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Road to Sustainable Development

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People's Voice



Edited by
Quamrul Islam Chowdhury

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Quamrul Islam Chowdhury

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Preface

People's Voice in this publication form is an outcome of a series of grassroots level consultations held across Bangladesh over a two-month period in the run up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) slated for August-September 2002 at Johannesburg. Six such public consultation workshops were held at six administrative divisional headquarters of Bangladesh which were finally capped by a national consultation meeting held in capital Dhaka on May 20, 2002. All this exercises for the first time had been designed to take into account the views and opinions of the local people from all over the country. These grassroots level consultations proved to be quite a useful tool in eliciting the common people's opinion on a wide variety of topics related to environment and sustainable development.

These people's consultative workshop was part of a national process to prepare Bangladesh not only for the WSSD but also for charting a future course for the nation on its path to sustainable development. These local-level consultations, participated by people from all walks of life-including the farmers, fishermen, factory workers, women as well as professionals from different vocations and trade- provided a unique fora for discussing development problems, giving the grassroots people an opportunity to speak out whatever they thought with regard to a sustainable future for the nation. And quite interestingly, many of these ordinary citizens came up with useful suggestions related to many of their local problems that hitherto missed the attention of the policy planners at Dhaka. This series of public consultations thus helped a great deal in understanding the nitty-gritty of the local problems of the people on the eve of the Johannesburg WSSD.

The whole exercise of this public consultation was launched by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) and conducted by the Forum of Environmental Journalists of

Bangladesh (FEJB) with very active and whole-hearted cooperation from the divisional commissioners, the civil society bodies and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). We are also grateful to Danish 92 group. We are really indebted to the great inspirational whipping of the dynamic Environment and Forest Secretary Sabihuddin Ahmed who mooted the idea of involving the people in Bangladesh's run-up to WSSD process. Our thanks to UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner for supporting the whole effort. Our gratitude also goes to Hans Peter of Danish 92 group. And above all, we must not forget the participants from every nook and corner of the country without whom this public consultation process would not have been possible-- they are the real authors of People's Voice.

We believe that the WSSD is providing us an historic opportunity to confront the serious and growing threats to mankind, underlining the importance of a sustainable development for the future of Mother Earth. With these few words, I have the pleasure of presenting this modest publication on the eve of the Johannesburg WSSD.

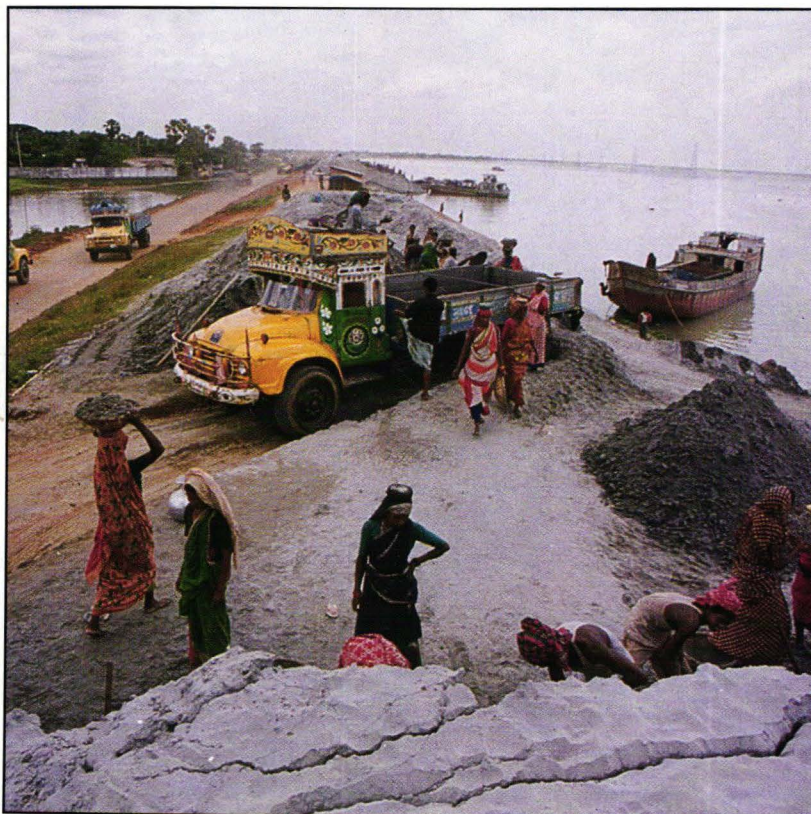
Quamrul Islam Chowdhury

Chairman, FEJB

June 2002



People's pathway



Photo

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People's Voice 

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People's pathway

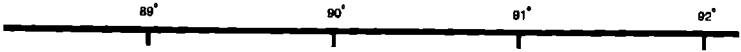
By Quamrul Islam Chowdhury

The world leaders including the heads of state and government, politicians, experts, development practitioners, environmentalists, media professionals and representatives of the civil society from across the continents are due to meet for a global summit on sustainable development in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August-September 2002. The global governance is likely to be the focus of this year's summit. The Summit offers an historic opportunity to confront serious and growing threats to human well-being: a third of the world's people live on an income of less than two dollars a day, use of fossil fuels is rising rapidly, patterns of production and consumption continue to eat up natural resources faster than they can be replenished, three-quarters of the world's fisheries are fished to their sustainable limits or beyond, mountain glaciers are slowly melting away and the world's forests have shrunk in the last decade by an area four times larger than Bangladesh. The world leaders are expected to adopt an implementation plan for sustainable development and a political declaration, and will also announce partnership initiatives aimed at delivering results on the ground.

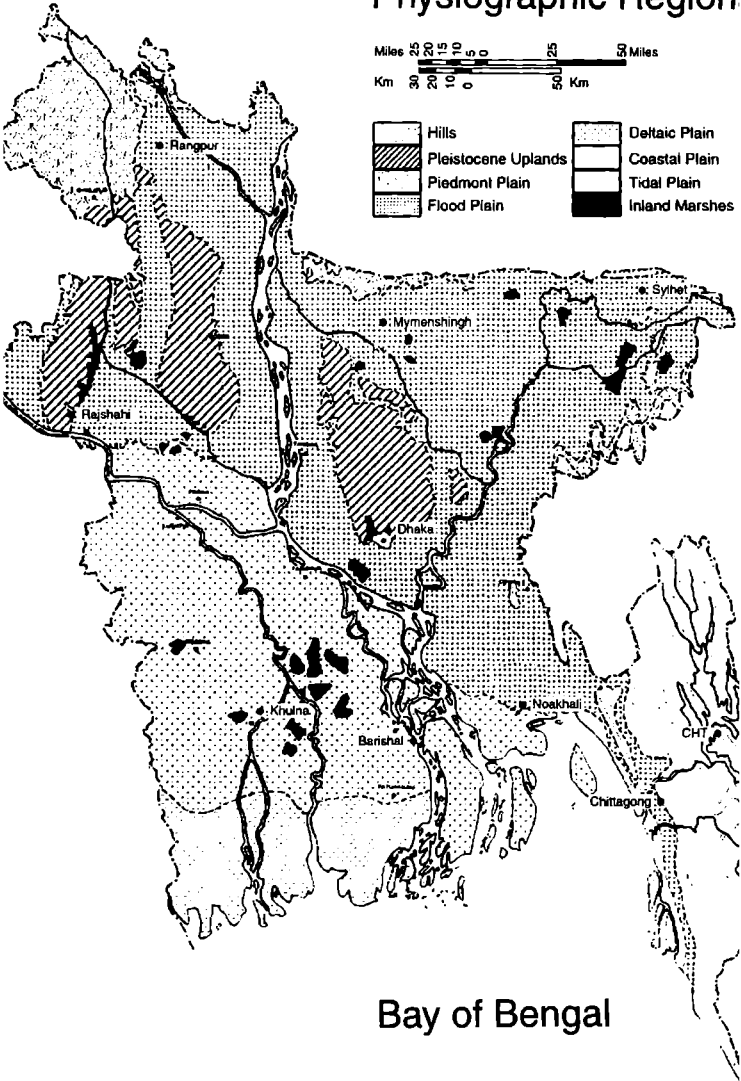
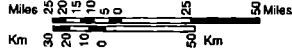
The planned moot, dubbed the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), will come as a follow up

The plus points

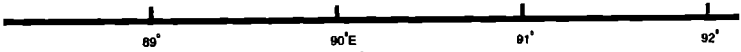
"There is a unique aspect of Bangladesh's development perspective that is seldom noticed. In spite of her very low per capita income, Bangladesh virtually leads the entire developing world in terms of income generated per square kilometer of land area (barring one or two relatively small countries). This high "physical density" of economic activities is the result of an extremely high population density, which is more than twice that of its nearest rival, South Korea (excepting the city-state of Singapore)."- Economist Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud told Dhaka Workshop.



Bangladesh Physiographic Region



Bay of Bengal



exercise of the landmark Rio Earth Summit 10 years ago. The global conference will review the progress of action plans and chart future strategies for achieving sustainable development across the world in line with the Rio Declaration popularly known as Agenda 21.

As part of the process to prepare a Bangladesh country paper on sustainable development for presentation at the Johannesburg WSSD, a National Consultation on Rio+ 10 Assessment was held in Dhaka on September 24, 2001 organised by the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) with support from Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), UNDP and Danish 92 Group. Then the government led by MoEF in collaboration with the FEJB, local administration and civil society bodies conducted a nationwide people's consultation. The process entailed a series of workshops designed to elicit public opinion at the grassroots, focusing on-the-spot local environmental and development problems, for adopting a national strategy for achieving a sustainable future for the country after assessing programmes undertaken in last ten years.

Under the two month-long exercise called "People's Consultation on Sustainable Development; National Assessment Report for WSSD, Bangladesh," six day-long workshops were held at the country's six administrative divisional headquarters. The process was launched from the north-eastern region of Sylhet on February 19, 2002 and culminated at capital Dhaka on March 10, 2002. The report of the people's consultation workshops was then shared at the National Consultation on WSSD on May

Look at the minus

**"No development in Char Kukri Mukri. No development in the remote areas of Bangladesh as our elite planners and development partners don't like to take risk for paying a visit to those far-flung places. Their air-conditioned cars also can't go there. So there is no light, no electricity, no education and for the backward people of those areas there is no ray of hope. If sustainable development means also their uplift, we want that in next ten years. That should be our vision. That should be our vision for Bangladesh."--
Rahima Sultana Kajal told Barisal Workshop.**

Widened scope for education

"Rich men are spending Taka 1400/1500 per month to send their children to good schools for their studies. We cannot manage so much money throughout the year for the education of our children. As the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing day by day, the gap between the standards of education is increasing at the same rate. That is why, the scope for education of poor children of the village should be widened." - villager Anguri Begum told Salhet Workshop.

20, 2002 organised by FEJB with support from the MoEF and the UNDP and Danish 92 Group.

The workshops were well attended encompassing cross-section of the citizens including political leaders, representatives of the local government bodies, NGOs, women and professional groups, local journalists, representatives of the civil society as well as officials of the district administrative units and special regions like the southeastern Hill Tracts and the south-western coastal belt and the Sundarbans mangrove forest.

It was explained at each of the workshops that the effort was based on a bottom-up approach of participatory policy planning to ensure that views of different groups of local people are seriously taken into account while drafting the country paper for global action on environment and development issues. The participants were told that the government wants to place the peoples' views in the country

paper through a comparative study of the views emanating from these divisional level workshops. The workshops were also told that the idea of formulating a pro-people assessment report aimed at meeting the demands of the current and next generations of Bangladeshi people for a planned and sustainable use of the country's natural resources.

"The biggest factor in making any programme a success is the participation and support of the people. We want to ensure this both at the planning and implementation levels for ensuring an effective and sustainable development," Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj said explaining the background and objectives of the WSSD consultative exercise.

State Minister for Environment and Forest Jafrul Islam Chowdhury said the workshops established a crucial linkage

among the people's views, the government's political will and administrative enforcement process.

"The government wants the people at grassroots to design the development strategies as stakeholders, identifying themselves the issues and problems that they feel should be addressed on a priority basis," said Sabihuddin Ahmed, Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest.

Dark side

"Black smoke from the brick kilns is polluting the environment. Emission of this black smoke should be stopped."-- Jafran Begum told Sylhet Workshop.

Methodology of the Consultation Workshops

The methodology of the People's Consultation Workshops was unique. It was set after several brainstorming sessions of the policymakers, experts, gressroot activists and facilitators. The NEMAP model was followed in all workshops. Following brief inaugural sessions, also joined by ministers, lawmakers, experts, academics and senior government officials, the workshop participants were divided into three groups for issue-based discussions on socio-economic aspects, natural resources and their conservation and management, and strengthening the role of different professions and organisations. The participants exercised their absolute freedom in reviewing or assessing successes and failures in the development process in the past one decade, expressing their expectations and recording their views and suggestions on future development strategies. Facilitators from the Environment and Forest Ministry, FEJB and academic institutions assisted the discussions of each group and helped the participants interact among themselves and come out with their opinions.

The six divisional workshops were held as per the following schedule

Sylhet:	19 February
Khulna:	28 February
Rajshahi:	02 March
Chittagong	04 March
Barisal:	07 March
Dhaka:	10 March

In consultation with the local administration, NGOs, Press Clubs and the civil society bodies participants were selected from various professional bodies and individuals representing people from all walks of life. The professional groups were as follows: government servants from various sectors (including Divisional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners), private sector business community, trade unions, teachers, media, NGOs, women and youth groups, farmers, fishermen, indigenous and tribal communities etc. While discussing the achievements and failures with regard to the Agenda 21 as well as future implementation strategies, the participants were divided into three groups to discuss the following issues:

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Socio-economic issues	Conservation and management of natural resource	Strengthening the role of professional groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Combating poverty ● Employment generation ● Economic growth ● Human health ● Human settlement ● Sustainable development in decision making ● Implementation mechanism ● Education and awareness ● Institutional strengthening ● International cooperation ● Legal Instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Land resources ● Combating deforestation ● Managing fragile ecosystem ● Sustainable Agriculture ● Conservation of biological diversity ● Wetlands and water bodies ● Toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes ● Implementation mechanism ● Education and awareness ● Institutional strengthening ● International cooperation ● Legal Instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of women and youth groups ● Strengthening the role of indigenous peoples ● Role of NGOs ● Strengthening Local Government ● Trade Unions ● Private sector ● Role of farmers ● Implementation mechanism ● Education and awareness ● Institutional strengthening ● International cooperation ● Legal Instruments

Voice of the people participated in the consultation workshops

Despite being an overwhelmingly homogeneous country in

terms of language and culture, the geography divides Bangladesh with diversified environmental and natural features. Situated in the south of the Himalayas, the country's vast tracts of alluvial plains are hemmed by foothills or hillocks in the north and southeast and criss-crossed by hundreds of rivers and rivulets that flow down to the Bay of Bengal on which it has a vast coastline. The six administrative divisions encompassing all such different physical features thus have their diverse and unique problems in terms of resources and potentials as well as environmental and development challenges. The workshop therefore gave the participants a unique opportunity to focus on their respective problems and issues vis-a-vis the common national development and environmental agenda.

The discourses at the six workshops revealed many interesting aspects of local problems that had either not been addressed or remained neglected - thanks to the apathy of the administration or the political leaders. Many of the participants were of the view that there had been an inherent conflict between "development and conservation". Some said that a sustainable development process could be ensured only through striking a balance between the two as the concept of sustainable development refers to the idea of continued development without affecting the nature or any group of people.

Most of the participants found close links between poverty, environment and development interventions and agreed

Easy credit schemes

"People need credit opportunity for safe investment. Sustainable development would be easier to achieve if employment generation and manpower export could be increased and income of the expatriate properly utilised. Numerous people of greater Sylhet live abroad. Eighty per cent of money sent by them come through hundi, because money can be received quicker through hundi compared to the general banking system. In the systems of hundi, money is paid on telephonic advice. First the government system should be improved if hundi business has to be stopped. For employment generation, credit should be advanced on submission of academic certificates and special facilities should be created for expatriates for safe investment." - Politician Nasim Hussain at Sylhet Workshop.

Defining development

Sustainable development envisages environmental considerations as an integral part of the development process rather than separate from it. The premise of sustainable development is "to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The concept of sustainable development considers development as a continuous process in which resource must be managed or stewarded to be regenerated.

that environmental degradation and unplanned development interventions in the past often intensified poverty. While the Agenda 21 asked governments to develop strategies to enable all people to achieve sustainable development, many of the participants identified poverty both as the cause and result of unsustainable activities.

Sustainable development envisages environmental considerations as an integral part of the development process rather than separate from it. The premise of sustainable development is "to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The concept of sustainable development considers development as a continuous

process in which resource must be managed or stewarded to be regenerated.

However, the workshops noted that despite its very low per capita income, Bangladesh virtually leads the entire developing world in terms of income generated per square kilometre of land area. They also noted that already a high density of economic activities has taken place despite the low level of technology, projecting the potentials of the people of this resource-strapped South Asian country.

While reviewing the impact of the past development interventions, they pointed out that in many cases unplanned projects had been carried out without properly assessing the impacts and even the necessities causing a negative impact on the economy, livelihood and nature of the country.

Participants at most of the workshops pointed out some redeeming features of Bangladesh's development efforts over

the past decade citing examples of successes in education, food production, EPI, safe water supply and above all poverty alleviation to some extent with increased role of different government bodies, NGOs and the private enterprises. But some of those successes, like in respect of water supply, were often marred or offset by unforeseen hindrances. Citing the case of arsenic contamination in ground water of parts of Bangladesh, they said the success story ran dry when the toxic element was discovered in the ground waters after decades of a "successful" campaign that had brought 98 percent people under tube-well coverage which was believed to be a safe source of drinking water.

Many participants viewed that some of the achievements in national life were in fact proved to be counter-productive saying that "the country attained self sufficiency in food at the cost of fertility of soil due to overuse of fertilisers and pesticides or urbanised localities causing asthma to the children".

Some participants viewed that the many "donor-sponsored development models" earlier often turned to be counter-productive as it was in the case of safe water campaign causing wastage of money, environmental hazards and negative effects on public health and livelihood. Many of the prescribed development projects in the past were devoid of any linkage with on-the-ground realities.

Pan growers' pain

"The area we reside in is full of hilly mounds. It is about 50 kilometers away Sylhet town and is situated in Jainta upazila. Almost everyone there is poor. There are two classes of people in the village. Some have land. Many have no land of their own.

These landless people live on the khas land. Though they had been living on those lands for ages, yet apparently they have no right to them. Their application for the khas lands are not approved. Problem of water there is acute. Betel nut saplings cannot be grown due to lack of water. Pan (betel leaves) cannot be cultivated. Free movement is often not possible because it is a border area. Even when we grow pan and betelnuts, the BDR (border force) personnel stop us when we try to take those to the market and say that we have brought them from the other side of the border (India). We are subject to such harassment continuously."-Traditional tribal village chief Khillaõ told Sylhet Workshop.

And many of them blamed the activities led by the "profit-oriented" attitude of the developed countries for much of the environmental degradation across the world, identifying the poor countries as "victims of development of the developed world". Some of them believe that the developed countries of the West were now "lecturing the poor developing nations" on conservation issues "in their own interests". Many further saw environmental degradation to be the outcome of "economic and commercial vandalism resorted to by a section of unscrupulous business people."

On region wise issues and success and failures of the past decade, the participants identified their concerns against the backdrop of the natural features and development and commercial activities in their respective areas. Many of those issues were identified and discussed as urban and rural concerns. But it was found that a large number of the issues were common concerns for all as those were somehow directly or indirectly affecting all the regions of Bangladesh.

These consultative workshops also noted that some local ecological and socio-economic problems like the issue of inter-state sharing of water of the common rivers stemmed to a great extent from external factors requiring inter-state co-operation and interventions for their solutions.

Arsenic contamination in ground water appeared to be the most common and crucial problem in all the workshops. The participants said over the past several decades the rural people developed the habit of using tube-wells for drinking water and became dependent on the water pumps. Now, with the detection of the toxic element in groundwater they were being asked to discard the tube-wells when the other sources of water like ponds and dug wells had been on the verge of virtual extinction due to their non-use and development of other infrastructures on those land.

Flood is another such common issue on which the participants were of common view that in recent days the deluges appeared to be more deadly due to increased population and expansion of infrastructures in the flood plains. They said a decline in the flow of the rivers from the upstream regions beyond

Bangladesh's borders, also heightened the river beds, reducing their carrying capacity and causing frequent floods or regular floods during the monsoon.

They also identified river erosion as another crucial problem for Bangladesh, criss-crossed by more than 250 rivers-- mostly originating beyond Bangladesh's borders. It was pointed out that thousands of people became pauper losing their homes and belongings every year due to this disastrous natural phenomenon.

Literacy bliss

"The rate of literacy has been on the rise for the last ten years. Food for Education Programme, financed entirely from domestic resources, has been one of the most successful innovative initiatives of Bangladesh. We are now enjoying salutary effects."

--Naurin Karim Pritu told Chittagong Workshop.

With regard to success stories, most of the workshops identified increased literacy rate, greater social, political and environmental awareness, women empowerment, reduced child mortality, self-sufficiency in food, expanded road communications and poverty reduction to some extent. They said common people now became very sensitive about environment while many participants referred to the success in banning the polythene bags which, it was pointed out, could be possible due to the increased public awareness.

But many noted that despite the increase of women's quota in government service and their increased participation in mainstream national activities, the women of the country were still subject to repression and discrimination at social and family levels.

Most participants cited the social afforestation campaign or expanding of the greenery across the country as of the most notable success in the past decade. Many of the participants however said that mono-culture plantations along with shrinkage of natural forests due to development interventions affected the traditional bio-diversity. There were also those who noted development of pro-people attitude among public servants as an encouraging headway. Some participants believe that the development of cross-border smuggling protected thousands of people from exposure to extreme poverty.

On growing public awareness regarding the development and

environment, most workshops praised the role of the electronic media, newspapers and other concerned organisations with particular reference to Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) for their role in campaigning development and environmental issues.

But they observed that despite significant progress in the fields of awareness development among the common people regarding all issues concerning the country, not much headway could be made in the development sector in the past decade. Inefficient management, lack of co-ordination among concerned people, lapses in involving all stakeholders in development planning and unplanned or ill-planned projects in government and private sectors being carried out sometimes for short-lived benefits and interventions on environment in many cases, intensifying poverty and affecting livelihood.

The other common problems identified by the participants included fall in the quality of education, constraints of technical education facilities, accommodation problems and unplanned land use pattern. On environmental issues, they identified the growing industrial pollution, deforestation, reduction of natural forestry, massive use of pesticides, introduction of high breed varieties, extinction of local fish species and crop varieties and introduction of alien ones, water logging, death of rivers and canals and other waterbodies, air pollution, depletion of ground water, etc.

On the issues of agriculture and rural development, most participants noted the attainment of self-sufficiency as the most remarkable success despite the diminishing role of agriculture in the national economy with the positive growth of non-farm sector and industrialisation. But most people expressed concern about the loss of indigenous crop varieties and due to introduction of high yielding varieties (HYV) requiring pesticides and fertilisers, which also visibly caused the loss of fish species in natural waterbodies as well as damaged soil fertility.

Most of the participants representing the urban areas of the country identified air and water pollution, waste disposal, traffic congestion and lapses in service delivery systems, inadequate schooling facilities and transportation as the major problems.

Many participants pointed out that though Bangladesh is faced with growing land scarcity due to increased population, most of the roads are of low quality while these are also taking up agricultural land and requiring costly maintenance.

The participants said that against the backdrop of increased population, landlessness was increasing and no effective measures were taken to ensure optimum land use or proper distribution of government-owned land (khas land) among the rural poor in the absence of a modern land policy.

As Agenda 21 reaffirmed that an environmentally sound management of wastes was among the issues of major concern in maintaining the quality of the environment and in achieving sustainable development, most participants discussing urban problems found waste management as a persisting problem in Bangladesh.

In southwestern Khulna region, most participants pointed out that the people were now more aware about the issues concerning them--but this awareness could do little to solve their problems. They said they were faced with increased salinity caused by intrusion of saline water from the sea for want of flow from upstream regions and unplanned shrimp cultivation. They said that

although the shrimp sector contributed to reduction of poverty in some extent, it could not create enough employment. The

Dig rivers, canals

"Unplanned building of roads in the haor area and absence of adequate provision of drainage there (bridges and culverts) cause untimely floods on slightest rains during the last 30 years. As a result, the crops of farmers get inundated. Such unplanned roads should be identified and adequate drainage arrangement should be made there. Secondly, one is asked not to cut hills and mounds to meet the demand of earth. But there should be proper directive as to how the people's need for earth is to be met. I think that the rivers are being filled up by alluvial deposition. If there is any need for earth, the rivers and canals in this condition can be dug instead of cutting down hills and mounds. This will enable us to have a sustainable river system. On the other hand, the locality will be saved from the environmental disaster caused by cutting down of hills and mounds." - Dr. Shafiqur Rahman told Sylhet Workshop.

participants pointed out that a group of rich and affluent people were invading the rural areas with sack-full of money to buy up vast tracts of farmland in the name of setting up agro-industries like fisheries and shrimp hatcheries much to the detriment of the poor farmers' traditional agricultural pursuit. This also caused loss of bio-diversity particularly with the loss of billions of fish fry due to the use of crude methods to catch shrimp fry. They pointed out that as a result of the situation, landlessness increased, land fertility decreased, farmland destroyed, rivers were dying, widespread water logging created, and above all the bio-diversity of the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, affected. Many of the participants acknowledged that the earnings from the shrimp cultivation were short-lived but the loss of bio-diversity caused by unplanned shrimp cultivation would have a far-reaching negative impact on the development, livelihood and ecology of the region as well as the country.

They said that although the area of the Sundarbans remained same, nothing had been done to improve its management to protect its rich bio-diversity. The participants noted that some local ecological problems like water salinity stemmed to a great extent from external factors like the Farakka Barrage built by India across the boarder.

In the southwestern coastal Barisal division, the participants said this southern riverine region was losing its ecological and social character with introduction of unplanned development programmes in different sectors particularly in agriculture--affecting the heritage and livelihood of the people. They said many of the development programmes in agriculture and communication sectors were designed without taking into consideration the features of the region affecting its natural advantage for development and livelihood. They regretted that this part of the country, once identified as a region of "paddy, rivers, and canals," has almost lost its heritage with its rivers and canals dying and the famous rice varieties on the verge of extinction. The workshop observed that despite being a riverine region, unplanned irrigation projects were being undertaken in the area without properly assessing their real utility--thus causing a negative impact on the water bodies as well as on the traditional livelihood of the local population. They said that

although being a coastal region, Barisal has been exposed to cyclones and tidal surges, but necessary infrastructures were not built to fend off the on-again off-again onslaughts of the natural disaster.

In southeastern coastal Chittagong division that also covers the tribal inhabited Hill Tracts, it was found that environmental degradation took the most crucial form affecting much of the region. The participants pointed out indiscriminate cutting of hills, deforestation, mono-culture, massive jhum (slash & burn) cultivation and "faulty" land management system in the hills were not only destroying the nature but also telling upon the livelihood of the people, including the indigenous tribal population, of the region.

In the northeastern tea-growing region of Sylhet, the participants said the existing management system had failed to protect the hillocks, water bodies (haors) and fisheries, and forests, the most important resources of the region. They said the over-exploitation of the natural resources for want of

appropriate policies or their enforcement the natural features of the region were changing and resources were dwindling-much to detriment of the livelihood of the local people. The workshop also highlighted sand and stone collection from rivers, a major source of local livelihood, problems of the ethnic groups particularly the tea garden workers and involvement and participation of expatriates hailing from Sylhet

Limited options

"Previously we did not use fertilisers or pesticides in the fields. But nowadays no crops could be grown without these. The vitality of the soil is decreasing day by day. Seven years back we used to apply one quintal fertiliser (on an acre). Now we require more than two quintal fertilisers. Now we need pesticides too. My family consists of my wife and two sons. She is simply a housewife. The elder son has passed the H.S.C examinations. He is now unemployed. The younger is now 18. He quit education after class IX. Now he works with my father in the field. Apart from an acre of cultivable land the only wealth the family has are three cattle two bullocks for plowing and a milch cow. My son wanted to set up a poultry farm but could not do it for lack of capital."- Peasant Devdas Mondol told Khulna Workshop.

who are now residents abroad in the local development process as major issues of the region. They observed that although a large number of people from this region of the country live abroad and earn huge foreign currency there was no planned initiative so far to use the expatriates' remittances for the development of the Sylhet region or the country as a whole. Some of the participants of Sylhet workshop also pointed out that flow of remittances has been higher than the net inflow of foreign assistance in Bangladesh. The nation, they said, should pursue a self reliant policy to attract more remittances and discard the path of relying on foreign assistance.

Water related problems surfaced as the most crucial issues at the divisional level workshop at northwestern Rajshahi. Participants there expressed concern about the downward trend in the groundwater table triggering a desertification process with massive use of aquifer for irrigation and drinking for want of availability of surface water in rivers due to withdrawal of water in upstream river in India across Bangladesh's border. Char land management, enforcement of international river laws, construction of barrages and water reservoirs, land use pattern, use of natural water bodies, desertification, ethnic minority issues, introduction of high-breed crop varieties, use of pesticides, unplanned urbanisation etc. came up as major issues of discussion.

In the central Dhaka division, the participants identified unplanned urbanisation and industrialisation, unplanned development of infrastructures, air and water pollution, encroachment of rivers and water bodies, extinction of fish species, unplanned embankments, filling of natural water bodies, increased dependence on ground water, indiscriminate felling of trees, distribution of khas land as major issues. On development issues, they said due to overlapping or lack of coordination between the NGOs and government bodies could not yield the desired success.

Regarding lapses in general terms in social sectors, the workshops pin-pointed on growing incidences of women repressions and rape, lack of security, failure to introduce direct election of women to parliament, dejection, disorder among the youth, drug addiction, increase of terrorism, obstacles in performing responsibilities by elected women representatives in

local government bodies at grassroots.

Shared Vision

The participants in the six workshops also shared their visions. They demanded involvement of all stakeholders in development planning since the people themselves know their issues and problems better. They pointed out that development is meaningless if it does not bring people's welfare. They also stressed on the need for planning based on regions under a democratic process. The participants also said that they wanted a sustainable development programme based on national priority. It should be reality-oriented and self-reliant as far as possible.

The most shared aspiration of the participants at the workshops was to bring up people living below poverty line to above that line. The workshops wanted total eradication of poverty, extension of financial and technical help to each poor person under planned initiatives for their self-reliance, reduction of unemployment, improvement in law and order and effective steps in the concerned fields.

Cut the costs

"From childhood I was used to go to the fields with my father. I was a fully-fledged peasant since I had been studying in class IX. Now I own only one acre of land. The early days were good. Later, the whole area became waterlogged. Trees and shrubs used to die away because of salinity. No crops could grow. No paddy could be grown there for 14 years despite construction of dykes to prevent intrusion of saline water.

During those early periods the families were dependent on the fish from the waterlogged bed. Now crops are growing there again. I get 40 maunds of paddy in a year, which meets the yearly food needs of the family. And fish are caught in the waters brought in only during the rainy season.

Previously, the same land used to yield 20 maunds of paddy. At that time some local varieties of paddy like Birpala (Aman), Kumri, Khesal etc. were used to be grown. Nowadays, these varieties are not available. Irriboro are now grown. These varieties have higher yields. But the cost of fertilisers and pesticides are higher and that is why expenses are increasing every year. The price of oil to run (irrigation) pumps are high and so irrigation cost is also high."-Farmer Devdas Mondol told Khulna Workshop.

Hope for jute

Polythene shopping bags, once credited for making shopping easy, turned into 'enemy' of the environment, as they are non-degradable. Bangladesh has witnessed colossal damage due to its excessive use and disposal in the open environment. These include degradation of soil quality, filling of riverbeds and blockage of drainage and sewage systems. Only in Dhaka city, nearly 10 million shopping bags were being used daily. The government, the workshop participants said, under the stewardship of the minister of environment and forest, has led a successful mass movement against the use of polythene bags by sensitising, mobilising and involving all strata of the society -- teachers, students, environmental activists, civil societies, housewives, journalists, NGO workers and members of the public. This is for the first time that a government programme has received wide support from all political parties including the opposition, they pointed out. The campaign also received unprecedented support from the national print and electronic media. Within one month, Dhaka city has been made free from polythene shopping bags. Moved by the unprecedented public support, the parliament passed an amendment to the Environment Conservation Act, 1995 empowering the government to ban the use of all kinds of polythene shopping bags in the country. This gives a new lease of life to jute, once the Golden Fibre of Bengal, used to produce biodegradable 'jute bags.' International demand for jute and jute goods is expected to rise, the participants hoped.

On the issues of health and environment, the participants wanted supply of safe water and hygienic latrines for all, 100 percent vaccination and recovery, further expansion of health and other service infrastructures, humanising of health services, enforcement of laws for healthy social and economic development and, more environment-friendly policies and their implementation.

They expect measures to effectively involve people in environmental and development works, accountability and transparency in government and private organisations, transfer of environment-friendly modern technology, supply of agriculture inputs to farmers, etc.

They underlined the need for self-reliant and pragmatic programmes for sustainable development, reducing dependence on foreign aid - specially commercially motivated suppliers' credit and expatriate-driven

consultant regimes and relaxing restrictions on global movement of people. They also called for curbing commercialisation of education. The participants expected promotion of technological education and particularly the development IT sector to cope with increased competitiveness against the backdrop of globalisation as well as overall national development.

The need for monitoring the NGOs' work to help ensure proper coordination and accountability as well as to avoid duplication. They also wanted improved public health services, house building loans on easy terms, improved democratic practices.

Regarding the realisation of the expectations and implementing the suggestions, the participants outlined the following issues as basic requirements. These were: promotion of human resources and capacity building through education, training and motivation, flow of information for decision making, generation of local and international funds for development, transfer of environment-friendly technology and recognising and strengthening the role of common people, decentralisation of decision-making process and strengthening the role of local government bodies, professional groups and NGOs.

