

Champions of the Earth Award 2015: Who else if not Sheikh Hasina?

This award has increased the responsibility of Sheikh Hasina to play a bolder role. Her government now needs to pay more attention to show responsiveness, efficiency, and accountability in the distribution and management of climate funds

SUBJECT OFTHE DAY

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We already know that recently Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh was awarded the '2015 Champions of the Earth Award' under policy leadership category for her outstanding leadership on the frontline of climate change.

It should be noted that "The Champions of the Earth Award" — is the highest environmental honor given by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) since 2004. The award is given to the outstanding visionary people and organisations whose actions and leadership have had a positive contribution on sustainable development and to tackle climate change challenges. Each year the Award calls for nominations under the four categories such as policy leadership, science and innovation, entrepreneurial vision, and inspiration and action. Since its inception, the Award has recognized 72 laureates in the four categories.

In order to justify the award, the UNEP termed Sheikh Hasina as a visionary leader whose vision was instrumental in tackling climate change challenges. While we all know that our Prime Minister received the award, it is little known to the masses, especially to those who work outside of the environment field, about the set of visionary planning and strate-

gies framed under her leadership. Therefore, it is pertinent to list some key policy frameworks framed under Sheikh Hasina.

Under Hasina's guidance Bangladesh is the first ever country in the world that prepared 'Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) 2009'. This was possible because Hasina had a vision and we all know she has a vision to turn the country into a middle-income country by 2021, and a developed country by

2041 through implementing environmental policies and achieving social and economic development. In order to tackle the impacts of climate change and to enhance the community resilience capacity, Hasina's government had set up 'Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF)' with domestic resources. On another front, 'Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF)' supported by development partners and the World Bank was formed.

One of her extraordinary moves

was to amend Bangladesh Constitution in 2011 and include protection of the environment and safeguarding natural resources for current and future generations. The government currently earmarks 6-7 percent of its annual budget on climate change adaptation where only 25 percent is coming from development partners.

Her self-motivation to tackle the impact of climate change is noteworthy. She mentioned in her award receiving speech that, her govern-

ment never waited for developed country's fund as they didn't keep their commitment to deliver finance for climate change. In the mean time, government developed a 'Climate Change Fiscal Framework' to track the demand and supply of climate change funds.

As part of climate change adaptation, the government is prioritizing the development of climate resilient infrastructure that will better help the people to fight against climate change. Adaptation measures also include early warning systems, increased

awareness through training, promoting climate-friendly agricultural technologies, new health services, etc. Bangladesh adopted the concept of Community Based Adaptation (CBA) focus on empowering communities to take action based on their own decision-making processes. In case of climate change mitigation, government pays attention to use clean and renewable energy.

In international forums, Bangladesh has offered political leadership to the Least Developed

towards addressing climate change.

One should note that, Bangladesh is also finalizing its 'Seventh Five Year Plan' for the period of 2015-2019. The plan prioritizing the climate change and disaster management as well as protect environment and conservation of wetland and forest biodiversity. Moreover, the country is preparing another 100 year perspective plan called 'The Delta Plan 2100' with assistance from the Netherlands government. Under the plan six hotspots e.g., coastal zone, barind regions, haor regions, Chittagong Hill Tracts, rivers and estuary, and urban areas have been considered.

In conclusion it should be noted that, this award has increased the responsibility of Hasina to play bolder role. Sheikh Hasina's government now needs to pay more attention to show responsiveness, efficiency, and accountability in the distribution and management of climate funds. The government also should address the criticism regarding misappropriation of climate fund. A continuous effort should be made by her government to mobilize both international and national fund for addressing the climate change and disaster. More efforts need to be made to carry out the preventive work rather than only curative work. In regard to this more participatory planning is needed at the local level to ensure efficient utilization of fund. Government also should develop a monitoring framework for the NGOs to prove their investment, accountability, transparency, seriousness in action and best utilization of funds efficiently.



Country (LDC) group, at the climate change negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The PM in UN Climate Summit declared that Bangladesh is committed to prepare a realistic public announcement called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) as an effort to mitigation. Moreover, formulations of 'National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA)' and 'BCCSAP', creation of BCCTF and BCCRF are considered as bold steps

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