

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
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DHAKA MONDAY JANUARY 11, 2021, POUSSH 27, 1427 BS

## Bangladesh should explore more potential sources of vaccines

*Work for a sustainable vaccine deployment policy*

QUITE a few suggestions have been made by the health experts about sourcing and managing the Covid-19 vaccines in a recent discussion on the issue. They have suggested that the government should explore more potential sources of Covid-19 vaccines apart from the ones that are being currently considered. It has also been suggested that Bangladesh should participate in vaccine trials which will broaden our scope to get more vaccines for future needs.

Although the government has made arrangements to bring three crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines from Serum Institute India (SII) and also announced that it will procure 68 million shots of vaccine under a global arrangement called COVAX, these are not enough for our population. And we still do not know how long these vaccines will give us immunity against the virus. Therefore, we need to procure more vaccines as soon as possible, and from sustainable sources.

Reportedly, six Covid-19 vaccines are already in the market and another 14 are in the pipeline. So, the government should decide which of the vaccines will be good for Bangladesh and make political and diplomatic efforts to buy them after consulting with health experts. And while selecting a particular vaccine, three basic parameters should be considered—safety, efficacy and standard of the vaccines. Needless to say, preference should be given to single-dose vaccines because it will reduce the government's vaccination cost.

Unfortunately, there is still confusion among people as to who will get priority in getting vaccinated and whether the majority of people will get the vaccines they need. In order to remove any such confusion, the government must make their vaccine deployment plan public and work with transparency. Moreover, campaigns should be held for raising awareness among people about the need for getting vaccinated against Covid-19. The government should make all-out efforts to make the vaccination process a success.

## Housing project's defiant incursions into Savar wetland

*Authorities must comply with SC directives instead of abetting violators*

WE'RE shocked by the defiant and seemingly coordinated manner in which all parties involved with the Modhumoti Model Town have been flouting a Supreme Court verdict to dismantle the 550-acre housing project. According to an investigative report by *The Daily Star*, the developers continue operations despite a ban in August 2012 by the highest court that upheld a July 2005 directive by the High Court declaring the project "illegal" and "unauthorised". The project sits on land belonging to wetlands in Bilamalia and Baliarpur mouzas of Savar that serve as flood-control reservoirs vital to the capital's water management. In its full verdict released in 2013, the Appellate Division directed Metro Makers & Developers Ltd., the project owner, to restore the wetland within six months. Far from complying with the order, the project continues to operate to date, under a new name, while the higher authorities including Rajuk and the housing ministry continue to entertain them.

The ministry recently took it a step further by sending a letter to Rajuk asking it to take steps to include the project land as an "urban area" in the Detailed Area Plan (DAP), following an application by the plot owners. This, we must say, constitutes executive overreach in a clear disregard for the Supreme Court verdict, one that, if carried through by Rajuk, would set a bad precedent for how to approach future court orders and also have grave consequences for the wetlands and those who depend on them. Wetlands and such water bodies play an important role in our life by holding deluge, and when we lose a wetland from our landscape, we lose this very important service. Protecting wetlands is also critical for biodiversity. Alarming, disappearing wetlands are increasingly being viewed as collateral damage in our mindless upward movement to development. The land in question is identified as floodplain in the 1997 Dhaka City Master Plan, and it is crucial that it remains so regardless of any attempt to change its status by the government and real estate companies.

We understand the importance of protecting the interests of the ordinary plot buyers. In fact, in its verdict, the apex court had ordered the project owners to double-refund all plot buyers including their registration fees. They didn't. The court also asked Rajuk to reclaim the wetlands in case the owners failed to complete the restoration within the six-month period—a task it abjectly failed to do. No structure or building has been reportedly demolished or removed from the project site since the verdict. This is not just unacceptable; it's a mockery of the state of law and order in our country. The authorities including all relevant departments of the government as well as the project owners must immediately comply with the order and settle the issue once and for all. Any breach of the court order or dereliction to that effect must not be tolerated at all.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Democracy must be cherished

The interpretation of democracy by Abraham Lincoln, that it is a government of the people, by the people, for the people, was terribly mistreated during the recent storming of the US Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump. What the world witnessed that day was an attack on democracy.

We hope that the people of America and the world will stand up for democracy and strive hard to live up to its principles.

Biplob Biswas, Dhaka

# Counting planetary pressures for sustainable human development



FAHMIDA KHATUN

**H**UMAN civilisation has progressed steadily over the years. Several countries have advanced immensely. Not only have they progressed in terms of economic growth, but they improved their human development indicators too. However, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has destroyed the global economy at an unprecedented scale. As recovery measures from this devastating pandemic are being implemented by countries, suggestions have been made to design these in a manner that combine economic, social and environmental aspects together.