In the backdrop of slow but gradual shift of agricultural land to other users, many participants laid emphasis on promotion of

Let rivers run

Rivers should be kept under the possession of rivers only. In the last decade, rivers, beels and canals have died killed on a wide scale. Sources of fresh water have been reduced. As a result of increase in the arsenic, iron and salt content of the water, the supply of fresh water is becoming limited day by day. Wetlands are almost devoid of bio-diversity. As a result of India's unilateral construction of dams and other structures in the upstream of the common rivers and withdrawal of water, Bangladesh, especially the zones in Khulna under command of the Ganges, is being damaged severely. Flow of fresh water has been reduced. Salinity damage has increased. Flow of water in the rivers is being obstructed due to river training at the time of building bridges and embankments. Rivers are dying out. Drainage of water is being obstructed due to unplanned construction of roads and landing stages.

Climate catastrophe

As a low-lying deltaic floodplain with the highest population density, Bangladesh is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Extreme weather events like floods, cyclones and tidal surges that regularly visit Bangladesh tend to reverse the development efforts for years. Studies including the IPCC-TAR indicate that about one meter sea level rise in several decades will permanently inundate 17 per cent of the country's land area, displacing 25 million population. Yield of rice and wheat is likely to reduce by a third, threatening the country's achieved food self-sufficiency. World's largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, a World Heritage Site and abode of Royal Bengal Tiger, will be lost forever.

rural non-farm sectors under coordinated initiatives of the government, NGOs and private enterprises. They also found it essential to find ways for the best uses of the scarce land as well as other natural resources under a reformed land and water policy.

To reduce the damage of floods, many participants suggested commercial basis dredging of riverbeds to extract soil instead of cutting hills and hillocks for earth used for landfills and infrastructures. Most participants saw peoples participation in the development planning and implementation process to "ensure people's role, protect environment to ensure growth." Many participants felt that utilisation of natural resources should be made through cautious programmes involving people of all strata of life. They felt the necessity to "act locally and think globally" in carrying out all development

activities to minimise the possibilities of "tampering with the nature."

Members of the Bangladesh delegation present at the national consultation pointed out that all the Regional Platforms including the Asia-Pacific one in Cambodia reaffirmed the urgency of implementation of the Rio Principles, with particular emphasis on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR). The UN Secretary General in his Report noted with concern the discrepancy between commitments and action. Despite the reaffirmation of commitment in Rio by the industrial countries to reach the UN target of 0.7 percent of their GNP for ODA, latest data

indicate that ODA hovers just around 0.2 percent of their GNP, or about US \$45 billion a year. This meager level is even declining. GEF is yet to mobilize even \$5 billion, whereas the UNCED in Rio suggested for an amount of \$125 billion a decade ago. Providing 0.2 percent of the industrial country GNPs to the LDCs is far off the target. On the other hand, the gap between the developed and developing countries is widening.

Acceptance of the CBDR warrants that international funding for environmental protection is based on binding, rather than voluntary, contributions. Related to financing is the technology transfer and capacity building in the developing world. Experience indicates that it still is dominated by commercial considerations. So we find a skewed distribution of clean technologies, mostly towards the industrializing countries, creating further gaps even within the developing world. So the Asia-Pacific Regional Platform focused on capacity building, transfer of and improved access to new technologies, the national consultation meeting participants pointed out.

The TAR of the IPCC states, "the effects of climate change are expected to be greatest in developing countries..." The

location of Bangladesh at the confluence of three of the world's largest rivers - Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna - makes her one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. Its long coastline, vast floodplains, high population density and nature-dependent agriculture would be severely affected due to climate change. Vulnerability of the disadvantaged and poor communities in the coastal areas would be most acute. The Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest in

Present matters

**"With regard to environment, the rate of destruction is higher than regeneration. We are just considering our present need or happiness ignoring the future."
-- Journalist Reazuddin Ahmed told the Dhaka Workshop.**

Getting to the heart

"We implement the government policies at field level. If we are involved at the primary level of the policy formulation process, we can share our experiences with the policy makers." - administrative chief of Shariatpur district Moshfeka Iffat told Dhaka Workshop.

Arsenic menace

Access to clean water with the increased use of tube wells had been a success story in Bangladesh. Suddenly, this has turned into a menace with findings of country-wide contamination of groundwater with arsenicosis. Studies have shown that 30 per cent of tube wells are contaminated with arsenic beyond normal standard. About 25 million people are exposed to unsafe levels of arsenic. While this disaster demands immediate mitigation, it has sparked a debate over use of surface and ground water. It is unfortunate that while interest in research on arsenic is rising, there is hardly any serious international response to tackle this 'silent killer.'

the world and abode of the Royal Bengal Tiger, would go permanently under water due to sea level rise. Such wide-ranging vulnerabilities have been documented both by national and international studies. Therefore, the people asked the policy makers that Bangladesh should argue for the need of increased international and domestic action to address the impacts of climate change, sea-level rise, development of win-win mitigation and adaptation strategies and mobilization of adequate resources for the purpose. The participants of national consultation meeting believe that in accordance with the CBD, industrial countries will ratify the Kyoto Protocol to bring it into force before the Summit. This would just be the first step.

Availability of fresh water for sustaining development will be a top priority issue at the WSSD. Most of the participants said though Bangladesh is called a 'Land of Rivers,' clean water and sanitation are serious concerns. In the monsoon, we have too much of water, while in the winter, too little of it. The flow in the lean season is restricted through the structural control of the Ganges by the upstream neighbor, participants pointed out. As a result, the country faces serious problems in the western and southern coastal areas. Due to lack of fresh water in the dry season, intrusion of saline water causes top dying of trees in the coastal areas, the workshop participants pointed out. At the national consultations, members of Bangladesh delegation recalled that the Asia-Pacific Regional Platform emphasized on the need for integrated river and basin management and strategic approaches that integrate all aspects of water management. It is important to improve the accuracy of

seasonal forecasting of monsoons and the understanding of the regional water cycle and promote regional cooperation in joint research on water management issues.

Currently, Bangladesh has been confronting a serious water-related problem recently surfaced due to over dependence on the groundwater for both irrigation and drinking purposes. This is the arsenic menace. Wide-scale use of tube wells for clean water had been a success story since the 1970s. Suddenly, this has turned into a menace with findings of nation-wide of groundwater contamination with arsenicosis. Studies have shown that 30% of tube wells are contaminated with arsenic beyond normal standard. About 25 million people are exposed to unsafe levels of arsenic. While this disaster demands immediate mitigation, it has sparked a debate over use of surface vs ground water, the national consultation workshops pointed out. The participants said it is unfortunate that while interest in research on arsenic is rising, there is hardly any serious international response to tackle this 'silent killer.'

The national consultation meeting observed that relationship between globalization and sustainable development is often conflicting. The terms of trade are

Players behind the scene

"Bangladesh media thanks to the activism of the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) has been in the forefront in unfolding the sustainable development agenda in general and green agenda in particular. In fact, the FEJB is now being cited as a model in creating awareness among the mass people including politicians and policy makers about our major environmental problems. The FEJB has been successful in raising a very strong group of journalists in mainstreaming environment and sustainable development in our otherwise politically dominated media.

International networks of media organisations like the Asia-Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists (APFEJ), the World Water Forum of Journalists (WWFJ), and the Commonwealth Environmental Journalists Association (CEJA) are now doing a commendable job in our part of the world. As media power these institutions should be strengthened to help achieve sustainable development."

--Enayetullah Khan told Dhaka Workshop.

deteriorating against the developing countries. Trade liberalization and environmental protection interface when trade measures are adopted to ensure compliance with the MEAs, some of which contain trade provisions. The trend is manifesting in the form of 'environmental protectionism' in the industrial countries, which incorporate into their GSP the provision of reduced customs tariff for imports from countries, which comply with their prescribed environmental standards. As of today, the Committee on Trade and Environment under the WTO could not reach consensus on how to resolve the conflicts posed by the inter-relationship between trade and environment. The participants want the resolution of such conflicts including the ones that exist between the TRIPs and the CBD provisions. Some industrial countries have offered duty and quota-free access to LDC exports. They believe other countries would follow.

The experts present in the meeting pointed out that there is evidence that the goods prohibited domestically (DPGs) in developed countries on the grounds of environmental hazards, health or safety reasons continue to be exported to developing countries. With limited information on DPGs, the developing countries are unable yet to make informed decisions regarding their impact. The participants, therefore, want full implementation of the Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides. Technical assistance for capacity building in the ministries of Commerce and Environment is needed to handle and manage trade in DPGs. Developing countries require time and capacity building to absorb and adjust to the unfolding realities of market-led globalization. The Asia-Pacific Regional Platform emphasized on increased technical assistance for the LDCs and access to global markets, to make globalization inclusive and equitable. Participants said special consideration should be given to LDCs and other geographically disadvantaged countries. This can be achieved through the Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical assistance to LDCs and its follow-up, the joint Integrated Technical Assistance Program as well as the activities of the International Trade Center.

The national consultation participants observed that experience shows that environmental management works better in a system of governance, with flow of policy inputs from the bottom to

the top. With a firm conviction in the efficacy of people's participation, the democratic government of Bangladesh has institutionalized a participatory environmental governance, they pointed out. The environmentally proactive government took several outstanding initiatives to improve the country's environment, they mentioned. These include establishing Environmental Court, banning of all types of polythene shopping bags, mandatory installation of catalytic

converters and diesel particulate filters in motor vehicles, phasing out of two-stroke vehicles from the capital city, provision of unleaded petrol, different fiscal incentives/disincentives, and country-wide mass movement on afforestation through social and homestead forestry. The government, they said, has achieved successes in these initiatives through mass mobilization at grassroots level. On 15 June, the National Tree Plantation Day, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has urged each citizen to plant at least 3 trees - one fruit-bearing, one medicinal and one timber species, which will in time serve as good investment and insurance premium. Through this movement, the entire country is now turning green.

Reduction of poverty is regarded as the precondition to sustainable development in developing countries. Accordingly, the Asia-Pacific Regional Platform focused on chronic and persistent poverty,

Conservation of biodiversity

Historically, rich biodiversity in the Bengal areas was the basis of local agrarian practices. Introduction of monoculture caused a loss of innumerable rice varieties, reducing intensive agriculture precariously dependent on 6-7 varieties. Due to ecological needs, communities are now gradually recovering the lost varieties and practicing organic farming.

The resilience

The resilience, ingenuity and coping strategies of the population of Bangladesh in the face of devastating natural calamities have been widely recognized. Based on the rich indigenous knowledge, local communities have taken initiatives to conserve the declining biodiversity of the country and recover the lost species through ex-situ and in-situ conservation.

for which urgent measures are required to address illiteracy, malnutrition, poor health, inadequacy of rural infrastructure and facilities to enhance rural employment opportunities, gender, cultural and social inequities, specially for the poor and marginalized communities. We hope the WSSD will contribute towards realization of the Millennium Development Goal of halving global poverty by 2015. The Government of Bangladesh put the highest priority in her economic and environmental planning on reduction of poverty and provision of social services. However, resources are extremely limited, with acute competition among sectors. Still there is significant progress in poverty reduction and lifting the lower segment of population from the absolute poverty. Bangladesh now stand among the top 20 performers in terms of consistent economic growth of over percent a year during the last decade. Her HDI is moving ahead as well.

Though profligate and wasteful consumption in the industrial world is mainly responsible for global environmental degradation, Bangladesh considers that population plays a critical role at local level, where carrying capacity of natural resources is exceeded. However, population is the most precious resource when turned into human capital. The Government with its limited resources puts high priority on education and skill development of her vast population. The resilience, ingenuity and coping strategies of the population of Bangladesh in the face of devastating natural calamities have been widely recognized. Based on the rich indigenous knowledge, local communities have taken initiatives to conserve the declining biodiversity of the country and recover the lost species through ex-situ and in-situ conservation.

As lack of adequate coordination between the government and the NGOs was identified as a major obstacle for sustainable development, many participants called for finding ways to ensure an effective co-ordination between the environment ministry and all concerned government and private organisations with regard to promoting the country's green agenda. A number of participants recommended introduction of a law for preservation of common property for proper and optimum use of the national resources as well protection of the environment. They also underlined the need for proper implementation of the already existing laws by the authorities

concerned and cooperation of the people in this regard.

The workshops laid emphasis on taking into account the local people's indigenous knowledge acquired over centuries, noting that many of the newly emerged problems were the outcome of hasty introduction of alien concepts and practices. It was observed that those problems could be removed with the promotion of the traditional knowledge base of the people. "Ensure people's role to protect environment and ensure a sustainable development," was a common opinion as the participants expressed their views.

The participants believe the Johannesburg Summit will come up with a concrete Action Plan, backed by strong political will and committed funding. This Earth is the one and only abode we have, as Paul Robson reminds, 'we are in the same boat.' Therefore, the chasm that divides the disadvantaged and the poor, and their fortunate brothers and sisters must be bridged in earnest. This is the key to ensuring sustainable development at national and global levels. Let the WSSD not be another forum for churning out another pious Declaration, pleaded some of the participants of the national consultation.

They hoped that the voice of so many Kaja's will be heard in Johannesburg. Their vision will be translated into reality in next ten years. The roads beyond Johannesburg will not be muddy for the 130 million people of Bangladesh. Their dream of a seven per cent growth in next five years and ten per cent growth in rest five years can be realised by improving the governance, mobilising the people for their own sustainable livelihood, preserving the nature and ensuring law and order.

Encourage expatriate's investment

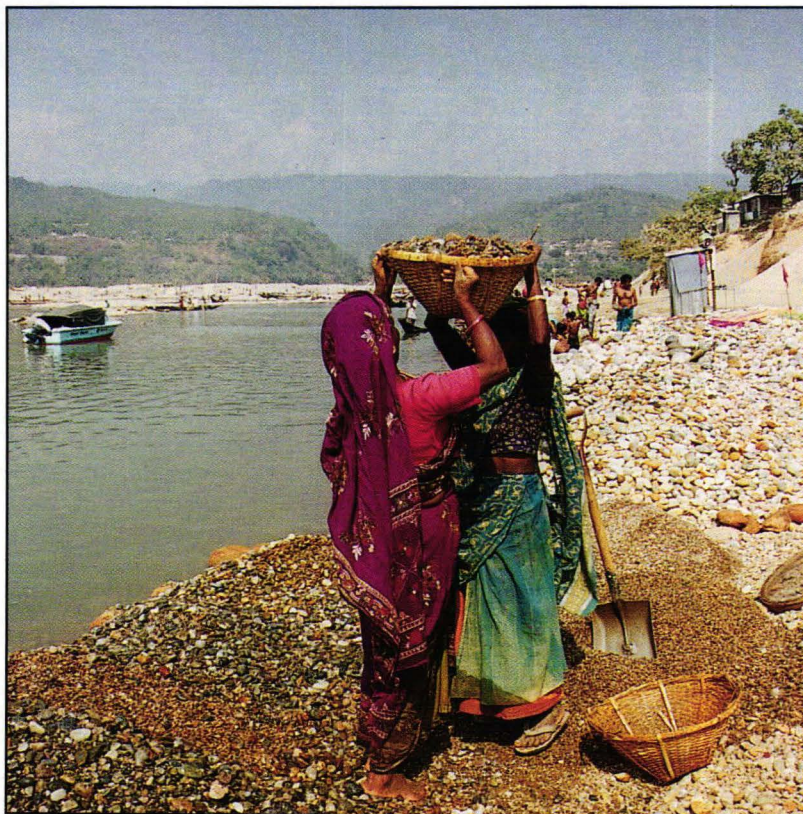
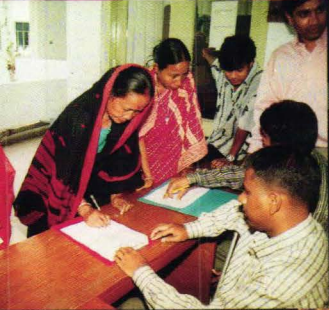


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Encourage expatriate's investment

By Kazi Shahnaz with Hasanuzzaman Khan and
Shahidul Islam Chowdhury

The people's consultation at the grassroots level has begun to prepare a national assessment report, keeping in view the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development. This consultation is being taken through six workshops to gather the opinion of all strata of people in the six divisions of the country. The first of the series of workshops, entitled '*People's Consultation on Sustainable Development: National Assessment Report for WSSD, Bangladesh*' was held on February 19, 2002 at Sylhet. Local representatives of the civil society uninhibitedly gave their opinions at the workshop.

This workshop was organised jointly by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh, the Sylhet divisional administration and local civil society with the cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Sylhet was selected as the venue of the first workshop because of the variety of its landscape and its ethnic diversity. This scenic area, with its hills, rivers, forests, plains and *haors*, also has many settlements of aboriginal people. The workshop was held at the conference room of the Bangladesh Rural Development Training Institute (BRDTI). About 150 people, including local leaders of

Do something substantial

Iqbal Hussain, chairman of Khadimnagar Union Parishad in Sylhet, said the government, NGOs and many others have for a long period of time worked a lot for poverty eradication. But it is necessary to scrutinise and verify if something substantial is being done. Already two to three thousand people have lined up for 500 vulnerable group feeding cards. Who knows whether this number will not increase in future? Wealthy people have taken possession of *khas* lands. There is no land to distribute among the landless. Time is wasted in offices due to bureaucratic tangles but no result is achieved.

different political parties, people's representatives, representatives of business organisations, teachers, officials of different government departments, professionals, women, NGO representatives, journalists, members of the *Khasia, Monipuri and Potra* communities, women's organisations, tea garden workers and planters, farmers, students and various representatives of grassroots people, took part in the workshop.

Inaugural session : People's voice in the United Nations

The inaugural session was presided over by Khondoker Mahmudur Rahman, a leading personality in the developmental activities in the Sylhet region, a noted development planner and former director of the BRDTI. At the beginning of the session Dr. Mahfuzul Haq, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, gave an idea of the perspective and background of the workshop and the responsibilities of its participants. He said, "It is not a routine workshop. Today you, the people, will talk. Only the opinions of those who have come as representatives of different districts, groups of people, professions and organisations will get preference. Those of us who have come from Dhaka, who have been occupying important posts in the administration, will only listen."

He said the subject to be discussed is sustainable development. Sustainable development means long-term, environment-friendly development. Development should be such that it will enable our children to live in peace and prosperity generation after generation. Mills and factories are necessary for development but not such mills and factories that harm the environment.

Nowadays people throughout the world are discussing how long-term development is possible by maintaining a balance between development and ecology. These deliberations are inseparably linked with the deliberations on the improvement of the environment. The concern today is how welfare of man can be achieved without impairing the world's environment, including the *haors, baors*, hills and rivers of the Sylhet region. The Earth Summit of 1992 was held in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil with this concern in view. The follow-up conference of that summit will be held 10 years later in August, 2002 in

Johannesburg in South Africa. The conference this year has been designated as the world Summit on Sustainable Development. Heads of state and governments of different countries will participate in this conference. Bangladesh will be represented at the conference by a high-powered delegation, probably headed by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. Progress or failure in the last 10 years will be discussed there.

The conference will formulate the outline of the probable programme for the next 10 years to materialise the dreams and expectations of sustainable development. The Ministry of Environment and Forest has taken up the task of preparing the Bangladesh country report to be placed at the summit. These workshops are intended to reflect the opinions of the people at the grassroots level. Dr. Mahfuz said, "Maybe such a report could be prepared from Dhaka, but it was thought advisable to talk to the people of the area, to understand the problems of the hills, *haors*, *baors* and tea gardens of Sylhet. It is essential to hear what the people at the grassroots level say. The opinion of the professionals is also important. The same is true of Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal. That is why it was decided to hold six workshops at six divisions of the country."

Chairman of the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh Quamrul Islam Chowdhury said, "Very few countries are preparing their country reports with the opinion of the people at the grassroots level. Previously, during the Earth Summit too, Bangladesh followed the same method. Along with the advice as to how the development centred on the soil and people of the country can be made sustainable, we

Think environmentally

Dr. Mustaq Ahmed, chairman, Department of Environmental Engineering, ShahJalal University of Science and Technology in Sylhet, said that in any development activity the environmental effects should be kept in consideration. The environment, especially the soil and water, is being damaged by the use of chemical fertilisers. Many species of fish are facing extinction. Farmers should be trained as to how much fertiliser and pesticide should be applied and what will be the result of irrigation. For the last several years the natural water reservoirs are being destroyed.

want to take the chronicle of dreams of ordinary people to the United Nations."

He reminded the local participants in the workshop, "You, yourselves, have to compile your opinions. You are the most important persons in the workshop. You will frankly talk about your dreams, expectations and needs. There is no chief guest here, no special guest. You are your own helping hand. The main work of compilation of the opinions will be done through three groups. You will divide yourselves into three groups to discuss three topics. One's opinion may not be the same as that of the other, therefore you yourselves should try to resolve the differences of opinion into a consensus."

The Divisional Commissioner of Sylhet, A.K.M. Shamsuddin, called upon the participants not to indulge in utopian recommendations but to express their opinion in the light of the reality of Bangladesh. He said, "Various programmes are adopted at various times and do not have continuity. Besides, no long-term plan is being undertaken in this unfortunate land. What can happen 10 years, 50 years or 100 years hence is not being considered in preparing plans." He urged the participants in the workshop to frankly state their opinions so that the opportunity afforded, even though belatedly, for the formulation of short-term, medium-term and long-term plans is utilised.

Among the FEJB members Khondoker Monirul Alam, president of the Jatiya Press Club (JPC), former vice president of JPC Ghulam Mohiuddin Khan, Ahmed Nure Alam and Shahidul Islam Chowdhury of the daily Janakantha, Muhammad Quamruzzaman of the daily Dinkal, Sharif Shahabuddin of the New Nation, Bulbul Ahmed of the Independent, Mohammad Hasan of the Jugantar, Abdul Hye Siddiq of the daily Inquilab, Anisur Rahman of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha and Ruhul Amin Rushd of Channel I took part in this day-long workshop.

Working session : Issue-based popular counsel

After the inaugural session participants in the workshop divided themselves into three groups and began the popular counsel session. The issue-based groups were:

socio-economic, preservation and management of natural resources, activation of the role of the professions and organisations. These issue-based popular counsel sessions continued uninterruptedly for three hours from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury acted as the facilitator of the socio- economic group. Issues discussed by this group of 30 participants were poverty, growth, employment, improvement of public health, durable dwellings, ensuring environmental approach in policy making, international cooperation in sustainable development, sustainable development and the decision-making process.

BRDTI Director Nurul Amin acted as the facilitator of the 'preservation and management of natural resources' group, consisting of 37 participants. Issues discussed by this group were sustainable management of soil resources, protection of mounds, hills and forests, preservation of agricultural resources, conservation of bio-diversity, management of rivers and *haors*, resisting industrial pollution, resisting air and water pollution, collection of sand and stones, management and preservation of fresh water sources, solid waste and sewage management.

Dr. Mahfuzul Haq acted as the facilitator of the 'activation of the role of the professions and organisations'. The topics of discussion of this 45-member group were the role of women, children and youth in sustainable development, uplift of the aboriginal people, strengthening the role of the different organisations including NGOs, role of the tea garden workers

Facilitate schooling

Mongali, a woman belonging to the *Patra* tribe, said that the problem of education of the village children is very great. There was no school even 10 years ago. A primary school has now been set up, so somehow one can complete one's preliminary education there. Young kids are going to the school. It is not possible for most of them to carry on further studies. The high school is six kilometres away. The college is even further distant. Thus it can be said that there is no scope to study in the college. Bad communication is the main obstacle

and trade unions in development, fruitful participation of expatriates in development, strengthening the local government system, and strengthening the role of the technologists and farmers.

The other topics in their respective fields that figured prominently in the discussion of the three groups were education and people's awareness, cooperation of the mass media, development research, financial cooperation at the local, national and international levels, and what programmes are desirable for the future, etc. All the three groups submitted their reports at the concluding session.

Consensus from diverse opinions : The suggestions

This was a people's consultation workshop in the true sense of the term and was participated in by people from various professions and classes. Despite their different political opinions, almost all the local political leaders said that political stability is very essential for sustainable development. The democratic process at all levels should be kept unhindered at all cost. Besides, rule of law, good governance, transparency and accountability at every level are essential. Development work should be based on the villages. Poverty eradication will gather pace as more money goes to the villages. And most importantly, the environment should be kept in mind in all activities. According to the participants the governments during the last 10 years have been democratic and were more or less stable. As a result positive progress has been achieved in poverty eradication, and in achieving growth and employment generation. However, national consensus, one of the main preconditions of sustainable development, has not been achieved.

Senior Reporter of the daily Janakantha, Ahmed Nure Alam, said, "Political commitment is essential for keeping the pace of development uninterrupted. There should be an all-party political consensus on some basic issues."

Nasim Hussain, general secretary of the Sylhet city BNP, said sustainable development would be easier to achieve if employment generation and manpower export could be increased and income of the expatriates could be properly

utilised. He said numerous people of greater Sylhet live abroad. Eighty per cent of the money sent by them comes through *hundi*, because money can be received quicker through *hundi* than the nationalised or general banking system. Money is paid on telephonic advice in the system of *hundi*. The government system should be improved if *hundi* has to be stopped. For employment generation he suggested that credit should be advanced on submission of academic certificates and special facilities should be created for expatriates for safe investment.

Iqbal Siddiqui, Sylhet correspondent of The Daily Star, said that about 4500 crore taka are lying idle in the Sylhet region but there is no investment opportunity. That is why Sylhet is now becoming a market town. Some banks could have come forward to lend money if there had been scope for taking decisions locally. He said it is important to introduce one-stop service for investment by expatriates.

He said there is continuous fighting for the possession of stone quarries and sand beds because there is no scope for taking decisions locally. Anyone can gather stones and sand according to his wish. There is no control anywhere. The ministry is giving allotment of a quarry or sand bed to one group and the district administration is giving it to another group. Most of the workers engaged in quarrying stones or gathering sand are migrants from other areas. Middlemen are profiting on the income of these workers.

**Give capital incentives,
create market**

**Rajkumari Sumi of the
Monipuri tribe said that
they are suffering from lack
of capital. Previously there
was no system of credit.
Now a little credit is
forthcoming, but the
amount is small. The scope
of marketing the handloom
products produced with the
credit is meagre. The
system of marketing
should be improved.**

Is something substantial being done?

Iqbal Hussain, chairman of Khadimnagar Union Parishad in Sylhet, said the government, NGOs and many others have for a long period of time worked a lot for poverty eradication. But it is necessary to scrutinise and verify if something substantial

is being done. Already two to three thousand people have lined up for 500 vulnerable group feeding cards. Who can tell if this number will not increase in future? Wealthy people have taken possession of *khas* lands. There is no land to distribute among the landless. Time is wasted in offices due to bureaucratic tangles but no result is achieved.

Difference between standards of children's education should be reduced

Anguri Begum, a poor woman hailing from Khadimnagar village said, rich men are spending Tk. 1400/1500 per month to send their children to good schools for their studies. We cannot manage so much money throughout the year for the education of our children. We have to spend far more money than we can afford to buy books and writing materials for a child or a daughter at the beginning of the year. As the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing day by day so is the gap between the standards of education. That is why the scope for education of poor children of the village should be widened.

Jafran Begum from the same village said that black smoke from the brick kilns is polluting the environment. Emission of this black smoke should be stopped.

Environment should be considered in development

Dr. Mustaq Ahmed, chairman, Department of Environmental Engineering, Shah Jalal University in Sylhet, said that in any development activity the environmental effects should be kept in consideration. The environment, especially the soil and water, is being damaged by the use of chemical fertilisers. Many species of fish are facing extinction. Farmers should be trained as to how much fertiliser and pesticide should be applied and what will be the result of irrigation. For the last several years the natural water reservoirs are being destroyed. Navigability of rivers and canals is being reduced. *Haors, baors, dighis*, ponds and wells are drying up. On the one hand hills and hillocks are being razed, and on the other hand rivers and canals are filling up in places due to siltation and their water levels are rising above that of the surrounding plain land. If necessary new laws should be enacted and these destructive acts should be stopped through strict application of the laws.

Follow-up programmes needed

Badaruddin Quamran, general secretary of the Sylhet city Awami League, said decisions are taken in various fields, and some of them are implemented too, but there is no follow-up. The standard of education should be improved. The teachers should have higher education and training as well as proper motivation.

Shafiqur Rahman, Sylhet district *ameer* of Jamaat-e-Islami, said that along with the general education, people should have job training so that export-oriented manpower can be created.

Several other participants in the workshop said that the local government system should be strengthened. The tyranny of official red tape should be stopped. The mass media often widely publicises incidents of crime but not the punishment of criminals. It should be more responsible.

Tales of the aboriginals

Twenty aboriginals participated under the leadership of headman Khellao (tribal chief, who is locally called 'minister') of the aboriginal Khasia tribe. This elderly tribal chief expressed his opinions in his own dialect. His words were translated into Bangla by Khokendra, who belongs to the same tribe. The headman said he felt privileged at being invited to the workshop because he could discuss the plight of his own tribe.

Let's do it ourselves

On the People's Consultation workshop, Dr. Ahmed Kamal said that let this not be the citizens' last say. The responsibility of the development experts is to keep uninterrupted the process of taking constructive suggestions from the people at the grassroots level for genuine sustainable development work. People will think about whatever touches life every day, whatever influences life, whatever is responsible for the success or failure in life, and will talk about these things with 10 other people and will then give their opinion on the issue. That is how the consciousness of the civil society is formed. This process will help us to move forward to development designed for people's welfare. Nobody will deliver such a development on a platter. We ourselves will have to do it.

Khillao said the area they reside in is full of hilly mounds. It is about 50 kilometres away from Sylhet town and is situated in Jainta upazila. The name of that tiny village is Mokampunjee. Almost everyone there is poor. There are two classes of people in the village. Some have land, and most have no land of their own.

These landless people live on *khas* land. They have no right to them though they had been living on those lands for ages. Their applications for ownership of the *khas* lands are not approved. The problem of shortage of water is acute there. Betel nut palms cannot be grown due to lack of water. *Paan* (betel vines) cannot be cultivated also. Free movement is often not possible because it is a border area. "Even when we grow *paan* and betel nuts," he said, "the BDR people stop us when we try to take them to the market and say that we have brought them from the other side of the border. We are subject to such harassment continuously."

Mongali, a woman belonging to the *Patra* tribe, said that the problem of education of the village children is very great. There was no school even 10 years ago. A primary school has now been set up, so somehow one can complete one's preliminary education there. Young kids are going to the school. It is not possible for most of them to carry on further studies. The high school is six kilometres away. The college is even further distant. Thus it can be said that there is no scope to study in the college. Bad communication is the main obstacle. After walking 2/3 kilometres and reaching the main road one has to wait for long periods for buses. The local transports do not want to take the school-going children. The drivers neglect them because they are aboriginals. They even try to prevent them from boarding the vehicles. Patients often suffer due to communication difficulties.

At this stage Khokendra said such a mentality is not good. It can be easily seen that the boy or the girl is carrying books, therefore what harm will befall if he/she is picked up by the bus?

When asked if there had been any improvement during the last 10 years, headman Khello said that the children are now able to study because of the opening of the school. Some credit has

flowed in officially. By using these small credits some people are trading in paan and betel nuts and some in poultry. As a result many families have somewhat improved their financial position. But, he said, sometimes the BDR appropriates the cream of the profit.

Khira Bala of the Patra tribe said that other people should change their mentality and attitude towards the aborigines. What is most necessary is more opportunity for studying, and more schools.

When asked what kind of development they want in the next 10 years, Khellao recommended solving the problems of the people of Mokampunjee 'through well planned and integrated projects'. He said the aborigines should be given use of the *khas* lands through long-term documents. He hoped that many other problems would be automatically solved if the problems of water, medical treatment and schools were solved.

Rajkumari Sumi of the *Monipuri* tribe said that they are suffering from lack of capital. Previously there was no system of credit. Now a little credit is forthcoming, but the amount is small. The scope of marketing the handloom products produced with the credit is meagre. The system of marketing should be improved.

What the tea workers said

Asharani Goala came from the Khadimnagar tea estate to take part in this workshop. What Asha said contained words of both hope and despair.

The daily wage of labourers in the tea gardens was Tk. 24 ten years ago. Tea workers had to agitate extensively to increase it to Tk. 36. The planters did not agree. After long years of

Sincerity is the key

If a person has the feeling that 'I am the author of this programme, I have prepared this plan, I am inseparably united with the programme', then he will treat every problem of the locality as his own problem. He will then wish for the success of the programme from the core of his heart, from his own belief and from his own sense of commitment. The man will then be sincere in materialising his own dreams.

negotiations, the daily wage has been increased by only 2 takas and now it stands at Tk. 26. Asharani has a family of 5/6 members. She said, "What can be done with Tk. 26, Babu? How can the family carry on? One cannot even meet the expenses of eating and drinking, not to speak of children's education and doctor's fees." The shortage of water, electricity, roads and communications, and housing in the plantations is acute. Even though some problems have been solved a little, the situation has not improved. Previously there were no schools. Now there is a primary school. The planters have often been requested to enlarge the school, but nobody listens. Health workers visit the place sometimes, but the same kind of medicine is given for all kinds of diseases. There is no one to see if diseases are cured or not. Most of those living in the tea plantations are women but there is no lady doctor for them.

Concluding session : Consensus from diverse opinions

Divisional Commissioner of Sylhet, A. K. M. Shamsuddin, presided over this session. The Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest Sabihuddin Ahmed, FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, Dhaka University Professor Ahmed Kamal, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest Dr. Mahfuzul Haque, SEMP Coordinator Dr. Babar Kabir, Sylhet district administrator Hasanur Rahman, Maulvibazar district administrator Mokhlesur Rahman, (Adivasi) Monipuri Mahila Samabay Samity president Chandra Kala Sharma, BRDTI director Nurul Amin and leaders of different political parties took part in the discussion at this session. Their reports on the issue-based open discussion were submitted at this session.

Report of the socio-economic group

The report of the socio-economic group was presented by Nasim Hussain, a prominent local leader of a leading political party. According to this group positive steps have been taken in the last 10 years in the fields of poverty alleviation, increase of job opportunities and economic growth. Over-all health consciousness has increased. No mentionable success has been achieved in providing durable dwelling houses. Awareness of the necessity of environmental protection has significantly increased through various programmes including NEMAP.

There has been no progress in international cooperation for sustainable development. Some progress has been achieved in education and popular awareness.

To keep this trend uninterrupted the hopes and aspirations of the coming 10 years are to restore political stability, to keep the democratic process unimpeded at all stages, to ensure good governance and transparency and accountability at all levels and to forge an issue-based national consensus. It is necessary to ensure medical facilities, safe water and proper sewage system. Dwelling houses should be built in the towns and villages in a planned fashion. National policy for the improvement of the environment is desperately needed. Extensive lobbying is necessary for international assistance for sustainable development. For this the developing countries should put pressure on the advanced nations. Difference in the standards of education should be removed. Moral education should be included in the curriculum. Educational institutions should be freed from terrorism.

