

Conflict between economic development and environment



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Advanced technology-based society emerged in the period following the industrial revolution in the mid-1700s. Several major factors distinguished this new form of society from the previous ones. They are: a marked rise in production and consumption, shift toward synthetics, such as plastics and non-renewable resources—fossil fuel and metals—and huge demand for energy required to keep the wheels of economic development running.

Energy consumption is unquestionably a major factor in the advancement of human civilisation. It has enabled us to manufacture goods, from the primitive iron and bronze implements to the sophisticated computer chips, cell phones, spacecraft, long-haul aircraft, synthetic materials, and many more. Energy facilitates high-speed communication that binds us into one global community. Most significantly, energy enables our planet to support a human population far beyond what would have been possible not long ago.

Ironically, the same energy consumption that brought human society an unprecedented level of comfort and material well-being also threatens Earth's natural systems that maintain a supportive environment. Although our ancestors did plenty of local environmental damage—polluting waters, denuding hillsides, burning forests, perhaps driving species extinct—it is only in the past century that we humans have become so populous, so technologically advanced and so extravagant in our energy consumption, that we have begun to alter Earth's environment on a massive scale.

Economic growth, fuelled by



unrestrained use of energy, retained its commanding allure until the mid-19th century. We were caught in an ever-escalating production-consumption cycle with domination of nature as the central theme. The one-sided emphasis on short-term economic gains without concern for adequate environmental protection caused serious environmental pollution and resource shortages.

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Deforestation across the globe has reached an alarming rate in recent years.

PHOTO: STAR

It is only recently we began to realise that our ability to balance economic development while protecting the environment has been drastically reduced by the environmentally irresponsible and unsustainable behaviour by the Europeans and Americans.

With a fast-growing population striving for better living conditions, the economy of Bangladesh has grown

at a tremendous pace over the last two decades. While economic growth has arguably helped the rising population in improving their quality of life, it has also led to deterioration of the natural environment and brought about dramatic changes in the climate. As an example, Bangladesh's graduation from the United Nation's one of

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