
ENVIRONMENT NEWSLETTER

Year 15, No. 29 (July 22, 2018)

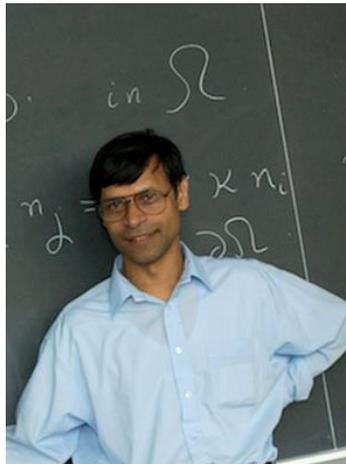
Presented by **Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN)**

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This issue of the Environment Newsletter includes the following items:

- 1) New Global Coordinator of BEN
- 2) Beat the plastic pollution! World Environment Day 2018
- 3) BEN leads youth participation in “Advanced Climate Policy Camp”

1. New Global Coordinator of BEN



BEN now has new Global Coordinator: Prof. Saleh Tanveer -- an eminent mathematician, who did his Ph. D. in Applied Physics from the California Institute of Technology (CalTech), and is now a professor of mathematics at Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA.

Prof. Tanveer is one of the founders of BEN, and has been playing a crucial role in BEN consistently for the last twenty years. In particular, his role as BEN Treasurer has been of fundamental importance for continuation of BEN's work. He played an important role in both first and second ICBEN, serving also as an editor of the volumes that were published containing the materials of these conferences. He is well known to BAPA leaders, who respect him highly.

The proposal to have a new Global Coordinator was tabled by Dr. Nazrul Islam, the Initiator of BEN, during the meeting of BEN leaders gathered in New York to celebrate the 20th anniversary of BEN. He noted that, after 20 years, during which he led BEN, it is time to have a leadership transition. He noted further that BEN leadership eventually has to pass on to members of the

next generation of non-resident Bangladeshis. Starting a practice of leadership change in every few years will be a good way to initiate that process. In this connection, he stressed the need to bring more of the next generation non-resident Bangladeshis into BEN and groom leadership from among them.

Dr. Nazrul noted that BEN has always been led collectively, based on consensus decision making, so that the change in Global Coordinator should not affect BEN's leadership style. He noted that he would continue to be in BEN as an Adviser and keep on doing many of the things that he usually did for BEN, so that the actual division labor may not change that much.

Dr. Nazrul noted further that, through long twenty years of work, BEN has become a mature organization, with well-laid principles, a solid record and experience, and a clear paved way to move forward. In particular, BEN has helped to build a reliable and effective partner organization inside Bangladesh in the form of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA). The BAPA-BEN model has established itself as a successful model of RB-NRB cooperation. Dr. Nazrul expressed confidence that, upholding the collective spirit, BEN, together with BAPA, will overcome the new challenges and have new accomplishments.

After thoughtful deliberations, Dr. Nazrul's proposal was accepted by BEN leaders gathered at the Anniversary event and then by BEN founders and BEN Consultative Committee. Prof. Tanveer has also kindly consented to the proposal.

Dr. Nazrul thanks all those who rallied around him when he first put forward in 1998 the proposal for a network of non-resident Bangladeshis dedicated to the protection of Bangladesh environment. He noted that it was a journey into the unknown, and he was humbled by the confidence that they showed in him. He thanks all BEN members and sympathizers for their consistent support through the subsequent twenty years. He appealed to all to lend now their full support to Prof. Tanveer in performing his role as the new Global Coordinator of BEN.

Dr. Nazrul noted that, at its 20th anniversary, BEN raised the slogan for a "Beautiful Bangladesh!" He appealed to all in BEN and BAPA to work together to make that a reality.

2. World Environment Day 2018: Beat plastic pollution!

World Environment Day 2018 was observed on June 5 with the slogan "Beat plastic pollution!" World-wide plastic pollution has now emerged as the second most important threat – after climate change -- to global environment. Annual global plastic production has increased from 1.7 to 322 million metric tons between 1950 and 2015. Over this period, 6.8 billion metric tons of mostly non-biodegradable plastic waste was accumulated. Nearly 80 per cent of this waste has been deposited in landfills or in water bodies, including seas and oceans. The total volume of plastic in the ocean is soon to exceed the total volume of all fish species! Whales dying from ingestion of plastic debris are showing up on sea shores more frequently. Plastic microbes are spreading to the air and are entering the food chain in increasing order, posing a serious health

risk for humans. Across the world, plastic waste is creating a havoc to land, water, and air. Unfortunately, the awareness about the danger posed by plastic pollution is still not adequate. “Beating plastic pollution” has become an urgent task.



Mounds of plastic in Vietnam

In Bangladesh the government the government held programs marking the day and promote the cause. The Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina herself took part in the campaign urging all to use jute-made bags and other articles instead of plastic. Bangladesh is one of the pioneer countries in banning the use of plastic bags. However, ubiquitous use of plastic packages is overriding the efficacy of than BAN. The governments need to ban all plastic packaging, except very few essential cases.

BAPA also observed the Day with appropriate attention. In particular, it held a seminar jointly with other organizations, in which BAPA leaders Khondoker Bazlul Hoque, Syed ABul Moksud, Abdul Matin, Mihir Biswas, Shahjahan Mridha Benu and other took part.

3. BEN leads youth participation in “Advanced climate policy camp”

A group of Bangladeshi youth, instructed by Prof. Farida Khan, a BEN leader, participated in the Advanced Climate Policy Camp held at the American University, Washington DC, on June 6-8, 2018. The Bangladeshi group represented the G-77 countries – comprising most developing countries -- at this camp. The other four groups represented the USA, China, Mexico, and Canada. The Camp was intended to prepare climate advocates to answer the complicated policy questions that can arise in advocacy work and attendees participated in either an international or domestic climate policy track. Attendees also participated in an experiential

learning exercise to put their new knowledge into action. BEN was a co-sponsor for this event. The following is a report by Aditya Krishnaswamy on this event.



Report on the Advanced climate policy camp

Every nation is facing the disastrous impacts of climate change, but developing countries such as Bangladesh are among the most climate-vulnerable nations. While the international community has attempted to take action through agreements such as the 2015 Paris Agreements, the international community must rally to accelerate and intensify global efforts to fight climate change. Developing countries such as Bangladesh are currently bearing the brunt of the problem. At the recent Advanced Climate Policy Bootcamp, I had the privilege of representing Bangladesh, and while it was difficult at times to stress the urgency of the issue to other nations, it was a great opportunity to see the role all nations have in saving our planet, not just the large nations.

Bangladesh holds a special position in the international community with respect to negotiating climate change policy. A member of the G77, which includes countries such as Brazil, China, Iran, and India, Bangladesh has served as a representative of the most climate vulnerable countries in the world. Facing many problems, including sea level rising, flooding, saline intrusion, and rising temperatures, Bangladesh has faced many of the worst effects of climate change, exacerbated by the country's high population density. Throughout our discussion, we had to keep in mind the many problems Bangladesh faces - problems representative of many developing nations. This thought process was critical to our discussion and allowed all of us to better understand the manner in which developing countries have to adapt to climate change and have been represented in international climate negotiations.

Above all, the biggest lesson I have learned from this invaluable experience is to realize the personal stories and issues different groups of countries experience with regards to climate change and to learn how to communicate and share their stories with the rest of the world. Once we show compassion towards all cultures, only then can we work towards true solutions that allow everyone to fairly contribute and work towards saving our climate. It is up to all of us to empower those around us and actively work towards strong and equitable policies to protect our future.

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