

US-led accord accepted

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After a break, the conference president gavelled a decision to "take note" of the agreement instead of formally approving it. Experts said that clears the way for the accord to begin even though it was not formally approved by the conference.

Ban was speaking after delegates passed a motion recognising the agreement, which the US reached with key nations including China and Brazil.

But Ban said the agreement must be made legally binding next year in Mexico City admitting that the agreement had failed to win global consensus and would disappoint many looking for stronger action against climate change.

UN chief voiced relief it had not been strangled at birth. "It may not be everything we hoped for, but this decision of the Conference of Parties is an essential beginning," he said.

"Many will say that it lacks ambition," Ban said. "Nonetheless, you have achieved much."

The UN conference yesterday rammed through a battle plan against climate change forged by US President Barack Obama and other top leaders, sidelining smaller states, which lashed the deal as a betrayal.

After toxic exchanges through the night, the summit chair forced through a deal using a procedural tool that effectively dropped all obstacles to the Copenhagen Accord.

Ed Miliband, Britain's climate minister, said it was "an important start".

"This is a very significant moment because it indicates developed and developing countries are both signing up to the notion that they should say what they are going to do in terms of cutting carbon emissions," he told Sky television.

Obama earlier called the accord an "unprecedented breakthrough" after meetings with about two dozen presidents and prime ministers in Copenhagen.

But the deal was mauled when it was put to a full session of the 194-nation UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Outraged developing countries blasted the document as a deal among the elite that violated the rules of UN democracy, excluded the poor and doomed the world to catastrophic climate change.

Verbal violence erupted when the draft was put to a full session of the UNFCCC.

Half a dozen developing countries led the charge, blasting the document as a cosy backdoor deal that violated UN democracy, excluded the poor and doomed the world to catastrophic climate change.

"It looks like we are being offered 30 pieces of silver to betray our people and our future," said Ian Fry of Tuvalu, a tiny Pacific island whose very existence is threatened by rising seas.

In remarks that sparked immediate condemnation from Western nations, Sudan's outspoken delegate, Lumumba Stanislas Di-Aping, who chairs a bloc of 130 poor nations, said the pact meant "incineration" for Africa and was comparable to the Holocaust.

The agreement was assembled in a frenzied game of climate poker among the leaders of the United States, China, India, Brazil and South Africa and major European countries.

The group had been chosen by conference chair Denmark after it became clear the summit was in danger of failure.

The draft is intended to be the kernel of a strategy to slash the fossil-fuel emissions that trap the Sun's heat and are warming Earth's surface, slowly but ruthlessly damaging our weather systems.

It set a commitment to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit), but did not spell out the important stepping stones -- global emissions targets for 2020 or 2050 -- for getting there.

It did not spell out a year by which emissions should peak, a demand made by rich countries that was fiercely opposed by China. And pledges were voluntary, without a tough compliance mechanism to ensure nations honoured promises.

It was more detailed on how poor countries should be financially aided to shore up their defences against rising seas, droughts, floods and storms.

Rich countries pledged 30 billion dollars in "fast-track" finance for the 2010-2012 period, including 11 billion from Japan, 10.6 billion from the European Union and 3.6 billion dollars from the United States.

They set an ambitious goal

of "jointly mobilising" 100 billion dollars by 2020.

But to make the "fast-track" funds operational, the accord needed plenary approval.

The outcome in Copenhagen will deliver a boost to Obama's efforts to secure legislation in the US Congress that would set his country on a path to lower emissions by around 17 percent by 2020 over a 2005 benchmark.

He described the deal as a "meaningful and unprecedented breakthrough".

"Going forward, we are going to have to build on the momentum we have achieved here in Copenhagen. We have come a long way but we have much further to go," he added.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who will host the next climate summit in mid-2010, said she viewed the result "with mixed emotions" but added, "The only alternative to the agreement would have been a failure."

China had bristled at anything called "verification" of its plan to cut the intensity of its carbon emissions, seeing it as an infringement of sovereignty and saying rich nations bore primary responsibility for global warming.

Disagreements between the China and United States -- the world's top two carbon polluters -- had been at the core of the divisions.

Obama met twice with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao once privately and once with other leaders in hopes of dispelling some of the doubts that had blocked progress.

The Copenhagen Accord was met with dismay by campaigners, who said it was weak, non-binding and sold out the poor.

"Well-meant but half-hearted pledges to protect our planet from dangerous climate change are simply not sufficient to address a crisis that calls for completely new ways of collaboration across rich and poor countries," said Kim Carstensen, leader of WWF's Global Climate Initiative.

