

Essay on Natural Disasters In Bangladesh

Introduction

Bangladesh is situated in the eastern part of South Asia with a deltaic land-mass comprising mainly the delta of three mighty rivers—the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, and the Meghna, with a network of numerous rivers and canals. To the north of the country lie the Himalayas and to the south the Bay of Bengal. Vast green fields are bounded by low hills in the northeast and the southeast. This geographical position along with its tropical monsoon climate has made the country the worst victim of natural disasters for centuries, causing manifold miseries and sufferings to millions of people, hindering economic development, and destroying infrastructure.

Disasters types

The most fatal natural disaster in Bangladesh is a cyclone. The Bay of Bengal is considered to be the main factor for causing cyclones in this country. Among the devastating cyclones that have occurred in 1960, 1961, 1970, 1991, 1997, and 1998, the most catastrophic one is that of 29-30 April 1991. Much of the destruction caused by it was due to the wind velocity and the tidal surge which began to swell about the time the cyclone hit the coastal areas of the country. Twenty-five feet at some points, it swamped the off-shore islands, submerging them and then bursting across the shoreline, raced inland. The impact of such an event was especially catastrophic because there was a dense rural population living in extreme poverty and with little protection in these areas. It is estimated that nearly 1,40,000 people lost their lives during this cyclone. As many as 1 million people in 16 districts of the country were affected in varying degrees while nearly 1,38,849 people were reported to have been injured. Besides, this cyclone has caused serious damage to

infrastructure. On 15 November 2007, SIDR, in the form of a hurricane, swept over the 22 districts of Bangladesh damaging the wealth and property of 2.3 billion dollars and killing 15 thousand hearts, according to Red Crescent Society. In the history of 131 years, SIDR is one of the ten speediest cyclones that ravaged our country sav-agedly.

Flood

Flood is another devastating natural calamity in Bangladesh. During the monsoon, it rains heavily and there is a heavy rush of water from the mountains through our rivers. But the rivers can neither hold the water nor carry it to the Bay of Bengal. As a result, they overflow their banks and cause floods. This flood causes heavy damage to our life and properties. Houses are destroyed, cattle are washed away, crops are greatly damaged and trees are uprooted. People take shelter on housetops, high lands, roads, embankments in untold miseries to save their lives. All communications from the outside world are out off. There is an acute shortage of pure drinking water. Famine breaks out in the flood-affected areas and many people die for want of food. The prices of all necessary things go up. Many dangerous diseases like cholera, typhoid, and dysentery break out in an epidemic form. The most devastating floods in this country are those of 1974,1987, 1988, and 1998 among which the last one broke all the records of the past affecting 68% of the total area of the country. The havoc caused by this flood was so great that almost all the roads, ports, and industries were directly or indirectly affected by it resulting in the destruction of the whole infrastructure and ruining the economy of the country.

Earthquake

Another natural calamity of our country is earthquakes. Bangladesh

lies in the active earthquake zone. A large area of Bangladesh including Dhaka, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Pabna, Bogra, and Dinajpur falls under the severe earth-quake prone zone while the rest of the country falls in the mild quake zone. But we are not so often threatened by earthquakes and the geologists of our country believe that although there are several fault lines in the geographical area comprising Bangladesh, none of these are active enough to pose a major threat. Yet they do not rule out the possibility of a major quake and the dangers that might be associated with it. So, adequate precautions should be taken to minimize possible losses.

Various storms

A common and regular disaster that hits the country during summer is 'Kalbaishakhi'. This violent and destructive storm coming from the northwest causes great damages to stand crops, houses, trees, cattle, etc. and kills valuable human lives. Sometimes, this North-wester turns into a hailstorm causing irreparable damage to our crops ready to be harvested.

Drought

Another natural disaster from which we suffer a lot is drought. The excessive use of groundwater, riverbed siltation, global warming, deforestation, and a low flow from the upstream of major rivers during the dry season creates a water crisis. This scarcity of drinking and irrigating water in the northern, southern, and southwestern parts of the country causes serious drought. Inadequate rain-fall and inadequate flow from high areas during the dry season also cause drought which affects adversely agriculture and vegetation. The unilateral withdrawal of Ganges water by India at the Farakka point worsens the situation resulting in desertification in the northern and northwestern parts of the country. In addition to

the disasters mentioned above, the people of Bangladesh are also affected by other natural calamities like depression, tornadoes, tidal surges, and above all the arsenic contamination in the tubewell water.

Hostile nature

The people of Bangladesh are the helpless pawns at the hand of a hostile nature. Because we cannot change the will of nature. But, we can reduce its impact by taking necessary measures. For this purpose, the government has already constructed cyclone shelters in the coastal areas for saving lives and property during natural calamities. The 'Asrayan' housing project has been launched to rehabilitate people in disaster-prone areas. Programs like infrastructure repair and maintenance and Vulnerable Group Development are being implemented to reduce the suffering of rural poor people through self-employment. But, these are not enough. More shelter centers should be built where possible. Rivers and canals should be dredged, so that, they can hold more water to help to lessen the intensity of floods. Above all, awareness should be created among people about the catastrophic consequences of natural calamities.

Conclusion

Bangladesh always remains exposed to one or another kind of disaster. The people of Bangladesh are the victims of nature. The economy stands for an unfortunate hostage to the whims of nature. So, we should come forward and work together to take the necessary steps to save our dear motherland from any kind of loss.