The measures necessary to materialise these hopes and aspirations are: powerful local government structure, end to red tapism, more budget allocation to health sector, increase in the use of surface water, ensuring safe drinking water and sewerage system in the slum areas, ensuring earthquake-resistant construction of buildings in quake-prone Sylhet, increasing budget allocation for the improvement of the

Immediate tasks at hand

The measures necessary to materialise these hopes and aspirations are: powerful local government structure, end to red tapism, more budget allocation to health sector, increase in the use of surface water, ensuring safe drinking water and sewerage system in the slum areas, ensuring earthquake-resistant construction of buildings in quake-prone Sylhet, increasing budget allocation for the improvement of the environment, rejecting unplanned foreign assistance, careful scrutiny prior to accepting foreign assistance, introduction of one-stop service to attract investment by expatriate Bangladeshis, and formulation of short-, medium- and long term-plans for development.

environment, rejecting unplanned foreign assistance, careful scrutiny prior to accepting foreign assistance, introduction of one-stop service to attract investment by expatriate Bangladeshis, and formulation of short-, medium- and long term-plans for development.

Report of the 'Preservation of natural resources group'

The report of the group on preservation of natural resources was placed by Enamul Kabir, Sylhet representative of the Ekushey Television.

According to the assessment of this group there has been little success in the last few years in preserving natural resources. Coordination in this field is markedly lacking. There are faults in the management of hills, mounds and forests and the laws relating to them. Steps to preserve bio-diversity are few and far between. There has been no success in protecting natural water bodies like *haors* and *baors*. There are rules to check industrial pollution but they are not enforced. There is complete failure in checking air pollution. Excessive quantity of stones is being quarried by taking advantage of the non-enforcement and weakness of government regulations. Hills are being razed. Management of safe and potable water has failed. Efforts to enforce strict management have not succeeded appreciably.

The major steps in the next 10 years to improve the existing situation is the making of regional and integrated rules and regulations for land management based on the differences in the types of soil. Laws on the management of hills, mounds and forests should be freed from defects and bans should be strictly enforced. The navigability of the rivers and canals should be increased by dredging. The almost extinct species of fish should be provided scope for regeneration. We want an undegraded environment and pure air. We want arsenic-free water. We want a standard and effective sewerage system.

In order to materialise the above hopes and aspirations it is necessary to get the opinions of the people concerned, especially the farmers of each locality. The land records and survey system should be simplified and made corruption-free. It is necessary to increase people's awareness for protecting hills, mounds and forests. Application of chemical fertilisers and pesticides should be discouraged. Integrated pest management

system and biological control should be popularised. To increase the navigability of the rivers an adequate quantum of water should be ensured from the neighbouring countries by maintaining good relations with them. Industrial wastes should be recycled into resources. Environmental engineers should be associated with the management of industrial pollution. The recent government initiative to check air pollution should be strictly enforced. Plying of defective and decrepit vehicles should be prohibited. The emission of poisonous smoke by industries, factories and vehicles should of course be prevented or controlled. Priority should be given to protection of the environment in stone quarrying. Cutting of hills and mounds should be stopped completely. Ponds can be dug on *khas* land in each union. The irrigation system should be improved. Plans should be formulated in consultation with those who are the possessors of resources, and the plans prepared to meet their needs should be implemented through them.

Excavate rivers and canals

A local political leader called the attention of all, including the government and planners, to three important subjects. First, unplanned building of roads in

Let the aboriginals retain own lifestyle

People should be motivated not to cut hills and mounds to meet the demand for earth. There should be proper directives as to how the people's need for earth is to be met. He thinks that the rivers are being filled up by alluvial siltation. If there is any need for earth, the rivers and canals in this condition can be dredged instead of cutting down hills and mounds. This will enable us to have a navigable river system. On the other hand, the locality will be saved from the environmental disaster caused by razing of hills and mounds.

The aboriginal people living in the hilly areas have their own methods of protecting forests. They have a philosophy of life that is in tune with Nature. There is danger of environmental disaster if their life-style is subject to unwarranted interference. Since they too are members of our society, there should not be any unplanned interference. The government should formulate rules in such regard and they should be strictly implemented.

the haor area and absence of adequate provision of drainage (bridges and culverts) have caused untimely floods during the last 30 years. As a result the crops of farmers get inundated. Such unplanned roads should be identified and adequate drainage arrangement should be made.

Secondly, people should be motivated not to cut hills and mounds to meet the demand for earth. There should be proper directives as to how the people's need for earth is to be met. He thinks that the rivers are being filled up by alluvial siltation. If there is any need for earth, the rivers and canals in this condition can be dredged instead of cutting down hills and mounds. This will enable us to have a navigable river system. On the other hand, the locality will be saved from the environmental disaster caused by razing of hills and mounds.

Thirdly, the aboriginal people living in the hilly areas have their own methods of protecting forests. They have a philosophy of life that is in tune with Nature. There is danger of environmental disaster if their life-style is subject to unwarranted interference. Since they too are members of our society, there should not be any unplanned interference. The government should formulate rules in such regard and they should be strictly implemented.

Report of the 'Activation of the role of the professions and organisations' group

Deputy Director of BRDTI Shamsul Islam submitted the report of the group on the activation of the role of the professions and organisations.

In the assessment of this group, some success has been achieved in the last 10 years with regard to the role of the professions and organisations. Women, whether in the villages or in the towns, are much more conscious today than before. Many of them have become organised. The rate of literacy among women is increasing. The women perform better than their male classmates in the examinations. Financial ability of women is increasing due to the programme of small credit in various professions. At the same time the rate of women's empowerment is also increasing day by day, even though slowly. On the other hand security of women has decreased. In many fields the inequality of wages for men and women still persists.

Where a male worker is paid 60 takas in certain instances, a woman is paid 40 takas for the same work. In some professions women are still lagging behind. There is no organisation to put forward the demands of the tea workers. Though the representation of women in the local government system has increased, the real power belongs to men.

The hopes and aspirations for the next 10 years to improve the existing situation are: giving title of *khas* land to the aboriginals, increase of daily wage of tea workers to Tk. 36, protecting the social rights of women by ensuring application of family laws, integration of women and aboriginals in the mainstream of development and enforcement of laws relating to the environment.

The measures to materialise those hopes and aspirations are: to increase the rate of literacy, to increase the degree of people's awareness, to strengthen the role of the local government, to promote the active role of the women and aboriginals, to stop infrastructural development on cultivable land, to increase foreign investment, to give workers facilities according to the ILO convention, and to include aboriginal tribes in organisational activities.

Integration of protection and development is the sustainable development

The chief guest of the concluding session, Sabihuddin Ahmed, said there is a contradiction between environmental protection and development, but integration of protection and development is sustainable development. This development is not possible by fighting against Nature and without the active participation of the people.

He said that at one time people used to drink water from ponds after boiling it. Then the tubewells were introduced as a

People matter most

It has now become clear that sustainable development will depend upon the active participation of the people at the grassroots level. He told the local participants that they have spontaneously, and in a very short time, successfully accomplished the complex task of popular counsel. This spontaneity is very essential.

source of safe water. Now arsenic has come and proved that tubewells are becoming death traps for us. We probably could not foresee what the fate of tubewells would be. Mentioning the ban on use and marketing of polythene bags, he said that the people have supported the move. "We have learnt one lesson from this - the people of Bangladesh have become very conscious. People are also conscious of the environmental problems. Previously polythene bags used to be given free in Dhaka, but now people are buying paper bags and gunny bags. They are facing inconvenience, yet they have welcomed this step."

Sustainable development depends on active participation of people

FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury said that it has now become clear that sustainable development will depend upon the active participation of the people at the grassroots level. He told the local participants that they have spontaneously, and in a very short time, successfully accomplished the complex task of popular counsel. This spontaneity is very essential. Plans devised by internationally renowned economists could not be implemented in this country because there was no active participation of the people. If a person has the feeling that 'I am the author of this programme, I have prepared this plan, I am inseparably united with the programme', then he will treat every problem of the locality as his own problem. He will then wish for the success of the programme from the core of his heart, from his own belief and from his own sense of commitment. The man will then be sincere in materialising his own dreams.

He said that side by side with their positive suggestions, the local participants through their criticism have tried to give direction to the government and the State. The national report will incorporate these suggestions and recommendations. It will be the report of the people at the grassroots level.

Environment, if ignored, will not spare us

Dhaka University professor, Dr. Ahmed Kamal, said, "This consultation conference is the fruit of the failure of the development experts. At one time the development experts

used to think that they know everything about development. What do the ordinary people know of development? We shall deliver development. Development will be achieved through our exclusive efforts. Later they would realise that their sort of development is not benefiting the people in any way. If we delve into the history of development of the Kaptai lake, we will be able to understand how the development programme, formulated and implemented without consulting the people for whose benefit it was intended, without associating them with it, can be disastrous."

History professor Dr. Kamal, citing the history of ancient civilisations, said that these civilisations grew up on the banks of rivers. But when men gradually degraded their relationship with the rivers, deviated from the policy of cohabitation with the rivers, then their civilisation gradually declined and was destroyed. Men became victims of desertification. In the same way, if we do not try to understand the environment, if we do not try to utilise it in a friendly way, the environment will not spare us. This Bangladesh is a land of soil, water and people. If we will fail to integrate these three factors, development will not be of any use to us. Another name of the Padma is Kirtinasha. Many of our glorious achievements have been engulfed by the Padma because we did not try to understand the real nature of the river. That is why we should try to understand the mood of the rivers whose banks we inhabit. We must try to understand why the river suddenly becomes angry, and how far we ourselves are responsible for it. If we leave this task of understanding to others then the river will one day engulf us.

Let not this be the citizens' last say

On the People's Consultation workshop , Dr. Ahmed Kamal said that let this not be the citizens' last say. The responsibility of the development experts is to keep uninterrupted the process of taking constructive suggestions from the people at the grassroots level for genuine sustainable development work. People will think about whatever touches life every day, whatever influences life, whatever is responsible for the success or failure in life, and will talk about these things with 10 other people and will then give their opinion on the issue. That is how the consciousness of the civil society is formed. This process

will help us to move forward to development designed for people's welfare. Nobody will deliver such a development on a platter. We ourselves will have to do it.

Dr. Mahfuzul Haq said it is clear from the opinions expressed at the workshop that negative aspects of the past have not made anyone pessimistic.

District administrator of Moulavibazar M. Mokhlesur Rahman said the brick fields and sawmills are exhausting the forest resources, especially trees. Of the 192 sawmills in the country, 92 are operating in Moulavibazar. This will make it clear how serious is the problem of forest depletion in this district. The sawmills are surviving on just three papers. These are a certificate of the Department of Environment and papers relating to VAT and tax. Now self-assessment has been introduced. Where tax should be 10/20 lakh takas, they are getting away by paying only taka one lakh under self-assessment. Another matter is to know whether ground rent is being paid at commercial rates. If all these things are not properly maintained then a brickfield can be fined only taka 50 thousand. A magistrate of an ordinary mobile court can impose a fine up to only taka 10 thousand. Only if the District Magistrate accompanies the mobile court can he can impose a fine of taka 50 thousand. But it is not possible for him to go everywhere at all times. How can things be run then? He called for necessary amendments to the concerned laws in this regard.

SEMP Coordinator Dr. Babar Kabir called for cooperation of the local people and groups in future programmes of the government.

See off salinity snarl



Photo: Shafiuddin Ahmed Bit

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See off salinity snarl

By Shahidul Islam Chowdhury

A large number of people joined the Khulna workshop, as in other divisional headquarters of the country, to record their views for the national assessment report for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The workshop was held on 28 February, 2002.

The daylong workshop was jointly organised by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB), Khulna divisional administration and local civil society bodies with assistance from the UNDP. It was held at the conference hall of a local hotel.

The special feature of this south-western coastal region of the country is that it includes the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, numerous rivers, natural water bodies (beels) and plains that are regularly washed by the Bay of Bengal. This region suffers from a growing salinity problem caused by shrimp cultivation and intrusion of saline water from the sea.

More than 100 people representing different political parties, professional bodies, trade organisations, teachers, officials of different government departments, professionals, women, NGOs, journalists, farmers, shrimp cultivators, entrepreneurs, bawalis

Bitter reality

The Bhairab river is drying up. Previously salt water used to intrude up to 30 miles into the mainland, but now it is penetrating up to 200 miles, destroying the industries and threatening the croplands with salinity. This salinity problem has discouraged investment in the region, he pointed out. Fresh water for the Khulna power plant has to be carried by barge from Jessore, causing a considerable rise in the cost of production. If the current through the rivers is not strong, salt water will gradually intrude further inland and destroy more cultivable land.

(traditional group of honey collectors), students and people at the grassroots level took part in the workshop and expressed their opinions freely.

Inaugural session

The inaugural session was presided over by Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, chairman of the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB). Ashraf Hussain, Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad, was the chief guest. Professor Ainun Nishat, Bangladesh representative of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and Monwar Islam, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, explained the background of the workshop. Treasurer of the Khulna University Prof. Mazharul Islam, Deputy Commissioner of Khulna Mohammad Restadul Islam and president of Khulna Press Club Ferdous Ali spoke at the inaugural session.

Conservation impossible without poverty eradication

National Parliament Whip Ashraf Hussain in his address observed that the countries, which were very vocal at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and Beijing Conference on Women's Issues, themselves have been creating many problems. He said that environmental situation in Bangladesh was quite good in earlier days, but it is now precarious. Ganges water is being diverted and taken away by India. Sources of the rivers are being closed. The Bhairab river is drying up. Previously salt water used to intrude up to 30 miles into the mainland, but now it is penetrating up to 200 miles, destroying the industries and threatening the croplands with salinity. This salinity problem has discouraged investment in the region, he pointed out. Fresh water for the Khulna power plant has to be carried by barge from Jessore, causing a considerable rise in the cost of production. If the current through the rivers is not strong, salt water will gradually intrude further inland and destroy more cultivable land. He observed that if the international community does not put pressure on India to allow normal flow of water through the common rivers, the purpose of such world conferences like the WSSD would be defeated. Pointing at the problems of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, he said some quarters, for political reasons, are compromising with those who are destroying the environment.

The Whip pointed out that people lack perception and sense of direction. Poor farmers are not in a position to educate their children. Most of them do not even properly understand that education is necessary. A poor man only understands that if he catches shrimp fry he will be able to eat. He does not have the time to think whether his action is destroying fry of numerous other species of fish and drastically reducing the nation's piscine population. He further pointed out that what were being said in the name of protecting the environment and development have little link with on-the-ground reality. Rivers are being encroached upon, slums are springing up everywhere but nobody is there to prevent such actions.

He said that environmental protection would not be possible without eradication of poverty. On the one hand, poverty eradication is being talked about, while on the other, the number of poor people is increasing day by day. The urban rich raid the rural areas, buying up hundreds of acres of land in the name of agro-industries and taking lease of the rivers and canals in the name of pisciculture. As a result, employment opportunities for the poor people are decreasing. Besides, the law and order situation is deteriorating. If such a situation persists, he said, it will not be possible to protect the environment despite all our attempts.

Whip Ashraf Hussain pointed out those who are now loudly advocating ban of polythene had themselves introduced polythene. On the other hand, they are not urging people to use paper or jute bags. He said that those who talk of globalisation today have kept the unemployment problem alive while trying to appease us by doling

The chain reaction

Environmental protection would not be possible without eradication of poverty. On the one hand, poverty eradication is being talked about, while on the other, the number of poor people is increasing day by day. The urban rich raid the rural areas, buying up hundreds of acres of land in the name of agro-industries and taking lease of the rivers and canals in the name of pisciculture. As a result, employment opportunities for the poor people are decreasing. Besides, the law and order situation is deteriorating. If such a situation persists, he said, it will not be possible to protect the environment despite all our attempts.

out some aid money. Big and powerful States often rebuke and compel us to do this or that. This is in fact an example of double standard and is the biggest impediment to poverty eradication and sustainable development. The truth is that the big States will not be able to solve our problems unless we ourselves properly identify our problems and try to solve them.

Bangladesh country representative of the International Union of Conservation of Nature and Environment (IUCN) Prof. Ainun Nishat said that Bangladesh needs the sort of development that will last long and be sustainable. Referring to the earlier World Earth Summit and World Women Conference, he said that those meetings were held to change the condition of the people, but yet it has not been possible to eradicate poverty.

Quamrul Islam Chowdhury pointed out that many problems now being suffered by the poor nations like Bangladesh were created by the developed world. "We are not the cause of most of these problems, but are their victims," he said, lamenting that the poor nations now have to seek ways for mitigation of the problems caused by the developed world.

Monwar Islam said the main purpose of a plan is thwarted if the opinion of those for whom the plan is intended is not taken into account. Development is taking place, but if it is not sustainable, if it does not bring people's welfare, then such development becomes meaningless. Therefore, all of us must come forward to make development works fruitful. Quoting a saying of venerable Lord Gautam Buddha, he said, "Do not kill a single animal, do not kill a single tree".

Restadul Islam Mohammad, Deputy Commissioner of Khulna, said that there are geological and geophysical differences between regions of the same country. There are differences also in the lifestyles of the people. That is why region-based planning is necessary, he stressed, pointing out that development planning for the Rajshahi region should not be similar to that for the Khulna region. Mr. Islam pointed out how difficult it is to achieve uplift in a developing country like Bangladesh. He said that development planning should be designed in a way that does not harm the environment, and

consequently, our posterity. For sustainable development the country should take up programmes of poverty eradication, keeping in view the environment aspects.

Working session

After the inaugural session, the participants at the workshop were divided into three groups for discussions and consultation on issues related to environment and sustainable development. The issue-based groups were: 1) socio-economic, 2) preservation and management of natural resources, 3) role of the professions and organisations.

FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury acted as the facilitator of the 'socio-economic group'. The topics covered by this group were: poverty, growth, employment, improvement of public health, durable housing, environmental and development issues in policy planning, international assistance for sustainable development, process of sustainable development and decision making.

Dr. Ainun Nishat acted as the facilitator of the group that tackled the issues on 'preservation and management of natural resources'. The topics of discussion of this group were: sustainable management of soil resources, conservation of forests including the Sundarbans, conservation of agriculture and bio-diversity, management of rivers and water bodies like beels and haors, curbing industrial pollution, waste management, controlling air and water pollution, shrimp cultivation, salinity, management of saline and fresh water, supply of safe water, management of solid wastes and sewerage system.

Monwar Islam acted as the facilitator of the group that addressed the 'role of the professions and organisations'. Topics of discussion of this group were: role of the women, children and youth in sustainable development, uplift of Bawalis and other aboriginal groups, strengthening the role of the NGOs and various other organisations, role of the trade unions, meaningful participation of expatriates

Meaningful

Development is taking place, but if it is not sustainable, if it does not bring people's welfare, then such development becomes meaningless. Therefore, all of us must come forward to make development works fruitful.

in national development, strengthening the system of local government, increasing the role of science and technology, and role of the farmers and shrimp cultivators.

Besides, the three groups also focused on different and related topics like education and public awareness, cooperation of the mass media, development research, financial assistance in the local, national and international fields and possible programmes for the future. All the three groups submitted their respective reports at the concluding session.

Immediate survey of bio-diversity needed

Conducting the discussion of the group on 'preservation and management of natural resources', Dr. Ainun Nishat said there have been no forceful steps in implementing the principles and the declaration of the Rio Earth Summit. There has been paucity of funds and, while the developed countries succeeded in implementing some of them, the poor nations were left in the lurch. Countries like Bangladesh were told, 'You do it yourselves.' But in reality the poor nations could do little.

Citing the arsenic problem, Dr. Nishat said we are not able to properly comprehend how serious the problem is. The instruments we use can measure only up to 100 ppm and not below. A tubewell that is safe today may have to be painted red after a few months. That is why testing of tubewells must be done repeatedly, he pointed out. But the big question is, 'Where do we have such resources or technology to do so?'

There has been a great increase in food production, Dr. Nishat said, but on the other hand there has been no monitoring to find out how the fertility of the soil was being reduced due to increased use of chemical fertilisers and rising salinity. Many medicinal herbs and plants are becoming extinct. There was a time when one could come across Chui-jhal (a kind of wild medicinal plant) and Satkara lemons in Sylhet. But they are virtually on the verge of total extinction, he lamented. In fact all kinds of medicinal plants are vanishing. Those rare species of plants should be preserved. Australia requested Bangladesh to supply neem saplings and in turn we brought eucalyptus from there. He underlined the need for an immediate survey of the bio-diversity in the Sundarbans and for making a list of medicinal plants of the country.

The tale of a farmer

Devdas Mondol is a farmer in Ruprampur village under Dumuria upazila in Khulna district. From childhood he used to go to the fields with his father. He has been a farmer since he was studying in class IX. Now he is 50. The change in the agricultural pattern that the region underwent also brought about a change in his life pattern. He was one of the participants at the people's consultation workshop at Khulna and had the opportunity to share his experiences with the rest of them.

Devdas' home is in one part of Beel Dakatia. He owns only one acre of land. He said that at first the soil was good and fertile, but later the whole area became waterlogged. Trees and shrubs started dying because of salinity. No crops could be grown. Then the local people came forward to build dykes to prevent intrusion of saline water. Later, the government also came forward to strengthen those dykes to fend off increasing salinity.

He informed the workshop that no paddy could be grown on his land for the last 14 years. His family, during that period, became dependent on fishing in the waterlogged land. Of late, he said, crops were being grown again. Paddy is being grown during the dry season. He gets about 40 maunds of paddy in a year, which meets the food needs of his family. Fishes are caught during the rainy season. Father and son - the two of them together - catch fish worth Taka 20 thousand each monsoon, which, he said, helps in meeting the family's cash expenses.

He said previously the same land used to yield 20 maunds of paddy. In those days, some local varieties of paddy like

Look at soil fertility

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Birpala (Aman), Kumri, Khesal, etc. were grown. But nowadays these varieties are not available and Irri-boro varieties have taken their place. Devdas said these varieties have higher yields, but the cost of fertilizers and pesticides is higher and that is why production expenses are increasing every year. The price of oil to run (irrigation) pumps is also high, he pointed out.

This elderly farmer said that previously the villagers did not use fertilisers or pesticides in their fields, but nowadays no crops can be grown without them. However, as a result of using those chemical fertilizers and pesticides, the fertility of the soil has been decreasing day by day.

Another point Devdas mentioned at the workshop was that previously there was no hospital in the locality, but now there is a government hospital and a doctor. A few medicines are available at the hospital, but in most cases they have to be bought from outside shops. He also reported increasing extortion and mastani in the area by a group of people who enjoy the patronage of the local political leaders.

What the women said

Quite a few women came to the workshop from far-flung areas of Khulna division. Among them were Gurudasi Bairagi of Fetalbunga village under Batiaghata upazila, Ashalata Dhali of Boyerdanga village and Sushama Rani Mistree of Banisanta village under Dakope upazila.

Elderly Gurudasi Bairagi said that though officially it is being said that cutting trees in the Sundarbans is banned, tree cutting on the same scale is going on unabated. Land has been destroyed by salinity caused by shrimp farms. Pasture for domestic animals is being drastically diminished and so the number of livestock is dwindling.

Sushama Rani Mistree said that no assessment is made of the work being done by women in the agricultural fields and poultry farms. The opportunity for women's education should be increased. Medicines should be cheap and easily available.

Ashalata Dhali said that women are being deprived of property. This should be stopped.

Concluding session : Reports by the three groups

The reports of the above three groups were presented at the concluding session. The report of the 'socio-economic group' was presented by Abdul Wazed, the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Jessore. According to this group, poverty has been reduced in the last decade and the growth rate has gone up. Employment has increased but progress in this field is very slow. The group wants to lift half of the people living below the poverty line above that line. The rate of growth should be 8 percent at the very minimum. There should be 15 million new jobs. Availability of small credit at lower interest and easy terms should be increased to attain this objective. This credit should be under government control.

Appropriate technology needed for public health

Significant improvement in the field of public health is continuing, but the arsenic problem has appeared as a huge, new threat. The arsenic problem should be speedily solved in the coming decade. Safe water supply should be ensured. Hundred per cent success is needed in sewerage and drainage, health care and public awareness. Appropriate technology should be devised and used to improve public health. Centrally organised system of safe water supply (through pipes) in the rural areas also, as in the urban areas, should be set up. Use of sanitary latrines should be made compulsory. Health care should be strengthened.

House building loans on easy terms

Not much progress has been made in

Accent on safe water supply system

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providing durable housing in the last decade. Policies of planned housing should be formulated and implemented to improve the situation. House building loans on easy terms should be advanced both in the urban and rural areas. Asrayan and ideal village projects should be strengthened with necessary improvements.

A major achievement of the last decade is the formulation of the national environmental plan. But region-based environmental and sustainable development should be ensured in any development planning. Planners should be more alert. The laws for the protection of the environment should be applied more stringently.

Democratic practice should bloom

During the last decade the democratic process in decision-making with regard to sustainable development has been strengthened. Democratic framework has been established. However, the progress of democratic practice and democratic culture is slow. Democracy should be further strengthened. Democratic practice should bloom. National consensus should be established in all decision-making processes.

The report of the 'preservation and management of natural resources' group was placed by Manik Saha, the Khulna representative of Ekushey Television (ETV) and the daily Sangbad. According to this group's evaluation no mentionable work has been done in the field of land management in the last 10 years. Most of the work done was useless. Most of the infrastructure like embankments, roads and houses has been built without any integrated and proper planning. As a result the problem waterlogging has been intensified. Land is being destroyed. No significant land reform has been done. The number of the landless has increased day by day and is still increasing. There is mismanagement and corruption in the distribution of khas land. It is necessary to draw up guidelines on land management to improve the situation. Land-use planning should be done by taking the characteristics of the land and water into consideration, but there should be an extensive survey before such guidelines and plans are formulated. How much and what kind of land for which sector is necessary should be determined. Awareness of the necessity

of planning before setting up infrastructure should be increased.

Human interference in the Sundarbans should be stopped

Regarding preservation of forests, including the Sundarbans, the group discussion revealed that social forestry has increased during the last decade. Popular awareness in this regard has also increased. Trees have been planted but bio-diversity has decreased. Moreover, trees and shrubs in the homesteads have decreased. For example, many useful trees like tal (palmyra), coconut, tamarind, and banyan have been much reduced in number. There has not been much improvement in management though the area of the Sundarbans has more or less remained intact. Bio-diversity of the forest has been reduced drastically. Harmful foreign trees should be avoided in expanding the forests and in increasing the number of trees and plants. People's participation in forest management should be ensured. Human interference in the Sundarbans should be stopped. Oil and gas exploration in the region should be prohibited. The Forest Act should be enforced strictly. More fruit-bearing trees and medicinal plants should be planted. Arrangement should be made to preserve rare species of trees. A complete list of the extant flora and fauna should be prepared. A survey of medicinal plants should be done by 2004 and a list prepared of all species of such plants and herbs. The number of natural preserves should be increased.

Think, and act locally

A major achievement of the last decade is the formulation of the national environmental plan. But region-based environmental and sustainable development should be ensured in any development planning. Planners should be more alert. The laws for the protection of the environment should be applied more stringently.

Use of chemical fertilisers and insecticides should be reduced

It was said by the discussants in the 'agriculture and preservation of bio-diversity' group, that agricultural production has increased significantly during the last decade. Pisciculture and poultry farming have increased.

The depredation of hybrid seeds and exotic fishes has increased

alarmingly. The local species of various life forms including crops and fishes are being lost. There is excessive use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides in farming, therefore the fertility of the soil has been reduced. The soil has been further damaged and bio-diversity reduced due to increase in salinity. The urban businessmen have destroyed the land by setting up shrimp enclosures. Pasture for domestic animals is being lost by hundreds of hectares every day, so the number of domestic animals is also plummeting down. Much land has become unfit for use due to waterlogging. Dependence on groundwater should be reduced in order to climb out of the above dismal situation. The collection and use of surface water have to be increased. It is necessary to increase the use of organic fertilizers and avoid use of chemical fertilizers. It is urgent to make integrated pest management and biological control effective in order to reduce the damaging effect of chemical insecticides. Crop diversification is necessary in farming. Crop rotation should be encouraged. Use of seeds that cannot be preserved should be discouraged. The existing agricultural extension service should be made more mass-oriented. Further improvement in the management of crop processing and marketing is necessary.

No interference with rivers

Rivers, beels and canals had been destroyed on a wide scale in the last decade. Sources of fresh water have been reduced, and the supply of fresh water is decreasing day by day as a result of increase in the arsenic, iron and salt content of the water. Wetlands are almost devoid of bio-diversity. As a result of India's unilateral construction of dams and other structures upstream of the common rivers and copious withdrawal of water, Bangladesh, especially the areas in Khulna under command of the Ganges, is being damaged severely. Flow of fresh water has been reduced, and salinity has increased. Natural flow of water in the rivers is being obstructed due to river training at the time of building bridges and embankments, and as a result many rivers are dying. Drainage of water is being obstructed due to unplanned construction of roads and landing stages.

For rapid improvement of the situation the normal flow of the rivers should be maintained through bilateral and international

dialogues. The rivers should be kept in 'working condition' at the local level too. Rivers should be kept under the possession of rivers only. Leasing of rivers and other such running water should be stopped. The water resources policy should be properly implemented. Catching of fish during the season of spawning and growth of fry should be prohibited. It should be kept in mind that rivers and canals are not shrunk or narrowed while widening bridges, embankments and culverts.

Padma barrage essential

The Padma barrage and other necessary projects should be implemented to increase the flow of fresh water in the Khulna area. Proper utilisation of water now coming through the Padma should be ensured. Integrated plans and projects should be adopted for excavation and deepening of rivers. The roadside ditches, canals and ponds should also be deepened to conserve more fresh water.

Eco-friendly waste management necessary

Industrial pollution and waste has increased in the last decade, but no steps are being taken to decrease pollution or manage wastes. There is no efficient and effective waste treatment plant. Domestic wastes, industrial wastes, clinical wastes, chemical wastes and all other kinds of wastes are being thrown on the land or into the rivers. As a result soil, water and air pollution has increased drastically.

The Department of Environment should be made more active and more accountable. Each industrial organisation should set up eco-friendly

People should be involved

There has not been much improvement in management though the area of the Sundarbans has more or less remained intact. Bio-diversity of the forest has been reduced drastically. Harmful foreign trees should be avoided in expanding the forests and in increasing the number of trees and plants. People's participation in forest management should be ensured. Human interference in the Sundarbans should be stopped. Oil and gas exploration in the region should be prohibited. The Forest Act should be enforced strictly. More fruit-bearing trees and medicinal plants should be planted.

Let's be sanitary-wise

Each industrial organisation should set up eco-friendly waste management systems. Separate arrangement should be made for management of chemical wastes. Production of organic fertilizers and bio-gas can be increased through management of solid wastes. Garbage should be made pollution-free before throwing it into the rivers. Throwing of waste from ships everywhere at Mongla and the Sundarbans should be stopped. Hanging latrines on rivers and canals and open latrines everywhere by the roadsides should be banned. Awareness of the need for sanitary drainage systems should be further increased.

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No atomic reactor near the Sundarbans, please!

In the last decade air pollution has substantially increased due

to the poison-laden smoke released by the industrial establishments, brick kilns and motorised vehicles. Plying of dilapidated vehicles whose prescribed life has expired must be banned to improve the situation. Use of CNG as fuel for vehicles should be increased. Gas should be used in brick kilns instead of firewood. The smoke belching chimneys of factories and brick kilns should be made higher, and, if possible, provided with suitable filters. Social forestry should be further expanded. A protest at the state level should be lodged against the Indian plan to set up an atomic reactor near the Sundarbans. Salinity in the soil has increased during the last decade in the Khulna region due to unplanned expansion of shrimp farms. The soil structure has been damaged and the Sundarbans is being harmed. Flora and fauna are being decimated. Bio-diversity is being lost due to wanton catching of fish fry. Land is being concentrated in the hands of the big owners of shrimp enclosures, and as a result the number of the landless has

increased. Unemployment has increased. The law and order situation has deteriorated. Social problems are surfacing in many places.

Prof. Mazharul Islam, treasurer of the Khulna University, submitted the report of the 'activation of the role of the professions and organisations' group. According to the opinion of this group the empowerment and awareness of women, youth and children have increased during the last decade but inequality between men and women remains as marked as before. In most cases women's labour is not properly evaluated. The contribution of women to agriculture and poultry farms has not been evaluated at all. Unemployment has increased, along with social instability. Scope for good education and health of women and children should be increased. Safe motherhood should be ensured. Inequality between men and women should be legally and socially eliminated. Ante-natal and post-natal health should be attended to. The scope of self-employment should be broadened by ensuring necessary assistance and loans without interest.

The role of the NGOs in development has increased, but their programmes are not coordinated. As a result much of the development work is overlapping. It is seen that more than one NGO is doing the same work in the same place or for the same people. The

Leave rivers alone

Rivers, beels and canals had been destroyed on a wide scale in the last decade. Sources of fresh water have been reduced, and the supply of fresh water is decreasing day by day as a result of increase in the arsenic, iron and salt content of the water. Wetlands are almost devoid of bio-diversity.

For rapid improvement of the situation the normal flow of the rivers should be maintained through bilateral and international dialogues. The rivers should be kept in 'working condition' at the local level too. Rivers should be kept under the possession of rivers only. Leasing of rivers and other such running water should be stopped. The water resources policy should be properly implemented. Catching of fish during the season of spawning and growth of fry should be prohibited. It should be kept in mind that rivers and canals are not shrunk or narrowed while widening bridges, embankments and culverts.

government is also doing the same work in many areas. On the other hand there are many places where no NGO is working, and even the government is absent. Besides, the NGOs have almost no accountability. Fake organisations are springing up in the name of NGOs. In many instances NGO programmes have become a business. Accountability of the NGOs should be ensured. Government control may be introduced on a limited scale if necessary. Fake NGOs should be identified and punished.

According to the reports of the above three groups the trend of development, education, popular awareness and mass media is good, but the progress of development research is not satisfactory. Such research is still very weak. The rate of literacy has increased, but with a few exceptions the standard of education in most cases has gone down. Inequality in the education field has increased. Expenses for education have also shot up. Scientific education is way below the world standard.