Ninimmo Bassey, chair of Friends of the Earth International, called Copenhagen "an abject failure."

Kumi Naidoo, head of Greenpeace International, said the agreement contained so many loopholes "you could fly an airplane through it, Airforce One, for example."

Since leaders failed to agree on a binding deal to reduce greenhouse gases, delegates also scrapped a plan to protect the world's biologically rich tropical forests early Saturday that would have paid some 40 poor, tropical countries to protect their forests.

Deforestation for logging, cattle grazing and crops has made Indonesia and Brazil the world's third- and fourth-biggest carbon emitters.

The overall outcome was a significant disappointment to those who had anticipated the deal brokered by Obama would be turned into a legally binding treaty. Instead, it envisions another year of negotiations and leaves myriad details yet to be decided.

"The deal is a triumph of spin over substance. It recognizes the need to keep warming below 2 degrees but does not commit to do so. It kicks back the big decisions on emissions cuts and fudges the issue of climate cash," said Jeremy Hobbs, executive director of Oxfam International.

Sudan's delegate, Lumumba Di-Aping, said the agreement would condemn Africa to widespread deaths from global warming and compared it to Nazis sending "6 million people into furnaces" in the Holocaust. The African Union, however, backed the deal and his statement was denounced by other delegations.

To resolve the stalemate early Saturday, UN officials changed the way the text was presented to the plenary. The conference recognised the agreement and those who agreed with it were invited to sign it.

Robert Orr, the UN policy coordination chief, said the conference's decision to "take note" of the US-led accord provides it with "equal legal validity as accepted."

One reason it's been "a very wild roller coaster ride," he said, was the unusual negotiating process involving the hands-on participation of officials on multiple levels, ranging from heads of state to ministers to negotiators.

If the countries had agreed to reach a full, binding agreement, "then we wouldn't make any progress," Obama said. In that case, he said, "there might be such frustration and cynicism that rather than taking one step forward, we ended up taking two steps back."

Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama called the

deal "a major step forward." German Chancellor Angela Merkel, a leading proponent of strong action to confront global warming, gave the Copenhagen Accord only grudging acceptance, saying she had "mixed feelings" about the outcome and called it only a first step.

Only at the conference hall Saturday, more than 100 protesters chanted, "You're destroying our future!" Some carried signs of Obama with the words "climate shame" pasted on his face.

Obama had planned to spend only about nine hours in Copenhagen but, as an agreement appeared within reach, he extended his stay Friday by more than six hours to attend a series of meetings. He and US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton held talks with European leaders, including Merkel, Britain's Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Obama said there was a "fundamental deadlock in perspectives" between big, industrially developed countries like the United States and poorer, though sometimes large, developing nations like China, India and Brazil. Still he said this week's efforts "will help us begin to meet our responsibilities to leave our children and grandchildren a cleaner planet."

The deal reflects some progress helping poor nations cope with climate change and getting China to disclose its actions to address the warming problem.

But Obama agreed the world would have to take more aggressive steps to combat global warming. The first step, he said, is to build trust between developed and developing countries.

In a diatribe against Hugo Chavez criticised the conference as undemocratic.

"There is a document that has been moving around, all sorts of documents that have been moving around, there is a real lack of transparency here," he said Friday. "We reject any document that Obama will slip under the door."

No convicts

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In hand in handing them over. I think they are in other countries," he said during an interview with The Daily Star Thursday.

He believes that the convicted killers of Bangabandhu would not feel comfortable because India will certainly not entertain their stay.

About two Bangladeshis in Indian Tihar jail, Pinak said he can confirm that the two people are brothers and they were involved in the August 21, 2004 grenade attack on an Awami League rally.

These two were caught in India in connection with terrorist attack in Benaras and perhaps in Hyderabad. "I think they are members of Huji. Hence they are in our custody, in our jail facing a case that has been lodged against them. It was only discovered later that they were also involved here."

He said this information is available to the Bangladesh government. "There is a judicial process that is going on in India. We will have to see how we can work this out. But I think there is no hesitation in the government of India if the government of Bangladesh would want them back to prosecute them for the crimes they committed here or alleged to have committed. We will certainly hand them over if necessary."

Nitin BJP

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A meeting of party's parliamentary board ratified Gadkari's appointment.

The 52-year-old leader takes the baton from Rajnath Singh, whose leadership had come under the scanner for a string of electoral reverses for BJP in the recent years, to become the first chief of the party from Maharashtra as BJP.

