

# 1.5 to stay alive

*It is not yet too late to meet global climate goals*

ARIF HUSSEIN

IT is easy to be fashionably pessimistic about climate change. Many people say they think it is already too late to avoid catastrophe, let alone to meet the relatively ambitious goals enshrined in the Paris Agreement. If it's too late to avoid the apocalypse, why even bother trying?

But that is not what the science says. The latest papers published by climate scientists on the matter show clearly that the world can still meet the Paris goal of a rise in global temperatures of 1.5 degrees Celsius that vulnerable developing countries like Bangladesh have said is essential for their survival.

Our lifeline, ironically enough, has been Covid-19. The data show that emissions globally fell by seven percent between 2019 and 2020 due to the pandemic. If sustained, this rate of emissions drop is sufficient for the world to achieve net-zero emissions globally by the year 2040, as required for a 50:50 chance of staying below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

That is not to say that we should be looking to maintain lockdowns and economic depression for another two decades. What it means is that post-Covid economic recovery efforts need to be strongly focused on ensuring a rapid transition to zero-carbon technologies.

In a paper published in the journal "Communications Earth and Environment", the scientists mainly focused on updating the remaining carbon budget estimates for the 1.5 degree Celsius Paris goal, updating previous estimates that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change had issued back in 2018. They estimate a remaining carbon budget of 440 billion tonnes of CO2 for an even 50:50 chance of staying below 1.5 degrees, although for a two-thirds chance of this outcome, the budget would be as little as 230 billion tonnes. In fact, there is a one in six chance that the budget for 1.5C has already been exceeded, meaning the world would miss the crucial Paris goal even if all emissions stopped overnight.

And there is more bad news—according to the lead author Professor Damon Matthews of Concordia University, Canada, at current emissions rates, there are only 11 years and nine months remaining on the "climate clock" before all of the budget for a 1.5



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*It is clear that the most vulnerable countries are assuming the mantle of leadership—now, the big emitters also need to step up and seize the opportunity to keep the global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius.*

degrees outcome is used up. This is partly a matter of perspective. The glass is more than half full, and not yet half empty, although time is rapidly running out. We can still focus on the future and achieve a result that protects our precious planet and safeguards the interests of the most vulnerable countries like Bangladesh.

In fact, it is notable that Bangladesh has assumed leadership in the climate change arena with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's chairmanship role of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), a coalition of 48 of the most vulnerable developing countries.

Determined not to face the future simply as victims, many of these countries are beginning work on Climate Prosperity Plans, which lay out the investment frameworks needed to achieve rapid economic growth and middle-income status, at the same time

as reducing CO2 emissions to zero. Bangladesh's plan—named the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan in honour of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—is already well advanced, and initial conclusions are expected to be set out in a couple of months. With Bangladesh graduating from LDC status and being one of the most important emerging markets, the multi-billion dollar investment opportunities will make clear how the climate agenda is a roadmap to growth and prosperity.

But Bangladesh and even all the CVF nations together, cannot solve the climate problem alone. The big emitters, in particular China, Europe, the United States and Japan, have at long last presented zero carbon dates and targets. South Africa, South Korea and Canada have also recently announced net zero targets. In total, 127 countries

responsible for around 63 percent of emissions are considering or have adopted net zero targets, according to the Climate Action Tracker.

As Professor Matthews says: "The momentum is shifting in the right direction, but it is still not happening fast enough". According to the Climate Action Tracker, even the most optimistic current targets still lead to a global warming outcome that exceeds two degrees.

The CVF reports that only 40 percent of countries responded to the key UN climate goal to update their Paris Agreement pledges by the deadline of midnight on 31 December, 2020.

As the Bangladesh minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Md Shahab Uddin, said: "Boldest efforts are needed from all nations to keep within reach the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal of the Paris Agreement on which our survival truly depends. After the "midnight hour", despite some progress, we remain under extreme threat as more countries than not failed to deliver in time on the promises made at Paris five years ago."

Bangladesh, along with the Maldives and many other CVF nations, were among the group who updated their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. It is clear that the most vulnerable countries are assuming the mantle of leadership—now, the big emitters also need to step up and seize the opportunity to keep the global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

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# We need to change how we 'see' sexual violence



THE stories seem endless. A couple is ambushed in front of a college by multiple perpetrators, who rape the wife while confining the husband. A 14-

year old child bride dies from excessive bleeding from the genitals, 34 days after her marriage. An O-level student is raped by her friend, eventually bleeding to death from her injuries in much the same way. And these are only the most serially reported on stories. We see new cases of sexual violence in the media almost every day.

In 2018, 732 rape cases were reported in the country, according to Ain o Salish Kendra. This almost doubled to 1,413 in 2019. Now with almost 1,000 cases reported in 2020, Bangladesh is seeing more than four rape cases per day on average. These numbers are thought to be just the tip of the iceberg. According to rights organisations, many more cases of sexual violence remain unreported out of fear, and also due to a lack of trust in the justice system.

This lack of faith is not unfounded when you look at the appallingly low conviction rates for rape in Bangladesh, estimated to be around one to three percent. In a 2013 UN multi-country survey of Bangladeshi men who admitted to committing rape, 88 percent of rural respondents and 95 percent of urban respondents said they had faced no legal consequences. Arrests and conviction can often be conditional on the amount of press interest the case generates.