Commercialisation of education should be stopped. The standard of education must be upgraded. Research in this field should be expanded. Budgetary allocation should also be increased. The mass media should adopt special programmes to raise people's moral values. Indigenous initiative and finance for research should be encouraged.

Lift control on global movement of people

All the three groups have said that local, national and international cooperation is not satisfactory. International cooperation is especially scanty in the field of sustainable development. Such cooperation should be strengthened, but care should be taken so that the resources of our country are not appropriated by foreigners in the name of international cooperation. Priority should be given to protect the national interest in the globalisation process. Control on global movement of people, and not only of commodities, should be lifted. Usually the developed countries are not harmed by the developing and backward countries, so if the developing and undeveloped countries sustain losses due to the activities of the developed countries, they should be compensated. Collection and proper use of local and national resources should be ensured. Participation in international organisations and forums should be increased.

Self-reliant and pragmatic programmes needed

The chief guest of the concluding session, Narayanchandra Biswas, the Additional Divisional Commissioner of Khulna, said that we shall have to make do with whatever resources we have. We cannot extend the beggar's bowl again and again. It is undignified and dehumanising.

Mentioning the salinity problem in Satkhira, he said the area seems to be a desolate desert. It has neither any tree nor any grass. But neighbouring Meherpur district is full of greenery. Trees in great numbers have been planted in Meherpur to enable retention of groundwater. Surface water can also be retained easily. If Meherpur can be successful in this regard why cannot the other districts?

Dr. Ainun Nishat said that Bangladesh should make its presence felt in international circles. It should participate in and speak effectively in various international forums.

Quamrul Islam Chowdhury said that we should create a tradition of self-reliant sustainable development. It is not enough to formulate policies in this field - the policies should be implemented rigorously. Self-reliant and realistic programmes should be adopted.

Cut underground water use



Photo

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Cut underground water use

By Rezaul Karim

The third workshop at the divisional level to gather popular counsel from grassroots-level people to prepare the national assesment report for the coming World Summit on Sustainable Development was held at Rajshahi on 2 March, 2002. Representatives of local citizens of Rajshahi, which is threatened with desertification, frankly expressed their issue-based opinions and gave suggestions at this workshop entitled 'People's Consultation prior to the World Summit on Sustainable Development: National Assessment Report, Bangladesh'.

This daylong workshop was organised by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh, Rajshahi divisional administration and the local civil society in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The workshop was held in the auditorium of the Rajshahi tennis complex. More than a hundred people including local leaders of political parties, people's representatives, representatives of the trade organisations, teachers, officials of various government departments, professionals, women,

Back to good old days

Mayor of Rajshahi Mizanur Rahman Minu said that in 1657 the area that is now Bangladesh was known as a very prosperous place. The environment of this land was much better than that of many areas of the world. People had well designed houses, peaceful co-existence and access to vast tracts of forest. There were many ponds and vast rivers and beels well stocked with fish. "All these now seem to us like a dream. We must bring back the lost glory. We are facing disaster after disaster in almost every field because of exploitation by the foreign traders and our own failures. India has built a huge barrage on the Padma, only 42 km upstream from Rajshahi, and is depriving us of our due share of water. As a result, a natural disaster has engulfed the area."

NGO representatives, journalists, representatives of the Santal community and other tribes, members of women's organisations, farmers, students and grassroots-level people took part in the workshop.

Inaugural session

Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation Mizanur Rahman Minu, MP, was present at the inaugural session as the chief guest. Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi M. Shahjahan, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest Dr. Mahfuzul Huq, Coordinator of the Sustainable Environmental Management Programme Dr. Babar Kabir, Director of the Environment Directorate Mohammad Reazuddin and politbureau member of the Workers Party Fazle Hussain Badshah spoke at the session. Chairman of the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, presided over the inaugural session.

Mayor of Rajshahi Mizanur Rahman Minu said that in 1657 the area that is now Bangladesh was known as a very prosperous place. The environment of this land was much better than that of many areas of the world. People had well designed houses, peaceful co-existence and access to vast tracts of forest. The granary in each household used to be filled to the brim with grain, the sheds with cows and other domesticated animals. There were many ponds and vast rivers and beels well stocked with fish. "All these now seem to us like a dream. We must bring back the lost glory. We are facing disaster after disaster in almost every field because of exploitation by the foreign traders and our own failures. Much damage has been done to the environmental balance in Rajshahi area. India has built a huge barrage on the Padma, only 42 km upstream from Rajshahi, and is depriving us of our due share of water. As a result, a natural disaster has engulfed the area."

He said we have to make the country prosperous by the dint of our own labour, imagination, and planning. We may perhaps get a little advice from foreign specialists, but we must ourselves come forward with far-reaching plans to maintain environmental balance.

Mizanur Rahman Minu said the water we drink in this region is not only impure but is full of germs and arsenic. The severe water crisis is a serious threat to the lives of many millions of people. He called upon all concerned to formulate proper plans to solve the problems of the affected people. He said we not only want to have financial aid from abroad, we also want to extend cooperation to them, and want to have cooperation from them. This should be the main theme of the World Summit.

Earlier when presiding over the session, Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, discussed the perspective and background of the workshop and said, "This is not a run of the mill workshop. The Earth Summit was held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro with the intention of finding out ways and means to bring prosperity to the people and at the same time keeping the environment of the whole world unimpaired. What progress has been achieved, and the successes and failures in the 10 years since that Summit, have to be identified before the follow-up Summit that will be held in August, 2002 in Johannesburg in South Africa to draw up a programme. The conference this time has been named World Summit Conference on Sustainable

Things that need to be done

The hopes and aspirations of the next 10 years to keep this trend unimpeded are: poverty to be further reduced by 25 per cent; ensuring of political stability and rule of law; safe drinking water and proper sewerage/drainage system to be ensured for all; medical treatment facilities should be reached to people's doorsteps; there should be further expansion of public health education; all kinds of pollution must be resisted; steps should be taken to obtain regional and international cooperation, especially technical cooperation, in the light of sustainable development; suitable changes should be brought about in the local government structure; people's participation in sustainable development should be increased; universal primary education must be provided by 2012; free education up to secondary level should be arranged; role of the mass media should be increased in the field of education; uniform standard of science-based education should be ensured; and each educational institution should have computers and Internet connection.

Development. Heads of states and governments will take part in the conference. Bangladesh will be represented there by a highest-level delegation, led probably by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. After discussing the trend of progress and regression in the last 10 years, the outline of what programme of action can be adopted to materialise the hopes and aspirations of sustainable development for the next 10 years will be spelled out there. The Ministry of Environment and Forest is preparing a report to be presented at that Summit. This workshop is being held so that the report may reflect the opinions of the people living in the rural areas, of the common people, of those who work in the fields, so that our head of government can take with her to Johannesburg their thoughts on the future."

Mohammad Reazuddin said the coming Summit against the background of environmental disasters throughout the world in the last decade is very important. Development will be sustainable only if the environment is kept in consideration during planning.

Working session- issue-based popular counsel

After inauguration the participants at the workshop divided themselves into three issue-based groups and began a session of popular counsel on particular topics. The issue-based groups were: soci-economic, protection and management of natural resources and activation of the role of professions and organisations.

FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury acted as the facilitator of the 'socio-economic group'. The topics of discussion of this group were poverty, growth, employment, public health, development, durable housing, ensuring the importance of environmental considerations in policy formulation, international cooperation in sustainable development, sustainable development and decision-making process.

Director of the Department of Environment Mohammad Reazuddin acted as the facilitator of the 'protection and management of natural resources' group. The topics of discussion of this group were sustainable land management,

conservation of forests, conservation of agriculture and biodiversity, management of rivers, haors and beels, prevention of desertification and drought, management of solid waste and sewerage/drainage.

Deputy secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Dr. Mahfuzul Huq, acted as the facilitator of the 'activation of the role of the professions and organisations group'. The topics of discussion of this group were the role of women, children and youth in sustainable development, uplift of the tribal people, strengthening the role of NGOs and other organisations, role of the workers and trade unions in development, strengthening the local government system, and strengthening the roles of scientist and technologists and farmers.

Topics related to their own issues such as 'education and mass awareness, cooperation of the mass media, development research, economic cooperation at the local, national and international levels and what sort of programme is desirable in the future', etc. also featured in discussions of all the three groups. All the groups later submitted their reports at the concluding sessions.

Concluding session

FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury presided over this session. The Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi, Md. Shahjahan, was present as the chief guest.

Three separate reports of the open discussion of the three groups were presented in this session.

Report of the socio-economic group

The report of the socio-economic group was presented by Ayezuddin Ahmed, ADC of

Long-term, easy loans needed

On the question 'what sort of programme do we want in future', the report said eco-friendly development programme is essential. Long-term loans at low interest and easy terms should be taken from the international organisations for sustainable development. Participation of the deprived people in development programmes should be ensured. All these programmes should be unified, and there should be accountability on every level.

Pabna. According to the evaluation of this group the success of programmes adopted during the last 10 years on poverty employment and growth is only 20%, which is not at all up to expectation. The over-all awareness of public health has increased. Average life expectancy has increased. The rate of mother and child mortality has decreased. The success of the EPI programme gives grounds for hope. There is some success in provision of durable housing. Urbanisation has spread. Rules for protection of the environment have been framed. There is significant increase in mass awareness of the need for the protection of the environment. There are some successes in international cooperation for sustainable development. Some advance has been made in increasing mass awareness of other important issues.

The hopes and aspirations of the next 10 years to keep this trend unimpeded are: poverty to be further reduced by 25 per cent; ensuring of political stability and rule of law; safe drinking water and proper sewerage/drainage system to be ensured for all; medical treatment facilities should be reached to people's doorsteps; there should be further expansion of public health education; healthy housing for all in the rural and urban areas should be ensured; all kinds of pollution must be resisted; steps should be taken to obtain regional and international cooperation, especially technical cooperation, in the light of sustainable development; suitable changes should be brought about in the local government structure; people's participation in sustainable development should be increased; universal primary education must be provided by 2012; free education up to secondary level should be arranged; role of the mass media should be increased in the field of education; uniform standard of science-based education should be ensured; and each educational institution should have computers and Internet connection.

The following strategy is necessary to materialise the above hopes and aspirations: the rate of population growth should be reduced further; local and foreign investment should be increased; poverty alleviation should be allocated 45% of the development budget and local government institutions should be directly associated with the programme, and the target population should be involved in its implementation; the culture of democratic development should be introduced; a nation-

wide plan should be adopted and implemented to protect agricultural production from the ravages of floods and droughts; setting up of agri-based industries should be encouraged; there should be firm political commitment to poverty alleviation, the credit programme associated with poverty alleviation should be strengthened, and the rate of interest for such credit should be reduced; training in skill development should be increased; the budget for the health sector should be increased; supply of arsenic-free water should be ensured; mass awareness on HIV should be increased; a national land plan should be prepared; cheap housing with the help of new technology should be arranged; planned housing should be ensured in the rural and urban areas; effective steps should be taken to manage liquid, gaseous and solid waste; efforts should be made to reduce air, water and sound pollution; the tree planting programme should be expanded; mills and factories should have waste treatment arrangements; a proper plan should be prepared for accepting international corporation by giving priority to national interest; emphasis should be put on technology transfer; the process of decision making on a local basis should be developed; science- and technology-based education system should be introduced, educational infrastructure should be expanded, and education should be spread wider through use of the mass media and video conferencing; the budget for development research should be increased; local resources should be increased; savings should be increased; and national income should be further increased.

Not all is lost

Some progress is being made in the case of information technology. A silent revolution is taking place in agriculture and poultry farming. Cultivation of high yielding varieties is increasing. Development of the Barind tract is taking place. Arsenic has been detected in underground water and many tubewells have been identified as unsafe, though lakhs of them have yet to be tested.

On the question 'what sort of programme do we want in future', the report said eco-friendly development programme is essential. Long-term loans at low interest and easy terms should be taken from the international organisations for sustainable

development. Participation of the deprived people in development programmes should be ensured. All these programmes should be unified, and there should be accountability on every level.

Report of the 'Natural resources conservation group'

Matruha K. Bela, executive director, Mahila Mongal and A.N.M. Salah, Rajshahi University, presented the report of the 'conservation of natural resources group'. Not enough success has been achieved in last 10 years in conserving natural resources, according to the evaluation of this group. Proper use of land is not being made. Land is being widely damaged due to setting up of brick kilns and salinity caused by shrimp farming. No measure has been taken against soil erosion. Management of chars (river islands that are caused by changes in the flow) has not been effective. The tribal people are being deprived of their right to land. Vested property is not being properly utilised. Measures to conserve bio-diversity are few and not properly implemented. No step has been taken to protect natural water reservoirs like rivers, haors and baors. Industrial and air and water pollution are going on unabated. Management of potable water remains unsuccessful.

The following measures should be taken in the next 10 years to improve the existing situation: an integrated land management system based on regions should be developed; the Land Act should be amended; afforestation programmes on the lines of EIE should be adopted; there should be popular support for effective enforcement of the Forest Protection Act; the national forest policy should be properly implemented; at first institutional reorganisation should be carried out to ensure better forest management; conservation of medicinal plants is essential; unplanned afforestation should be stopped; steps should be taken to protect the endangered or the almost extinct species of flora and fauna; 'reserve areas' to protect bio-diversity should be increased; care should be taken in using hybrid seeds; use of organic fertiliser and pesticides should be increased by reducing the use of chemical fertilisers and insecticides; integrated pest management (IPM) system should be strengthened; there should be much more diversification of crops; drought-tolerant trees and crops should be evolved and their cultivation popularised; well harmonised use of land and

water should be ensured; genuine ownership of land should be determined to end disputes, especially over ownership of chars; normal flow of rivers should be ensured; regional cooperation is essential in implementing the international riparian laws in this region; it should be ensured that neighbouring countries abide by those laws; jalmohal lease of canals, beels and haors should be stopped; silted up ponds, rivers and canals should be re-excavated; there should be government control and law on the use of underground water; river water should be purified

Amend the Land Act

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and supplied as potable water in the urban areas; dependence on underground water for irrigation should be reduced and use of surface water must be increased; the Padma barrage project should be implemented at the same time with the Padma bridge; the north Rajshahi irrigation project should be implemented soon; steps should be taken against pollution by sugar and paper mills and distilleries; scientific management and economic use of waste should be increased; there should be sanitary sewerage/drainage system; mass awareness should not be confined to towns but should be spread to the villages; the mass media should produce and broadcast developmental and awareness-increasing programmes in greater numbers; information technology education should be reached to the grassroots level; the tribal people should be enabled to enjoy all facilities by expanding education and cultural activities in their own language; a fully-fledged television centre should be started at Rajshahi; opinions on the environment should be sought from people at the grassroots level; investment in sustainable development in the northern region should be increased; training on eco-friendly agricultural system should be arranged; and economic assistance should be provided to set up agro-based EPZs.

Report of the 'activation of the role of the professions and organisations group'

Rajab Ali, organising secretary, Central Kishore Kurir Mela, Rajshahi, presented the report of the 'activation of the role of the professions and organisations group'. There has been some advance made by women, according to the evaluation by this group, but no advance has been made by children and youth. Opportunities for women to be directly elected to local government bodies have been created. Women's participation in non-governmental development activities and small credit projects has somewhat increased. Women's education has advanced. A law against Women and child oppression has been enacted. In the case of children, immunisation programme, birth-registration and compulsory education have been arranged. Drug addiction among the youth has increased alarmingly. Landlessness among the tribal people has increased, and the problem of ownership of their land has not been solved. Tribal people have not been given constitutional recognition. In certain areas oppression on them has increased. However, there has been some advance in their education. Some advance in setting up developmental organisations including NGOs is also evident. However, many developmental agencies and NGOs have been commercialised, and quite a few of them have been politicised. The opportunities of employment and poverty alleviation are increasing. The rate of adult literacy has increased. Labour unrest has increased, but the trade unions have not been able to play a satisfactory role. No noticeable progress in strengthening the local government system has been made. The only progress is the election of women through direct voting. The local government system has not been made effective. Development in the field of science and technology is not up to the expectation. Some progress is being made in the case of information technology. A silent revolution is taking place in agriculture and poultry farming. Cultivation of high yielding varieties is increasing. Development of the Barind tract is taking place. Arsenic has been detected in underground water and many tubewells have been identified as unsafe, though lakhs of them have yet to be tested.

The following steps have to be taken in the next decade to ensure improvement of the present situation: equal rights of

women in all fields must be ensured; steps should be taken for direct election to the 63 reserved women's seats in Parliament; child labour and child smuggling should be stopped; use of children in political activities should be stopped; opportunities of employment for trained youth should be increased; the credit system in banking should be simplified; the youth should be associated with socio-economic development on a greater scale; budget allocation for poverty eradication, education and women's development should be increased; skill improvement courses for employment abroad should be arranged; proper utilisation of the money remitted by expatriates should be ensured; the tribal people should be given constitutional recognition and a Land Commission should be set up to solve the problem of their land ownership; education in one subject in their own language up to the secondary level should be arranged; oppression of tribal people should be stopped; measures should be taken for the development of tribal culture; there should be five reserved seats for tribal representatives in the the Jatiya Sangsad; discriminatory laws should be abrogated and facilitative laws should be enacted; local NGOs should be strengthened and given priority in the local development activities; accountability of the NGOs and their non-involvement in party politics should be ensured; trade unionism should be strengthened, but

Priorities ahead

Well harmonised use of land and water should be ensured; genuine ownership of land should be determined to end disputes, especially over ownership of chars; normal flow of rivers should be ensured; regional cooperation is essential in implementing the international riparian laws in this region; it should be ensured that neighbouring countries abide by those laws; jalmohal lease of canals, beels and haors should be stopped; silted up ponds, rivers and canals should be re-excavated; there should be government control and law on the use of underground water; river water should be purified and supplied as potable water in the urban areas; dependence on underground water for irrigation should be reduced and use of surface water must be increased; the Padma barrage project should be implemented at the same time with the Padma bridge; the north Rajshahi irrigation project should be implemented soon.

transparency and accountability of the trade unions should be ensured, and a democratic atmosphere should be maintained in them; the powers and functions of women members in the local government system should be specified; there should be a strong four-tier local government system at village, union, upazila and district levels; there should be effective coordination between the central and local government systems; laboratory equipment and research facilities in schools, colleges and all educational institutions should be increased; the role of agriculture and farmers in development should be strengthened; farmers' participation in formulating development policies should be ensured; proper utilisation of indigenous resources should be ensured for reducing dependence on foreign aid; political stability must be ensured along with strict and correct application of laws.

Chart coastal ecology, economy

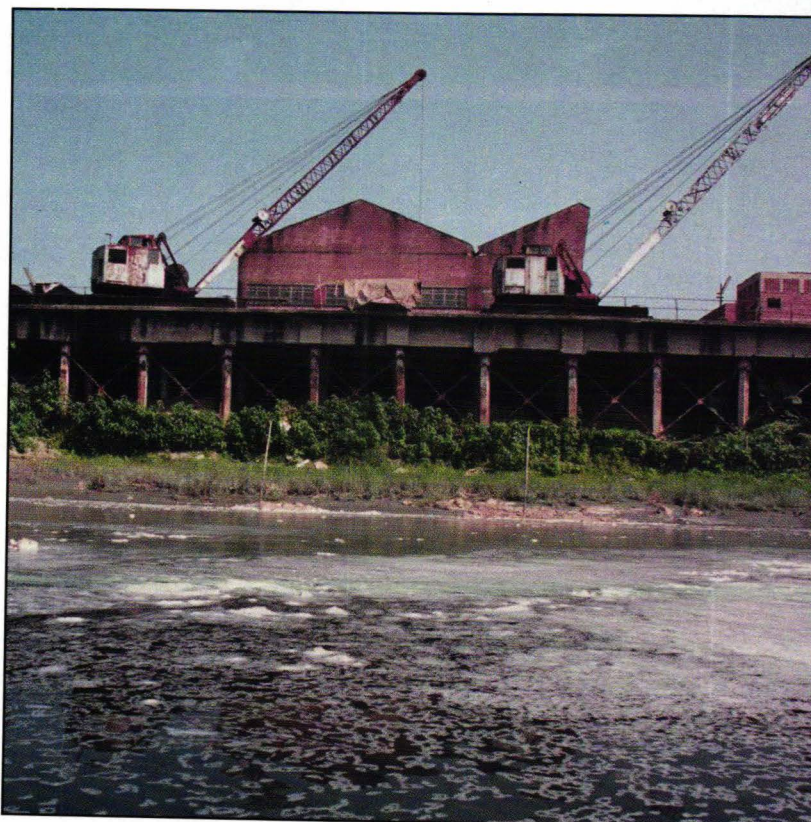


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Chart coastal ecology, economy

By Golam Mohiuddin Khan with Obaidul Kabir

The fourth people's consultation workshop preparatory to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was held at the port city of Chittagong on March 4, 2002. It was participated by government officials, representatives non-government organisations (NGO), professional groups, the civil society and people at the grass-roots level including tribal leaders. More than 150 people attended the day-long deliberation of the workshop which culminated in the adoption of a set of recommendations. Held at the auditorium of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the workshop was organised by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Chittagong divisional administration, Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

State Minister for Environment and Forest Jafrul Islam Chowdhury was chief guest at the inaugural session which was also attended by Director General of the Department of Environment Hedayetul Islam Chowdhury and senior vice-president of Chittagong Chamber S M Nurul Huq. At the working session that followed, the participants divided themselves into three groups and held detailed discussions on three different topics, viz. socio-economic issues, preservation and management of natural resources and the role of professions and organisations. The participants exchanged their views on sustainable development and came up with their recommendations at the concluding session of the workshop.

Link uplift to ecology

Sustainable development in a developing country like Bangladesh depends on the ecological balance. The development process must be supportive of and in harmony with the environment. Only then will development be sustainable and lasting.

Inaugural session

The inaugural session which started at 9:15 am was presided over by Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Qatebur Rahman. Explaining the objectives and importance of the workshop, Chairman of the FEJB Quamrul Islam Chowdhury in his introductory speech said that ten years have elapsed since the Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. He said that the objective of the workshop was to review the progress of activities in the environment sector in Bangladesh in last 10 years as well as to chalk out future strategy for the next 10 years. He pointed out that after the 1992 Earth Summit, a national environmental management programme was formulated in 1995 following a series of grass-root level workshops participated by people from all walks of life. The Environment Policy 1992 and Environment Protection Act 1995 and the Environment Protection Rules were also formulated. There had been a number of successes in different sectors in last 10 years: food production increased and poverty reduced from 65 percent to 40 percent. He said that the country should now move forward further to ensure a sustainable future for the nation.

Inaugurating the workshop, State Minister for Environment and Forest Jafrul Islam Chowdhury pointed out the workshops at the local divisional level had been designed to ensure people's participation in the planning and policy-making process. The whole idea is to give local people from all walks of life a say in the planning and policy formulation with respect to sustainable development. The minister said that the sustainable development meant 'development that does not damage the environment'.

Taking part in the discussion, Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong said that sustainable development in a developing country like Bangladesh depends on the ecological balance. The development process must be supportive of and in harmony with the environment. Only then will development be sustainable and lasting, he said giving a cautious note that if such balance is not maintained the environment would take its revenge on people.

He pointed out that man remains at the centre of any development endeavour. If environment is inimical to any

development process then such development will not only be not sustainable... rather it would be destructive. That is why environment friendly development plans are being adopted throughout the world. The Agenda-21 adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 had taken the environmental aspects of development. The main objective of the Agenda-21, adopted on the basis of different national and international reports, was to find out a way of sustainable development for mankind. He said that in order to formulate a sustainable development plan, the correct situation in Bangladesh should be assessed. There are five main causes of environment pollution viz. soil erosion, water pollution and scarcity, air pollution, damaging of the bio-diversity and natural disasters.

Senior vice-president of Chittagong Chamber said that for 30 years since independence the green agenda did not advance much. But there has been a silver lining now that environmental issues are being addressed with the government, the NGOs and the civil society taking interest in conservation. It is now taking the form of a movement. Citing the case of environmental pollution due to disposal of wastes from ships at the Chittagong port, he said dumping of such wastes within 12 kilometres of any port is banned under international law. But such laws are not being followed at the Chittagong port.

Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest Monwar Islam said the country must fix a target for the next 10 years. He cited that in the past 10 years there had been significant development in the garment sector, people's average longevity, per capita income, and average rate of literacy increased. The micro-credit programme earned praise from all over the world. Now the country should formulate the development programme in such a way that will bring lasting welfare of the people.

Speaking as the special guest, DG of the Department of Environment Hedayetul Islam Chowdhury said that a new

Trouble stems from the sea

Environmental pollution in Chittagong comes mainly from the pollution of the sea. We must pay attention to it now. The greenhouse effect that is now being talked about will first submerge Chittagong before any other part of the country, he warned.

environment movement has started due largely to growing environmental awareness among people in recent times. He said few people in the world gave a thought to the environment before 1972. In that year, 'We must save the earth' agenda was adopted by the UN Conference of Human Environment. The same year an environmental conference at Stockholm decided to hold World Environment Day on June 5.

Discussing the Bangladesh scenario, he said work on water pollution in our country first began in 1973. The Environmental Pollution Control Board was formed in 1977. An environmental policy has been adopted. The Environment Act was passed in 1995 and the environment rules were formulated in 1977.

He pointed out that environmental pollution in Chittagong comes mainly from the pollution of the sea. We must pay attention to it now. The greenhouse effect that is now being talked about will first submerge Chittagong before any other part of the country, he warned.

In his presidential address, the Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Quatebur Rahman said that the main reason behind the increase of carbon dioxide gas in the air is the destruction of trees. Accumulation of this gas is heating up the air and destroying ecological balance. He pointed out that the developed world today is talking about environment, but it is them who are mostly responsible for polluting the environment. He called upon the developed countries not to set up industries that destroy the environment. At the same time he called upon all to come forward in the movement to protect trees, hills and rivers.

Second session

At the working session of the workshop, participants were divided into three issue-based groups. Each group was given specific agenda to discuss as well as the task of formulating recommendations on the basis of their discussions. The three issues were: socio-economic, preservation and management of natural resources and activation of the role of professions and organisations. The three sessions were held simultaneously from 11 am till 2:30 pm. SEMP coordinator Dr. Babar Kabir acted as the facilitator of the socio-economic group. Director of

the department of Environment Mohammad Reaz Uddin acted as the facilitator of the preservation and management of natural resources group and Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest Monwar Islam acted as facilitator of the group that dwelt on the role of professions and organisations.

Group I discussed socio-economic issues. They took up the following themes: poverty, growth and employment , Improvement of public health, durable housing, ensuring environment and development, international cooperation in sustainable development, sustainable development and the decision making process, education and mass awareness, mass media, and development research, economic cooperation at the local, national and international levels and what sort of programmes needed in future.

Group II discussed the issues of preservation and management of natural resources. They addressed the following themes: sustainable soil resource management, protection of hilly mounds and forests, preservation of agriculture and bio-diversity, rivers, seas, coasts and ports, management of desertification and drought, curbing air pollution, collecting and lifting sands, management and preservation of fresh water, management of solid wastes and sewer, education, public awareness, mass media and development research, economic cooperation at local, national and international levels and what sort of programme needed in future.

Group III discussions focused on the role of professions and organisations. They addressed the

Wasteland in the offing

"There is no plain land in the Rangamati town. It is floating on the lake water surrounding it. Wastes from the country boats and the town is polluting water in the lake and the people of the town are forced to use this polluted water. The green beauty of Rangamati and its trees are all being destroyed. Whatever the few hills that still remain are being cut down to build houses or develop new crop land. As a result, rainfall has reduced in the area. Surface temperature is increasing. Land is becoming infertile. If steps are not taken immediately situation may become extremely serious."

following themes: women, children and youth in sustainable development, uplift of tribal groups, strengthening the role of NGOs and other organisations, role of workers and trade unions in development, strengthening of local government system, science and technology, strengthening the role of businessmen and active sections of people, education and public awareness, mass media and development research, economic cooperation at local, national and international levels and what sort of programme needed in future.

Recommendations that come up

The three groups sat separately and discussed in details the country's success in last 10 years, what are required to be done in next 10 years and how the nation should proceed with new programmes for sustainable development. At the end of their sessions, each group coordinator presented a set of recommendations.

Recommendations of the socio-economic group

1. Targets through short, medium and long term planning should be fixed.
2. Sustainable development programmes should be taken up at the local, national and international levels.
3. People's participation in decision-making must be ensured.
4. Every man in the country must be made fully literate and environmentally aware. In this context, maximum use of mass should be ensured.
5. Wide circles of people including religious institutions and peoples representative must be associated with environmental protection and development programmes.
6. Publicity should be carried out through creative cultural and literary activities. For publicity, microphones should be used in the villages and market places. Other publicity materials like posters and special bulletins, leaflets should be distributed to promote public awareness. Besides, meetings, assemblies and seminars should be held to discuss issues related to environment and development.
7. Environment clubs and environment protection forces should be organised locally.
8. Students, scouts, BNCCS in the schools; madarsas, colleges and universities should be utilised in the publicity

work relating to environmental protection and in raising awareness.

9. Proper application of environmental laws and quick trial of those committing offences related to environment.
10. Environment awards and medals should be introduced. Environment fairs and environment weeks should be regularly held.
11. Necessary steps should be taken to halt noise, air and water pollution. In this context, existing laws should be strictly applied.
12. Communication should be improved and efforts should be made to create a fund with international support. The country's diplomatic missions abroad should be utilised to ensure funds flow for environmental causes.
13. New, appropriate technologies should be evolved and projects inimical to the environment should be cancelled.
14. Dependence on underground water should be reduced.

Recommendations of natural resources management group

1. Land tenure system should be changed for proper use of land. A special land commission should be formed for land administration in the hilly regions. Surveys should be conducted before adoption of development projects keeping in view environmental issues. Attention should be focussed on rapid afforestation. Alongside government efforts, private initiatives for afforestation should be encouraged.
2. Khas lands should be reclaimed through social forestry instead of leasing those out. Accountability must be ensured in this regard.
3. Use of wood to be reduced by increasing the use of plywood.
4. Cutting of hills and mounds should be stopped and if necessary summery trials should be arranged for this. Alternative to jhum cultivation should be found.
5. Each peasant in the country should be made self-reliant. Supply of seeds, fertilizers and other necessary inputs should be ensured for them.
6. Use of insecticides should be controlled.
7. Area-wise projects should be adopted to save local

- biodiversity. Women should be associated in this regard.
8. New laws should be enacted for river training. Steps should be taken for determining maritime boundary. Regular dredging of the rivers should be arranged to prevent their silting.
 9. Ship repairing works at Chittagong port should be stopped.
 10. There should be coordination between shrimp cultivation and afforestation.
 11. Mills and factories should be repaired and modernised within prescribed time limit. There should be provision for issuing environmental certificates to the industrial units after on the spot inspection.
 12. The Department of Environment (DoE) should be expanded with skilled manpower.
 13. Well-coordinated rural development plans should be adopted.
 14. Waste treatment plants should be set up on five canals in the Chittagong region.
 15. Villages should be brought under sanitation cover.
 16. Environment should be included as a subject in educational development research.
 17. Natural beauty of Chittagong region to be restored.
 18. Institutional facilities should be ensured for the salt and shrimp culture in Cox's Bazar area.

Recommendations of professional group

1. Women employment should be increased. They should be associated with development activities.
2. Children's rights should be protected. Child labour should be banned.
3. Alternative arrangements should be made without disturbing jhum cultivation by the tribals in CHT.
4. Initiatives should be taken to preserve and market spring water from the hilly areas.
5. The CHT peace accord should be properly implemented.
6. NGO activities should be coordinated at the district, upazila and grass-root levels in implementing the micro-credit programmes.
7. Missionary activities should be stopped.
8. Proper functioning of the trade unions should be ensured. Labour leaders should be educated and competent. Trade Unions should be kept free from politics. Tendency to

- make ports immobile through strikes should be resisted.
9. Communal harmony among workers should be increased. Factory workers should be properly trained.
 10. Initiative should be taken to build up a powerful local government system. Proper persons should be elected to the local bodies. Steps to train people's representatives should be taken. Outside interference in local administration should be stopped. Participation by women in various institutions of the local government should be ensured.
 11. In all tiers of government management, introduction of IT training should be encouraged. The telecommunication network expanded and made more easily available to people.
 12. Use of solar energy should be encouraged and increased.
 13. Drugs, arms and smuggling should be resisted. Terrorism should be banished from the educational institutions.
 14. Role of educational institutions in cleanliness drives and in protecting the environment should be increased. Subjects of environmental awareness should be publicised in easily understood language.
 15. Proper non-partisan mass media should be encouraged and those under government control should be given autonomy.
 16. Foreign investment in the country's development should be encouraged and increased. Necessary environment for this has to be created. Technology transfer should be ensured.

Concluding session

Director General of the Directorate of Environment Hedayatul Islam Chowdhury presided over the concluding session. Presidents of the three group sessions read out the recommendations of their respective groups. Later Deputy secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest Monwar Islam high-lighted the gist of the recommendations. Woman participant Shahana Akhtar, Deputy Commissioner of Bandarban Mian Mostaque Hussain, Chairman of Chittagong Chamber Farid Ahmed Chowdhury, Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Abdus Salam and Chairman of Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) Quamrul Islam Chowdhury spoke in the occasion. Managing Editor of The Daily Star Syed Fahim Munayim gave the vote of thanks.

Reaction of participants

Manjulika Chakma, owner of Bain Textiles, a cottage industry for weaving traditional tribal apparels at Rangamati, participated in the day-long workshop. She was in the first group of the working session. She received the National Handicraft Board award last year. She said that she had taken part in the workshop form a sense of national responsibility in improving the environment. She highlighted the problems of her area in Rangamati in the following words:

"There is no plain land in the Rangamati town. It is floating on the lake water surrounding it. Wastes from the country boats and the town is polluting water in the lake and the people of the town are forced to use this polluted water. The green beauty of Rangamati and its trees are all being destroyed. Whatever the few hills that still remain are being cut down to build houses or develop new crop land. As a result, rainfall has reduced in the area. Surface temperature is increasing. Land is becoming infertile. If steps are not taken immediately situation may become extremely serious."