His appointment as BJP chief came a day after the first phase of the organisational overhaul of the party's top leadership was effected with L. K. Advani making way for Summa Swaraj as leader of the opposition.

Gadkari said he did not view politics as a career but as an instrument of socio-economic reforms to bring about a change in the lives of the poor and the downtrodden.

"I don't work as if I am making a political career. I work for the poor and downtrodden sections of society who do not have food, house or clothes. I strive to bring about a transformation in their lives," he said.

AL critical

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achievements of the AL government, including distribution of cards, food and cash under social safety-net programmes like the VGE, Food for Work, Test Relief and others. She said the government was also successful in conducting hajj operations this year.

Late and Textiles Minister Abdul Jute Siddiqui said, "We are not being able to tackle the party's inner instability. We endured lots of sufferings and oppression in the past. People have given us an opportunity this time. We should not misuse the opportunity... Let us downplay our personal interests and work for the country."

He said, "We need to change our mindset and behaviour to bring in changes. The Awami League activists have to change their mindset to build a 'digital Bangladesh'."

Addressing as the chief guest, noted columnist-journalist Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury said the AL would continue to enjoy state power if it can ensure that food prices will not increase anymore, violence will not occur and its activists will not engage in tender manipulation.

He bitterly criticised BNP chief Khaleida Zia, her son Tarique Rahman and other leaders of the last BNP-Jamaat-led four-party government for their corruption and misrule.

Carbon cut pledge

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So this accord will not be a legally binding document and it has not set any target of immediate emission curbing. But we cannot say we have not achieved anything. A fund is going to be created," said Dr Saleemul Haq, one of the key climate change experts.

The developed countries have initially pledged \$30 billion for next three years till 2012 and later they would increase it up to \$100 billion in 2020.

However, the UNFCCC measured as much as a fund of \$200 billion might be needed to battle the effects of the climate change from 2020.

Experts say if the developed countries don't act properly, it may leave Bangladesh and other small islanders in a risk of being submerged partially and displacement of millions of people and loss of livelihood.

It also imposes a threat of losing 20 to 30 percent of the world biodiversity.

Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) Chairman RK Pachauri in his opening remarks of the conference said if the temperature increase is to be limited within 2 to 2.4 degrees, the global emission must not peak no later than 2015.

"But the Copenhagen Accord has not mentioned any peaking year. It does not also specifically say about emission curbing target of the developed countries," said Dr Saleemul Haq, one of the leading climate change experts.

"So we can say Bangladesh did not get what we were expecting," Dr Haq added. "Termining the Accord a major breakthrough, Dr Anun Nisat, one of the key negotiators from Bangladesh, said, 'The most vulnerable countries will get a preferential share of the fund.'"

"At one stage, it seemed nothing was going to happen here. But the summit overcame that stage and made an accord. It is a good start," he observed.

Details of the accord have not yet been fixed as to who will contribute to the fund, who will get the shares and how much, and on what basis everything will be worked out before the COP 16 scheduled to take place in Mexico in 2010.

As all the blocs -- developed countries, big polluters like China and India and LDCs -- were struggling to reach an agreement, a group named "Friends of Chair" came forward with a text to discuss.

Initially, eight countries were in the group led by Barack Obama. Later other countries were invited and the number reached to 27 including Bangladesh.

While negotiating, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh demanded preferential share in the climate fund for the most vulnerable countries like Bangladesh.

She also said carbon emission in Bangladesh is very negligible but Bangladesh and other LDCs are ready to go for clean energy if the developed countries provide technologies and funds.

"It was Bangladesh who put the demand on behalf of the LDCs," said Dr Hasan Mahmud, state minister for environment and forest of the country.

The draft accord caused a storm at the plenary session as Tuvalu, Venezuela, Bolivia and Peru opposed it.

The representative of Tuvalu said they couldn't accept the deal as it is amounted to "30 pieces of silver to sell our country."

However, the Maldives, a low-lying island and also a

Presided over by Acting Jubo League Chairman Omar Faruk Chowdhury, the meeting was addressed, among others, by poet Asad Chowdhury, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's then press secretary to Aminul Islam Badsha, State Minister for LGRR Jahangir Kabir Nanak, and Jubo League General Secretary and Whip of Parliament Mirza Azam.

Third BDR

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mutiny from Rangamati and the second trial started on December 7 in Sakhira.

A representative nominated by the attorney general and two public prosecutors would stand for the state before the court.

Some members of the 19 Rifle Battalion took part in the mutiny by firing blanks and putting up barricades on Feni-Majdee road on February 26 following the revolt at the Pihkhana headquarters in Dhaka.