How does the media choose which rape cases to report? A few days before the case of the O-level student,



PHOTO: COLLECTED

our understanding of the extent of violence against women, especially poor and marginalised women, and the reasons behind it. While it is unrealistic to expect media to be covering every reported rape case, the severity of the crime, the location and proximity of the case are some aspects that can play an important role in deciding the amount of coverage it will receive. Perhaps more importantly, class, religion and locale are biases that are so ingrained that they often go unnoticed.

More sexual violence reports seem to make the news lately, but much

of the coverage is still focused on the rape survivor as the main subject, and not the attacks and the context that enabled them. News stories also often use language that avoids placing responsibility on perpetrators while seeming to imply the victim's consent, whereas the list of questions asked of rape survivors often shifts the blame onto them for bringing on the violence by something they did, said or wore.

As Indian journalist Sameera Khan aptly wrote, "Survivors... are attacked twice. The first time is when they are assaulted, the second is afterwards when we as a family, community, law enforcement end up bruising them further by our judgmental words, advice and reactions."

But even those who die after the assault are not spared. Take, for example, the O-level student rape. After the initial reports came out, many started to argue that because the couple may have been in a relationship, the girl had willingly agreed to have

intercourse and somehow the whole incident had gone awry, which led to her bleeding to death. The fact that the perpetrator had confessed to the crime became an insignificant factor; the focus was fully on the victim and whether she gave consent. How does someone bleed to death from consensual sex?

Let me make this really clear—going out on a date with a man is not providing consent to being raped or molested. By laughing loudly, smoking, staying out late—women are not consenting to assaults against themselves. They are within all their rights to experience public and private spaces without violence.

At the same time, misleading stereotypes—such as the image of the rapist as a monster—endure. Rape survivors are represented as weak and vulnerable, reflected in the popular "head-in-hands, crying" representational images used in most of these reports. This then shifts conversations to how to "protect" women and not how to stop rapists. Shifting those perceptions could be a big step in the struggle to stop sexual violence.

The image of the rapist as a monster also shifts attention away from the fact that, worldwide, people are more likely to be sexually abused by a person known to them. This is especially true in the case of children and adolescents, who are more likely to be abused by a boyfriend, family member, relative, family friend, neighbour or an adult in a relationship of trust or authority, according to the UNICEF report to end Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, 2020. Women are also more likely to be raped by a partner, although in Bangladesh, marital rape is still not a crime under the law.

The overwhelming media narrative of assaults by strangers in public spaces creates a belief in society that the two

options available to women are that they can either be secure by staying at home or risk assault when they go out in public spaces. However, the UNICEF report reveals the fakeness of the "only safe at home" argument, which can effectively make home the most dangerous place for many women. When we tell women not to go out in public spaces but instead to stay at home safe, we are misreading all the data on reported crimes against women and choosing to be wilfully ignorant. Home, family and friends are no guarantee of safety for women—only the rule of law and effective justice systems are.

The study on child sexual abuse identified three approaches to the prevention of sexual violence—changing social norms, attitudes and behaviour; altering the environmental and situational context that provide opportunities for abuse; and reducing the risks and vulnerabilities of children, adolescents and women to victimisation through programmes for social and economic empowerment.

We need to focus on all three in Bangladesh, but in the case of how we view survivors of sexual violence, social marketing and media campaigns designed to promote awareness and understanding about sexual abuse and exploitation can be an effective response. Such campaigns have been part of international, regional and national strategies for primary prevention promoted by governmental bodies. A 2010 WHO study showed that the most successful media interventions are those that begin by understanding the behaviour of their audience and engaging its members in developing the intervention. The Bangladeshi media can definitely play a part in bringing about this change.

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**QUOTABLE Quote**

**FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY**  
(1821-1881)  
Russian novelist, philosopher, essayist and short story writer.

*Nothing in this world is harder than speaking the truth, nothing easier than flattery.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- 1 Obtains
- 5 Cavalry weapon
- 10 Accepted truth
- 12 Dancer Castle
- 13 Sunday reading
- 14 Buoyant tunes
- 15 Flamenco cheer
- 16 Merchant of music
- 18 Take-home
- 20 Rink make-up
- 21 Good pair
- 23 Homer's neighbor
- 24 Take cover
- 26 Wading bird
- 28 Brood watcher
- 29 Japanese sport
- 31 Treasury Dept.

**DOWN**

- 1 West African nation
- 2 Banish
- 3 Himalayan land
- 4 Costa del -
- 5 Riverbed make-up
- 6 Diva's piece
- 7 Peach cocktail
- 8 Tempts
- 9 Plant anew
- 11 Threats
- 17 Ensign's answer
- 19 Spot to jot
- 22 Alike
- 24 Katniss Everdeen, e.g.
- 25 Establish
- 27 Autonomous program
- 28 Gave clues
- 30 First numero
- 33 Make baskets
- 34 Ticked off
- 35 Lock
- 37 Rep on the street
- 38 Crew members
- 42 Impress greatly

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**BEETLE BAILEY** BY MORT WALKER

**BABY BLUES** BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

S	A	F	A	R	I	S	L	E	W
I	C	E	M	E	N	L	O	V	E
T	E	N	A	N	T	L	O	W	E
			S	T	O	O	G	E	
C	A	P	S	K	A	R	M	A	
A	G	O	G	L	A	N	C	E	S
F	E	W	R	E	Y	A	D	S	
E	N	E	M	I	E	S	S	E	
S	T	R	A	P	N	E	A	T	
		B	I	S	T	R	O		
L	O	A	D	H	A	V	E	A	T
E	L	S	E	A	V	E	N	G	E
T	E	E	N	W	E	L	D	E	D