

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND UNCHECKED INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

## Asia's rivers under 'great threat'

AGENCIES

A glacial burst that triggered a deadly flash flood in the Indian Himalayas at the weekend was a disaster waiting to happen, and one likely to be repeated in a region transformed by climate change and unchecked infrastructure development, experts warn.

Asia is home to some of the world's biggest waterways, from the Ganges and the Indus in India to the Yangtze and Mekong originating in China, that snake for thousands of kilometres.

They support the livelihoods of vast numbers of farmers and fishermen, and supply drinking water to billions of people, but have come under unprecedented pressure in recent years.

Higher temperatures are causing glaciers that feed the rivers to shrink, threatening water supplies and also increasing the chances of landslides and floods, while critics blame dam building and pollution for damaging fragile ecosystems.

"Rivers are really at risk from development projects, dumping of solid waste and liquid waste,



sand mining and stone mining," Himanshu Thakkar, from the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People, told AFP.

"Climate change is a longer-term process that has already set in. The impacts are already happening.

"So in every respect, rivers are under greater threat."

The disaster in India was apparently triggered by a glacial burst, that unleashed a wall of water which barreled down a valley in Uttarakhand state, destroying

bridges and roads and hitting two hydroelectric power plants.

Till yesterday 31 people have been confirmed killed and more than 170 others are missing after the accident on the Dhauliganga river, which feeds into the Ganges.

It is not yet clear what damaged the glacier and triggered the accident, but there are suspicions that construction of hydro-power projects -- in an area that is highly seismically active -- may have contributed.

"This area is prone to vulnerability, it is not appropriate for this kind of bumper-to-bumper hydro-power development," Himanshu said.

Patricia Adams, executive director from Canada-based environmental NGO Probe International, said dam building in such an area was simply too dangerous, as it makes hillsides unstable and causes landslides.

A major study in 2019 suggested the region reliant of the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) mountain system faces more frequent extreme climate events in coming decades due to irreversible changes there, the largest source of fresh water after the two poles.

More than a third of the ice in the HKH mountain range will melt by 2100, even if governments take necessary measures to limit global warming under the 2015 Paris climate agreement to 1.5 degree Celsius, the assessment said.

Glaciers in the HKH region are critical water source for the 250 million people who live there, and 1.65 billion people who rely on the great rivers that flow from it.

## Is Trump's impeachment trial constitutional?

REUTERS

The impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump on a charge of inciting last month's deadly riot at the US Capitol will begin on Tuesday with arguments over whether the proceedings are constitutional.

Trump's legal team has argued the trial is improper under the US Constitution because Trump is now a private citizen, and 45 Senate Republicans cast votes to that effect on Jan. 26. But many legal experts disagree, and there are likely not enough votes in the Democratic-controlled chamber to halt the trial based on that argument.

Is there a consensus on whether Trump's post-presidency trial is legal?

No, but the majority of experts say it is constitutional to have an impeachment trial after an official has left office, said Brian Kalt, a law professor at Michigan State University and leading impeachment scholar.

Kalt was part of a bipartisan group of roughly 150 lawyers who signed a letter arguing that Trump can still be convicted in an impeachment trial.

Other scholars disagree, including J Michael Luttig, a prominent lawyer and

former federal appeals court judge, and Jonathan Turley, a George Washington University law professor.

Under the Constitution, the president "shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors."

In a separate clause, the Constitution says conviction can lead to "removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States."

Removing an official requires a "conviction" by a two-thirds Senate majority under the Constitution. Under precedent,

only a simple majority is needed for disqualification. Historically, that vote only happens after a conviction.

Many experts believe that presidents who commit misconduct late in their terms should not be immune from the very process the Constitution created for holding them accountable. Since the Constitution makes clear that impeachment proceedings can result in disqualification from holding future office, there is a live issue for the Senate to resolve even though Trump is no longer president, those scholars argue.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

## La Nina has peaked: UN

The 2020-2021 La Nina phenomenon has passed its peak, the UN weather agency said yesterday, but its impact on temperatures, rain and storm patterns is set to continue. La Nina refers to the large-scale cooling of surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, occurring every two to seven years. The effect has widespread impacts on weather around the world -- typically the opposite impacts to the El Nino warming phase in the Southern Oscillation cycle. La Nina conditions have been in place since August-September 2020, according to atmospheric and oceanic indicators. The temporary global cooling effects of La Nina were not enough to prevent 2020 from being one of the three warmest years on record.

