auditor



PHOTO: STAR

according to newspaper reports.

### Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation (PKSF)

Both the BCRF as well as the BCCTF had made a decision to pre-allocate 10 percent of their total funding to the civil society to support grassroots and community level adaptation to climate change. PKSF, on the other hand, was chosen as the agency to manage those funds.

At the time, PKSF did not have any experience on climate change but had disbursed many hundreds of millions of US dollars to several NGOs for micro-credit and it had a very robust monitoring system.

PKSF set up a new climate change cell to handle the climate funds it received from both BCRF as well as BCCTF and has, over the years, funded many NGOs who are working at community level.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to channel \$100 billion a year from the developed countries to the developing countries to help tackle climate change. Bangladesh will have to compete with other countries in order to get funds from the GCF. Fortunately, Bangladesh was among the first eight countries to be allocated funding by the GCF.

### Lessons learnt

First of all, the time for having standalone climate funds, such as the BCCTF and BCRF, are over, as the national planning and finance systems are fully geared up to mainstream climate finance with national development finance. The government has indeed already recognised this fact by designating the Economic Resources Division (ERD) to be the National

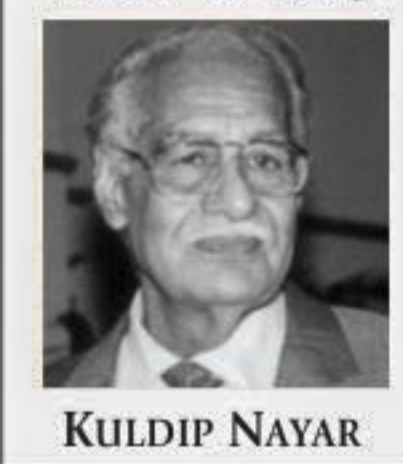
General and Parliamentary Standing Committees, as well as by third party monitors, including the citizens themselves.

The \$100 billion a year promised by the developed countries - to begin from the year 2020 - to the developing countries is a floor and will grow over time. Bangladesh, being one of the most vulnerable developing countries, has a good chance to get significant amounts from the GCF, but it will have to compete with other countries to get it. The criteria by which we will get more funding is not by asserting our vulnerability over others, but rather by demonstrating good practice in transparency and accountability of climate funding.

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# Water, water everywhere, but...

### BETWEEN THE LINES



KULDIP NAYAR

OUR real problem is population, I told an American Nobel Prize winner. He contradicted me and said: "Your problem is going to be water." We were discussing the ordeals that India

would face in the years to come. Our views did not tally even after a long discussion.

What has happened at Latur, in a better-off state like Maharashtra, has renewed the American's warning. Section 144 had to be clamped down to ensure that pots and pans were in an orderly queue to receive water from a tanker; this took me back to the said warning.

The American had also given me an optimistic side: There is an ocean of water under the Yamuna-Gangetic plan waiting to be tapped. I wonder if this is true. Had it been so, the government would have done a scientific study by this time to get an estimate of the collected water. I have not heard of any such plan so far.

Maharashtra may be the worst hit state this year. There were some other states last year. The economy of most states, in fact, for that matter, the country, is very dependent on the monsoon. It looks like we need to continue scanning the sky for the dark clouds.

The Bhakra Dam in Punjab and Himachal Pradesh has converted the entire area, including Haryana, into India's granary. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru hailed the Bhakra Dam as a "temple". He said at that time that India's traditional 'temples', meaning the dams and industrial projects, would be there but new 'temples' have to be built for our economic development.

This Bhakra Dam alone can feed the entire population of the country.

However, it is not necessary to build big dams which create problems of rehabilitating uprooted people from their hearth and homes. Small, satellite dams can probably serve the same purpose well, if not better.

This was the genesis of the agitation led by social activist Medha Patkar over the height of the dam on River Narmada. She could not succeed, even though the government-sponsored report by Saifuddin Soz, then Water Resources Minister, said that the gain from the dam would be far less than the loss from the ousting of people who had

power. This has worked to a large extent, but in certain parts of India, the fallout has led to a series of disputes, which remain unsolved even after decades.

This situation has also led to estrangement between people of different states. For example, the sharing of Kaveri water between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu has been hanging fire for several years now. This is despite the Supreme Court's verdict to release certain cusecs of water to Tamil Nadu.

Nearer home, Punjab has refused to release water to Rajasthan. This is contrary to the stand New Delhi had taken during the Indus Water Treaty. At that time, to

*New Delhi has set up the Central Water and Power Commission to have a systematic plan to harness not only water but also generate power. This has worked to a large extent, but in certain parts of India, the fallout has led to a series of disputes, which remain unsolved even after decades.*

been living in the area for many years.

However, the dam was built several years later when Gujarat gave an undertaking that it would give land to compensate farmers and others who were uprooted. It is another matter that the state government could not fulfil its promise because there was not enough land to go around.

India has seven major rivers - the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Indus, Narmada, Krishna, Godavari and Kaveri - and numerous tributaries. New Delhi has set up the Central Water and Power Commission to have a systematic plan to harness not only water but also generate

claim more water from the Indus, India argued before the World Bank, which was funding the project, that it required a large quantity of water to irrigate the sandy area of Rajasthan.

It's ironic that Punjab has now refused to release water to Rajasthan which got a favourable verdict from New Delhi. The World Bank then accepted the argument that India could not give Pakistan water because it needed to retrieve the land from sand dunes in Rajasthan. What explanation do we have when Punjab goes back on its undertaking to give water to Rajasthan?

It is conceded that water reaching

Rajasthan would help grow numerous crops, but some land in Punjab and Haryana, already under irrigation, would have to be denied water. Such incongruities are responsible for inter-state water disputes. Even after 70 years of independence, the disputes are far from settled.

When the Congress ruled both at the Centre and in the states, the problems never assumed an ugly shape. The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), which then only commanded a few Lok Sabha members, did not count much. It is a different scenario today. Now that it has a majority in Parliament, the BJP sees to it that the states run by it get the maximum benefit, rules or no rules.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi did declare, from the rampart of the Red Fort, soon after taking over, that India was one and there would be no discrimination against states on the basis of their affiliation to different parties. But this is not true on the ground. The Congress, which is now in the opposition, does not allow even Parliament to function.

The Rajya Sabha stayed adjourned for several sessions till the party itself realised that differences would be better highlighted if there was a discussion in the house. At present, it seems that all political parties have come to an understanding that Parliament should be allowed to function. One hopes that all parties will stick to the consensus they have reached and discuss the matters in earnest as it used to happen before.

If that spirit is translated into action, there would be no disturbance in Parliament and the elected representatives, who have exasperated the public by their boisterous behaviour, will be able to devote their attention to what ails the country. Then no dispute, be it over water or any other issue, will stall a session.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.