A participant in the second group was the Deputy Commissioner of Cox's Bazar Matiur Rahman. He said that the biggest problem in his district is felling of trees. Earlier, trees had been cut indiscriminately in the area. At the same time there is a tendency to cut hills among the native population. He laid emphasis on planting trees on fallow land and on increasing the beauty of the sea beach to make it more attractive to the tourists. He said that side by side with government management, private initiative is necessary for the development of the sea beach. He suggested that different sections of the beach should be distributed among private entrepreneurs for development which should attract more tourists to the resort town.

"The rate of literacy has been on the rise for the last ten years. Food for Education Programme, financed entirely from domestic resources, has been one of the most successful innovative initiatives of Bangladesh. We are now enjoying salutary effects," told student Naurin Karim Pritu.

NGO worker of Chittagong Jesmin Sultana resides at the Nasirabad Housing Society colony. She took part in the group

III of the working session. She in her reaction identified five problems of Chittagong city. These are: cutting of hills, population increase, destruction of natural beauty and environment, and pollution of the sea and air. She believes that the government should come forward in solving these problems. If the government is sincere then it is possible to increase environmental awareness among the people.

Streamline surface water

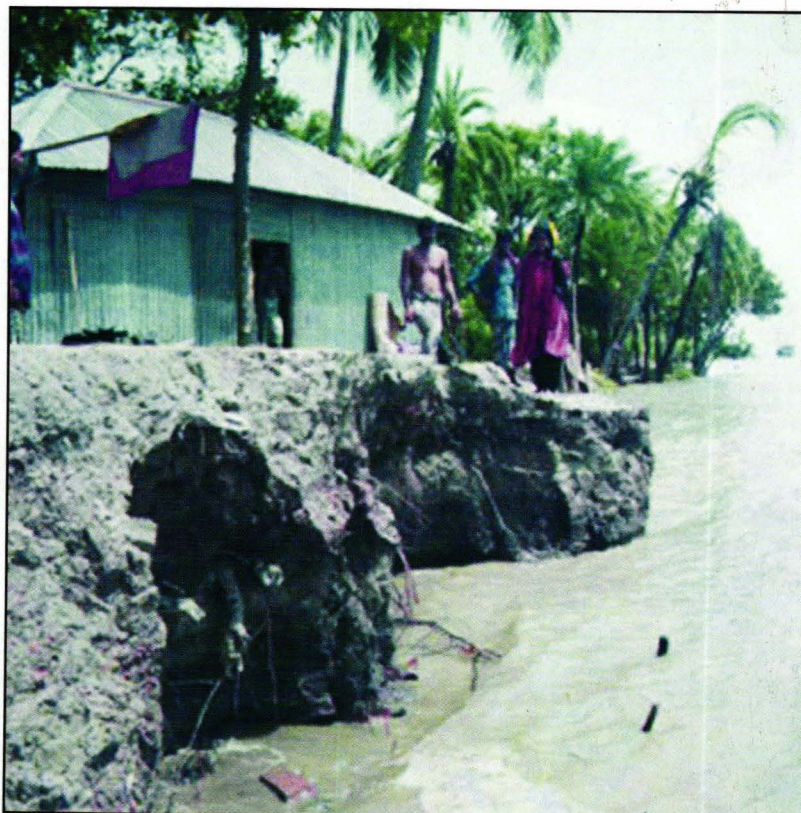


Photo: Md. Kamruzzaman

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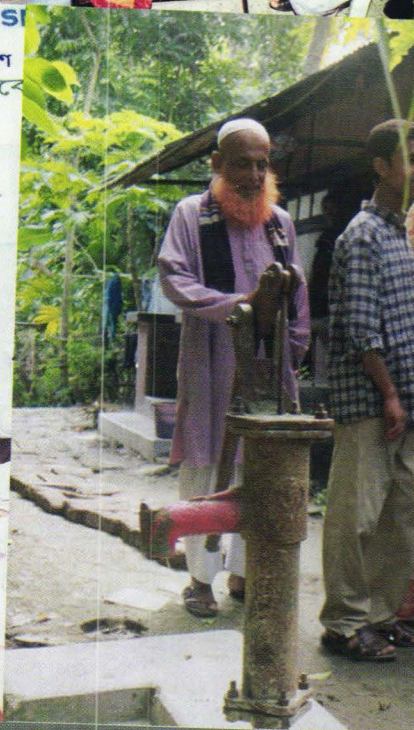
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Streamline surface water

By Khairul Anwar

The fifth divisional workshop to draw up the Bangladesh national assessment report for the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held at Barisal town on 7 March, 2002. The organisers of the workshop were the Ministry of Environment and Forest, the divisional administration, the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) and the civil society with the assistance of the UNDP.

The workshop began at 9.15 a.m. and continued in three phases till 5.30 p.m. with a short break at

noon. The three phases were the inaugural session, technical session and concluding session. The Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad, Mujibur Rahman Sarwar, was the chief guest at the inaugural session.

Parliamentarian Zahiruddin Swapan, Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest Sabihuddin Ahmed, educationist Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury and the Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam spoke as special guests. D.G of the Department of Environment Hedayetul Islam Chowdhury, FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, Managing Director of PKSF Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed, Professor of History of the Dhaka University Dr. Ahmed Kamal, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest Dr. Mahfuzul Huq and

Keep environment above everything else

Development by destroying the natural conditions is not proper. Rather, we should start from the grassroots level. The majority people of Bangladesh did not know much about environment only a few years back. Now they are realising the importance of the environmental issue. Natural conditions should be preserved. We should think about development by maintaining the forested areas and the rivers. Nothing should be done without environmental certificates. This should be the decision. Environment and Nature must be given the maximum importance."

Deputy Commissioner of Barisal Sheikh Abul Kalam took part in the discussion on the objective of the workshop. Acting Divisional Commissioner of Barisal, Loqman Hakim, presided over the inaugural session.

Whip Mujibur Rahman Sarwar: Preservation should start from the grassroots level

Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Mujibur Rahman Sarwar said, "Rich countries are creating many problems in the environmental field. The donor countries are not extending any effective assistance in this regard. Rice, rivers and canals had been the distinguishing features of Barisal. These rivers and canals are being silted up. The people of this area are moving towards environmental disaster. We are erecting buildings everywhere and cutting down trees and vegetation. One has to collect certificates from the relevant authorities to build a house, but we care a damn for such things. Woodlands are being destroyed, and irrigation projects are also creating environmental problems in Barisal. The canals that big boats (bajras and stage-boats) used to ply have now dried up. A plant has been set up at Barisal Shisu Park after cutting down trees. Development by destroying the natural conditions is not proper. Rather, we should start from the grassroots level. The majority people of Bangladesh did not know much about environment only a few years back. Now they are realising the importance of the environmental issue. Natural conditions should be preserved. We should think about development by maintaining the forested areas and the rivers. Nothing should be done without environmental certificates. This should be the decision. Environment and Nature must be given the maximum importance."

What other discussants said

Member of Parliament Zahiruddin Swapan said Bangladesh may be poor but it must speak firmly in the World Summit Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg in South Africa in August.

Secretary Sabihuddin Ahmed said that we should claim a share of the technology of development at the World Summit.

Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury said, "We are the victims of world development. We are under its pressure. Flood and

drought are impoverishing us. The earth in being heated up. In the name of development and environment the developed or rich countries are pursuing an expansionist policy. Extreme craving for luxuries and profit is polluting the environment. Political decision is urgently needed in resisting environmental disaster. Environmental pollution could not be resisted because of the absence of political will. Rivers have been turned into sewage drains. The Buriganga is emitting a putrid smell."

Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam said, "Unconsciously we are putting up a wall against Nature. Food production is increasing, but the use of chemicals in the soil to increase food production is also increasing, and as a result the fertility of the soil is decreasing. At one stage, we shall find that there are only chemicals left in the soil, but no fertility. Children are suffering from asthma due to air pollution. I want to know why has polythene remained in use for so many years? Tall buildings are sprouting everywhere in Dhaka. There will be nowhere to go if the environment is destroyed. The environment, once ruined, cannot be mended. Our very existence is at stake if the environment is destroyed. Environment is a life and death matter. The issue should be viewed from this angle."

Managing Director of Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed said that growth, equality and resource management are needed for sustainable development. "The poor do not ruin the environment much. For example the forests in Nepal are being depleted by the businessmen there, not the poor. We must fix our priority for sustainable development."

Professor Ahmed Kamal said we must determine where and for

Take it seriously

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whom development will take place. The discussion should proceed by keeping in mind how many resources and how much capability we have. We have been hearing of development for quite some time, but we found that development is not taking place at the proper rate.

Dr. Mahfuzul Huq said that Barisal is a coastal area which, with its rivers and canals, has its own distinguishing features. That is why the issue of Nature in the area should come up in the discussion.

The DG of the Department of Environment, Hedayetul Islam Chowdhury, said the environment consists of water, air and living beings. We must preserve it for posterity. We must determine how that can be done. The developed world is more responsible for the degradation of the environment. We must preserve the environment but keep the momentum of development unimpaired.

Issue-based discussion

The inaugural session was followed by issue-based discussions that were carried out in three groups. The groups were: 1) socio-economic, 2) natural resources, 3) activation of the role of the professionals and organisations. Political leaders and people's representatives, government officials, NGO representatives, leaders of local government, women's organisations, youth organisations, teachers, journalists and representatives of the Rakhine community took part in the issue-based (group-wise) discussion. Dr. Babar Kabir and Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed coordinated the discussion of the socio-economic group, Dr. Ainun Nishat of the natural resources group and Dr. Ahmed Kamal and Dr. Mahfuzul Haque of the professionals and organisations group.

Recommendations of the socio-economic group

Poverty alleviation should be considered as the main head of budgetary allocation. The micro level should be given maximum allocation by the centre and the funds should be utilised through the local institutions. Local-level planning and implementation should be arranged. Parishad- and the local-level institutions should be straightened up and made competent. Development plans should be adopted on the basis

of local resources, technology and demand. Local participation in the planning process should be arranged. While carrying out development of Barisal, the use of river water, transportation system and agricultural development should be suited to conditions in the district. Surface water should be used along with that from tubewells. Management skills in use of underground water should be increased. Rivers should be kept free from pollution. Mills and factories and launches should have their own waste and pollution management system. High-speed launches and sea trucks should be introduced. Social and legal measures should be adopted against habits inimical to the environment. By increasing social awareness waste disposal arrangement in each locality may be improved. Houses could be built on non-agricultural land in a planned way. There should be a system of taking permission from the relevant authorities to build houses. Habitations should be built to suit the weather, conditions and resources of Barisal or the southern region. These things should be kept in consideration while planning houses. House-building materials and technology should be made easily available. Planning should be given importance in designing and in policy formulation. Permits should be procured from the Department of Environment while adopting development projects. Efforts should be made so that the partners from the international community extend their hands in our support. People's support and cooperation in different forums should be increased. Use of local technology should be prioritised. Agricultural development should be speeded up and various kinds of local-based projects should be adopted. It is necessary to coordinate the activities of the government, NGOs and civil society. There should be a district-level forum.

More money for poverty alleviation

Poverty alleviation should be considered as the main head of budgetary allocation. The micro level should be given maximum allocation by the centre and the funds should be utilised through the local institutions. Local-level planning and implementation should be arranged. Parishad- and the local-level institutions should be straightened up and made competent. Development plans should be adopted on the basis of local resources, technology and demand. Local participation in the planning process should be arranged.

Development of education and increase of mass awareness can be speeded up through necessary changes in the curricula of the schools and colleges. Seminars on development should be held through social gatherings, and with the help of cultural, religious and educational institutions. Environmental programmes should be taken up. While adopting plans the family should be kept in mind. No environment-hostile measures should be adopted while taking international assistance in project formulation.

Recommendations of the natural resources group

Rainwater should be stored in reservoirs. Water in the rivers, canals and beels should be preserved. Residual flow of chemical fertilisers/insecticides into surface water should be stopped. Canals should be dug, and if necessary, be dredged and re-excavated. Navigability should be improved and river erosion stopped through river training. Discharge of industrial effluent into the rivers/canals should be stopped. In order to solve the arsenic problem, safe drinking water to be ensured in all areas. Work on patient identification and monitoring and follow-up should be done conscientiously. Training should be arranged for those who are working on the arsenic problem. Awareness campaign should be conducted in easy and simple language so that rural people are not confused. Special health centres should be devoted to arsenicosis patients.

Recommendations on land management

Current rules/laws/customs on land tenure should be changed. There should be legal bindings determining ownership during sale of land. Awareness of the usefulness of common property should be created and there should be research on this issue. There should be no further filling up of ponds, canals and rivers, etc. There should be special drives to recover and protect khas land. There should be campaigns against cutting down of trees. Afforestation process on newly accreted land should be encouraged and those forests should be preserved. Habitation in new lands should be discouraged. Social forestry should be expanded and attention paid to fruit-bearing trees. Medicinal plants of endangered and almost extinct species should be preserved.

Recommendations on agriculture, pisciculture and animal husbandry

Use of organic fertilisers/manures should be increased. Indigenous species and varieties of paddy and other cereals should be preserved. Steps should be taken for crop diversification and rotation. Infiltration of sterile/GMO (in case of paddy) should be stopped. Catching of shrimp fry and of immature fish including jatka should also be banned. Mass awareness on preservation of bio-diversity should be created among ordinary people. Special steps should be taken so that exotic and predatory fish cannot enter open water bodies. No fresh import of any foreign species of fish/plants should be allowed. Preservation and production of almost extinct local fish species should be encouraged. Fishing during the breeding season should be banned. There should be sanctuaries. Mass awareness on these issues should be heightened.

Recommendations on sound, air, water and soil pollution

Use of hydraulic horn and 'miking' (using loud speakers) should be banned. Sound pollution in special localities (like hospitals, educational institutions, residential areas) should be totally stopped. Brick kilns should not be allowed near residential areas. Solutions to air pollution in kitchens should be found. Steps should be taken to run watercraft, cars, buses, etc. with CNG/CPG. Not only Dhaka but the entire country should be freed from pollution. Steps should also be taken for proper waste management and recycling. Management of medicine factory/hospital wastes is essential. Control should be imposed on use of acids in shops.

Change school, college curricula

Development of education and increase of mass awareness can be speeded up through necessary changes in the curricula of the schools and colleges. Seminars on development should be held through social gatherings, and with the help of cultural, religious and educational institutions. Environmental programmes should be taken up. While adopting plans the family should be kept in mind. No environment-hostile measures should be adopted while taking international assistance in project formulation.

Recommendations on rivers, sea, coasts, ports, etc. issues

Projects centring on a river should only be taken up after properly understanding the nature and movement of the river. Projects to reclaim land from the sea should be taken up. Integrated measures should be taken to maintain the navigability of rivers. All must together dredge the silted-up water bodies. Strategies on tackling the impact of climate change should be developed. People should be made conscious of adopting proper measures (such as water-sealed latrine) for sanitation. Surface water drainage in the towns should be kept operative all the time. Natural disasters such as storm surges may increase due to climate change. Disaster management methods must be improved to meet such situations. Every citizen should be active to maintain, at the individual level, a good environment in his own habitation and work place. To achieve this aim a programme on environmental awareness and inspiration should be taken up.

Recommendations on the issue of activation of the role of professions and organisations

Recommendations have been made on the issue of women, children, youth, tribal people and NGOs. Recommendations contain increase in comprehensive security. There ought to be increase of quota having positive impact on empowerment of women and reduction those quotas that have a negative effect. Amendments to the law of inheritance should be made. Increase of women's employment by 57% in accordance with the ILO convention must be implemented. There should be sincere attempts to associate women at the grassroots level in the national and international fields. Increased employment of youth and introduction of unemployment allowance must be arranged. There should also be projects for training youth to increase their skills. There should be total ban on child labour. Political stability, accountability and transparency must be ensured. Technical education and training should be expanded. Loans to the unemployed youth on easy terms should be arranged. There should be a concerted effort for strengthening social movement and infusing these groups with patriotism. There should be humane behaviour towards child labour (no child domestic help can be kept).

Increasing attention must be paid to the indigent old people at the social and family level. The nationality rights of the tribal people should be recognised. Ensuring human rights is crucially important. Education and health care for tribal people should be ensured. Their rights to landed property should be protected. NGOs should desist from party politics and there should be rules in this regard at the national level. High rate of interest (on credits) should be reduced. A strong local government system must be introduced and there must be increase in the financial allocation for the local governments. Local level planning (financial) should be made through the centre. Responsibilities of women UP members should be specified.

Increasing the role of trade unions to protect the interest of workers in sustainable development must be ensured. Dependence on foreign assistance should be reduced. Local-level funding must be 50 per cent. Trades and businesses inimical to sustainable development should be discouraged. Ensuring correct application of environmental laws is essential.

Concluding session

The concluding session was held after the issue-based discussions of the three groups. The chief guest at this session was the Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Sabihuddin Ahmed. The DG of the Department of Environment, Hedayetul Islam Chowdhury, presided over the session. The three groups presented their reports. Deputy Commissioner of Patuakhali district, Shafiqul Islam, presented the report of the 'socio-economic group'. Deputy Commissioner of Barisal, Sheikh Abul Kalam, made the group presentation of the 'preservation and management of natural resources group', and an official of

Awareness campaign crucial

Use of organic fertilisers/manures should be increased. Indigenous species and varieties of paddy and other cereals should be preserved. Steps should be taken for crop diversification and rotation. Infiltration of sterile/GMO (in case of paddy) should be stopped. Catching of shrimp fry and of immature fish including jatka should also be banned. Mass awareness on preservation of bio-diversity should be created among ordinary people.

the drug firm Opsonin, Mokarram H. Khan, of the 'activation of role of professions and organisations group'. Two persons took part in the discussion on behalf of the three issue-based groups. They were NGO representative Rahima Sultana Kajal and Deputy Commissioner of Bhola, Kabir Md. Ashraf. Rahima Sultana Kajal said development takes place only where cars can move. No development takes place where there is no road. Those who provide funds for development activities immediately want to know if the concerned area can be reached by car. Work is allocated from air-conditioned rooms without going to the concerned area, and as a result no development takes place in 'remote areas'. "We must keep the issue of development of the remote areas under consideration if we want balanced and sustainable development. Let the development start from Kukri-Mukri (name of a remote area)," she said. Kabir Mohammad Ashraf said the workshop was held for too short a time. More time was necessary. "We must proceed in the improvement of the environment by keeping the over-all situation in mind. For example, when talking decisions on rivers in Bangladesh we must also think about international rivers, because the rivers of Bangladesh are connected with the flow of many international rivers." UNDP's Dr. Aminul Islam said there should be no boundaries in case of the environment and there should not be any politics about it.

Protection of the resources, bio-diversity, and environment for our posterity has now become imperative.

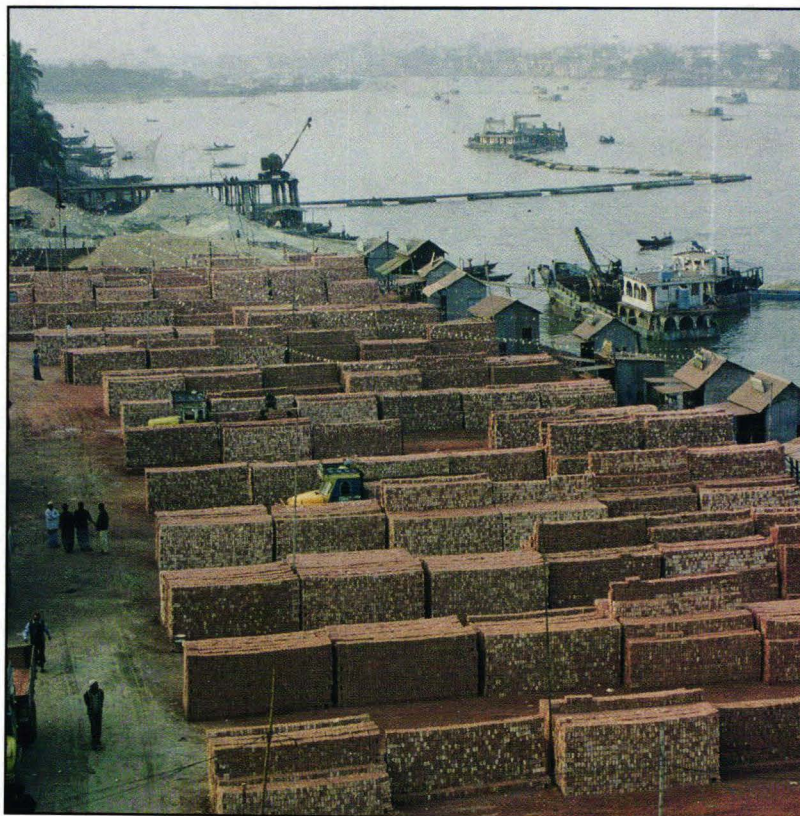
IUCN country representative said, "Great work will be accomplished in 2012."

Prof. Ahmed Kamal said, "We are talking of people's participation, but there is some catch in it. Compared to the country's entire population, only a small number of people are being associated with it. Those, whose uplift we are talking about, should be included in large numbers. Successful implementation of the Programme will not be possible if this cannot be done. We leave behind the issues at the place where we hold discussions. We do not proceed any further. Widespread social movement is necessary to protect the environment." Dr. Salauddin Ahmed said that, instead of talking, we should rapidly go into action. Work is essential. "Good result can be achieved only if we can inspire the people

at the grassroots level and involve them in the protection of the environment." Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Sabihuddin Ahmed, said the environment should be treated as a national issue. "Much depends on the success of the workshops at the divisional level." President of the concluding session, DG of the Directorate of Environment Hedayetul Islam Chowdhury, said we shall get a sense of direction in solving environmental problems from the divisional workshops. There will be an air monitoring camp in Dhaka.

FEJB chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury was the coordinator of the facilitators of the Barisal division. He said, "Environmental disaster has now become a serious challenge to us and we must gird up our loins and meet the challenge head-on... Sustainable development should not be considered in isolation. The issue of development should be tackled from the grassroots level. Development efforts will not be successful if the common people are not made partners in development. Side by side with the national issues, local issues should also be given equal importance. Solution of the environmental problems is not possible unless this can be done. The distinguishing features of Barisal are paddy, rivers and canals. This should be kept in mind while thinking about the protection of environment of the coastal region."

Turn to right technology



Photo

Bangladesh
Road to Sustainable Development

People's Voice

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Turn to right technology

By Kazi Shahnaz with
Shahidul Islam Chowdhury

Taking counsel from the grassroots-level people to prepare the national assessment report for the coming World Summit Conference on Sustainable Development has been completed. This has been done at the six workshops that were organised to record the opinions of people from all strata of the six divisions in the country. The last workshop in the series entitled, "People's Consultation Prior to World Summit on Sustainable Development: National Evaluation Report, Bangladesh", was held in Dhaka on March 10 last. Representatives of the administration and local citizens have freely expressed their opinions and put forward suggestions in issue-based discussions at these workshops, apparently shedding all their doubts and inhibitions.

The daylong workshop was organised by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh, Dhaka divisional administration and local citizens in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The workshop was held at the conference hall of the Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia-Pacific (CIRDAP). About 2000 people's representatives -- leaders of trade organisations, teachers, intellectuals, officials of different government departments, professionals, women, NGO representatives, journalists, leaders of women's organisations, students and representatives of different classes and professions, and grass-roots level people--participated in the workshop.

Environment and Forest Minister

A pledge to keep

Shahjahan Siraj said the government is firm in its determination to ensure the sustainable development of Bangladesh. The Ministry of Environment and Forest, together with other ministries, departments and institutions, will take initiatives in framing sustainable policies and programmes to meet the challenge of the new millennium.

Bangladesh bears the brunt

Global warming increasing because of the imprudent and indiscriminate consumption of fossil fuel by the rich countries. The problem of climate change has become serious. It is for the over-consumption of the rich countries that Bangladesh faces the threat of one-fifth of its land being submerged by the sea. The dangers like storms, storm surges, floods, droughts are increasing and sustainable development is being hampered.

Shahjahan Siraj was chief guest at the inaugural session of the workshop. It was presided over by Environment and Forest Secretary Sabihuddin Ahmed. State Minister for Environment and Forest Jafrul Islam Chowdhury, noted economist Wahiduddin Mahmud, Chief Editor of Holiday Enayetullah Khan, Advisory Editor of the Financial Express Reazuddin Ahmed, Director General of the Environment Directorate Hedayetul Islam Chowdhury and Divisional Commissioner of Dhaka Abu Solaiman Chowdhury spoke at this session.

Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj, in his speech as chief guest, said sustainable development implies economic progress by conserving Nature and bio-diversity, and by maintaining the flow of the seas, rivers, canals and beels. That means we get economic progress as well as the maintenance of balance in Nature. Sustainable development means to move forward in harmony with Nature. By sustainable development we mean such a

development in Bangladesh where no one will use any kind of polythene shopping bags, where no one will use any vehicles spewing poisonous black smoke on the streets, where no one will encroach upon the Buriganga and other rivers, canals and beels, where no country will build dams and barrages on the Padma and other common rivers and unilaterally withdraw water from them. Bio-diversity of the Sundarbans will be preserved. No disaster like that of Magurchhara will happen. In short, we shall eradicate poverty, achieve progress and at the same time we shall get pollution-free air, water and soil, and we shall attain prosperity and yet conserve the environment. We shall avoid substances depleting the ozone layer as far as practicable. We shall have to spell these things out more forcefully at the World Summit on Sustainable Development because developed and rich countries destroy the environment much more than the

developing countries like Bangladesh do. Global warming increasing because of the imprudent and indiscriminate consumption of fossil fuel by the rich countries. The problem of climate change has become serious. It is for the over-consumption of the rich countries that Bangladesh faces the threat of one-fifth of its land being submerged by the sea. The dangers like storms, storm surges, floods, droughts are increasing and sustainable development is being hampered.

He said the present democratic government under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has been laying emphasis on sustainable development planning which will reflect the hopes and aspirations of the common people of the country. With this end in view the National Environmental Management Action Plan, which is known to all as NEMAP and has earned praise both at home and abroad, was formulated under the BNP government in 1992-95 period. At the time of preparing the action plan many workshops at the grassroots level were organised in various places throughout the country.

Shahjahan Siraj said that the environment and forest ministry has enacted the Environment Protection Act 1995 and other environment protection rules. Environment protection acts and rules enacted earlier have been amended to make them time-relevant. Already the production and marketing of all kinds of

Overcome impediments

Chief Editor of Holiday Enayetullah Khan said adjustment of opinions outside the State and State structure is urgently necessary. Then it will be easier to overcome the impediments to environmental protection. We no longer see kites soaring and dancing in Dhaka's sky because of serious damage to the environment. Squirrels are not found in Jessore any more. Many species of birds are extinct. These are important elements of a good environment. We must all be conscious of the necessity of their conservation. The awareness the ministry has created among the people against their use is unprecedented. The FEJB is discharging its responsibility in creating total awareness about the environment. I hope that those who are in important positions in the government will properly discharge their responsibilities.

polythene shopping bags have been banned throughout the country. This has been acclaimed in all circles. Everyone has welcomed this bold and timely decision of the government.

He said the government is firm in its determination to ensure the sustainable development of Bangladesh. The Ministry of Environment and Forest, together with other ministries, departments and institutions, will take initiatives in framing sustainable policies and programmes to meet the challenge of the new millennium. The minister said, "We are going to enact further laws against the production, marketing and use of polythene bags. This law contains provisions of 10 lakh taka fine and up to 10 years of imprisonment for the producer of polythene bags and 500 taka fine for the user. We shall have to make concrete contributions to sustainable development on the basis of the SAARC concept that was visualised and implemented by the proclaimer of independence, Shahid President Ziaur Rahman. Political commitment cannot succeed if it is not firm. The administration will also have to play an effective role for this purpose. The estrangement that existed between the political leadership and the administration during the colonial days still exists. But we could activate the administration on the issue of the ban on polythene bags and make the movement successful. Behind this success lies the ability to associate the political leadership, administration and the people with the movement. We have a lot to do to make the environment habitable. We have taken steps to make the air clean by stopping emission of poisonous smoke from vehicles, and are also going to take measures against cutting of hills in different parts of the country. Brickfields have mushroomed around capital city Dhaka and various other towns of the country. This is a threat to the environment.

"Our third step will be to transfer the Hazaribag tanneries to some other place. If we cannot do it foreign countries will not buy leather and leather products from us. A nine-foot thick layer of polythene has accumulated at the bottom of the Buriganga. Along with that the river has accumulated poisonous wastes from tanneries and the sewerage outlets. The water of the Buriganga is no longer usable, not even for bathing. Transcending the present, we shall have to work for the future."

State Minister for Environment and Forest Jafrul Islam Chowdhury, the special guest, said this workshop would play a big role in improving the lot of the poor and bringing smiles to the faces of indigent people of the country. "If we can channelize properly the awareness that we could generate against the use of polythene shopping bags, then we will be able to make an effective contribution to improving the over-all environment."

He said, "It has been observed that while collecting ten fry of shrimp thousands of fry of other fish are being destroyed. Those who are engaged in this work may not be conscious of the consequences of their work. Whether we shall be able to get sea fish in the future is doubtful if this process of destruction continues. Awareness should be created among them." He added that the existence of forests is at stake because of the rate at which forest resources are being destroyed.

The state minister said that we should be able to make further advance if the NGOs, who are contributing to the eradication of poverty, do not put emphasis on profit. "Our appeal to the NGOs is that they should employ their labour and intellect for the people's welfare. If development remains confined within the cities of Dhaka and Chittagong, no balanced development will ever be achieved."

Not bad at all

The successes of the last 10 years, according to the report of this group, are: poverty has been reduced by 10 per cent; growth in agriculture compared to population has increased; self-sufficiency in food has been achieved; income and employment have increased; the garment industry has expanded; the programme of small credit has spread further; popular awareness of the need for safe drinking water has been heightened; mortality rate of children and mothers has come down due to increase in health consciousness and success of the integrated insulation programme; activities for protection of the environment have apparently increased; the Environmental Protection Act and disaster management policy has been adopted; initiative to set up environment court has been taken; extensive activities are going on through SEMP and NEMAP; and production and use of polythene bags have been drastically reduced.

He further said, "We shall have to make the afforestation programme really successful. Deforestation must be resisted. The present government has taken the initiative for afforestation on a priority basis."

Economist Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud said usually the civic society is hostile to government initiatives, but the last few months have shown that if there is sincerity of purpose in the government's initiative, the civic society works as a unified force. Maintaining the balance between environment and development in a populous country like Bangladesh is a stupendous problem. It is difficult to imagine how the additional demand of the people can be met when the country will march further towards progress. It becomes perplexing to think of the future, of whether any solution can be found with regard to human habitation and employment in the country forty years hence.

He said that it has been seen last year the GDP growth in forest resources has increased from 2 per cent to 4 per cent. But we should not rejoice at all because this means the forests are being depleted. It is difficult to visualise the situation if in the future Dhaka city, like other mega-cities, is filled with skyscrapers and the number of cars increases exponentially. There will be almost no cultivable land due to unplanned housing and road building in the villages. Problems will arise in implementing the programme of reaching electricity to every house. Mr. Mahmud said it is possible for the political leadership to achieve positive change in the country if there is sincerity in the political will. Bureaucratic tangles and red tape will not be impediments in that case.

Chief Editor of Holiday Enayetullah Khan said adjustment of opinions outside the State and State structure is urgently necessary. Then it will be easier to overcome the impediments to environmental protection. We no longer see kites soaring and dancing in Dhaka's sky because of serious damage to the environment. Squirrels are not found in Jessore any more. Many species of birds are extinct. These are important elements of a good environment. We must all be conscious of the necessity of their conservation. The machinery at the government level to publicise all facts on the environment should be further strengthened. The role the environment minister played in

banning polythene bags is praiseworthy. The awareness the ministry has created among the people against their use is unprecedented. The FEJB is discharging its responsibility in creating total awareness about the environment. I hope that those who are in important positions in the government will properly discharge their responsibilities.

"Bangladesh media thanks to the activism of Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) has been in the forefront in unfolding the sustainable development agenda in general and green agenda in particular. In fact, FEJB is now being cited as a model in creating awareness among the mass people including politicians and policy makers about our major environmental problems. The FEJB has been successful in raising a very strong group of journalists in mainstreaming environment and sustainable development in our otherwise politically dominated media. International networks of media organisations like Asia-Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists (APFEJ), World Water Forum of Journalists (WWFJ), and Commonwealth Environmental Journalists Association (CEJA) are now doing commendable job in our part of the world. As media power these institutions should be strengthened to help achieve sustainable development. I hope that those who are in important positions in the government will properly discharge their responsibilities," Enayetullah Khan added.

Uphill tasks ahead

According to the group's report, the vision of the next decade and the strategy to realise them are: in order to build a 'poverty free' Bangladesh, we must achieve a yearly growth rate of at least 7 per cent for the coming five years; we must develop management, training, skill and employment in order to attain this objective; we must ensure supply of totally pollution-free drinking water and ensure rapid improvement of the drainage/sewerage system; mortality rate of mothers and children must be brought down to zero; housing for all must be ensured through proper planning; formulation of an integrated policy and its implementation is essential to ensure housing for all by giving priority to the poor people; the environmental laws should be realistically applied.

The Advisory Editor of the Financial Express, Reazuddin Ahmed, said that if we look closely at the environment we can easily see that the rate of destruction is much, much higher than the rate of regeneration. "We are only concerned with our own needs and pleasures, we do not think about the future. The limited amount of cultivable land is being used beyond limit. Its consequence will be far reaching. Adverse effect is being created in all aspects of the environment. We ought to determine what the strategy for development should be by analysing all the situations. We should fix poverty alleviation as our target and connect it with the sustainable development programme," he said.

Director General of the Department of Environment Hedayetual Islam Chowdhury, said poverty alleviation by maintaining over-all development activities and yet ensuring environmental protection is sustainable development. "Developing countries have not caused as much damage to the environment as has been done by the developed countries for their advancement," he remarked. "Developing countries are paying the cost of damage caused by the developed countries. In this situation we should take strong measures so that posterity cannot blame their predecessors. Improvement of the environment is necessary for poverty eradication."

Divisional commissioner of Dhaka Abu Solaiman Chowdhury said it is for the first time that a workshop on popular counsel has been arranged. "This is very important in the interest of over-all development," he said. "The administrative officials at the field level will get direction from this workshop as to what should be the role of the administration is environmental protection at the field level."

In his presidential speech, the Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Sabihuddin Ahmed, said the problems of the common people and different areas of the country have been identified in the workshops on popular counsel. "We are being harmed mostly with regard to the environment. We are not being able to utilise folk wisdom for water use. The proposal that US President George W Bush made, opposing the Kyoto protocol on climate change, is against the interest of the developing countries," he observed.

