

## ENVIRONMENT

## Paris Agreement and the Bangladesh Perspective

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THE twenty-first Conference of Parties or CoP21 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) came to an end with all the 195 member countries of the planet agreeing to the "Paris Agreement" after a long session from November 29 to December 11, 2015 at Le Bourget in Paris. As the gavel came down

by US, several other major emitters including Russia, Canada, Japan and Australia walked out of the KP causing the collapse of the only GHG reducing global agreement. From the early implementation of KP, the widely heralded three Kyoto instruments and the emergence of a carbon market resulted in a drastic and disastrous collapse.

Thus, there was a lot of skepticism about whether Paris would get an agreement at all. If there was no agreement in Paris, the planet was destined to experience temperature above 3 degrees centigrade by 2100. This would challenge the planetary human civilisations, its food, water and livelihood securities as well as increase the likelihood of a drastic reduction in the

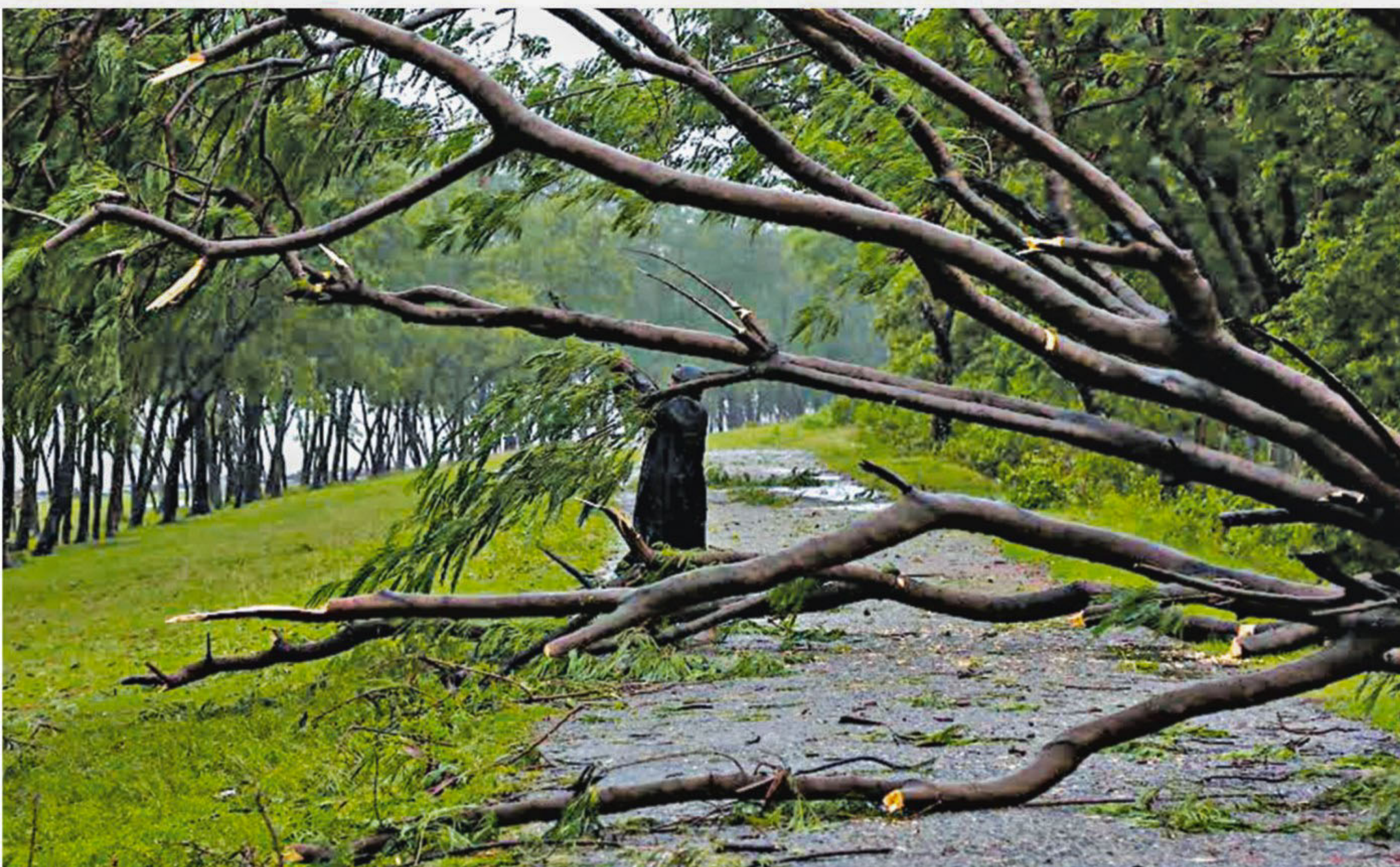
Least Developed Country (LDCs) group, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and Africa group- all seemed to be happy with the outcome. When probed, it appeared that each group found that their issues of concern were included though their nuances may have been modified.

Secretary General of the UN Ban Ki moon termed the Paris Agreement as "a health insurance policy for the planet" and "a great success."

**Leaders upfront**

It is the first time that all the key heads of states and government came up in front in the beginning of the conference. They laid out their positive expectations and

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The recurrence of natural disasters is one of the adverse impacts of climate change.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

on the last and extended session of CoP21, all the countries and citizens of the world breathed a sigh of relief. Because CoP21 came against the backdrop of two great failures - the Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the CoP15 at Copenhagen in 2009, during which the parties in question could not come to an agreement. This enhanced the risks for rapid increase in climate change as evidenced from accelerating extreme weather-related events across the world. The KP had agreed in 1997 on a 5 percent reduction of greenhouse gases (GHG) with the reference baseline of 1990 by the industrialised countries. Unfortunately, the KP also met with a total failure as, led

number of species and greater acidification of the oceans. All the countries would experience dramatic rise in extreme environmental conditions and also threaten the possibilities of poverty reduction and the newly emerging SDGs. Hence the global risks were too high for the economy, development and environment.

US President, within minutes of the conclusion and adoption of the Paris Agreement, congratulated everyone and termed the success as 'huge'. The US and the umbrella group China, Russia, India, developing country grouping G-77, the

high hopes for the agreement and the need for success. This had created an atmosphere of a positive outcome.

**Focus on the science and risks**

All countries and groups realised that the science was very bold and clear. Missing this opportunity would force the different planetary systems (atmosphere, oceans, biodiversity, social, institutional and human systems) beyond recovery and everyone would suffer, despite the levels and differences in technological advancement. Furthermore, some technologies and management systems have already evolved to give several solutions. No country or group wanted to be held

responsible for the failure of the negotiations as the stakes were too high for everyone.

**Focus on agreement**

The Ministerial (backed by experts and bureaucrats) high level session in the last days had decision makers engaged and it included many of their respective concerns and issues. There were "fudges and compromises" but an agreement and a positive outcome were ensured albeit devoid of the many details and specifics.

**Ambitious and purposeful**

The focus of innovation was to make the agreement look ambitious and purposeful. Here the key decision makers using the science and sense of urgency emphasised the key issues of rapid mitigation needs for all countries.

The discussion in the early days was confined within 2 degree centigrade. Soon 2 degree centigrade was made the ceiling and a more serious and ambitious floor was asserted at 1.5 degree centigrade. It may be noted that in Copenhagen Bangladesh had placed 1.5 degree centigrade as the preferred objective on behalf of the LDCs and most vulnerable states.

**Wider inclusion**

Wider ranging progressive issues were incorporated to include concerns of various groups of Parties. An example was to include text such as "Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity".

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