

26TH CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Bangladeshi delegates to COP26 have a tricky job on their hands



TOMORROW, on October 31, world leaders and top climate officials will come together to discuss climate change against the backdrop of Covid-19 and an already rapidly changing natural environment. This year, the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland presents an important opportunity for delegates. Not only is the world seeing the light at the end of the Covid-19 tunnel, but sentiments from the US and China are shifting whereby green growth can act as a catalyst for economic dominance in a post Covid-19 era. For countries like Bangladesh, the challenge will be to adapt—quickly—to a new, inclusive green economy that can take advantage of a changing global economy. Already, the textile sector in Bangladesh has been significantly impacted by changing consumer preferences in Western countries for more sustainable, green products, and labelling that can showcase a product's green credentials. Bangladesh's economy is at risk of falling behind if appropriate steps aren't taken to implement an inclusive green economy, as investment will move towards producers that can.

With supply chain constraints and concerns of rising inflationary pressures, delegates to COP26 face a tricky task as Bangladesh transitions into a middle-income economy. This will require significant action. First, COP26 provides a forum for many countries, including Bangladesh, to present updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which details the level of political commitment and a roadmap on how to achieve greater climate change resilience. The Bangladesh government provided an updated NDC in August 2021 in preparation of COP26. The new NDC outlines a goal for 6.73 percent reduction in emissions below the 2012 baselines, and a further 15.12 percent reduction below 2012 emissions if the government receives international funding and technology

support. Given the recent rise in per capita emissions in the last three years, this will be a challenge for Bangladesh, but it presents a meaningful commitment to mitigation efforts. More importantly, delegates must have a clear vision of how Bangladesh can achieve its mitigation and adaptation goals and prevent an "ambition gap" from forming. The Bangladesh government has already articulated this vision through a range of policy documents, including the National

Adaptation Plan (NAP) and the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP). But how the government can secure the necessary resources, climate finance, technology, and support to achieve its vision depends on how its delegates can seize asymmetric opportunities to extract concessions during negotiations. This is where the challenge for a green economy lies. Delegates must develop a long-term perspective, coupled with strategies that can enable consensus building, even

if that requires increasing the scope of potential items to negotiate to extract mutual concessions. For instance, participation in a global emission trading scheme will bring specific short-term challenges for Bangladesh, but making participation contingent on additional support can ease transition, support those who are adversely affected by an emission trading scheme—while encouraging the growth and development of clean, efficient businesses—and strengthen

also be tasked with approaching developed countries to address the big elephant in the room: loss and compensation for existing contributions to climate change. Bangladesh is disproportionately vulnerable to the existing climate change impacts. Together with small island states, Bangladesh has already seen significant internal migration as agricultural opportunities and incomes decline due to soil degradation, salinity intrusion, increased frequency of severe weather events (including flooding), and rising input costs. Increasingly, rural people are forced to move to major metropolitan areas in search for new job opportunities to supplement their incomes. Developed countries have a moral responsibility to compensate due to their contributions to carbon emissions that have resulted in the existing damage, improving the lives and livelihoods of those who are most affected. Calling on developed countries to be accountable for their carbon emissions is a significant bargaining chip to motivate them to take up adaptation and other capacity-building initiatives to enable green economies.

Bangladesh is not alone. COP26 provides an opportunity for delegates to seek partnerships with other developing countries for improved South-South cooperation and triangulation with developed countries. Improved South-South cooperation will be needed to address capacity constraints and share knowledge on how to engage in actions that deliver on the NDCs. The developing country negotiation bloc is becoming increasingly more powerful as the global economy and transnational nature of supply chains enable them to have a stronger voice in how a green economy can be realised. At COP26, Bangladesh must pursue sharing expertise with fellow developing countries as to how to increase its capacity to regulate effectively, implement development programmes, and generate the political will with key stakeholders who remain invested in the "old economy."

The real work awaits beyond COP26, however. The Bangladesh government will be challenged to reform existing policies to mainstream an inclusive green economy



As a climate vulnerable country, Bangladesh needs to make the most of COP26 to get necessary support out of the big emitters.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

local government commitments to carbon neutrality also support the greening of our cities. The ESCAP Climate-Smart Trade and Investment Index (SMARTII) and carbon-border adjustment mechanisms show that Asian and Pacific economies have significant room to make their trade and investment more climate-smart. A growing number of countries include climate and environment-related provisions in trade agreements. More are requiring energy efficiency labelling and standards on imports. Digitalisation of existing trade processes also helps reduce CO2 emissions per transaction and should be accelerated, including through the regional UN treaty on cross-border paperless trade facilitation.

The ESCAP Sustainable Business Network is crafting an Asia Pacific Green Business

commitment to action across the sectors that drive the region's development. With major players moving away from foreign investments in coal, momentum is building for a transition to cleaner energy sources. There is a growing share of renewables in the energy mix, and going forward, we should support increasing subregional and regional energy connectivity to enable the integration of higher shares of renewable energy. However, more support to exporters is needed to wean them off lucrative coal and fossil fuel reserves, supported by long-term low-emission development strategies (LT-LEDS). The shift to sustainable transport has been slow, but the electric vehicle (EV) mobility is growing. Countries are also emphasising low-carbon mobility in a new regional action plan under negotiation ahead of a ministerial conference on transport later this year. Local government commitments to carbon neutrality also support the greening of our cities.