## Arab ministers back Palestinian state

Arab foreign ministers has reaffirmed their commitment to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, warning against "any unilateral moves" by Israel. After talks at the Arab League in Cairo, they "emphasised the Arab states' commitment to the two-state solution, which embodies a sovereign, independent Palestinian state on the basis of international law". The "emergency" meeting at the League's headquarters, called by Jordan and Egypt, came months after a string of Arab states began normalising ties with Israel. Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said the Palestinian cause remained "a priority for Arab states". Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul Gheit warned that Israeli "settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is a dangerous obstacle to the two-state solution". Since August, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco have normalised or restored ties with Israel.

## China's new births fall 15pc



The number of new births in China plummeted 15% in 2020 from a year earlier, according to the Ministry of Public Security, with the onset of the novel coronavirus disrupting the economy and weighing on decisions to have a family. China saw 10.035 million new births last year, the ministry said on Monday, compared with 11.79 million births in 2019. In recent years, many couples are reluctant to have children due to the rising cost of health care, education and housing. The abandoning of the decades-long one-child policy in 2016 has not provided much impetus to the country's birth rate. The economic uncertainties brought on by Covid-19 last year further weighed on decisions to have children, extending a long-term birth decline in the world's most populous but fast-ageing nation.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



A man walks along a bridge over the Yauza river in front of trees covered with hoarfrost on a cold day in Moscow, yesterday. A cold wave that has gripped Europe recently plummeted temperatures in much of the northern part of the continent.

PHOTO: AFP

## UN: Iran, N Korea resumed missile collaboration last yr

AFP, United Nations

North Korea and Iran resumed cooperation on the development of long-range missiles in 2020, according to a UN report that also confirmed Pyongyang continues to violate various nuclear resolutions.

The annual report, produced by an independent panel of UN experts, was submitted to the Security Council on Monday and seen by AFP.

It said Tehran denies any such missile cooperation with North Korea.

But according to an unnamed member state, North Korea and Iran "have resumed cooperation on long-range missile development projects," the report states.

"This resumed cooperation is said to have included the transfer of critical parts, with the most recent shipment associated with this relationship taking place in 2020."

The report's experts monitor the multiple sanctions imposed on Pyongyang to attempt to force it to suspend its nuclear and ballistic weapons programs.

In their assessment of North Korea, the experts said Pyongyang "maintained and developed its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, in violation of UN Security Council resolutions."

Pyongyang last year announced preparation for testing and production of new ballistic missile warheads and development of tactical nuclear weapons.

"It produced fissile material, maintained nuclear facilities and upgraded its ballistic missile infrastructure. It continued to seek material and technology for these programs from overseas," the UN expert report states.

The experts also investigated cases in which North Korea acquired ships, sold fishing rights and continued to export coal in violation of sanctions.

## Biden, Modi seek to deepen bilateral ties

AGENCIES

President Joe Biden signaled he would seek to deepen the close US relationship with India in his first talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he added climate change and "democratic" values to the agenda.

In the first telephonic conversation on Monday between Biden and Modi since the former assumed office, the two leaders "resolved that the rule of law and the democratic process must be upheld in Burma," according to a White House read-out.

India has a close relationship with its neighbor, also known as Myanmar, maintaining contact with its military even as Western nations shun it on human rights grounds.

Biden and Modi also committed to "work closely together to win the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, renew their partnership on climate change, rebuild the global economy in a way that benefits the people of both countries and stand together against the scourge of global terrorism," White House added.

Modi "warmly congratulated" Biden, conveyed best wishes for his tenure, and looked forward to working closely with him to further elevate the India-US strategic partnership," said a statement issued by the Indian PMO.

"They noted that the India-US partnership is firmly anchored in a shared commitment to democratic values and common strategic interests. They reiterated the importance of working with like-minded countries to ensure a rules-based international order and a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region," it added. Modi "welcomed President Biden's decision to re-commit to the Paris Agreement."

Modi also took the opportunity to invite Joe Biden and Jill Biden to visit India at their earliest convenience.



M. Anis Ud Dowla, one of the eminent industrialists and business leaders of the country, started his career with the "British Oxygen" group. His 27-year tenure in the British multinational took him to various parts of the world leading different subsidiaries of the company. When he returned to Bangladesh, he joined Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), another British multinational. In 1992, ICI divested its shareholding through management buyout and Mr. Dowla took the leadership of the company as a majority shareholder and changed the name of ICI to Advanced Chemical Industries (ACI). Since then, he has been leading ACI, which is currently one of the largest conglomerates of Bangladesh. A company, which started with 230 employees, is now the source of employment for 15000+ people.

In the third episode of Prerona Kotha, Mr. M. Anis Ud Dowla, Chairman of ACI Group talked about his childhood, his professional life and the opportunity to start ACI, how it has become a brand in every family, and about various aspects of industry and commerce in Bangladesh.

