



PHOTO: STAR

Sustainable forest resource management

DR ABU SYED



Forests provide timber, fuel and essential ecosystem services in addition to carbon storage and delivery of oxygen to the atmosphere. It is vital for the continued provision of essential life-sustaining services like health, livelihoods, water, food, nutrient cycling, carbon sequestration and climate security. The natural forests in Bangladesh are not uniformly distributed and concentrated only in the 12 districts and 28 densely populated districts are devoid of any forest.

Bangladesh has been experiencing demographic pressure which drives large number of people to get goods and services from a single unit of land, compared to any other country. The forest ecosystem has been modified by human influence, especially by the transformation into other land uses. Exponentially increasing use and dependence on forest goods and services by the fast growing population are the main problems. Hence, it is apparent that the main problem lies outside the forestry sector. All other problems including those within the forestry sector such as declining productivity and sustainability of forest resources are manifestations of the main problem. In these socio-economic circumstances, climate change (CC) appears as an additional threat for sustainable forest management (SFM). As the global climate changes, forest ecosystems would also change and biophysical processes will be altered. If the climate parameters (temperature, precipitation, humidity, etc.) change, forest composition and structure also get altered by stressed conditions. Studies found that tropical forests in Bangladesh are already facing consequences of changing climate. The primary challenge for SFM is finding ways to continue to produce ecological services despite the complex problem cited above.

Role of forestry
It is reported that 1.6 billion on the planet and 19 million people in Bangladesh are directly dependent on forest resources for their survival. They are among the world's poorest, most marginalised and politically disempowered people. The forestry sector accounts for about 3 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and 2 percent of the labour force. The low contribution of the forestry sector to the GDP is attributed to

several factors, e.g. value added from wood processing is counted under the industry sector, rather than the forestry sector. The GDP figure is an underestimate. It excludes fuel wood, fodder, small timber and poles, thatching grass, medicinal herbs, and other forest products extracted illegally. An innovative approach - Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) - was established in 2008 to value forests role in sequestering carbon. When conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks with active engagements of stakeholders are expressed in REDD+, has become a prominent discourse under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiation processes.

Exponentially increasing use and dependence on forest goods and services by the fast growing population are the main problems. Hence, it is apparent that the main problem lies outside the forestry sector.

Inclusion of climate change issues in forest management will improve its role in sustainable development. The conventional forest management and enforcement practices gave limited results and has not served Bangladesh adequately in forest conservation. Again, Bangladesh Forest department (BFD) does not get the required attention from national policy makers particularly to reinvigorate this century old institution with modern practices. It lacks sufficient funds, training, infrastructure, logistics and manpower particularly new professionals to properly carry out a diverse array of responsibilities e.g. protection, exploitation, afforestation, extension, planning, training and research.

Status of forest resources in Bangladesh

The total area of forest land in Bangladesh is about 2.6 million hectares (BFD, 2015). Out of which 1.6 million hectares are under the control of the Forest Department (BFD). Un-classed State Forests (USF) 0.73 million hectares were until recently under the control of the deputy commissioners and now has been placed under the control of district councils. There are discrepancies about the total area of forest land. The National Forest Assessment (2007) reported about 1.44 million hectares which is about 9.8 percent of the total land. However, tree cover in forest land amounts to only 6.7 percent - much less than 17.62 percent of the land that has been designated as forest lands. Again, Global Forest Resources Assessment indicated that total forest area of Bangladesh is 1.429 million hectares i.e. 11 percent of the land. The per capita forest area in Bangladesh is less than 0.015 hectare against the world average of 0.60 hectare.