The pandemic broke out at a time when the world was already suffering from the negative impact of climate change, which is the outcome of the economic activities of humanity. Such activities have created wealth only for the few. Thus, inequality increased as the global economy progressed. Such pattern of economic growth is neither environmentally, nor socially sustainable. The long-term objective of making development sustainable has been sacrificed for the short-term objective of growth at any cost. Human fixation on growth has therefore been largely

understanding of human progress. It has looked into the impact of individual on the climate.

When launched in 1990, the HDI itself was an advancement from the conventional measure for economic growth that looks at only the gross domestic product (GDP). This index included indicators of well-being such as life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling, and gross national income per capita. Over time, the concept has been

in the PHDI ranking. Each of these countries dropped by over 70 positions—Luxemburg by as high as 131 places. On the other hand, Costa Rica, Belarus and Panama see their ranks increase in the PHDI.

In cases of the "high human development", "medium human development" and "low human development" countries, the drop in the ranking is much less. Hence, in the "high human development" category, only

cannot afford to save themselves from the impact of carbon emissions while the rich can pay for cleaner air. Therefore, the vulnerability of the poor is much more than the wealthy.

Till today, no country could achieve higher HDI without affecting the climate. HDI and high resource use have gone hand in hand. Therefore, having a high HDI is not good enough for a country. Rather, the trend is such that when HDI improves, PHDI decreases. This



Development should be pursued in a way that ensures the wellbeing of both people and the planet.

PHOTO: UNDP

*The top 1 percent wealthiest individuals in 2019 are responsible for more than 20 percent of the global carbon emissions as they consume more and emit more through their investments.*

destructive.

The Human Development Report (HDR) 2020 of the United Nations looks into these aspects closely. The world has entered the "age of humans"—the Anthropocene which is a new geologic epoch. Hence, human development from now on should be accomplished in a way that takes nature into consideration. The 30th anniversary edition of the HDR titled, "The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene", highlights the issue of balancing between people and planet. It highlights two types of vulnerabilities—planetary vulnerability and people's vulnerability. By doing so, the report has broadened the

expanded to capture a comprehensive measure of human development. Hence, estimates such as inequality-adjusted HDI, the Multidimensional Poverty Index, the Gender Inequality Index and the Gender Development Index have evolved.

Now the HDI has included two new indicators such as carbon dioxide emissions per capita and its material footprint per capita of a country. Material footprint is the amount of raw materials extracted from the environment to meet the demand of people and to achieve economic growth. This latest index, which is called the Planetary pressures-adjusted HDI (PHDI), reveals the current development patterns of countries. It also suggests that development should be pursued in a way that ensures the wellbeing of both people and the planet.

Indeed, PHDI is an eye opener to our traditional thought on progress which gives the wrong signal on our actual standing. When countries are assessed in the context of PHDI, their HDI rankings change dramatically. Countries which have been achieving development by burning fossil fuels and through material footprints, fall behind in PHDI rankings compared to their HDI rankings. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that PHDI rankings of almost half of the 66 countries in the "very high human development" category decline compared to their HDI rankings. Luxemburg, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait experience highest drops

about 17 percent of the countries saw a decline in their rankings. Sri Lanka's ranking went up by 34 places. Bangladesh, which is in the "medium human development" category, saw its rank rise by 9 positions. Bangladesh secured 133rd position in the HDI out of 189 countries and territories. Its HDI value was 0.632 and PHDI value was 0.625 in 2019. In the "medium human development" category, among the 37 countries, only Lao PDR lost two places. The increase in PHDI rankings of countries implies that these countries emit smaller amount of carbons and have low material footprint.

Besides introducing the PHDI, the report also brings out the inequality issue in the share of emissions by various sections of people in the society. The richer the individuals are, the higher their emissions. The top 1 percent wealthiest individuals in 2019 are responsible for more than 20 percent of the global carbon emissions as they consume more and emit more through their investments. Their emission is 100 times more than the poorest 50 percent. These poorest 50 percent emit just 9 percent of global emissions.

In addition to national share of emissions by various countries, the individual level comparison is very important for policymaking. The poor use energy for basic services such as cooking and transportation. The rich emit not only through their lifestyles but through the investments they make. The poor

will have to be changed so that both improve simultaneously. Shutting down the economy is not the answer. Because investments have to be made and jobs should be created.

