Conflict between economic development and environment

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the Least Developed Countries (LDC) category to a Developing Country has been achieved at the cost of the health of the country's rivers. Most of the rivers are highly polluted and the main culprit is the flourishing textile sector (readymade garment) which accounts for about 80 percent of the country's total export revenue.

The Rampal and dozen or so power plants Bangladesh government is building near Maheshkhali of Cox's Bazaar invokes the classic battle between development and environment. By deciding to build a coal-fired power plant at Rampal ignoring concerns from national and international environmental organisations, the future of Sundarbans—the most ecologically sensitive and largest continuous mangrove forests in the world—will be in jeopardy. The economic benefits that will result from the construction of the power plant, the prospects of which are doubtful because of rampant corruption, volatile political atmosphere and a history of mismanagement, cannot compensate for the long-term negative effects it will have on the local population and the Sundarbans.

The pollutants from the power plant will cause deforestation which will contribute significantly to global carbon dioxide emissions, reduce biodiversity, cause flash floods and disrupt livelihood of millions of people. Furthermore, it will have an impact on the forest's ability to provide important ecosystem services, namely, functioning as a natural protective barrier against coastal erosion, rising sea levels and killer cyclones.

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.

PHOTO: STAR

With more than 100 km of sand, Cox's Bazaar has the world's longest uninterrupted natural beach. To make Cox's Bazaar an attractive tourist destination, trees in nearby hills are being cut indiscriminately and lands are cleared to make room for hotels, restaurants and shops. As a result, frequent landslides during monsoon period are killing many people. In addition, shrinking habitat is endangering wild elephants, forcing them to rampage through villages and neighbouring Rohingya refugee camps. What is more, "planned killing" of these critically endangered species is being carried out in other parts of Bangladesh to illegally occupy forest lands.

Deforestation across the globe has reached an alarming rate in recent years. Undermining pledges to protect forests made at the COP26 climate summit in November 2021, trees are still being cut indiscriminately on the hillside, and lands are cleared to make way for settlements and farms. Cutting and burning forests may release enough plant nutrients to support crops for a few years, but because the soil has little reserve and because nutrients are quickly taken up by crops or washed away, the land quickly falls into ruin. Moreover, cutting down trees exposes the soil to intense rains that wash away the soil, filling nearby streams and rivers with sediment.

Clearing the forest has severe effect on humans, too. When the forest vegetation and its animal population are disturbed or reduced, insects that lived on natural vegetation transfer their attention to man's crops. Some of the parasites of the vanishing animals make the transference to man, like the malaria-carrying mosquito.

As noted above, the engine of economic development is energy, much of which is derived from fossil fuels. But at every step in the extraction of fossil fuels, particularly coal, significant impacts on the environment occur.

When we think of coal mines, we probably picture miners toiling away deep underground. This is the traditional method. Coal is also extracted by strip mining, in which surface layers are removed to reach the coal seam. Obviously, surface mining results in major environmental alteration. It creates eyesores, destroys wildlife habitat and grazing land, and may increase land erosion.

Not too many years ago, strip-mined land was abandoned when coal was gone,

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