M. Anis Ud Dowla grew up in a disciplined environment. While reminiscing his childhood, he said, "Everyday, we had to return home before sunset so that we could say our prayers together with our father. He taught us to speak in English and inspired us to listen to BBC, so that we could fit into any society in future."

A scholarship from Asia Foundation turned things around for this veteran entrepreneur. Upon completion of his studies in Physics from University of Dhaka, he went to Karachi University to complete his Masters in Public Administration with a scholarship from Asia Foundation. After graduation, he started his career at British Oxygen Group (then Pakistan Oxygen) as Assistant Sales Manager in Chattogram. For the next 27 years, he served as a skilled professional for British Oxygen in and out of the country, becoming the first Bangladeshi Managing Director of Oxygen Group in the process. In 1987, he left Oxygen Group to join ICI PLC as the Managing Director for its Bangladesh operations.

He also discussed his work ideals in both his career and business. He always focused on the fundamental and technical sides of things he worked on. He always wanted to be the most knowledgeable person regarding the products in the office, something that he thinks helped him a lot during his time in British Oxygen. He always loved his work wherever he went. He saw every role he had from the perspective of an entrepreneur, even when he was not one.

The versatile industrialist said that the population of Bangladesh is an asset. As GDP increases, so will the purchasing power of the vibrant middle class and then fulfilling the demand of that large market will be a huge opportunity.

Towards the youth, M. Anis Ud Dowla said, "Everyone has something that they love and is good at. You have to figure out what you are good at. Success will definitely come if you constantly pursue your dream." He is amazed with the brilliance of the Bangladeshi youth. While conversing on this topic, he cited the RMG sector of Bangladesh as an example. When they saw promise in this sector, the young entrepreneurs of the country focused on driving it and today Bangladesh is the second largest RMG exporter in the world.

This learned business leader sees failure as a learning step. He believes that there will always be failures, what matters is how one views it. It is important to improve oneself through a constant feedback mechanism. He stated that he never does the same thing twice in the same way, and always leaves room for improvement.

Mr. Dowla emphasized that our youth is lucky to have the Liberation War as a source of inspiration. "Very rarely does a country's youth get this strong an inspiration. The youth of our country have got tremendous inspiration. They need to use this inspiration and work towards building the nation. Nothing is impossible and sky is the limit," he added.

A stalwart champion for professional ethics, Mr. Dowla does not believe in shortcuts. "Honesty pays. Integrity is very important. People should practice these qualities for their individual growth and development." He thinks that people who make an honest living by working hard and not taking any shortcut are loved by everyone for their nation building activities.

M. Anis Ud Dowla believes that Bangladesh is a land of possibilities. Every human being in this country is an asset. The youth will take this nation to greater heights of prosperity and success will definitely come as long as quality of business is not compromised.

The interview was conducted by Dr. Melita Mehjabeen, Associate Professor, IBA, University of Dhaka as part of "Prerona Kotha", an initiative by Prerona Foundation.

You can watch the full interview on the YouTube channel of Prerona Foundation.

## US flexes muscle in S China Sea

2 carrier groups conduct drills in the disputed waters angering China

AGENCIES

Two US carrier groups conducted joint exercises in the South China Sea on Tuesday, days after a US warship sailed near Chinese-controlled islands in the disputed waters, as China denounced the United States for damaging peace and stability.

The Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group and the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group "conducted a multitude of exercises aimed at increasing interoperability between assets as well as command and control capabilities", the US Navy said, marking the first dual carrier operations in the busy waterway since July 2020.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said the frequent moves by US warships and aircraft into the South China Sea in a "show of force" was not conducive to regional peace and stability.

The exercise comes days after China condemned the sailing of the destroyer, the USS John S. McCain, near the Chinese-controlled Paracel Islands in what the United States calls a freedom of navigation operation - the first such mission by the US navy since President Joe Biden took office. In a separate move likely to anger



Beijing, a French nuclear attack submarine was among two navy ships that recently conducted a patrol through the South China Sea.

The SNA Emeraude was accompanied by support ship BSAM Seine for the passage, Defence Minister Florence Parly said on Twitter late Monday.

Last month, the US military said Chinese military flights over the South China Sea fit a pattern of destabilising and aggressive behaviour but posed no threat to a US Navy aircraft carrier strike group in the region.

The United States has contested China's extensive territorial claims in

the region, accusing it of militarising the South China Sea and trying to intimidate neighbours such as Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, who have claims that overlap with China's in the resource-rich area.

China has been infuriated by repeated US sailings near the islands it occupies and controls in the South China Sea. China says it has irrefutable sovereignty and has accused the United States of deliberately stoking tension.

China has also been angered by US warships sailing through the Taiwan Strait, including one last week, also the first such operation under the Biden administration.