The then Officer-in-Charge of Daganbhuiyan Police Santosh Barua filed a case against 64 people. The accused were later arrested on May 14 and sent to Feni jail by the Judicial Court of Md Emdad Ullah.

The accused are allowed to take assistance from an officer of the force or lawyer in their defence.

Hasina

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The PM, however, expressed satisfaction over a "reasonable conclusion" of the UN Climate Change Conference, saying that there are certain areas that need to be finalised in the future.

"An agreement has been agreed upon taking in most of our concerns. There are certain areas that would be finalised in the coming days to safeguard the earth's existence threatened by the global warming," she said to the teachers and students of the university.

She noted that all are expecting to have all from this Copenhagen summit, but this conference may be the beginning of an end. "It is not the end," she said.

She sought international cooperation with Bangladesh in enabling the country and its people to face the challenges of the climate change.

The PM also expressed her government's strong commitment to establish Bangladesh as "the most peaceful nation of South Asia".

Hasina had first visited the Lund University campus forty years ago in 1969 with her late husband and nuclear scientist Dr MAWazed.

Lund University Vice-chancellor Per Eriksson, faculty members, scholars, students and Swedish eminent persons attended the function.

Sheikh Rehana, younger daughter of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque, the Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam, the Daily Samakal Editor Golam Sarwar, PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad, lawmaker Faez Noor Taposh, among others, were present.

DRAFT ACCORD FOCUSES PROPOSALS OF LDCs, MVCs
The proposed Copenhagen Accord has recognised the impacts of climate change on the Least Developed Countries as well as Most Vulnerable Countries.

"The draft of the Copenhagen Accord has focused many of our proposals we have placed in the plenary," Bangladesh State Minister for Environment and Forests Hasan Mahmud said here yesterday, reports BSS.

"But many things remained pending to achieve," he said adding that Bangladesh would continue its efforts to include the issues of climate displaced persons in the UN framework.

The agreement said various approaches would be taken to pursue the countries to tap the opportunities of carbon market, enhance the cost-effectiveness, and to promote mitigation actions.

Funding for adaptation will be prioritised for the Most Vulnerable Countries (MVCs), such as the Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States and countries in Africa affected by drought, desertification and floods.

Jamaat

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Jamaat-e-Islami that opposed the Liberation War and labelled freedom fighters as "traitors, agent of India and enemy of Islam" on the occasion of Victory Day this year took elaborate programmes.

Meanwhile, Jamaat's announcement of honouring freedom fighters drew strong protests in some parts of the country including Dughachia upazila in Bogra, Barisal, Natore and Faridpur. Freedom fighters in those areas vowed to foil any such activities of Jamaat.

Party's publicity secretary Tasneem Alam for the last couple of days kept saying that he didn't know about the names of the freedom fighters and advised this correspondent to talk to the party's city unit leaders.

Contacted, party's Dhaka city Ameer (chief) Muhammad Rafiqul Islam Khan said the same thing.

AHM Hamidur Rahman Azad, a lawmaker and party's Dhaka city unit secretary, on December 14 told The Daily Star, "It is Jatiya Muktioddha Parishad that is organising the programme; please contact them," he suggested.

This correspondent tried several times to contact Muslim Uddin, President of Muktioddha Parishad, a Jamaat-affiliated organisation, but his mobile phone (given by Jamaat central office) was found switched off.

Mohammad Iqbal, general secretary of the organisation, said, "Believe me or not, I really don't know about the matter. I have been sick for the last couple of days."

Judiciary upset

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justice if accused of criminal charges."

The High Court on December 14 expressed grave concern over persistent extrajudicial killings as 11 people were killed in custody since its November 17 suo moto rule upon the government for an explanation on the matter.

Meanwhile, rights groups Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) and Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) in separate statements submitted to the court said over 1,000 people have been killed in custody in "so-called" crossfire, encounter or gunfight since the formation of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in 2004.

According to official sources, 606 people were killed in crossfire or encounter since the inception of Rab. Of them, 74 were killed during joint drives by Rab and police.

Justice Nazrul said Section 167 of the criminal procedure code does not allow any repression or coercive measures against an accused in the name of remand, but coercive measures are taken with misinterpretation of the section.

The government should immediately pay adequate attention to stopping extrajudicial killing and repressive police remand, and making the parliament effective with rigorous debate on enacting any law, he said.

Chairman of National Human Rights Commission Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury, who was the chief guest at the meeting, said a committee comprised of a deputy secretary-level officer, a superintendent of police and a civil society representative should investigate each of the extra-judicial killings, and make the findings public.

