

Conflict between economic development and environment

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

leaving behind steep piles of discarded earth alternating with trenches from which the coal had been removed. Because the soil of the abandoned mine is often acidic from minerals leached from the mine, very few plants could grow and the area became a wasteland. Also, acidic runoff from mines, or acid mine drainage as it is called, has rendered nearby streams and rivers lifeless.

Even old-fashioned underground mining has serious implications for the environment and health of the miners.

Miners often suffer from black lung disease brought on by exposure to dust-laden air inside the mines.

Underground mines are notorious for explosions and cave-ins, making mining one of the most hazardous occupations in the world. Countries where rapid industrialisation drives a growing appetite for coal averages scores of deaths each year from accidents. Additionally, collapsing mines cause subsidence, a sinking of the surface.

Environmental dangers persist long after mining ends; for instance, accidental fires in abandoned coal mines can burn

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.

PHOTO:
MD MEHEDI HASAN

for years or even decades, threatening communities that have the misfortune to be located above or near the mines. A fire has been burning for over 50 years in a mine in Centralia, Pennsylvania.

Hydroelectric power is a clean renewable source of energy that emits practically negligible amounts of greenhouse gases compared to fossil fuels. Nevertheless, it has substantial environmental impacts, nearly all of which are related to the dams that store water for generation of electricity. Some of those impacts are obvious, while others are subtle. The most obvious impact is to

block naturally flowing rivers and turn them into placid lakes. In many countries the lakes have become breeding sites of potentially life-threatening parasitic worms, as in the Aswan Dam in Egypt. The dams also inundate vast areas of nearby land that often necessitate the relocation of entire towns and villages.

Construction is one of the fastest growing sectors in the economy of Bangladesh. Hundreds of buildings—high-rise apartments, shopping malls and office buildings in cities, hotels and restaurants in tourist hot spots, to name a few—have mushroomed in recent years. To feed the booming construction industry, there are approximately 5,000 privately operated brick kilns all over the country, many illegal, with towering smoke stacks belching thick, black plumes of smoke into the sky.

Traditionally, coal is used as fuel for firing clay bricks in the kilns to a temperature close to 1000 degrees Celsius. These kilns emit substantial amount of black carbon, or soot, and other toxic pollutants which are major components of air pollution. According to a study, kilns are responsible for about 15 percent of the country's annual carbon dioxide emissions and in the capital Dhaka, up to half of the fine particulate matter considered harmful to human lungs.

Besides, unchecked and unplanned construction of buildings have adverse impact on the environment. Most importantly, they modify some of the local climatological factors in their immediate vicinity, resulting in a relatively small-scale but tangible variation in the local climate, which is called "urban heat island effect," or more generally microclimate. While microclimate does not produce dramatic changes in temperature, over the years the cumulative effect of these heat sources are clearly noticeable in the average temperatures of 1970s Dhaka and present Dhaka. An extreme example of the effect of microclimate is the city of Kyoto, Japan.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31



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