Besides, even if emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) is stopped now the average temperature may not decline significantly because of the past emission pattern. The experience during Covid-19 has shown that despite economic shut downs the reduction of carbon emission was not enough to meet the global targets. A recent research in the UK shows that global GHG emissions dropped by 7 percent in 2020 compared to 2019 due to the pandemic. However, according to the UN Environment Programme, global GHG emissions should be reduced by 7.6 percent every year from 2020 till 2030 in order to bring down the temperature by 1.5 degrees Celsius—a goal set under the Paris Climate Agreement.

Therefore, in order to achieve higher PHDI and HDI, countries must adopt appropriate policies. Reduction of subsidies on fossil fuels, implementation of polluters pay principle, incentives for green infrastructure and renewable energy, and huge investment on human resources are some of the requirements for us to move forward.

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Views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the organisation she works for.

## Distant climate actions are dooming global apparel industry



MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

**W**E are hearing a lot of businesses and brands make pledges about the climate at present. Along with pledges to cut climate emissions, there is talk of cutting water use, chemical use, and addressing a range of other supply chain issues. The overall goal is to improve sustainability.

But are we doing enough? We've been talking about the climate issue for many years. We are all aware of the risks that the earth is facing and we keep being told that "business as usual" is no longer an option.

In the meantime, businesses set distant, often vaguely worded, targets. Sometimes these targets are two to three years away, but in many cases, businesses are setting targets for 2030, 2035, 2040, and beyond. This is way, way too late. We lost the luxury of setting these far-off targets a long time ago. High-level climate talk is one thing, but more than anything, we now need meaningful, concrete actions on the ground. Not in the future, but now.

"Climate change will impact the way we will do business moving forwards," we hear people say at high level meetings. Well, climate change is already impacting business in the global textile industry, and on quite a significant scale if one begins to connect the dots.

In Australia, the cotton production in 2019-2020 was almost a quarter of the size it was two years ago, due to the impacts of drought and reduced water allocations. Australia might only account for about 4 percent of the global market for cotton but, nonetheless, in an average year, the country produces enough cotton

to clothe 500 million people around the world. Australia is no stranger to drought conditions, but last year has been dreadfully difficult for sheep farmers, even by historical standards. Many local observers believe climate impacts are at play.

There is more. Back in June last year, it was announced that India's cotton imports are likely to rise by 80 percent this crop year due to a short supply of quality material for textile mills. Data

US, many cotton growers have been hit by hurricanes for three years running. Has there ever been a time where the impact of climate on business has been so clear and obvious? It is hard to think of one. This comes back to the point made earlier about this no longer being an issue which we can be discussing in a future tense. Climate impact is happening right here, right now.

What's more, with the above we have only looked at examples where extreme

impact—around 5.5 kg CO2 according to some studies.

We know the impact that cotton products have, with their huge use of water use right through the supply chain, during cotton growing, processing and the transformation of cotton into garments. The message, then, is that not only are climate impacts here, but textile supply chains continue to make them worse—and at an accelerating rate as clothing output increases in line with population expansion and the growth of the middle classes.

Climate impacts are happening and textile supply chains are making them worse. So, long-distant target setting, even medium-distant targets, are becoming irrelevant. We need answers, and we need them to be implemented, not in 10 years' time but today.

The technology and know-how is ready and waiting, so our whole industry, our complete value chain, should be using it. Technology is available that allows us to dramatically reduce the amount of water used in textile processing. There is CO2 dyeing technology which uses no water at all. It has been around for years.

Why is it not being used? There are safer textile chemicals which have less or no impact on the environment, yet parts of the industry still go with the cheapest available from un-reputable suppliers, which are often harmful. Why? Recycled polyester is vastly available. Why is virgin polyester still used in such abundance? I could name many more examples, but hopefully readers get the point.

Each and every one of us in the value chain should be looking within and recognising that, where climate is concerned, if we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem.

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compiled by Cotton Association of India (CAI), forecasts raw cotton import at 2.7 million bales for the season, compared to 1.5 million the previous year. The CAI said the major reason for a forecast rise in imports was drought in the major growing states of Maharashtra, Telangana, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh, while the quality of late picked crop was poor due to the lack of moisture in the field.

This really is a global issue. In the

climate conditions have potentially impacted textile supply chains.

What about the other way round? What about how textile supply chains impact climate? We all know there are major issues to address here. We know polyester, the most commonly used fibre in textiles, has seen a doubling in production since 2000. We also know a polyester shirt produced from virgin polyester has a significant carbon