Working session : Issue-based popular counsel

After the inaugural session the workshop participants were divided into three groups and began the session on issue-based popular counsel. The issue-based groups are: (1) socio-economic, (2) preservation and management of natural resources, and (3) activation of role of professionals and organisations. This session to solicit popular counsel continued at a stretch for two hours from 12 noon to 2 p.m.

Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Monwar Islam, acted as the facilitator of the socio-economic group. The topics of discussion in this group were poverty, growth, employment, improvement of public health, durable housing, ensuring environmental conservation and development in policy making, international cooperation in sustainable development, sustainable development and the process of decision-making.

Deputy Commissioner of Madaripur district Md. Shafiqul Islam acted as the facilitator of the 'preservation and management of natural resources' group. The topics of discussion in this group were sustainable management of land resources, protection of hills and forests, preservation of bio-diversity, management of rivers and *haors*, stopping industrial and air pollution, sand collection, sweet water management and preservation, management of solid waste and sewerage.

Dr. Mahfuzul Haque acted as the facilitator of the 'activation of roles of professionals and organisations' group. Topics of discussion in this group were women, children and youth and their role in sustainable development. Upliftment of tribal communities, strengthening the

Act fast

The strategy to materialise these aspirations is firm political will in every case, quick measures to ensure proper use of time, integrated planning and improved management, encouraging new scientific research and inventions, popularising appropriate technology, holding meetings at the local level with the participation of the people, proper application of laws, ensuring people's respect for law and making them develop the habit of abiding by the laws.

role of NGOs and other organisations, role of trade unions in development, strengthening local government system, strengthening the roles of scientists, technologists and peasants were also discussed.

Besides, all the three groups also discussed different issues connected with their own topic such as education and popular awareness, cooperation of the mass media, development research, economic cooperation at the local, national and international levels and what sort of programmes are needed in future, etc. All the three groups later presented their own reports at the concluding session.

Concluding session : Reports by the three groups

Divisional Commissioner of Dhaka Abu Solaiman Chowdhury presided over this session. The team leaders of the three groups presented the reports of their respective groups. Earlier, BCAS Chairman Atiq A. Rahman, in his brief speech, said that sustainable development is a difficult matter. Due to 'our mistakes' practically no development has taken place in the country. Rectification of those mistakes is a difficult task. The World Summit on Sustainable Development is an inter-government effort. The government speaks there on behalf of the people. The special feature of the method is the direct participation of the government at this phase. The opinions that the government officials have expressed at the workshop on their experience at the field level are based on reality. The people from different professions and groups have projected those subjects that have been highlighted by the awareness created by the efforts for protecting the environment and for sustainable development for 10 years after the Rio Earth Summit. "On the basis of the experience of this workshop it can be said that we have advanced far in the field of method." He said there should be no compromise on the issue of economic development. "Our economic development should be eco-friendly and based on social justice."

Report of the socio-economic group

Deputy Commissioner of Faridpur Ismail Jabiullah presented the report of the socio-economic group. He said the administration has had to face many hurdles in their work at the field level. Experience of the field level has been given

importance in preparing the report to be placed at the World Sustainable Development summit on behalf of Bangladesh. This is a very promising initiative.

The successes of the last 10 years, according to the report of this group, are: poverty has been reduced by 10 per cent; growth in agriculture compared to population has increased; self-sufficiency in food has been achieved; income and employment have increased; the garment industry has expanded; the programme of small credit has spread further; popular awareness of the need for safe drinking water has been heightened; mortality rate of children and mothers has come down due to increase in health consciousness and success of the integrated insulation programme; activities for protection of the environment have apparently increased; the Environmental Protection Act and disaster management policy has been adopted; initiative to set up environment court has been taken; extensive activities are going on through SEMP and NEMAP; and production and use of polythene bags have been drastically reduced. SEMP and NEMAP are examples of international cooperation. Countries and institutions that are partners in development are extending cooperation in various development projects. Environmental matters are being included in various project pro formas.

The failures of the last decade, according to this group, are: growth in the industrial field has slowed down; NGO programmes are being duplicated in the same place and even in the same sector; the over-all growth has remained unstable; arsenic problem has complicated the matter of safe drinking water;

Pro-active administration

Political commitment cannot succeed if it is not firm. The administration will also have to play an effective role for this purpose. The estrangement that existed between the political leadership and the administration during the colonial days still exists. But we could activate the administration on the issue of the ban on polythene bags and make the movement successful. Behind this success lies the ability to associate the political leadership, administration and the people with the movement. We have a lot to do to make the environment habitable.

What went wrong

The failures of the last decade, according to this group, are: growth in the industrial field has slowed down; NGO programmes are being duplicated in the same place and even in the same sector; the over-all growth has remained unstable; arsenic problem has complicated the matter of safe drinking water; drainage and sewerage system have not improved much; malaria has made a comeback; success in providing durable housing is negligible; there is no proper housing policy; unplanned building activities are going on; the poor people have severe dearth of housing facilities; slums are proliferating dangerously; there is lack of coordination in the activities of different organisations in protecting the environment.

drainage and sewerage system have not improved much; malaria has made a comeback; success in providing durable housing is negligible; there is no proper housing policy; unplanned building activities are going on; the poor people have severe dearth of housing facilities; slums are proliferating dangerously; there is lack of coordination in the activities of different organisations in protecting the environment; application of environmental laws is limited; the issue of environmental protection is not getting due importance in economic development planning; side by side with environmental pollution, the depletion of natural resources is not being highlighted; there are failures in taking advantage of the Kyoto protocol; there are failures in utilising various funds.

According to the group's report, the vision of the next decade

and the strategy to realise them are: in order to build a 'poverty free' Bangladesh, we must achieve a yearly growth rate of at least 7 per cent for the coming five years; we must develop management, training, skill and employment in order to attain this objective; we must ensure supply of totally pollution-free drinking water and ensure rapid improvement of the drainage/sewerage system; mortality rate of mothers and children must be brought down to zero; housing for all must be ensured through proper planning; formulation of an integrated policy and its implementation is essential to ensure housing for all by giving priority to the poor people; the environmental laws should be realistically applied; the question of the protection of the natural environment must be given due importance in

economic and social activities; in each sector environmental indicators should be prepared and these should be used in taking decisions; and grade accounting must be ensured.

Report of the natural resources group

Deputy Commissioner of Madaripur Md. Shafiqul Islam presented the report of the group on preservation and management of natural resources. The successes of the last 10 years according to the report of the group are: some improvement has been made in resource management through distribution of khas land, ashrayan and ideal village projects; attempts at ensuring maximum use of agricultural land are being made; beel management programme has been taken up; digital or GIS (global information system) maps are being prepared; awareness of the need for afforestation has increased; some progress has been made in social forestry; tree planting on individual initiative has increased; coastal afforestation has begun; the Sundarbans has been declared a 'world heritage site'; marketing of agricultural products has become easier; cultivation of high yielding varieties and diversification of cereals have increased; the use of organic manure and compost has become popular even if on a limited scale; fish cultivation has increased; foreign exchange is being earned by shrimp culture; the 'Save the Buriganga' movement has started even though on a limited scale; popular awareness for resisting industrial pollution and management of wastes is increasing; the work of the Directorate of Environment has increased, even though slowly; advances are being made in environmental management; the government decision to boycott polythene has earned popular support and the social movement in the private sector is a helpful step in this regard; use of CNG in motorised vehicles is increasing; popular awareness of air pollution is increasing; efforts are on to impose

Future is not always bright

It is difficult to visualise the situation if in the future Dhaka city, like other mega-cities, is filled with skyscrapers and the number of cars increases exponentially. There will be almost no cultivable land due to unplanned housing and road building in the villages. Problems will arise in implementing the programme of reaching electricity to every house.

restrictions on use of old and decrepit vehicles; use of underground water is gradually decreasing and use of surface water is increasing; the irrigation system is improving; popular opinion is being mobilised for preserving rain water; the sewerage system covers 40% of the urban areas.

The failures of the last decade according to this group are: there is no planning in the use of land and wetlands; cutting of hills remains uninterrupted; more land than necessary is being requisitioned and the power of requisition is often being misused, and if the requisitioned land is not used, it is not easily recovered; there is dearth of skilled manpower in land use; there is no endeavour to recover unlawfully occupied land and vested properties; urbanisation, founding of settlements and building of roads are going on without planning; insecticides are being used indiscriminately; forests are being continuously destroyed and forest land is being encroached upon; there is no adequate skilled manpower to protect forests; foreign species of animals and plants are being introduced at random; forest resources are being collected in an unplanned manner; reckless use of chemical fertilisers is going on without hindrance; soil fertility is continuing to decline; beneficial worms, insects and pollen are decreasing; crop diversity is vanishing; the local varieties of fish are becoming extinct; there is hardly any multiple use of agricultural products; there is no application of post-harvest technology; *char* lands are being illegally occupied; dams and sluice gates are being constructed on rivers without planning; bridges and culverts are being built everywhere in an unplanned manner; river erosion is continuously increasing, and as a result thousands of victims of such erosion are becoming rootless; rivers and canals are losing navigability due to siltation; floods have become regular affairs because rivers cannot retain water due to the above reason; dredging to maintain navigability is far from enough; many rivers are dying; water flow in rivers cannot be kept normal; there has been no proper solution of the Farakka problem; dependence on underground water should be reduced; there is mismanagement in land surveys and records; there is a dearth of skilled manpower for land surveys and records; unplanned industrialisation is taking place; there is lack of zoning in setting up industries; waste is being thrown into the rivers, canals and land; there is serious lack of accountability in the field of waste management; air pollution is increasing;

there is lack of appropriate technology in preventing air pollution; the water table is going down due to over-use of underground water, and as a result the rate of desertification is accelerating; the arsenic problem is becoming acute; supply of fresh/sweet water and retention of rainwater is still inadequate; salinity is increasing without control; and there is a lack of coordinated policy guidelines, awareness and application of law in sewage management.

Expectations for the next decade according to the group report are: integrated and planned use of land should be ensured; urbanisation should be well balanced; forests should be planted on 20/25 per cent of the total land; seed diversity should be preserved; people's participation in afforestation and creating gardens in the grounds of houses should be ensured; organising a social movement is urgent to increase afforestation widely; use of wood in the brick kilns should be totally stopped through strict application of laws; a greater number of sanctuaries should be set up; daily food intake of 2200 calories must be ensured for every one; people should be encouraged to change their food habits; preservation and export of surplus harvest and vegetables should be made easier; a green Bangladesh should be created; proper management of rivers and wetlands should be ensured; rivers and canals should be deepened; khas lands and *haors* should be leased out in a planned way; use of surface water has to be increased; a greater number of artificial water reservoirs has to be excavated; the concepts of 'clean industry' among entrepreneurs and of 'healthy city' among town-planners should be popularised; adoption of small waste technology should be given priority as far as possible in setting up new factories; the 3 Rs -- 'reduction, recycling and reuse' -- should be integrated in waste management; if necessary setting up of waste-treatment plants should be made mandatory;

Linking poverty with development

The limited amount of cultivable land is being used beyond limit. Its consequence will be far reaching. Adverse effect is being created in all aspects of the environment. We ought to determine what the strategy for development should be by analysing all the situations. We should fix poverty alleviation as our target and connect it with the sustainable development programme.

recycling should be made popular in cases where artificial raw materials have to be used; use of improved ovens, solar ovens, bio-gas and natural gas should be made popular in order to prevent air pollution; planned and proper use of underground and surface water resources is necessary; in every possible case use of surface water should be made compulsory; arsenic-free, 100% safe water for all must be ensured; there should be strict conservation of underground water; use of chemical insecticides should be restricted in a planned way; water should be stored by constructing well-planned small dams; silted up ponds and *dighis* should be re-excavated; community-based potable water storage system should be made widespread; there should be 100% sanitary sewerage/drainage systems.

The strategy to materialise these aspirations is firm political will in every case, quick measures to ensure proper use of time, integrated planning and improved management, encouraging new scientific research and inventions, popularising appropriate technology, holding meetings at the local level with the participation of the people, proper application of laws, ensuring people's respect for law and making them develop the habit of abiding by the laws.

Report of the professional group

Dr. Mahfuzul Huq presented the report of the 'Activation of the role of professionals and organisations' group.

The successes of the last 10 years, according to the report, are: spontaneous participation of women in the general elections; women's role in formulating policy and the rate of women's literacy have increased; participation of women and youth in small credit programmes has increased; rate of child and mother mortality has been reduced; continued success of programmes on education, health and small credits as a result of the activities of NGOs and other organisations; women are being organised; coordination between public and private sector is increasing; the Ministry of Hill Chittagong affairs has been created; computer engineers are coming up; technologists are making positive contributions to agriculture, irrigation, pisciculture and animal husbandry; initiatives have been taken to strengthen the local government system; women's participation in local government has increased; and women have become more conscious of their rights.

The failures of the last decade, according to this group, are: repression of women has increased; child labour has not reduced up to expectation; despondency, restlessness and drug addiction among the youth have increased due to unemployment; the rate of interest for small credits is still high; some NGOs are trying to extend their influence in national politics even if indirectly; rate of landlessness among the tribal people has increased; rate of literacy among tribal people has not increased up to expectation; in certain regions repression of tribal people has increased; social insecurity of tribal people has also increased; most of the schools and colleges have no library or equipment necessary for science studies; local governments are still very weak.

The expectations for the next decade, according to the group report, are: one seat for every district should be reserved for women in the Jatiya Sangsad; amendments to, and application of, the Women's Repression Act and quick settlement of related cases should be ensured; the United Nations Convention on Children should be quickly and fully implemented; risky child labour should be completely stopped; child smuggling should be prevented; children's education should be given priority; wide scope should be created for self-employment of the youth; there should be specific rules for NGO activities and their transparency and accountability should be ensured; rate of interest on small credits has to be reduced; NGO activities should be completely free from political influence; proper policy guidelines should be prepared for land distribution and implemented in the interest of the tribal people; equal rights for all citizens should be ensured institutionally; science and computer study should be popularised from the primary stage; we should seek ways of increasing software export; equal rights of men and women should be ensured; stronger local government system is essential; there

Righting the wrong

Due to 'our mistakes' practically no development has taken place in the country. Rectification of those mistakes is a difficult task. The World Summit on Sustainable Development is an inter-government effort. The government speaks there on behalf of the people. The special feature of the method is the direct participation of the government at this phase.

should be effective coordination between local and national government; and active participation of women in local government should be further increased.

The strategy to materialise these expectations is to ensure formulation of policies and laws on the basis of partnership and their application. According to the reports of the three groups the degree of education and mass awareness has increased. Side by side with institutional education, the scope of non-formal and semi-formal education has also increased. Opportunities for research on education have increased. Environment has been given due importance in the mass media, and many newspapers have started allocating a separate page for environment.

Citing the instances of not paying enough attention to environment in education and lack of adequate resources for environmental research, it was said that education and increased awareness on environment is urgently needed. With this aim in view environment should be given importance in formulating plans. The environment should be included in the curriculum from the primary school stage.

Regarding the cooperation at the local, national and international levels the three reports said that coordination between the local administration and people has increased. Activities of various environmental organisations have increased at the national level, and unconventional donor involvement in development activities has also increased. The participants in the workshop emphasised the effective coordination of activities and cooperation at the local, national and international levels.

The workshop has recommended adoption in future of eco-friendly development programmes after identifying priority sectors according to importance and need.

In his concluding speech, Director General of the Environment Directorate Hedayetul Islam Chowdhury said each environment worker should work hard to discharge his responsibility in protecting the environment. "Dhaka City has not yet become a gas chamber, but if we do not take steps immediately then such a situation may arise. Change has come about in the procession of seasons. Many places have no trees or birds due to changes

in the environment. The ozone layer is being destroyed. We shall have to march ahead into the future without impairing present development. We expect necessary cooperation for development."

FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury said the purpose of the six workshops at six divisional headquarters was 'to unify our ideas and strategies' on sustainable development with those of the common citizens. "Our contributions in protecting the environment is exemplary, but a country like the Philippines has gone for ahead through combined efforts. Their skills in negotiation and power of bargaining have put them ahead. Financial assistance in sustainable development is necessary. We have not yet developed skills in the international perspective. Those who are now working at the field level will one day hold the responsibility at the highest level of administration, and that is why they should develop skills in negotiation and bargaining."

Deputy Secretary of the environment ministry Omar Ali said the ban on use of polythene shopping bags has taught us that if realisation dawns on all of us, then no illegal acts can happen. "We are working for sustainable development, but many things are yet to be done."

Deputy Commissioner of Faridpur, Ismail Jabiullah said realistic and life-oriented advice could be received if we accept counsel from officials at the field level in formulating any national policy guidelines.

He said we are concerned about the country's environment because our lives depend on the conservation of the environment. "We are lagging behind the developed world in environmental awareness but we are optimistic that we shall be able to resist environmental degradation. The NGOs should become more vocal against environmental pollution."

Mr. Jabiullah said the brickfields have

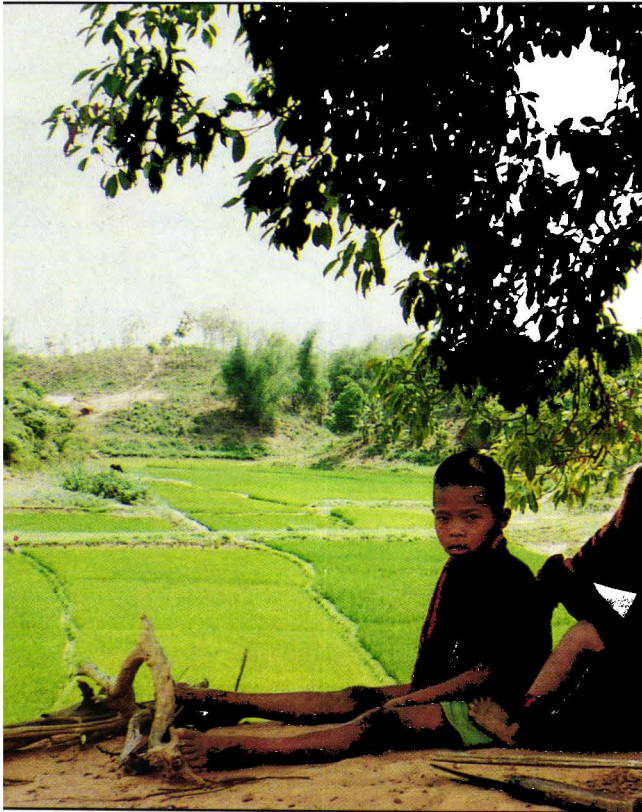
Getting basics right

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played a major role in degrading the environment in Faridpur. "Although bricks are necessary for development, their production process is harmful for the environment. Wood is burnt indiscriminately in the brickfields. The owners of those fields procure licences after fulfilling all conditions, but they flout the conditions after getting the licence. There is some vagueness in the government rules of which they take full advantage."

Deputy Commissioner of Shariatpur Moshteqa Iffat said we implement at the field level the policy that the government formulates. "We can take advantage of our experience if we are involved at the primary stage of policy formulation. Mobile courts are responsible to see if the brick kilns are fulfilling the conditions, but due to paucity of officials it is not always possible for mobile courts to function."

People's power



Photo

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Road to Sustainable Development
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People's power

By Kazi Shahnaz with Anisur Rahman

Experts, environment activists and donor representatives have observed that the developing nations must ensure better coordination among themselves for effective projection of their issues and causes in international forums. They were speaking on May 20, 2002 at a national consultation meeting on World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) to be held in Johannesburg in August this year. They identified lack of coordination among the developing countries as a major obstacle in the way of getting due consideration of their respective issues.

It was further observed during the consultation that the developing countries must fix their strategies at informal meetings for incorporation of their agenda in the international conferences like the WSSD, a follow-up of the landmark Rio Earth Summit held in 1992.

State Minister for Environment and Forest Jafrul Islam Chowdhury was present as chief guest at the consultation meeting organised by the Forum of Environmental Journalists of

Anticipate, adapt

The climate change issue, they said, also calls for a paradigm shift in the development concept of Bangladesh as the change threatens people's livelihood, economy, culture, environment and the natural resource system.

Development planning guidelines from the climate change perspectives require location-specific scientific predictions over time and the state-of-art technology. They pointed out that rethinking of the development process in the climate change context involves the issue of impact assessment, and anticipatory adaptation measures at the physical, biological, social and institutional levels and multi-criteria analysis.

Bangladesh (FEJB) in collaboration with the Environment and Forest Ministry, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Danish 92 Group.

Presided over by FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, the meeting was also participated by journalists, officials and representatives from different international development partners including the World Health Organisation (WHO), DANIDA, British High Commission and the US Embassy. Referring to the inherent link between environment and sustainable development, the state minister said. "All of us have to understand the delicate relations and exploit the nature with care."

The FEJB Chairman underlined the need for a thorough discussion on the developing countries' issues in the preparatory committee meeting for WSSD to attain the desired goal in the Johannesburg Summit. He also presented the draft report of People's Consultation Workshops for discussion.

Peter Hersom of the DANIDA described Bangladesh as a "modest and efficient nation" and appreciated its efforts and role in domestic and international initiative for sustainable development. "In terms of population, Bangladesh is a big country and therefor it should raise its issues and concerns with a louder voice," he said. "Bangladeshis are too modest," the Danish engineer commented.

Han Heijen of WHO identified an inter-link between water quality and poverty but said the issue was missed in the draft text of the WSSD. Contaminated water affects public health and subsequently has an impact on productivity and national economy. It also raises the number of people below the poverty line, he said. Heijen also highlighted the issues of clean energy and primary education as major factors for sustainable development.

The national vision of Bangladesh, the participants articulated, aims at achieving the country's ability to reproduce and enhance its existing wealth and resources which include economic, social capital, natural, biological, human and knowledge resources.

The vision, as stated by them is directed towards achieving a sustainable livelihood for all citizens, securing a life free from hunger, diseases and malnutrition, ensuring peace, harmony and security, and a attaining a good standard of living for all Bangladeshis.

Bangladesh faces a number of international constraints in its efforts for achieving the stated vision including, global economic inequity and widening gap between the rich and the poor countries, unfavourable global policy environment and conditionalities, Lack of balance between developed and developing countries in international trade regimes (i.e. WTO) and lack of consistency and harmony among various global covenants, treaties, policies, undertakings, principles.

Achievements and major tasks ahead

Bangladesh, the participants said, is usually cited as a country with one of the highest population density in terms of number, disregarding the productive capacity of its human resources. People can resolve the resource constraints if their local wisdom and knowledge is given adequate support to enhance production and quality of life. Unfortunately, due to the use of unsustainable technologies in agriculture, the country's natural resources (land and water) are already under intense pressure. The narrow biological and genetic base of agriculture also became a threat for the agrarian systems. Bangladesh

Innovation invited

A major challenge that the people of Bangladesh are facing is arsenic contamination of ground water in parts of the country. While this disaster demands immediate mitigation, this has also sparked a debate of surface water versus ground water use and the future of irrigated agriculture. It is unfortunate that while interest to do research on the arsenic problem is rising, there is hardly any serious international response to tackle this disaster. At the national level, the country will have to be innovative in the use of surface water and gradually go about reducing the extraction of ground water, without creating detrimental effect on agricultural production.

Lurking danger

Currently, some 10.2 million people in Bangladesh have access to micro-finance services under government supported programmes, including the Grameen Bank, BRAC and more than 500 other NGOs. However, it is also apprehended that efforts to commercialise micro-credit system are likely to push the NGOs further away from comprehensive social development programmes which will have adverse impact on the poor.

has demonstrated that increase in agricultural productivity is possible without exacerbating problems of soil fertility, water quality and ecological cost. In this context, so far as Bangladesh is concerned perhaps no other area deserves as much attention as the issue of sustainable agricultural and rural development strategies. They said in Bangladesh, a riverine and sea-board country, concentration of poverty incidences are more prominent along the river banks and vulnerable coastal zone. People living in the flood prone areas are susceptible to widespread

hardship during the severe flood years.

The climate change issue, they said, also calls for a paradigm shift in the development concept of Bangladesh as the change threatens people's livelihood, economy, culture, environment and the natural resource system. Development planing guidelines from the climate change perspectives require location-specific scientific predictions over time and the state of art technology. They pointed out that rethinking of the development process in the climate change context involves the issue of impact assessment, and anticipatory adaptation measures at the physical, biological, social and institutional levels and multi-criteria analysis.

The participants of the national consultation said, the country offers a good example to the world for the dynamism of its civil society organizations and development NGOs. Yet while the civil society organizations have become worthy interlocuters for the poor and the disenfranchised, it is also apparent that the long-term sustainability of poverty reduction depends--to an important degree--on real local self-articulation. And this is where Bangladesh is redefining the agenda for the country's

development policy. Currently, some 10.2 million people in Bangladesh have access to micro-finance services under government supported programmes, including the Grameen Bank, BRAC and more than 500 other NGOs. However, it is also apprehended that efforts to commercialise micro-credit system are likely to push the NGOs further away from comprehensive social development programmes which will have adverse impact on the poor.

Moving onward

Despite heavy odds, Bangladesh has scored quite a few successes and achievements which should now be carried forward towards the achievement of the goal of sustainable development, they assessed.

They said Bangladesh's challenge for the future is to address the problem of distribution while making it possible to reduce poverty by increased participation of the poor in economic activities. The government understands that it is the moral responsibility of the state not to destroy the existing livelihood options. "Bangladesh is rather unique in the sense that the rural livelihood is based on biodiversity-based production systems where the majority can survive if the existing life support systems are maintained and enhanced," as the government aptly pointed out in its draft national report for the WSSD, the participants pointed out.

A major challenge that the people of Bangladesh are facing is arsenic contamination of ground water in parts of the country. While this disaster demands immediate mitigation, this has also sparked a debate of surface water versus ground water use and the future of irrigated agriculture. It is unfortunate that while interest to do research on the arsenic problem is rising, there is hardly any serious international response to tackle this disaster. At the national level, the country will have to be innovative in the use of surface water and gradually go about reducing the extraction of ground water, without creating detrimental effect on agricultural production.

But they said, a major challenge for Bangladesh is to have access to education, skill and technology without disrupting

its indigenous and local knowledge systems and cultures. While the country must generate as much domestic resources it can, the investment requirement is far higher than it can muster. Hence, the country will need a greater understanding and sharing of moral and other responsibilities from the international communities.

Moral commitments made over the last ten years since the Rio at different international fora and conventions by the rich nations still remain to be fulfilled, the participants regretted. Progress towards efficient and equitable management of natural, biological and genetic resources continues to be limited. They said globalisation and trade liberalisation have given rise to more discord than resolution because of asymmetric implementation by the rich to the detriment of the interests of the developing nations. Countries making major contributions to greenhouse gas emission and global warming have reneged on their pledges. We all must at least acknowledge that environmental degradation, poverty, and deprivation anywhere in the world is a threat to all the nations and mankind, they added.

The participants called for taking urgent actions now by people, communities, nations and the world at large will certainly jeopardize the future of people, particularly that of the poor. It is the poor who are going to suffer the most for the loss of their livelihood unless we can chart out a course of actions for sustainable human development. In this endeavour, as in any long journey, we must take the first small step, beginning in this case with whatever we have done best and increasingly build upon those and new areas of enterprise. Despite heavy odds, Bangladesh has scored quite a few successes and achievements which should now be carried forward towards the achievement of the goal of sustainable development, they assessed.

Assess achievements



Photo: Shahadat Hossain

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Assess achievements

By Anisur Rahman with Farid Ahmed

Officials, donor representatives, experts, civil society and media people agreed on the need for continued interactions among themselves to carry out programmes for sustainable development in line with the landmark 1992 Rio Earth Summit in Brazil.

Taking part in a national consultation on preparations for the upcoming Rio plus 10 summit in South Africa as the follow up of the Rio Summit, they identified lack of coordinations between the government agencies causing perception problems on sustainable development issues.

Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) organised the consultation meeting on September 24, 2001 with support from MoEF, UNDP and Danish 92 Group. Information secretary Syed Marghub Murshed was the chief guest.

FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury presided over the meeting also

At our own peril...

The participants pointed out that species like the world famous Royal Bengal Tiger, the Ganges River Dolphin, the Hoolock Gibbon and the Asian Elephants are on the verge of extinction. Five species of threatened marine turtles nest along the Bay of Bengal coasts and two globally important migratory bird flyways converge on Bangladesh. This is a country with a broad range of ecosystem, including tropical green forests, moist deciduous woods, mangroves, riparian and coastal wetlands, and the littoral, sub-littoral and benthic. But unfortunately, they said, all this diversity and the ecosystems supporting it have been under threat--thanks to such overriding factors like land scarcity, population pressure, poverty and dependence on natural resources for subsistence.

attended by environmental journalists from neighbouring India, Pakistan and Nepal to share regional experiences on the issue.

The speakers said despite involvement of all including NGOs and private sectors, the government was to take the lead role in carrying out the Agenda 21, the agenda for 21st century in all spheres "Now we have to take stock of what we have done in the past 10 years (since Rio summit). We should be well prepared for the Rio 10 plus summit to highlight our concerns," Syed Marghub Murshed said.

Leading environmental expert and negotiator Dr. Atiq A. Rahman said Bangladesh should highlight its magnitude of natural disasters along with the progresses it made in environmental sector including the landmark National Environmental Management Plan (NEMAP).

Reviewing the global scenario after 1992, he said a significant change took place with emergence of strong civil society or private sectors compelling the United Nations to protect its credibility with endorsements of global community instead of the governments alone.

But, he said, the world during this period also witnessed severe food scarcity, worst environmental degradation and massive corruption side by side increased yields and knowledge on environment and increased awareness of the people.

UNDP's Assistant Resident Representative Syed Shireen Kamal said that Bangladesh had so far nothing to be called as national paper to be presented in Johannesburg despite preparatory initiatives taken by some of the civil society bodies.

"Such a multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional assessment would obviously need to be led by a key ministry like the environment and forest ministry which would play a coordinating role in leading this national level exercise," she said.

FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury emphasised the need for forming a National Steering Committee involving all stakeholder groups, civil society bodies, private sector and

government agencies to assess progress after Rio and chart national vision to achieve sustainable development.

Director General of Department of Environment Khondoker Rashidul Haque explained the Bangladesh perspectives and concerns linked to the Johannesburg summit and underlined the need for activating the national steering committee for better coordination in carrying out the Agenda 21.

Sunil Kanti Bose and Omar Ali of the environment ministry, Anju Sharma of leading Indian research group Centre Science and Environment, leading Nepalese journalist Aditya Man Shreshtha and journalists Mahfuzullahs, Badiul Alam and Mostafa Kamal Majumder among others spoke on the occasion.

The participants pointed out that species like the world famous Royal Bengal Tiger, the Ganges River Dolphin, the Hoolock Gibbon and the Asian Elephants are on the verge of extinction. Five species of threatened marine turtles nest along the Bay of Bengal coasts and two globally important migratory bird flyways converge on Bangladesh. This is a country with a broad range of ecosystem, including tropical green forests, moist deciduous woods, mangroves, riparian and coastal wetlands, and the littoral, sub-littoral and benthic. But unfortunately, they said, all this diversity and the ecosystems supporting it have been under threat--thanks to such overriding factors like land scarcity, population pressure, poverty and dependence on natural resources for subsistence living.

They said that Bangladesh government has taken up efforts to reverse the trends of environmental degradation. It has taken up a National Environment Management Action Plan (NEMAP) after country wide consultation in 1995 leading to

After all, money matters

They also saluted the farmhands of Bangladesh for achieving food self-sufficiency braving flooding, droughts and other natural calamities. The participants called for putting more emphasis on remittance by adopting a pragmatic policy as the country is trying to reduce its dependence on foreign assistance.

Effective legal means needed

Bangladesh still lacks effective legal instruments for conservation and environmental protection. With a large population and scanty and depleting resource base, it has proved impossible to strike a balance between economic growth and the country's conservation needs. Hence, there is series of challenges standing in the way of ensuring a sustainable development.

the formulation and implementation of what is called the Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP). There is also the Bangladesh Environmental Management Project (BEMP). It has prepared and gone about implementing a National Conservation Strategy (NCS) in 1995. But despite all this, little headway could be made in reversing the alarming rate of degradation of environment. They said adding that road to achieving a sustainable development

remains a far cry in Bangladesh.

Some of the participants said, Bangladesh still lacks effective legal instruments for conservation and environmental protection. With a large population and scanty and depleting resource base, it has proved impossible to strike a balance between economic growth and the country's conservation needs. Hence, there is series of challenges standing in the way of ensuring a sustainable development. To begin with, attaining a sustainable development in Bangladesh will require sweeping reforms in government policies and legislation, improved governance, strengthening of institutions, capacity building of the government and the civil society and ensuring active participation of all stakeholders, they emphasized.

The participants also debated an hour to go about charting a course on way to sustainable development in the coming decade (2002-2012): The concept of sustainable development they said has a large connotation. It should take into account the overall vision necessary for a purposeful social transformation, which is best construed in terms of a nation that is democratic, economically vibrant, driven by coherent, secure, just and equitable principles and

consisting of citizens whose capabilities and potentials are developed to a high degree. Good governance, ensuring transparent, accountable, rule of law, effective democratic institutions at all levels of the society, appropriate legal and regulatory systems, free and vibrant news media, social equity, and participation of all citizens are crucial pre-requisite for building an ideal pathway towards sustainable development, they said. There has been a general understanding in the government about these essential pre-requisites to ensuring a sustainable future for the nation.

In the post-Rio Bangladesh, both poverty and unemployment have assumed critical dimensions. And hence, poverty alleviation has been a central theme in the national development policies and actions. They said despite heavy odds Bangladesh achieved some success in reducing the incidence of poverty since 1992.

But again, the present economic growth (below 5%) and the low rate of savings and investment, it is feared, can further aggravate the poverty cycle. Hence, the strategy of the government should be to accelerate economic growth and increase investments in the priority sectors like agriculture, industries and infrastructures, rural development, education, health, human resources development--especially women and youth development. All this should be geared to attaining the over-arching goal of poverty alleviation through ensuring sustainable development.

They also saluted the farmhands of Bangladesh for achieving food self-sufficiency braving flooding, droughts and other natural calamities. The participants called for putting more emphasis on remittance by adopting a pragmatic policy as the country is trying to reduce its dependence on foreign assistance.

