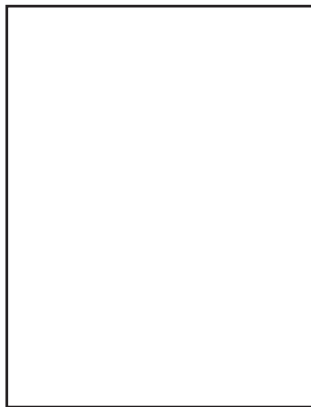


Environmental management in Bangladesh

Ahmed Ali Shah

Environmental protection and waste management are current industry issues in Bangladesh. The government has recently taken a number of measures towards pollution control and waste minimization in the industrial sector. Government policies, regulations and strategies are already in place and the industry is graduating to the concept of environmental management.



Mr. Ahmed Ali Shah

*Senior Research Officer
National Expert for Bangladesh on
Linking Wages with Productivity and
Benchmarking
National Productivity Organization
(NPO), Ministry of Industries
Government of Bangladesh and
Shilpa Bhaban, (1st Floor),
91, Motijheel C/A Dhaka 1000,
Bangladesh
Tel: (+880-2) 9562883,
Fax: (+880-2) 9563553 (Attn. NPO)
E-mail: npobd@ncll.com
ratuls@bdmail.net*

The Bangladesh economy is characterized by a predominant contribution of its agriculture sector to national income. Unbridled population growth has spawned many woes. High unemployment, a disproportionate load of dependency, shortages of food and power, a growing landless class, technological backwardness, and low productivity in agriculture, industry and other economic sectors are the most disquieting problems. The savings-GDP ratio and per capita income are among the lowest in the world, together forming a vicious circle of poverty. The only escape lies in a systematic improvement of productivity at all levels.

Bangladesh depends on its natural resources for employment, revenues and foreign exchange. Important areas of environmental concern are therefore a decline in soil fertility, water and air pollution, excessive use of chemical fertilizers, excessive exploitation of natural resources for commercial purposes, deforestation, and floods and other natural hazards. The high population growth (1.8 per cent in 1996) and massive poverty are also important factors in envi-

ronmental degradation. These factors pose a grave danger to the sustainability of the economy.

The disposal of industrial wastes in Bangladesh is poor. Black smoke is emitted from factories, vehicles and brick making kilns. Sound pollution from factories and vehicles is normal. Effluents and solid waste disposal from factories render the waters in Khal/Bill unfit for community use and are responsible for the mass killing of fish and other aquatic lives; soil fertility around factories is dwindling; factories are set up without planning; working conditions are poor; and industries are built in residential areas.

Already the limitations of the resource base are aggravated by population growth and over-exploitation, with consequent environmental degradation.

But the task of sustaining this limited resource base is further complicated by natural calamities that damage the resources, including flora and fauna. Vulnerability to natural disasters like cyclones, floods, droughts and tornadoes, and desertification are the major environmental concerns in Bangladesh. Tropical cyclones in coastal areas uproot