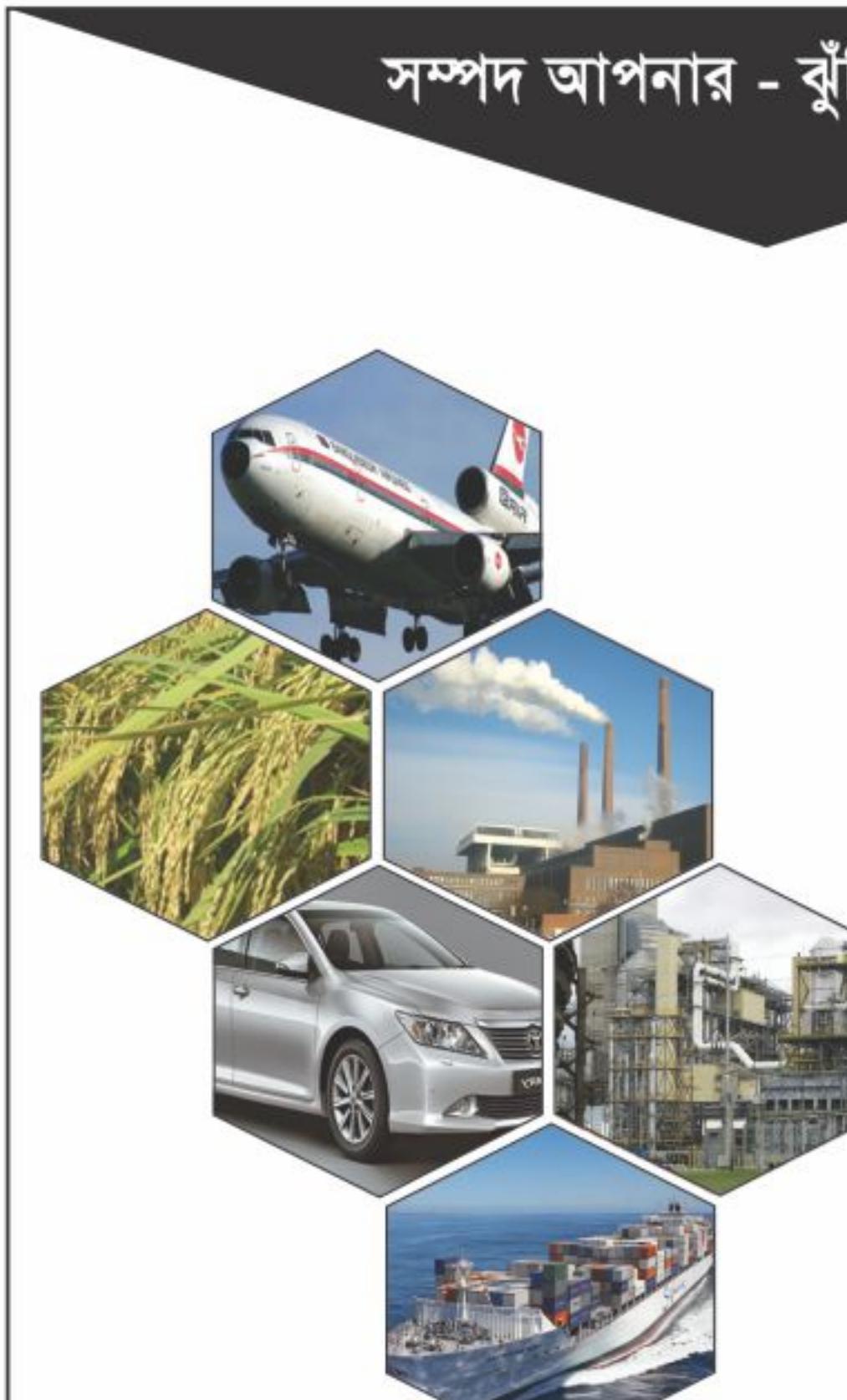
Of the total forest area, 84 percent has been classified as natural forest and nearly 16 percent as plantation forest. The two most common forest types, namely hill forest and mangrove forest, cover more than 68 percent of total forest area. Various participatory forestry projects were implemented to raise agro-forestry and woodlot plantations in institutional premises, fallow lands along roads, embankments, railways etc. Up to 2014-2015 51,389 hectares of woodlot plantation, 10,626 hectares of agro-forest, 64,834 km of strip plantation and 9,007 hectares of other plantations have been raised and about 6,05,566 participants are involved in social forestry programmes. An amount of Tk. 2,362 million has been distributed to 1,20,413 participants as benefit of social forestry (BFD, 2016).

The government has established Protected Areas (PA) for conservation which was begun in early seventies and currently 267,330 hectares or nearly two percent of the country's total area, is under PAs. These include 17 declared national parks, 17 wildlife sanctuaries and one special biodiversity conservation area. The co-management approach was adopted (2003) to reduce high dependency of adjoining population on the protected areas by involving

the local community and stakeholders and provision of alternative income generation activities. The co-management is found to be working well where BFD officials and co-management committee (CMC) members can collaborate effectively. Further, homestead forestry in and around homesteads are contributing much of fuel wood, timber and fruit trees.

The challenges in sustainable forest resources management
Section 12 of the Constitution (Fifteenth Amendment) Act, 2011 (Act XIV of 2011) provides a new Article 18A to safeguard the natural resources, biodiversity, wetlands, forests and wildlife for the present and future citizens.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47



সম্পদ আপনার - বুঁকি আমাদের!

আপনার সম্পদের অঞ্চল, নে, মটর বিনিয়োগ বুঁকি বহন করে থাকে রাষ্ট্রীয় খাতে সাধারণ 'বীমা'র একমাত্র প্রতিষ্ঠান 'সাধারণ বীমা কর্পোরেশন'। পাশাপাশি ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং, বিমান, টেল-গ্যাস উত্তোলন, ওভারসেস মেডিকেল, ব্যক্তিগত দুর্ঘটনা বীমাসহ একাপোর্ট ক্রেডিট গ্যারান্টি বীমার বুঁকি ও বহন করে থাকে।

দেশের একমাত্র রাষ্ট্রীয় বীমাকারী ও গুণবীমাকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান 'সাধারণ বীমা কর্পোরেশন'।



রাষ্ট্রীয় খাতে সাধারণ বীমা'র একমাত্র প্রতিষ্ঠান

সাধারণ বীমা কর্পোরেশন

৩০, দিলকুশা বা/এ, ঢাকা, বাংলাদেশ।

(অর্থনৈতিক নিরাপত্তার প্রতীক)