Mainstream in the media



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Mainstream in the media

By Enayetullah Khan

At the Dhaka workshop for people's consultation for sustainable development, Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud made a significant, though brief, reference to the mashrooming of unplanned habitats across the country. Directly proportional to population pressure in one of the most densely countries, these metropolitan, urban, semi-urban and rural centres for housing and other civic amenities, coupled with other works of bricks and mortars, are laying waste the farmlands, including those on both sides of a road or a highway. Do we need to practise voluntary retraction to create space for additional people or plan townships and habitats to leave a space where other living things could exist?

In Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud's considered opinion, Bangladesh is an overbuilt country both infrastructure- and shelter-wise. There may be a time not far ahead when urban and rural habitations for

Watchdogs

Environment, eco-system, biodiversity, pollution are now the common beat of a reporter, although he or she is not a specialist writer. This is how it should be for the print media practitioners whose holistic view of the society and events and informed reportage make sustainable development work, encourage the civil society to create a movement, oblige the government to act administratively and enact regulatory laws to prevent incursions into Nature. It must be acknowledged that environment and sustainable development as part of the news and analyses have caught on with the print media in a very short time and served the causes well indeed. The Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB), in this regard, has played the part of a catalyst that constantly prods the reporters or the editors, reporting or editorialising news and information fit to print, to put their faculty to use and keep their eyes and ears open.

Problems creep in

Some protective slabs of a concrete spar for containing the force of rising and gushing waters of Jamuna recently gave way, giving rise to erosion of a part of a village in Sirajganj and threatening the adjoining living space and cropland. The structural river-engineering device, unattended by the ground-level authority awaiting orders to replace the slabs, militates against sustainable development in productive terms for the areas on the river bank.

residents will pose a critical problem of spacing unless it is addressed now.

Echoing a somewhat similar concern, Bangladesh Finance Minister M. Saifur Rahman told the editors in a pre-budget meeting that the urban, semi-urban and rural roads snaking the countryside under successive annual development plans of the government have hit the anarchic high. They are squeezing croplands, obstructing natural drainage of both rainfall and the flow from the rivers and streams as also the work of nature. These projects, oftener fanciful electoral signposts, interfere with sustainable development. ADP investment on infrastructure and buildings, including the mega projects, needs to be made with a futuristic view of the land and the people. After all, the cornucopia of nature and the immediate thrust of human needs, even in a per-capita-income-poor country like Bangladesh, are not

always synchronic. To the contrary, they may be at odds.

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Wetlands around Dhaka, and the banks and the gradients of rivers Buriganga and Sitalakhya in Dhaka and Narayanganj-in that order - have been literally run over by land-grabbers and builders to whom money is God and a naked one at that. Water bodies and open spaces, including the tree-lined parks and the

conserved forests, are being encroached on overnight, as in a Hobbesian jungle where the strong feeds on the weak.

The print media in Bangladesh is now replete with such and other stories focussing on the need for sustainable development. The instances are diverse ranging from economic banditry at the expense of Nature first and the State next as in the case of Ashuliya, unplanned development in structural solutions to flood-protection, arsenic contamination in water, lead pollution in the air, polythene-menace in drains and river-beds and more-the-merrier roads and construction plans in the ADP, among scores of other concerns.

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Media makes the difference

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Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB), in this regard, has played the part of a catalyst that constantly prods the reporters or the editors, reporting or editorialising news and information fit to print, to put their faculty to use and keep their eyes and ears open. The newspaper-ethic has undergone a sea-change particularly in matters of environment and sustainable development.

Recommendations of Divisional Workshops



Photo

Bangladesh
Road to Sustainable Development
People's Voice





**People's Consultation on Sustainable Development
National Assessment Report for WSSD, Bangladesh**

February 19, 2002, Sylhet

**Group I
Group discussion on Socio-economic issues**

Success / failure of programmes adopted in last 10 years (1992-2002)	Hopes and aspiration of next 10 years (2002-2012)	Strategy for implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive response to programmes to alleviate poverty, provide employment and achieve growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable government • Maintenance of democratic process at every level • National consensus • Establishment of rule of law, transparency and accountability • Transformation of unskilled manpower into skilled human resources • Government initiative to increase remittance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To strengthen local government • To remove bureaucratic tangle • To expand accountability of people's representatives • Coordination in poverty alleviation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall health consciousness has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe water and sanitation • Improved service in community clinics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase budgetary allocation for health sector • To increase public awareness about environmental protection and development • To enact a law to protect natural water bodies in Sylhet city and frame rules to implement the act.
Sustainable development and decision-making process		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning of the flow of development-NEMAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of public opinion • Treating opinion of experts with due importance • Taking opinions of people's representatives at all levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To formulate short-, medium- and long-term plans.
Education and public awareness, mass media and development		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress is there 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of disparity in education • Educational institutions free from terrorism and availability of educational materials • Increased mass awareness • Increased role of mass media • Strengthened development research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase budgetary allocations
International assistance on sustainable development		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive lobbying to strengthen international cooperation • United pressure by developing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not to accept unplanned, imposed assistance • To be choosy in

	countries	accepting forced assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging expatriate Bangladeshis to invest in their homeland and set up of special investment cell.
Ensuring improvement of environment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress made National Environmental Management Programme Several isolated ministry-based policies and programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination between national policy and the planning policy and programme Development plans only after protecting environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate budgetary allocation for improvement of environment
Durable housing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No notable success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned housing in rural and urban areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring appropriate sanitation, safe water for slums and building of ecologically sound housing Making earthquake resistance test compulsory for multi-storey houses in Sylhet.

Group-2

Issue-based group: Preservation and management of natural resources

Success / failure of programmes adopted in last 10 years (1992-2002)	Hopes and aspiration of next 10 years (2002-2012)	Strategy for implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No desired success due to lack of coordination among the relevant authorities regarding implementation of the government policy on land resource management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulation of proper policies taking difference in quality of land into account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring implementation of policies by the authorities concerned in line with suggestions made by people associated with land
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hills, mounds and forest preservation laws have failed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strict enforcement of laws side by side with mass awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating mass awareness apart from ensuring transparency, accountability and strict enforcement of law
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programmes adopted during last ten years not worth a mention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of the previous status through satisfactory application of management policies adopted to preserve agriculture and bio-diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the use of organic manure and reduction of chemical fertiliser and insecticide use. Increase in the use and popularity of the IMP system. Control over standard of mechanised boats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No good results from river and haor management policy doing the last years. Rivers are silting up for lack of initiative to excavate those. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steps towards increased navigability of rivers and bringing back endangered species of fishes and other water animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-excavation of rivers ensuring availability of water by maintaining good relations with neighbours where the rivers have their sources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No government policy on stopping industrial pollution and waste management was noticed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pollution-free, clean environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To turn wastes into resources To associate environmental engineers To enforce proper policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total failure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean air 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recent government steps to stop air pollution should be strictly enforced. Ban on plying of defective vehicles and control on factory smokes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abuse of government policy on sand and stone collection and quarry. As a result, over-extraction has put environment in great danger. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sand and stone quarry should be done by keeping the nature in tact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To achieve coordination between different agencies involved in this sector.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh water management and preservation policies have totally failed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digging ponds in khas land in every union. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take initiatives for irrigation management and digging ponds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government efforts at management of solid waste and drainage have failed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper and standard drainage system from towns to villages and initiatives by people concerned for solid waste disposal. Ditches and drains free from encroachment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commendable steps like banning polythene bags should be taken.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and mass awareness and role of mass media have significantly increased. But no tangible success is achieved in development research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heightened awareness among citizens in preserving and managing natural resources. More publicity of this medium. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public awareness needs to be increased.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of transparency observed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of real picture before the people through mass media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To determine demand correctly and identify proper heads. To formulate demand-based policies in consultation with those who possess the resources and to associate them in the implementation process.

Group: 3

Issue-based Group: Activation of role of profession organisations

Success / failure of programmes adopted in last 10 years (1992-2002)	Hopes and aspiration of next 10 years (2002-2012)	Strategy for implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily wage of tea garden worker has increased from Tk 24 to Tk 26 per head in last 10 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Per head daily wage of tea garden workers at Tk 36 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased mass awareness and education.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem of electricity and water in the houses of tea garden workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education of their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening the role of local government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem of schools for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to health workers, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the involvement

children.	doctors and health services for them	of indigenous people in local government.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No lady doctor in hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solution to problems of schools, communications etc of the indigenous people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in association of women in local government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dearth of necessary medicine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ownership of khas land by Khasia tribe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded legal power of local government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solution to the aforesaid problems of the Khasia community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting a stop to building of infrastructure on farm land
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem of schools of the Patra community has been solved to some extent in 10 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solution to the above mentioned problems of the Monipuri community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased foreign investment by reducing political instability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problems of water and communications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully enjoy civic amenities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the ILO convention to solve problems of tea workers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of insecurity of women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated approaches to alleviate rural poverty and, above all, achieve sustainable development are needed to be adopted irrespective of party affiliations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some improvement in business, commerce and communications of Khasia community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men assuming role to remove wage discrimination among stone quarry workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening community- and tribe-based organisational activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No schools and colleges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of child labour 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No bus service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional safety of journalists and implementation of Wage Board recommendations 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem of medical treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heightened awareness about environment and environmental laws 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortage of cremation grounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforcement of family laws 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some progress in handloom industry of Manipuri community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Favourable circumstances for improvement of the lot of women and children, and environment 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem of capital. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement of women and indigenous people in mainstream development 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Necessary credit not available. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some improvement in the lot of women in last 10 years but lack of security is still there 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's consciousness has improved especially with regard to elections. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservatism has reduced 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child labour has 		

increased in certain fields		
• Environmental awareness has increased		
• Disparity in wages between men and women stone-quarry workers		
• Meager role of local government		
• Journalists are able to get close to the people but security problem is increasing		
• Wage Board is not being implemented		
• Weak role/activities of women members in Union Parishad		
• Financial weakness of local government		
• Absence of organisations to raise demands of tea garden workers		

People's Consultation on Sustainable Development National Assessment Report for WSSD, Bangladesh

February, 28 2002, Khulna

Group I

Group discussion on Socio-economic issues

Success/failure of different programmes undertaken during last ten years (1992-2002)

- **Poverty, growth and employment:** Poverty reduced; economic growth and employment opportunities increased – but not as had been expected.
- **Development of public health:** Substantial progress achieved; but the problem of arsenic contamination of groundwater has arisen in parts of the country.
- **Sustainable housing:** No progress.
- **Ensuring the incorporation of environmental and sustainable development in the policy planning:** A national environment plan adopted.
- **International cooperation for sustainable development:** Very limited.
- **Sustainable development and policy making process:** Program was not as had been expected. Democracy has been restored – but the advancement of democratic culture and practice had been very slow.
- **Education, public awareness, media and research:** Significant progress achieved, but insignificant research activities on development issues.
- **Financial assistance at local, national and international level:** Not satisfactory.

Hopes/aspirations for coming ten years (2003-2012)

- At least half the people now living under poverty level should be brought above the poverty level.
- To achieve a minimum 8 percent GDP growth rate.
- To ensure new employment opportunities for 1.5 crore people.
- Solution to arsenic problem.
- Ensure supply of safe drinking water.
- To ensure 100 percent sanitation, healthcare and public awareness in this regard.
- A planned housing policy for people.
- To build up better housing facilities in the cities and rural areas.
- Any development planning should take into account regional environmental problems to ensure sustainable development.
- International cooperation for ensuring sustainable development should be increased.
- Democracy must be strengthened further and democratic culture should be enriched.
- Rate of literacy and the quality of education should be increased. Cost of education must be reduced.
- Academic research activities should be strengthened. More funds should be made available for research work.
- Extensive financial assistance should be made available at local, national and international level for ensuring sustainable development.

Implementation strategy

- For ensuring poverty alleviation, accelerated growth and greater employment opportunities, micro-credit (controlled by the govt.) at easy terms and small interest should be extended away from the poor. Programmes for self-employment and education on Information Technology should be strengthened.
- For development of public health appropriate technology should be encouraged.
- Pipeline supply of tap water should be introduced in rural areas like in the cities and towns.
- Encourage sanitary latrine in rural areas.
- Healthcare programmes should be further strengthened.
- House building loans on low interest and easy terms for people in rural areas as well as in cities and towns.
- Programmes like ideal village and housing projects in rural areas should be strengthened.

- Greater awareness among planners about sustainable development. Environment Protection Act-1995 must be strictly enforced through increasing the provisions of punishment.
- Greater participation in international forums.
- Greater coordination between GO-NGO initiatives.
- People's participation in all decision-making process.
- Establishment of a national consensus on all major national issues.
- Increasing financial budget for different sectors of development.
- Exploitation of national resources and their proper utilisation for sustainable development.
- Expanding the sphere of international cooperation. Should be cautious about conditionalities.

What kind of future development should be adopted?

- A sustainable development programme based on national priority. It should be reality-oriented and self-reliant as far as possible.

Group II

Group discussion on natural resources, conservation and management

Success/failure of different programmes undertaken during last ten years (1992-2002)

In the field of land management:

- Not much headway made.
- Infrastructures and other facilities was not build in a planned way.
- Mismanagement in the administration of govt.-owned Khas land.
- Land reforms were not carried out.
- Landlessness increased.
- Fertility of land decreased due to widespread use of chemical fertiliser and insecticides.
- Farmland destroyed as a result of inroad of saline water.
- Widespread water-logging created.
- Rivers are dying.

On forests:

- People awareness and participation increased.
- Social forestry is a good thing.
- Homestead forests reduced.
- Afforestation taking place but bio-diversity reduced.
- The number of fruit-bearing trees decreased.
- Some species like banyan trees are slowly vanishing.
- The area of the Sundarbans remained same. But nothing has been done to improve its management. Bio-diversity of the Sundarbans affected.

On agriculture and bio-diversity:

- Invasion of hybrid seeds in last decade.
- Some aggressive fish species introduced.
- Local species of rice, fish etc. are vanishing.
- Increased salinity affected farmland and bio-diversity.
- Shrimp culture and salt manufacturing destroyed farmland.
- Grazing grounds were vanishing and the livestock population reduced.
- Dependence on HYV increased.
- Many farmland lost usefulness because of water-logging.
- Fresh cultivation in ponds increased.
- Poultry industry developed with people rearing more chicken and ducks.

On rivers, water bodies and wetland:

- Rivers, canals and other wetlands were dying.
- Bio-diversity of the rivers and water bodies were vanishing.

- Vast areas in Khulna, Jessore, Kushtia and other southwestern districts are affected as a result of construction irrigation and river training, structures and withdrawal of water from the common international rivers by neighbouring India – particularly in the Ganges valley.
- Dearth of sweetwater and increasing saline water.
- River training, irrigation dam and bridge construction caused death of many rivers and their affected waterflow.
- Unplanned road construction. hampered natural flow of water.

Industrial pollution and waste management:

- Industrial pollution increased as a result of lack of waste management.
- Absence of effluent treatment plants.
- Chemical wastes are being indiscriminately dumped.
- Soil, water and air pollution increased.
- Unplanned expansion of shrimp culture destroyed the natural composition of soil, increasing salinity and destroying trees and forests.
- Bio-diversity affected because of indiscriminate catching of shrimp fries.
- All the above are causing unemployment and rendering more people landless.
- Implication of the use of snails as a food should be studied.
- Arsenic and iron content in water increased.
- Limitation in ensuring supply of safe drinking water in Khulna region due to high salinity.
- Some good initiatives have recently been taken in Khulna with regard to waste management.
- Sanitation aspects were not addressed in Khulna area.

On education, mass media, public awareness and research:

- Many initiative taken. But virtually no activities in the field of research.
- Rate of literacy increased, but quality of education decreased.
- Scientific education, weakened.

Expectations for coming ten years (2003-2012)

- Forest laws should be amended to suit changes of time.
- An inventory of bio-diversity should be made.
- Medicinal plants should be recorded and documented.
- A list of all species of flora and fauna should be made.
- A protected area system should be developed.
- Resource extraction plan should be formulated.
- Alternative domestic fuel and materials for furniture should be found out.
- Rare species of flora and fauna should protected.
- Dependence on underground water should reduced and use of surface water should be encouraged.
- Organic fertiliser, crop diversification and crop rotation will have to be encouraged.
- Seeds that can not be preserved should be discouraged.
- Agriculture extension service has to be made more people-oriented.
- To ensure natural flow of water of the common international rivers bilateral and multilateral dialogue should be continued for solution of water-sharing problems.
- peoples participation in all water development projects.
- Local peoples ideas and suggestion should be incorporated in project planning.
- Rivers and canals should be maintained at local level.
- Practice of leasing out rivers should be abandoned.
- Policy guidelines for water resources management should be implemented.
- Special measures should be taken during breeding seasons for different species of bio-diversity to saving them from extinction.
- Waste management should be ensured at the industrial plants according to EIA.
- DoE should be made more accountable.
- Locations of all industrial plants including brick fields should be controlled.
- Stop the plying of old vehicles.
- Encourage the use of CNG.
- Ban the two-stroke engine driven vehicles.

- Expand social forestry.
- Indian moves for setting up any Atomic Reactor in the vicinity of the Sundarbans should be protected.
- Roadside ditches, canals and ponds should be re-excavated to increase their depth for conserving sweet water.
- For increasing the supply of sweet water, projects like the proposed Padma Barage should be implemented.
- An integrated plan should be taken for dredging the rivers.
- Scope for producing bio-gas and organic fertiliser through proper waste management.
- All open air latrines should be closed. Awareness about sanitation, health and hygiene should be increased.
- Proper treatment of wastewater should be ensured before their disposal.
- The health of the rivers should be maintained.
- Urban drainage systems should be properly designed.
- Waste disposal from ships should be stopped.
- National initiatives should be taken for research activities.
- Quality education should be ensured.
- Education should not be commercialised.
- Moral values should be developed using the media.
- Hand use classification should be made.
- Agro-bio-diversity should be developed.
- Necessary steps should be taken to uphold national interest in the process of globalisation.
- Like tree movement of goods, globalisation should also have provisions for tree movement of people across the world.
- Allocation should be increased in the national productive sector.
- Special attentive should be given to reproductive health care.

Group III

Group discussion on how to increase the role of professions & organisations

Success/failure of different programmes undertaken during the last 10 years (1992-2002)

On women issues:

- A number of programmes were taken for women education, empowerment, awareness development and employment.
- Not much headway made in ensuring social insecurity, evaluation of labour and development of mother health.

On children issues:

- Child labour was banned, healthcare services improved, mortality rate reduced, literacy rate increased.
- Ratio of drop outs from schools increased, authorities lacked in enforcing the ban on child labour.

On issues of youths:

- Programmes were taken to create self employment through micro credit and leasing out of waterbodies, and to ensure their participation in development activities with partial success in generating employment.
- Unemployment increased, ratio of drug abuse increased and terrorism appears to be a major problem.

On issues of 'Bawalis,' the ethnic profession-based minority group

- No steps were taken for socio-economic development of the 'Bawalis'.

On NGOs & other organisations:

- NGOs contributed a little to the socio-economic development.
- There is no coordination between the NGOs in field level.
- NGOs lack accountability.

- Several NGOs appear to be fake organisations.

On trade unions:

- Trade unions failed to show any success.
- Trade unions are not pro-work.
- Trade unions cause indiscipline, often misuse state fund.

On participation of expatriates:

- Expatriates earned foreign currency which was largely used in carrying out welfare activities particularly in promoting education.
- They contributed to the national development with increased investments.
- Expatriates caused brain drain, shortage of manpower at home.

On issues of local government bodies:

- Participation of peoples representatives including women in development activities increased.
- Local government bodies faced with procedural problems.
- They lacked transparency and accountability.
- They failed to maintain ethical/moral standard.
- They were faced with problems of coordination.

On issues of science and technology:

- IT, telecommunication and agriculture (HYV) sectors witnessed some success.

On farmers' issues:

- They brought self sufficiency in food through increased yields.
- Use of technology in agriculture increased.
- Shrimp cultivation became major source of foreign exchange earnings.
- Farmers organisations lacked affectivity.
- Farmers lacked awareness regarding mechanised cultivation system.

On issues of education, mass media & development research:

- Awareness regarding education, mass media & development increased.

On development assistance:

- Development assistance from local, national and international levels increased.

Expectations for coming 10 years (2003-2012)

On women issues:

- Expansion of women education and development of awareness.
- Development of women healthcare and education.
- Ensured safe motherhood
- Proper evaluation of women.
- Ensured women rights.
- Active participation of women in development activities.

On children issues:

- Enforcement of the ban on child labour.
- Development of child healthcare services
- Ensured universal education.

On issues of "Bawalis," the ethnic profession-based minority group

- Effective practical measures for their socio-economic development.

On NGOs & other organisations:

- Effective role of NGOs for development

On trade unions:

- Pro-active and welfare oriented role of trade unions.

On participation of expatriates:

- More remittance from expatriates.

- Proper investment of the foreign exchange earnings.
- Export of more skilled/unskilled manpower abroad.

On issues of local government bodies:

- Strengthening of local government bodies.
- Expansion of development activities.
- Training of local government personnel.

On issues of science and technology:

- Expansion of IT sector through linkage with Information Super Highway (submarine cable)
- Expansion of present facilities.

On farmers' issues:

- Strengthening of farmers organisations.
- Involvement of farmers in campaigns for environment.
- Facilitate them with inputs for increased yield.

On issues of education, mass media & development research:

- Spread of the campaign for education, mass media development & development research

On development assistance:

- More development assistance from local, national and international levels
- Self-reliance in economic & other sectors.

Outline of development strategies, recommendations

On women issues:

- Strengthening of organisational activities
- Coordination at private and government levels
- Enforcement of concerned existing laws.
- Motivation for change in attitudes
- Development of gender relations
- Human resource development
- Transparency of concerned organisations/agencies.

On issues of youths:

- Creation of employment particularly through agro-based industries.
- Setting up of treatment facilities for drug abusers.
- Motivational campaign against drug abuse.

On issues of "Bawalis," the ethnic profession-based minority group

- Expansion of education facilities for "Bawalis".
- Campaign for awareness development.
- Provide supports for their self-reliance.

On NGOs & other organisations:

- Effective coordination between NGOs and concerned government bodies
- Strengthening of government regulation/monitoring systems.
- Legal actions against fake organisations.

On trade unions:

- Enforcement of existing trade union laws.
- Cutting off the direct relations between trade unions and political parties.

On participation of expatriates:

- Development of skilled manpower
- Export of manpower under an appropriate policy.

On issues of local government bodies:

- Adoption of measures under article 7, 9, 11, 59, 60 and 77 of the constitution.
- Dividing local government systems in three strata at district, upazila and village levels.

On issues of science and technology:

- Increase of budgetary allocation
- Training
- Creation of infrastructural facilities
- Strengthening of research activities

On farmers' issues:

- Zoning of land under an specific guidelines for shrimp cultivation
- Spread of technical knowledge

On issues of education, mass media & development research:

- Ensuring of a responsible role of newspapers, radio and televisions.

On development assistance:

- Ensuring of transparency and accountability
- Checking of misuse
- Increased savings
- Investment on priority basis

General demand

- Adoption of development programmes ensuring ecological balance
- Balanced development against the backdrop of globalisation

**People's Consultation on Sustainable Development
National Assessment Report for WSSD, Bangladesh**

March 2, 2002, Rajshahi

Group I

Group discussion on Socio-economic issues

- Poverty, growth and employment
- At present, less than 45 per cent of people live below the poverty line.

Success/failure of programmes adopted in last 10 years (1992-2002)	Hopes and aspiration for next 10 years (2003-2012)	Strategy for implementation
Poverty, growth and employment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 per cent success (Not up to the mark) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 per cent poverty alleviation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the rate of population growth • Increasing investment • Allocation of 45 per cent of development budget for poverty alleviation and to associate local govt. directly with it • Associating target population with the management in the programme implementation process • Introducing democratic development culture • Executing the national plan to protect agricultural production from natural disasters like flood, drought etc. • Encouraging people to set up agro-based industries • Strengthening of credit schemes connected with poverty alleviation with interest rate • Presence of political commitment to poverty alleviation • Arrangement of training to develop skill
Improvement of Public health		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popular awareness on public health has increased • Reduction in mother and child mortality rate • Success of EPI programme satisfactory • Average life expectancy has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pure drinking water and sanitation for all • Medicare at the doorsteps of people • Expanded public health education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased budgetary allocation for relevant head • Measures to ensure supply of arsenic- free pure drinking water • People to be associated with the programme • Public health and nutrition should be included in the media and in school curriculum

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each family to have a sanitary latrine • Public awareness on HIV to be heightened
Durable housing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success is there • Urbanisation has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy and durable housing for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of a national land use plan • Ensuring low-cost housing through new technology • Ensuring planned housing (rural and urban)
Ensuring environment and development in policy formulation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy guidelines on protection of environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop to all forms of pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking up effective steps to resist liquid, gaseous, solid and sound pollution • Arrangement of recycling of wastes from mills and industries
International cooperation on sustainable development		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success is there 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International cooperation in line with national need. • Technological cooperation; regional and international cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing up proper planning • Attaching priority to protecting national interest • Technology transfer
Sustainable development and decision-making process		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in participation in sustainable development process through changes in and strengthening of local government structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making on a local basis
Education and mass awareness, mass media, and development research		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success is there 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal primary education in place by 2012 • Education up to secondary level • Increased media role in education • Each educational institution with computers and Internet access • Uniform science-based education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in budgetary allocation for education • Introduction of science- and technology-based education system • Expansion of education/infrastructure • Increase in budgetary allocation for development research • Attaching priority to research programmes • Expansion of education through mass media • Expansion of education through video conferencing
Financial cooperation at local, national and international levels		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success in there 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased cooperation in local, national and international levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Augmenting local resources • Increase in national income • Increase in national income through savings • Availing long-term loans at low interest from international organisations

Required future programmes

- Adoption of an environment-friendly development programme,
- Raising funds for sustainable development from donor organisations on acceptable, easy terms,
- Ensuring participation of deprived people in development programmes, and
- Ensuring accountability in every level of integrated development programme.

Group 2

Natural resources, conservation and management

Sustainable land management

- Coastal area management,
- Proper land usage,
- Steps to stop soil erosion absent,
- 'Top soil' being harmed by the presence of brick fields,
- Tribal people are being deprived of the rights to enjoy land,
- Improper use of property on 'lease', and
- Amendment to laws regarding land issue needed.

Forest conservation

- Forest conservation projects should be based on the EIA,
- Public cooperation on the enforcement of law for forest conservation is needed,
- National rules and regulations regarding forestation need revision,
- Conservation of rare animal species is needed, and
- Unplanned forestation should be stopped.

Conservation of agriculture and bio-diversity

- Strengthening of the IPM,
- Raising awareness towards the usage of hybrid seeds for cultivation,
- Specification of land area for the conservation of bio-diversity,
- Taking up steps on the conservation of rare animals and food grains, and
- Reduction in the use of chemical fertilisers, insecticides and increase in the same of natural fertilisers.

Management of rivers, lakes and wetland

- Proper utilisation of land and water bodies,
- Reduction of dependence on ground water,
- Evaluation of projects already taken up by the FCD/FCDI and their implementation,
- Identifying the actual owners for reclamation of coastal land areas,
- compliance to international river laws,
- Canals, lakes and wetland should not be 'leased out',
- Ensuring natural flow of water in rivers,
- Purification of river water for utilisation as drinking water in urban areas, and
- The government should slap a ban of the use of underground water.

Desertification and drought management

- Reduction in the use of underground water and increase in that of surface water for irrigation,
- Implementation of both " Padma bridge" and " Padma barrage" projects, and
- Speedy implementation of the irrigation project in northern Rajasthan.

Industrial pollution control, waste management and air pollution control

- Steps ensuring control of pollution in sugar, distillery and paper mills, and
- Steps to control vehicular pollution

Waste management and sanitation

- Ensuring scientific management of waste product, and
- Increase in sanitation coverage.

Education, public awareness, mass media and development research

- Increase in public awareness both in urban and rural areas,
- Taking up of environment-based educational programme by mass media,

- Introduction of IT education at grassroots level,
- Making sure that tribal people enjoy the benefit of culture and education in their local language.
- Widespread awareness programme by mass media, and
- Launching of a local TV station for the people of Rajshahi.

Financial assistance at local, national and international level

- Decision-making as regards environment should come from grassroots level,
- Rajshahi deserves topmost priority towards receiving aid for overcoming poverty,
- Aid needed for implementation of the Padda Barrage, and
- More investments are to be made in the northern zone of Rajshahi to ensure its sustainable development.
- Training facilities on agricultural matters (based on environmental factors present in area) need to be provided.

Group 3

Making the role of professional and organisational bodies active

Success and failure in the activities taken up during the last ten years (1992-2002):

On the issue of women:

- Significant improvement regarding all women issues,
- Women now have the opportunity to participate in elections at local government level,
- Participation of women in non-governmental development organisations has increased,
- More women are now able to avail themselves of micro-credit facilities,
- Literacy rate has increased, and
- Laws protecting women from violence have been enforced.

On the issue of the youth:

- No significant development, and
- Addiction among youths has increased significantly.

On the issue of children:

- No significant development, and
- Children are being vaccinated, their date of birth is being registered and education for them has been made compulsory.

On the issue of tribal people:

- The rate of land-less or nomadic tribal people has increased,
- Literacy is up,
- No proper recognition,
- Complications regarding ownership of land are there, and
- Violence against them has increased.

On NGOs and other organisations:

- Some improvement,
- Improvement in trade,
- Political influence present,
- Increase in awareness of their own rights,
- Has overcome poverty to some extent,
- Was able to create more job opportunities, and
- Rate of adult literacy has increased.

On the issue of the role of trade unions and labourers in development:

- Increase in the number of conflicts.

On the issue of strengthening the role of the local government:

- No significant development,
- Participation of women in elections, and
- Unsuccessful in a number of sectors.

On the issue of science and technology:

- Development has not been up to the expectations,
- Improvement in the IT sector, and
- Improvement in the agricultural sector.

On the issue of developing the role of farmers:

- Increase in production yield
- Improvement in IPM
- Arsenic found has been in ground water.

Hopes and expectations for the next 10 years (2002-2012)

On the issue of women:

- Equal rights for women.
- Direct election to 64 seats reserved for women in the parliament.

On the issue of children:

- End of child labour and trafficking, and
- End of use of children for political purposes.

On the issue of the youth:

- Increased employment opportunities,
- Easier access to credit, and
- More involvement of the youth towards socio-economic development.

On the issue of tribal people:

- Recognition of their nationalism,
- Formation of the Land Commission,
- Educational facility up to middle school in their local language,
- Protection from violence,
- Implementation of law on their favour,
- Development of their culture, and
- Reservation of 5 seats in the parliament.

On the issue of NGOs and other organisations:

- Strengthening of and more priority to the local NGOs,
- Isolation from political involvement, and
- Proper rules and regulations and application of law.

On the Issue of the role of trade unions and labourers in development:

- Creation of a democratic atmosphere.

On the issue of strengthening the local government:

- Defined capacity of female members,
- Coordination with the local government,
- Strengthening, and
- Enforcement a 'four-layer' management system.

On the issue of science and technology:

- All schools and colleges with well-equipped laboratories and
- Introduction of a 'Science and Technology Day'.

On the issue of strengthening the role of farmers:

- Increased use of natural fertiliser,
- Increased use of surface water,
- End of use of impure fertiliser,
- More importance on the development of fishery and livestock,
- Reduced dependence on foreign aid and proper use of available natural resources,
- Political stability,
- Proper application of law, and
- Implementation of rules and regulations regarding partnership.

**People's Consultation on Sustainable Development
National Assessment Report for WSSD, Bangladesh**

March 4, 2002, Chittagong

Group I

Group discussion on Socio-economic issues

1. Poverty, growth and employment

1992 -2002 Success – Failure		2003-2012 Hopes and aspirations	Strategy for implementation
Success	Failure		
Slowing down rise in poverty (through adoption of programmes in different public and private organisations)	Poverty has not been eradicated	Elevation of people now living below poverty line above that line	Developing labour-intensive technology Developing profession-oriented education
Extent of poverty reduced		Total eradication of poverty	Information technology
Wide role of banks and financial institutions	Has not been given extensively to the poor classes	Reaching monetary help to each poor person	
Foreign recruitment /employment/ manpower export and informal cross-border trade have helped alleviate poverty	Many skilled and unskilled labour have not been utilised. Foreign earnings have not been invested in the education sector.	Aggressive initiative on manpower export	Expansion of vocational training and manpower export market
Foreign investment (garment sector etc.), employment and income of women workers and women empowerment have increased	Investment climate and quantum have not increased as expected	Improvement in law and order and effective steps in the relevant fields	Expansion of application of law, cut on expenses of justice
Upward trend in growth	Target not reached	Achievement of the target	Prevention of switching of profession
Significant achievement in population control	Awareness among the uneducated has not increased	Increase in awareness	
Poverty reduced from 60-65 per cent to 40-45 per cent	Huge population below the poverty line	Bringing the number down to 20-12 per cent	

2. Public health

98 per cent underground water	Safe (arsenic-free) water could not be ensured	Safe water and hygienic latrines for all	Increase in the use of surface water by reducing use of ground water
Sanitation and latrines, drainage/sewerage have become hygienic	Most have not come under it		Increased allocation of resources for use of sanitary latrines, reduction of costs
Vaccination has increased	Some diseases are still prevalent	100 per cent vaccination and recovery	
Public health infrastructure has	Nutrition awareness has	Further expansion of infrastructure and	Increase in awareness

expanded	not increased, superstition persists. Health care has not increased	health education and awareness	
Reform of drug policy	Real drug policy has not been formulated	Expansion of infrastructure and service	
Awareness about food security		Humanisation of health care service	

3. Durable housing

Modern technology in house building		House residence for all	Maximum utilisation of modern technology
Distribution of Khas land, ideal village project, Ashrayan			
	Unplanned, uncontrolled construction of houses. Increase in housing hostile to environment. No housing for limited income group. Number of slums and their area increased. The number of brick-built slums also increased. The number of people without shelter has increased		Application of appropriate laws and building codes Building of planned and environment-friendly housing at low cost through appropriate technology Research
	Failure in resisting forcible occupation and profiteers or unlawful construction	Reduction in the number of people without shelter, proper distribution of land and enforcement of law	Scientific construction resistant to earthquake and cyclone and other natural disasters

4. Ensuring environment and development in decision-making

Framing of the Environment Act	Court ineffective, full implementation not achieved	Enforcement of law	No enmity with nature
Environmental policy ready	Mass awareness not created	More environment-friendly policy formulation and implementation	Framing of laws to conserve nature, preparing plans commitment and right to protect environment, plans and acts should be in line with cultural tradition
Activities of the Department of Environment	Result not fully achieved		
Ban on polythene		Complete ban and restoration of jute	
Activities of the mass			Pressure through the

media - journalist, (samity) (Forum)			civil society
Role of the public, private and international organisations		More involvement	PPP Pollution Pay Principle
Initiative to make entire population aware of environment initiative to make them literate	Entire population has not been embraced	Involvement of people in environmental and development work	Spreading overall education and literacy for environmental and development work

5. International cooperation on sustainable development

Increasing cooperation, environment-friendly activities	Not properly initialised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for real help. • Transfer of modern technology/waste removal. 	Increase in international contact and diplomatic activities
Increase in assistance from UNO-Organise+ EU+ and others		Increase in the WB, ADB etc. assistance in the transport and other such sectors	Increase in of foreign countries in environmental and development activities
Increasing activities and operations of NGOs at grass-roots level	Fund problem is there.	Developed countries would increase accountability	Increase in publicity
	Failure to involve target population in sustainable development.	Just and proper distribution of resources.	PPP Pollution Pay Principle

6. Decision-making in sustainable development

More political will and commitment	Not fully	Everybody will protect the environment	Cancellation of projects inimical to environment
Heightened awareness among officials of the republic about implementation of policies	Not as much as desired	Complete adherence to policies and guidelines	Increased awareness, expanded education and research
	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in approving projects are not properly done in all instances	Following scientific and technological subjects	Encouraging new and appropriate technology invention

7. Financial assistance at local, national and international level

Increased use of local resources, tree-planting and nurseries	Destruction of forests unabated/not resisted/wide afforestation not achieved	Increased use of local resources	Continued efforts to obtain assistance through increasing communication via embassies by projecting the real situation
Increased activities to protect environment in respective fields	Destruction forest resources/nature not reduced	No fund shortage	

Government financial assistance is there. Social forestry	Necessary fund not available	Easy access to proper and just UN assistance in protecting environment	
UN recognition assistance/Sundarban Green belt (Coastal)			
Assistance increased and bio-diversity			

Group-2
Conservation and management of natural resources

1. Sustainable land resources management

Agriculture
Poultry
Forestry

Not sustainable

- a. Land tenure system should be changed and participatory use of barren land be introduced.
- b. IMP. Land, not acquired due to unjustified political will or commitment of land disputes, is to be resolved.