"Free media is a must for a democratic society," he said.

"Media also must not have allegiance to any political party or individual, and it has to serve only public interests."

According to Odhikar documentations, 229 media repressions occurred during January to December this year. These included three cases of

killings, 71 injuries, 36 assaults, 16 attacks, one abduction, 68 threats, suing 16 and 18 others.

During the period, 15,126 incidents of political violence took place, including 239 killings.

Trader shot

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from him.

Sources also said several incidents of robbery took place in the area over the last few days and the attackers might have been from members of the gang of robbers.

Officer-in-charge Kazi Ayubur Rahman of Kadamtali Police Station said they were trying to nab the killers.

Bank charges

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balance fee, sources said.

The waiver may come into effect on January 1 next year.

Banks also impose different types of fees on the monthly savings schemes.

If a savings scheme is closed immaturely, Tk 50-300 is charged as pre-mature encashment fee.

Besides, different types of charges are realised in the name of sign-up fee, counter transaction fee etc.

For loan processing, 0.25 to 2 percent charge is levied on the approved loan amount as processing fee while one has to pay 0.50 to 5 percent of a loan as early settlement fee for repaying the loan before schedule.

A customer is charged Tk 50-500 for closing savings and current accounts.

Sources said some of these charges may be withdrawn while others reduced.

Banks, especially the private and foreign commercial ones, used to charge excessively for different services including opening L/C and export-import business.

After holding meetings with the banks the central bank cut some of the charges.

Businessmen, however, still complain that the charges are high.

Rattled Zardari

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opposition's calls that he resign on moral grounds.

Asked if other Cabinet officials now vulnerable to revived charges would be asked to leave, Zardari aide and party spokeswoman Farahnaz Ispahani said such ministers had no legal obligation to quit, and that it would be inappropriate to fire people when they were merely accused.

"You're not guilty until you're proven so," Ispahani said.

Anti-corruption courts across the country issued summons on Friday to more than 100 suspects, including Interior Minister Rehman Malik a figure seen as very close to the Americans and presidential secretary Salman Farooqi, court officials said.

The summons came a day after the Interior Ministry issued a list of nearly 250 officials, including Malik and Defence Minister Ahmed Mukhtar, who were barred from leaving the country following the Supreme Court's decision.

After immigration officials stopped Mukhtar from boarding a plane to China on Thursday, the ruling party became defiant.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani criticized the ban, suspended the secretary of the interior, Qamar Zaman, and ordered an inquiry.

"Stopping the defence minister from going on an official trip to a very friendly country brought a bad name to the country," Gilani told reporters. State media reported that he also defended Zardari, saying the allegations against him were old and had never been proven.

Zardari, who spent years in prison on corruption allegations, has always insisted he was innocent and that charges against him were politically motivated.

But the Supreme Court ruling has been welcomed by many Pakistanis, who viewed the graft amnesty as an immoral piece of legislation that whitewashed the crimes of the elite.

It was introduced as part of a US-backed deal to allow Zardari's wife, the late Benazir Bhutto, to return from self-imposed exile in 2007 and contest elections knowing she would not be prosecuted for corruption accusations she said were motivated by sinister politics.

"They are stealing our resources, so if cases against them are opened, it is good," said Islamabad resident Nasar

Rehman as he shopped at a market in the capital.

The turmoil comes at a challenging time for the Washington-Islamabad relations. The Obama administration needs political stability in Pakistan to succeed in neighbouring Afghanistan, where violence against US and Nato troops is running at all time highs. The White House wants Pakistan to do more to eliminate insurgent safe havens on its territory along the Afghan border. (AP, AFP)

PM's Delhi visit

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Over Dimensional Consignments (ODC) for Palatana power project in Tripura.

Strengthening Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute to remove the hassle of certification of Bangladeshi export goods, facilitating Bangladesh-Nepal and Bangladesh-Bhutan connectivity through India.

To arrive at a mandate from the Hasina-Manmohan summit, Dhaka sought a date from Delhi to hold ministerial-level Joint River Commission meeting before the PM's visit. The Indian side has not yet responded to the Bangladesh's intention.

In reply to a question the foreign secretary said giving facility to India to transport its ODCs through Ashuganj Port is not a transit.

Asked about the killing of Bangladeshi citizens by Indian Border Security Force (BSF), Quayer said the Bangladesh side keeps sustained pressure on the Indian side to stop the killing.

Despite assurance from India to show maximum tolerance by BSF, incidents of killing are taking place along the border.

"We're keeping pressure and we're trying