The Bangladesh delegates to COP26 will

Deal in pursuit of a "green" competitive advantage, while companies are responding to greater shareholder and consumer pressure for science-based targets that align businesses with climate aspirations. Entrepreneurs, SMEs and large industries in the region could adopt this new paradigm, which would also enable countries to meet their commitments for sustainable development. Supporting ambition with the power of finance Such ambitious climate action will require a realignment of finance and investment towards the green industries and jobs of tomorrow. Innovative financial instruments

and the implementation of debt-for-climate swaps can help to mobilise this additional funding. Putting a price on carbon and applying carbon pricing instruments will create liquidity to drive economic activity up and emissions down. Mandatory climate-related financial disclosure will help investors direct their investments towards climate action solutions that will help manage risks associated with climate-related problems. People-centred action in vulnerable situations It is clear from the science and the frequency of disasters in the region that time is not on our side. The combination of disasters, a

Dr Shawkat Alam is a professor of international and environmental law and the director of international engagement in Macquarie University, Australia.

Is Asia and the Pacific ready for the global climate stage?



AS the leaders of Asia and the Pacific prepare to head to Glasgow for the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), they can be sure that our region will be in the spotlight: many of the most vulnerable

countries to the impacts of climate change are located here; the seven G20 members from this region are responsible for over half of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; and five of the top 10 countries with the greatest historic responsibility for emissions since the beginning of the 20th century are from Asia.

The starting point is not encouraging, however. A joint study by UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN Women shows that the Asia Pacific region is falling even further behind in its efforts: GHG emissions are projected to increase by 34 percent by 2030, compared to the 2010 levels. Getting the 30 Asian and Pacific countries that have so far updated their NDCs to drastically raise ambitions and securing adequate NDCs from the other 19 who have yet to submit their plans will determine if the region—and, indeed, the world—can maintain any hope of keeping the temperature increase well below two degrees Celsius.

Momentum for climate action is building There is some reason for hope. Leaders have been lining up to make their carbon neutrality pledges, shrinking the gap from

commitment to action across the sectors that drive the region's development. With major players moving away from foreign investments in coal, momentum is building for a transition to cleaner energy sources. There is a growing share of renewables in the energy mix, and going forward, we should support increasing subregional and regional energy connectivity to enable the integration of higher shares of renewable energy. However, more support to exporters is needed to wean them off lucrative coal and fossil fuel reserves, supported by long-term low-emission development strategies (LT-LEDS). The shift to sustainable transport has been slow, but the electric vehicle (EV) mobility is growing. Countries are also emphasising low-carbon mobility in a new regional action plan under negotiation ahead of a ministerial conference on transport later this year. Local government commitments to carbon neutrality also support the greening of our cities.

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We are racing against time to combat climate change and protect our planet from irreversible damage.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

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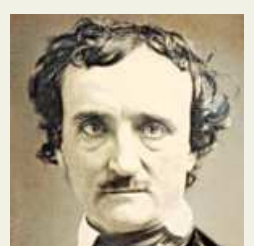
Without concerted action, carbon neutrality is not within the reach of the Asia Pacific region by 2050. All stakeholders need to collaborate and build a strong case for decisive climate action. Our leaders simply cannot afford to go to Glasgow with insufficient ambition and return empty handed. Since it was founded 76 years ago, ESCAP has supported the formation of strategic alliances that have lifted millions out of poverty and guided the region to enabling a better standard of life. The time is right for such an alliance of governments, the private sector and financial institutions to help turn the full power of the region's ingenuity and dynamism into the net-zero development pathway that our future depends on.

Armidia Salsiah Alisjahbana is the United Nations under-secretary-general and executive secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

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QUOTABLE Quote

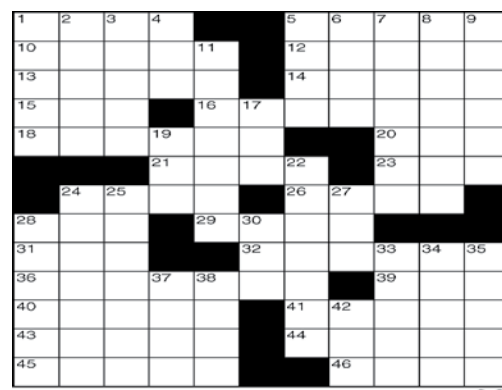


EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809 - 1849) American writer

The true genius shudders at incompleteness - and usually prefers silence to saying something which is not everything it should be.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Quarterback
- 5 Does the crawl
- 10 Maui greeting
- 12 Camp craft
- 13 Sheets of stamps
- 14 Give a speech
- 15 Cannes comrade
- 16 Noisy insect
- 18 Noisy insect
- 20 Blvd.'s kin
- 21 Rivals
- 23 Last letter, in London
- 24 Noted baseball family
- 26 Chmn.'s kin
- 28 Drink with a
- head
- 29 Floor piece
- 31 Joplin piece
- 32 Noisy insect
- 36 Noisy insect
- 39 Pert talk
- 40 Stroll
- 41 City on the Mohawk
- 43 Holdup
- 44 Game of hands
- 45 Perfect places
- 46 Sunset site
- DOWN**
- 1 Vatican-based
- 2 Texas mission
- 3 Boom type
- 4 That woman
- 5 Edinburgh native
- 6 Cautious
- 7 Stunned
- 8 Crime causes
- 9 Ranked, in tennis
- 11 Invites on a date
- 17 Dined
- 19 Sky sighting
- 22 Divorce
- 24 Anxious
- 25 Fit for reading
- 27 DVR button letters
- 28 Gaming hall
- 30 Bar rocks
- 33 Similar
- 34 Chops up
- 35 Isolated
- 37 Large family
- 38 Florida feature
- 42 Highway rescue



WEDNESDAY'S ANSWERS

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

BETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinon@gmail.com.