



Earth in crisis: environmental policy in an international context

Bangladesh: Who Will Pay?

Commentary

Bangladesh is home to one of the largest deltas in the world. A network of more than 230 major rivers flow through the country. For hundreds of years Bangladeshi people have fished these rivers and farmed the surrounding land. The delta area has always been fertile, watered by the rivers running through it and by rainfall during wet season. For centuries Bangladesh has suffered from yearly floods and storms, but many scientists have concluded that climate change is now making these events worse.

Mohammed Reazuddin

Bangladesh is a country known to the world for its extreme vulnerabilities to climate change. And during these years Bangladesh really had experienced a severe, catastrophic situation due to extreme weather and people attribute it to climate change.

Commentary

In 2007 thousands lost their lives in cyclone Sidr. That same year the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published its Fourth Assessment Report, which offered some grave predictions for Bangladesh. It predicts that floods and droughts will become more severe, cyclones will become more frequent and almost a quarter of Bangladesh's landmass will almost certainly be submerged by rising sea levels.

Sabihuddin Ahmed

There are some people who say that there is insufficient evidence that climate change will happen, but I believe their voices have been subdued by the report of the Fourth Assessment Report which was published in 2007, which gave hard scientific evidence of climate change as a reality and that it is induced by human action because of the burning of fossil fuels.

Commentary

At the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology scientists are developing computer models which simulate existing and projected impacts of climate change.

Jobair Bim Alam

Bangladesh is going to be affected by floods, by droughts, cyclones, salinity, increase of salinity and sea level rise and also, obviously, increase of temperature and rainfall. By using those kind of models, now we can make medium to long term forecasts like forecasts up to the year of 2100 and so on.

Atiq Rahman

If we look at the map of Bangladesh, let me start from the south: one of the most dominant issues is sea level rise, unquestioned that sea level is rising. The second is the cyclones. Bangladesh is extremely flat, and the next cyclone that comes in, will push the water and make the water front move. And all that combines to destroy the crops, so the whole food security of that whole area, in a devastating way.

Commentary

In coastal areas of Bangladesh cyclones are a major problem. In 1988 a devastating cyclone caused tidal waves to flood the region. Storm surges pushed saline water upriver and when the floods retreated, the composition of the river had changed – from fresh water to saline water. Much of the soil was left saturated by salt. Whether the severity of this particular cyclone was a result of climate change is impossible to say for certain, but scientists have concluded that, as the Earth's temperature warms, cyclones of this sort will become more frequent and more intense. There is now evidence of more severe weather events in Bangladesh than in the past as predicted by climate change models.