Suggestion: There should be a Land Commission for the Chittagong Hill Tracts; and coordination between legislators and implementors.

- c. **Upgrading land use acts:**
 - Implementation of land use policy.
 - Land survey to be carried out in Chittagong Hill Tracts.
- d. **Land records should be computerised:**
 - Survey should be carried out before adoption of development projects and later on, the arrangements should be monitored. A powerful commission should be set up to look after share-cropping and other matters.
- e. **Geological survey has been carried out.**
- f. **Rights of indigenous people.**

2. Hillocks and forest conservation:

- Accountability to be ascertained in case of plantation,
- Rapid afforestation/planting of fast-growing trees and trees fit for SALT (Slope Agro-cropping Land Technology).
- Summary trial to determine hills related cases.
- Non-coastal monoculture but multiple culture and civilian oversight.
- Reduce use of wood by utilising plywood. Planning authorities should be involved in the review of EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment).

Not properly done

- Environment-friendly steps should be taken in developing communications in the Hill Tracts.
- Industrial wood: Modernisation field. Forest Act. Summary trial should be held.
- Alternative to jhum cultivation.
- Social forestry should be encouraged.
- Afforestation should be done under private initiative.
- Protection of Reserve Forest against illegal extraction.
- Poverty alleviation.
- Neutral supervisory committee should be set up for implementing afforestation programmes.
- Building up of social awareness.
- National Forum to be formed.
- Inter-departmental coordination should be strengthened in application of laws.

- To plant medicinal herbs and trees.
- Correct implementation of laws should be ensured to protect the hillocks and mounds against their destruction.

3. Bio-diversity preservation

- Seed paddy should be returned to the farmers.
- Farmers should not be dependent on anybody.
- Indiscriminate use of insecticides should be stopped.
- Instead of leasing out government khas land, those should be used for social forestry.
- Initiatives to be taken to adopt ecological projects in order to restore region-based bio-diversity.
- Ecological farming to be expanded.
- Use of organic fertilisers should be increased.
- To associate women in conserving bio-diversity.

4. River/Coastal management (river, sea, coast, ports)

- Rivers should be dredged. River training coastal zone should be marked.
- No arrangement for surveillance (CBA).
- Repair of ships at Chittagong port should be stopped.
- New law should be enacted to close rivers/river embankments. Afforestation programmes to be carried out.
- There should be coordination between shrimp cultivation and afforestation.

5. Industrial/Domestic waste management

- Enforcement of laws to be ensured.
- Factories should be corrected within a specified time-frame.
- Encouragement in giving financial assistance.
- Integrated ETP should be arranged.
- Environmental certificates should be given after on-the-spot inspection and transparency to be brought in giving corruption-free environmental certificates.
- Department of Environment (DoE) should be expanded with skilled man-power.

6. Sound pollution

- Laws to be strictly enforced.
- Well-integrated urban planning.

7. Fresh water

8. Solid wastes

- Waste treatment plants on 5 canals. Easy implementation of sewerage network of the CWASA.
- 80% villages to be brought under sanitation coverage.

9. Donor assistance required

- Assistance in developing Chittagong sewerage system.
- Bringing back natural beauty of Chittagong.
- Infrastructure facilities for salt farms and shrimp hatcheries to be developed.

Group 3

Activation of the role of professionals and organisations

Women, children and youth in sustainable development

Success/ failure of programmes adopted in last 10 years (1992-2002)	Hopes and aspirations for next 10 years (2003-2012)	Strategy for implementation
Successes : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are coming out of house and becoming work-oriented • Awareness of voting rights • Advance in women's education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women employment to be expanded • Sense of values among children, women and youth to be inculcated • Women's activities should be encouraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective steps to end child labour • Stopping child and women trafficking

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security of women increased • Free education for women • Improvement of women's financial position • Advancement of women in industry and business • Health awareness increased • People taking active part in birth control • People taking part in local bodies elections (UP) • Increase in women's quota in government services • Decline in child mortality • Success in vaccination programme • Youth development (training and credit) • Increasing alertness of guardians in child's mental development <p>Failures :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rape, insecurity of women • No direct election of women to parliament (in three Hill Districts) • Increase in women's repression. • Despair, disorder among the youth, drug addiction, increase of terrorism • Women have not been fully empowered at local Union Parishad (UP) levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women should be associated more with development activities • Children's rights should be protected 	
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Strengthening role of NGOs and other organisations

<p>Successes :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of small credit schemes • Improvement in employment, education and health • Women and children's rights are being enforced • Sanitation and water supply developed <p>Failures :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People's acceptability of the NGOs not improved • Misunderstanding in this regard • Increase in political involvement • High rate of interests on small credit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of activities at the district, upazila and grass-root levels • Should be realistic • Activities of missionaries should be stopped • Wider programmes for socio-economic development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory planning • Ensuring govt. programmes • Each institution should have sign-board • Their supporting role in new fields of activities • Realistic and need-based planning required
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Role of workers and trade unions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organising healthy trade unions• Resisting trend of immobilise pats• Increasing consciousness about production oriented activities in building up the country.• Not close down trade unions• Not to associate the trade unions in politics	<p>Success :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduction of undesirable incidents• Realisation of just wages• Stoppage of retrenchment of workers without reason• Employment after attaining the age of 12-year• Role in increasing national economic growth• Keeness for education <p>Failure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Failure to realise wages fully• Lack of security (at the work place)• Failure to train and employ skilled workers• Tendency to evade work in the name of trade unions• Misuse of labour
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Strengthening local government system

<p>Success :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased role of the local government in developing infrastructures• Hill districts areas achieved separate regional bodies like Zila and Upazila Parishads• Role in social forestry• Increase in area and number of Pourasabhas (municipalities) and city corporations• Improvement in law and order situation• Direct participation by women• Removal of illiteracy <p>Failure :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corruption and nepotism• Increase in political interference• Zila Parishad not fully activated• Increase in election violence• Ignorance about people's respective roles and task• Neglect in discharging responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To elect competent and educated persons as UP Chairmen• Special training arrangements for them• Providing accountability for them• Active participation of women in Zila Parishads• Women should be more dutiful with regard to their work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resolve local problems locally an a priority basis• Stopping interference by outsiders• Ensuring fair elections• Fair elections aimed at people's welfare• Educated section to be motivated running elections to local bodies• Implementation of environmental and priority development projects
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Science and technology

<p>Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bio-gas plant• Use of Internet, E-mail, mobile phones	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To create eagerness in IT training (at government level)• Further progress in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adopting various devices in primary schools to create scientists• To make students at primary
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active development of information technology • Expansion of TV, radio network • Bringing science in agriculture • Use of modern equipment in diagnosing, treatment and control of diseases • Advance of printing industry • Advance in meeting the power deficit • Setting up of satellite earth station <p>Failure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of unemployment due to use of IT • Though Kaptai hydro-electric project had a provision of supplying free electricity but it has not been done • Aggression of sky culture • Failure to develop IT village • No proper use of information technology 	<p>telecommunications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making net phone easily available • Arranging IT training at small cost • Arranging IT training at government level • Proper use of bio-gas • To give importance to English in the education system at primary level 	<p>level inclined to science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To give proper training to trainees • Wide use of solar power • Wide introduction and use of information technology • Information super highway (submarine cable)
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Education, public awareness, mass media and development research

<p>Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in mass media in the field of education and health and in protecting environment • Role of mass media in social movement • Number of readers and viewers increased • Anti-terrorist movement at international and national levels <p>Failure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of exaggerated and erroneous news • Party influence in mass media • Not enough development research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper mass media free from party influence • Autonomy of mass media • Unfettered freedom but not wanton behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper policy in distribution of advertisements • Identifying fields of development research • Decentralisation of advertisement
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Local, National, International

<p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ample foreign loans and grants • Self-financing by different organisations <p>Failure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misuse of foreign aid and corruption 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More investment to expand socio-economic infrastructure • Transfer of foreign technology to develop local technology
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of favourable climate/environment 		
Strengthening the role of people and business community		
<p>Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded role of the civil society • Increase in public awareness on human and environment development • Role in maintaining communal harmony <p>Failure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise of dishonest and unscrupulous business people • Failure in meeting people's aspiration • Business community became victim of extortion and terrorism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should play catalyst role in socio-economic development • Containing smuggling and use of arms and drugs • Greater role of households and schools in maintaining sanitation and protecting environment • Mosques, educational institutions and different government and private organisations should be used to create awareness against terrorism and promote conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create a sense of responsibility among people on the needs for protecting environment through mass publicity, meetings and conferences • To reach people of all walks of life through posters, cartoons etc.

Programme needed in future

- Mass participation in development activities,
- Achieving competence to keep up steps with globalisation
- Total quality management to stay in international competition
- Effective government programme for improvement of the environment
- Summary trial to resist repression on women
- Want a happy, prosperous developed country and secured life for all

People's Consultation on Sustainable Development National Assessment Report for WSSD, Bangladesh

March 7, 2002, Barisal

Group 1

Issue-based group: Socio-economic

Activities taken up (1992-2002)

- Eradication of poverty at micro level. Adequate resources were not supplied to create employment and facilitate growth.
- Planning was centralized and the approach was top down.
- Local needs, available resources and technology were not taken into consideration while formulating plans.
- The local lifestyle of Barisal, revolving around the rivers, lakes, canals and paddy fields, were not taken into consideration during development planning.
- Local resources were not used in various field of public health development
- The rivers were being polluted by wastage from factories, drains and water transport vessels.
- Water transport vessels of higher speed hasn't yet been introduced.
- Environment polluting practices/ habits have not been stopped.
- Agricultural land is used indiscriminately for settlements.
- Houses were not built using locally available resources like bricks, wood, sand in such a way so as to tackle calamities like flood, cyclone etc.
- Local authorities namely, UP, Municipality did not take into consideration any environmental issues in its development policies.
- International aid was absent regarding sustainable development to fight natural calamities like flood, river erosion, tornado etc.

- While considering sustainable development, local technology, profession, and livelihood were not given any importance.
- Local obstacles in the way of development
- GO, NGO, and CIVIL were not coordinated.
- Due consideration was not given for creation of mass awareness about educational development.
- While accumulating resources, International, National, as well as Local Observers were not taken into account.

Hopes & expectations (2003-2012)

- Poverty alleviation will have to be considered as the main sector for alleviation.
- Measures will have to be taken for planning and realisation at the local level
- Development plans will have to be based on local resources, technology and needs
- During development planning of Barisal, the local lifestyle revolving around the rivers, lakes, canals and paddy fields, will have to be taken into consideration.
- Surface water (RWH, PSF, Pond) should be sued along with water from the tube-wells.
- Rivers will have to be kept pollution free.
- Launches, C-trark with higher speed will have to be introduced.
- Social and legal measures have to be taken against such habits.
- By proper planning, houses can be built on non- agricultural lands.
- Houses have to be build by taking into consideration, the weather and the resources available in Barisal and the southern region.
- Planning have to be given importance while planning and policy making.
- Steps have to betaken to facilitate increased cooperation from the International Community.
- The usage of local technologies should be increased.
- They should be locally coordinated.
- Development issues will have to be introduced in the educational curriculum as well as in public gathering, seminars etc.
- Family issues will have to be taken into account while accepting a project

Implementation strategies

- The highest alleviation should be made to the micro levels from the headquarters. These allocations must be utilised through local organisations.
- Local Parishads and other organisations will have to be strengthened and made capable.
- Local participation will have to be facilitated in the planning process
- Local planning will have to be done keeping the greater district in mind.
- Management skills for the use of ground water will have to be increased.
- Factories, launches, etc will have to take measures for the management of their own waste.
- The use of water resources will have to be increased my using Launches and other transport vehicles of higher speed.
- By increasing social awareness, locality based, social waste management processes can be introduced
- Permission must be taken from the concerned authorities before building houses.
- These factors have to be considered while planning houses. Easily available technology and resources will have to be used
- The approval of the Ministry of Environment will have to be taken before adopting any development projects.
- Public support and cooperation will have to be increased through various forums.
- Projects will have to be adopted which deal with local issues and agricultural development in Barisal.
- A forum will have to be formed at District level
- Development and environmental issues will have to be taken up at social, cultural, educational and religious institutions.
- While accepting International cooperation for any project, no cooperation can be accepted for actions that go against the Environment.

Surface water

- The quantity of ground water is decreasing.
- Ponds and canals are being filled up.
- Canals are getting filled.
- The canal-based areas no longer have canals.
- As a form of development, canals have been converted into drains.
- The use of surface water is decreasing.
- When tube-wells were first introduced, common people have been told against using surface water but ground water no longer remains safe.

Remedies

- Rainwater should be trapped.
- Water in rivers, canals, and lakes should be conserved.
- In order to retain its quality, the residual of chemical fertilizers, insecticides into surface water should be stopped.
- By means of river training, navigation facilities will have to be increased and river erosion will have to be combated.
- The dumping of industrial water into water bodies like rivers and lakes should be stopped.
- Canals will have to be dug or re-excavated where necessary and dredging will have to be done where necessary.

How to implement

- Implementation of law for waste management.
- Waste recycling could be taken up.
- Participation of the stakeholders will have to be ensured.
- Coordinated planning has to be taken up for river/canal management
- Steps have to be taken up to create awareness.

Ground water

- So far only awareness seminars and discussions have been held regarding the arsenic issue.
- Committees have been formed.
- Problems have been identified.
- The issue has gained recognition but no solution has been found.
- The party responsible for this menace hasn't been identified.
- The time period during which this menace has surface and the cause behind it has not been identified.
- The total number of arsenic patients is unknown.
- The correct treatment for these patients haven't been found.
- An alternate water source hasn't been identified.
- The alternate water source is either absent or hasn't been identified.
- Lack of coordination among people who are working on this arsenic issue. The issue is also being sued as a source of profit.
- To use groundwater, as a source of drinking water, the level of its chemical content should have been checked against the WHO standards.

Remedies

- Safe drinking water should be supplied to all areas.
- The task of identifying the 'hot spot' should be strengthened.
- Arsenic patients should be identified, monitored and the follow up of this monitoring should be continued.
- Training facilities regarding the arsenic issue should be introduced.

How to Implement

- Rectification of this arsenic issue should be worked upon regardless to any political influence.
- Awareness campaign has to be made in easily understood language so as to combat false propaganda.

- Health centres dedicated to only arsenic issues should be established.

Land management

- Due to fragmentation of land, scientific methods of agriculture cannot be taken up. Therefore land is not being properly utilised.
- Due to legal issues regarding the management of 'khas' land, the misuse of such land cannot be stopped.
- 'Gobat', 'halot' and such other common property need to be replaced.
- There has been unplanned urbanization and housing.

Remedies

Prevailing rules, laws, and customs regarding transfer of land has to be changed. During the sale of a piece of land, determining its owner will be made a legal compulsion.

- Awareness about the usefulness of common property and research on its utilisation.
- Ponds, rivers and canals etc. should not be filled any more.

How to implement

- Special measures have to be taken up for reclaiming and reforming 'khas' land.

Forest conservation

- Any kind of measure to fell conserved trees or tress at important locations has to be opposed.
- Forestation and conservation at new locations has to be taken up.
- People should be discouraged to settle on fresh land.
- Forestation should be increased.
- Fruit bearing trees should be paid more attention to.
- Medicinal plants of various species/ species which are almost extinct has to be conserved.

Agriculture/ Fisheries/ Livestock

- The use of natural fertilizers should be increased.
- Local varieties of paddy etc. should be conserved.
- Due to the excessive use of HYV influence, the local varieties are getting lost.
- Steps have to be taken for introducing crop rotation.
- Infiltration of Sterile/GMO (in case of paddy) has to be put to a stop.
- Catching of immature (pona) lobsters/ prawns should be stopped.
- Catching of immature hilsa (jhatka) and other fishes should also be stopped.
- Awareness has to be created for the importance of conserving all varieties of flora and fauna.
- Foreign fish breeds and fish which might prove to be harmful to the local breeds present should be cultivated in isolation and be prevented from entering open water bodies.
- Further import of foreign species of fishes/ plants should be stopped.
- Steps to conserve and breed local varieties of fish which are almost extinct.
- Catching of fish should be put to a halt during breeding season and important breeding grounds should be protected.
- Mass awareness has to be increased regarding these issues.

Noise/ Air/ Water/ Soil pollution

- Hydraulic miking/ use of horns should be stopped.
- Noise pollution in particular areas like hospitals, schools, residential areas etc. has to be especially stopped.
- Air pollution from brick-fields have reached a dangerous level. They should be situated far away from residential areas.
- A solution has to be found for air pollution from the kitchen.
- For example, use of proper fuel / improved stove.
- Steps to be taken to use CNG/ CPG as fuel for water vessels / cars / buses etc.
- Not only Dhaka, but Bangladesh as a whole should be made free from pollution.
- Steps are to be taken for proper waste management and recycling.
- Steps should be taken for management of waste from medicinal factories and hospitals.
- Acid usage by gold smiths should be monitored.

Rivers/ Seas/ Coastal areas/ Harbours

- River based projects have to be adopted after careful analysis of the natural flow of the river.
- Projects have to be taken for reclaiming land from the sea.
- Coordinated steps have to be taken to maintain the navigability of the water bodies.
- Adaptation strategies should be developed to face the impact of climatic changes.
- Silt should be removed.

Sanitation

- Mass awareness has to be created on sanitation.
For example, the use of water sealed latrines.
- Cities should always have a surface water drainage system.

Research

- Folk wisdom and knowledge should be retained.

Disagreements

- Natural disasters may arise from climatic changes. This may lead to an increase in storm range. Disaster management should hence be improved.
- Individual efforts should be there to improvise one's own home and work place. This can be done by means of awareness program.

Group 3

Making the role of profession and organisational bodies active

Success and failure in the activities taken up during the last ten years (1992-2002)

On the issue of Women:

- Social awareness has increased.
- Self-dependence has increased.
- Increase in literacy rate.
- Increase in political awareness.
- Increase in professional participation.
- Violence on women has increased.
- Lack of security everywhere
- Reduction in employment in rural areas.
- Awareness in family welfare has increased.

On the issue of Youths:

- Increase in addiction.
- Increase in violence and clashes.
- Unemployment has increased.
- Family relations has increased.
- Increase in opportunistic culture.
- Decrease in protesting approach.
- Moral decay.

On the issue of Children:

- Death rate has decreased.
- Nutrition level has increased.
- Child labour has increased.

On the issues of the "Rakhayans:

- Has become landless and nomads
- Literacy rate has increased.
- Cultural enrichment and practice of mother language facilitated.
- Received lesser importance on land matters.

On NGOs:

- Activities increased.
- More organisations.
- Micro-credit increased.
- Adult education increased.
- Awareness on nurseries, tree plantation, forestation increased.
- Women have become more aware of their rights.
- Relationship between men and women increased.
- A lot of NGOs have got diverted from their main objectives.

On The Local Government:

- Weak

On sustainable development:

- Trade union has become weaker.
- Role of trade union regarding the welfare of labourers has come up.

Hopes and expectations for the up coming ten years (2003-2012):**On the issue of Women:**

- Increase in security
- Increase in quota in areas relating to women empowerment.
- Amendment of Law of Inheritance.
- 5% increase in employment facilities in accordance to I.L.O convention.
- Involve women at the grass-root level in National and international issues.
- Unemployment allowance.

On the issue of Youths:

- Increase employment opportunities.
- Unemployment allowance.
- Training to increase skills.

On the issue of Children:

- Child labour should be stopped.

On the issues of the "Rakhayans:

- Recognition of their nationalism
- Ensuring their human rights.
- Education and health facilities.
- Protect their rights on land and resources.

On NGOs:

- Keep away from politics.
- Policies at national levels.
- Reduce high interest rates.

On sustainable development:

- Dependence on foreign aid should be brought down.
- 50% of the required finance should be managed locally.
- Business against sustainable development should be discouraged.
- Laws relating to environmental matters should be enforced.

On the local government:

- Strengthen the local government.
- Increase financial allocation.
- Planning at the local level. Local planning should be from the centre.
- Specify responsibilities for women (UP members)

Techniques of implementation:**On issues of both Women and Youth:**

- Ensuring political stability and transparency.
- Increase in vocational and educational training.
- Easy to obtain loan facilities for the unemployed.
- Social movement.
- Patriotism.

On the issue of Children:

- Child labourers should be treated well. Children cannot be employed as domestic servants.
- Child labour should be abolished.
- Increase awareness towards the elders both at family levels and social levels.

People's Consultation on Sustainable Development National Assessment Report for WSSD, Bangladesh

March 10, 2002, Dhaka

Group I

Group discussion on Socio-economic issues

Success/failure of different programmes undertaken during last 10 years (1992-2002)

On poverty alleviation and employment generation

Successes

- Poverty reduced by around 10 percent
- Remarkable growth in agriculture; self sufficiency in food
- Expansion of employment; development of garments industry and income growth

Failures

- Slow growth of industrial sector
- Overlapping/duplication in NGO activities
- Low growth rate

Expectations

- A poverty-free Bangladesh
- To achieve at least 7% growth rate for the first five years and 9% for the next five years of the coming decade

Recommendations/Implementation strategies

- Training and development of skills
- Improved management
- Generation of employment

On public health issues:

Successes

- Public awareness regarding safe drinking water
- Massive coverage of child immunization (EPI)
- Reduction in child and mother mortality rate

Failures

- Very little expansion of sanitation coverage
- Emergence of the arsenic problem
- Growing air pollution
- Traffic congestion
- Return of malaria

Expectations

- Safe drinking water for all
- Expansion of sanitation coverage
- Reduction of maternal and child mortality rate

Recommendations/Implementation strategies

- Training and skill development
- Awareness development
- Expansion of safe water and sanitation facilities

On housing issues:

Success

- Little headway made

Failures

- Lack of proper housing policies
- Unplanned development of housing infrastructures
- Lack of housing facilities for low income people
- Growth of slum areas

Expectations

- Housing for all
- Planned housing

Recommendations/Implementation strategies

- Adoption of sustainable housing policy
- Plans for housing facilities for poor people
- Introduction of different credit packages for housing

Incorporation of environment and development issues in policy planning**Success**

- Enactment/introduction of environment conservation laws, environmental courts
- Launching of Sustainable Environmental Management Planning (SEMP)
- Launching of NEMAP

Failures

- Lack of proper coordination
- Failure in enforcing environmental laws
- Ignoring environmental issues in economic planning
- Ignoring the depletion of natural resources along with environmental degradation

Expectations

- Accommodating environmental issues in economic and social issues
- Conservation of natural resources

Recommendations/Implementation strategies

- Generation of peoples' awareness
- Coordinated planning
- Enforcement of environmental laws

On international assistance in sustainable development:**Success**

- Launching of SEMAP and NEMAP
- Positive supports of development partners in development projects
- Declaration of the Sundarbans as a World Heritage site
- Declaration of Tanguar Haor as Ramsar Site

Failures

- Failure in proper using of GEF funds
- Failure in getting facilities under Kyoto Protocol

Expectations

- Getting funds under the Kyoto Protocol
- Proper use of GEF funds

Recommendations/Implementation strategies

- Capacity building of people

On sustainable development and policy making process**Success**

- More emphasis given on sustainable development issues in Five-Year Plans
- Environmental issues incorporated in project formats

Failures

- Proper EIA was not carried out
- Coordination problem remained

Expectations

- Proper EIA application and its reflection
- Framing of environment indicator in all sectors and its use in decision making process

Recommendations/Implementation strategies

- Acceleration of grade accounting in all sectors

Success

Failures

Expectations

Recommendations/Implementation strategies

Group-2 Preservation and management of natural resources

Success/failure of programmes adopted in last 10 years (1992-2002)	Hopes and aspirations of next 10 years (2003-2012)	Strategy for implementation
Appropriate resource management		
<p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of khas land (Ashrayan, Cluster village, Ideal village) • Maximum utilisation of cultivable land. • Beel management. • Digital/GIS map. • Coastal afforestation. <p>Failure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No plan in land use. • Unabated cutting of hills. • Encroachment into and filling up of rivers, canals and beels. • Unplanned wetland management. • Requisition more than necessary. • Misuse of requisition. • Requisitions are not being released/acquitted. • Dearth of skilled manpower in land use. • In recovery of khas land/vested property. • Unplanned habitat/urbanisation. • Indiscriminate use of Insecticides. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated and planned use of land. • Balanced and equitable spread of urbanisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firm political commitment. • Awareness building. • Formulation of plans. • Enactment and proper application of laws.
Protection of forests		
<p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal afforestation. • Declaration of Sundarbans as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing forest coverage to 20-25%. • Diversity of fruit-bearing trees/creating forest resources on homestead land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political good intention. • Creation of sanctuaries. • Planting trees on both sides of roads. • Sensitising people through

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some socio-economic progress in social forestry. • GO-NGO socio-economic progress. • Individual initiative in tree plantation. <p>Failure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uninterrupted cutting of forests. • Reduction of forest coverage. • Encroachment on forest lands. • Lack of skilled manpower. • Lack of adequate manpower. • Dwindling bio-diversity. • Indiscriminate introduction of foreign species. • Unplanned collection of resources. 	<p>/kitchen gardens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total ban on use of wood by brick kilns through application of laws. • Ensuring peoples participation in afforestation. 	<p>media.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong political commitment. • To strengthen social movement.
Preservation of agricultural and bio-diversity		
<p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased agricultural production. • Marketing crop. • Cereal crop variation. • Use of organic manure. • Evolving and use of HYV. <p>Failure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depletion of land fertility. • Useful insects and worms are being reduced. • No multiple use of products. • Less use of Post Harvest Technology/Reservation. • Wanton use of chemical fertilizers. • Extinction of crop diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure 2200 Calories of food value for everyone. • Change in food habits. • Increase in export of surplus food and vegetables. • Improvement in food preservation • Development of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper planning and management. • Increasing awareness. • New scientific research and innovation of new methods. • Green revolution. • Expansion of markets/increasing exports/search for new markets.
Implementation of river, beel and haor management		
<p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digging canals and increasing fish cultivation (MACH, CBFM). • Declaration of Tanguor Haor as a Ramsar Site. • Earning foreign exchange through export of shrimps. • Save Buriganga.movement <p>Failures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal encroachment (Ashulia) • Unplanned land use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood plain management. • Proper and coordinated management of wetlands. • Ensuring minimum navigability (dredging). • Preventing desertification. • Green Bangladesh. • Preservation of surface water for its greater use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned leasing of waterbodies. • Creating artificial water reservoirs. • Enactment of laws against illegal occupation; strict application of laws. • River training technology to prevent erosion. • Reservoirs in upstream areas. • Dredging the rivers. • River training. • Planned building of roads and embankments.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filling up rivers/beels. • Lack of dredging. • Reduction in navigability. • River pollution. • Unplanned embankments. • Destruction of fish fries. • Encroachment on islets -- their distribution. • Mismanagement in survey and records. • Lack of skilled manpower. 		
Preventing industrial pollution and waste management		
<p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in public awareness • Enhanced role of DoE • More environment laws • Advance in environment management • EIA implementation • Start of the treatment plant • Use of GNG batteries • Conversion to 4-stroke engines <p>Failures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unplanned industrialization • Lack Zoning • Indiscriminate and uncontrolled throwing of wastes • Lack of accountability • Lack of enforcement of laws and regulations • Inadequate manpower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollution-free Bangladesh. • Clean industry. • Waste minimisation. • Pollution reduction. • Recycling • Reuse • 3 R 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper and strict enforcement of laws • Heightening awareness • Media • Strong political commitment • Commitment of the entrepreneurs • Research and Development (R & D) • Healthy cities • HRD
Curbing air pollution		
<p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing awareness • Use of CNG Batteries • Use of unleaded gasoline/ Petrol • Ban on use of leaded gasoline petrol • Reflection in budget • Attempt to ban use of old cars • Decision to ban two stroke engines <p>Failure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-materialisation of efforts to increase awareness of indoor air pollution • Lack of appropriate technologies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To curb air pollution • Ban on smoking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of imported stoves (chula) • Use of appropriate technology • Use of solar energy • Increasing use of gas • Use of bio-gas • Measuring air pollution

Management of underground water		
<p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in lifting of water • Improving system of irrigation • Self sufficiency in food <p>Failure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquifer going down due to excessive use of water • Arsenic pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper use of water resources • Ensuring arsenic free safe water for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of new technology • Research monitoring • Preservation of surface water • Use of surface water • Recharge during rainy season
Management and preservation of fresh water		
<p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in quantum of fresh water • Increases in use of surface water • Self-sufficiency in food • Advance in collection and storing of rain water • Expansion fish culture <p>Failure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate supply of fresh water • Increase in salinity and lack of control • Inadequate technology in storing rain water • Inadequate fish culture • Extinction of local species of fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring maximum use of fresh water • Limiting / planning and control of use of insecticides • 100% ensuring arsenic free safe water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storing water with the help of small dams • Re-excavation of ponds and tanks • Community-based storing and use of fresh water • Water purification project • Underground water; surface water.
Management of solid waste and drainage		
<p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in people's awareness • Ban on polythene • Recycling has increased • Organic and composting • Increase in coverage of drainage / sewerage 40 % in villages, 45% in towns. <p>Failure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No co-ordinated guidelines • Lack of awareness • Habit of throwing waste everywhere • Lack of technology / resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring proper waste management • Purification • Increase recycling • Waste management which allows its healthy use in soils • 100% health / sanitation drainage / sewerage system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of appropriate technology • Awareness • To formulate and implement specific rules • GO-NGO coordination • Participation • Peoples solvency

1. Firm political commitment
2. Use of appropriate technology
3. Increase in awareness
4. Proper application of laws
5. People should show respect to laws and should be habituated to abide by the laws

6. Participatory meeting of people
7. Representative participatory meeting
8. Formulation, management and implementation of co-ordinated plans
9. Proper use of time
10. Taking timely steps

Group-3
Activation of role of professions and organisations

Success/failure of Programmes adopted in last 10 years (1992-2002)	Hopes and aspirations of next 10 years (2003-2012)	Strategy for implementation
Women, Children and Youth		
<p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneous participation of women in elections • Improvement achieved in policy formulation • Rate of women literacy has increased • Child mortality rate has decreased and child birth related death has decreased. Success of EPI increased. • Participation of women and youth is small credits increased • MCHFR has progressed <p>Failure :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women repression increased • Incidence of child labour not reduced satisfactorily • Despondency, restlessness and drug addiction among youth increased due to in employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District wise one seat in Jatiya Sangsad to be reserved for women • Creditable amendment to law relating to rape of women and steps for speedy resolution • Full implementation of United Nation convention on children • Risky child labour should be stopped • Child trafficking to be banned • Children's right to education to be ensured • Wide scope for youth's self employment to be ensured • Necessary amendment, addition and change in current laws and regulations and their enforcement should be ensured. 	
Role of different organisations including NGOs		
<p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have brought about success in various activities (education, health and small credit) • Have organised woman. • GO-NGO coordination increased <p>Failure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High rate of interest for small credits • Peddling of influence in national politics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well defined rules • Transparency and accountability • Reducing rate of interest for small credits • Free from political influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulation of policy and law on basis of partnership and ensuring their enforcement

Indigenous people		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidence of land less ness has increased • A ministry on Hill Ctg. affairs created • Rate of education not increase satisfactorily • Zonal basis repression increased • Lack of social security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper policy on land issues • Constitutionally ensuring equal civic rights 	
Scientist and technologists		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer technologists have been created • Success in agricultural and irrigation fields (HYB). • Have contribution in fisheries and animal husbandry. • Absence of equipment in schools-colleges, libraries, lack of study. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want a science day. • Export of software should be increased. • Science/computer should be introduced from primary level. 	
Local government		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government established. • Women's participation in local govt. increased. • Women's rights expanded. • Weak local government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal rights for woman. • Strong local government. • Increase in coordination between local and national governments. • Increase and strengthening of women's participation in local government. 	



