

26TH CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

# Bangladeshi delegates to COP26 have a tricky job on their hands



**T**OMORROW, 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 across its development agenda. This includes reforming development and industry policies to shift from just climate mitigation and adaptation actions to transitioning into a new green economy. This not only requires substantive reforms such as creating new green jobs or demand-side pressures for environmental performance (e.g. by creating carbon emission and pollution standards), but also fundamentally changing how policy is implemented and evaluated. Budgeting for a green economy and introducing metrics that value ecosystem services and nature-based solutions to assess economic performance are measures that need to be introduced to ensure a post-pandemic recovery. Changes in monitoring and evaluation can only be achieved if the government has the capacity to perform this task. The delegates to COP26 must secure resources, funding arrangements and know-how to implement such reforms and mainstream an inclusive green economy in the country.

Bangladesh has transformed as it has embraced the changes in the global economy—creating new industries, new opportunities for women, and securing local jobs. However, without embracing an inclusive green economy, the country remains at risk of being left behind and losing valuable opportunities, as global economies seek to green their supply chains and improve their environmental performance that is demanded by end users and consumers. What happens in Glasgow in the next two weeks will be highly consequential in how the economy can be transformed to a green economy. A green economy is not just empty rhetoric; it provides a pathway that reimagines climate change not just in negative terms, but as an opportunity for developing countries—as well as Bangladesh—to secure new opportunities for sustained economic growth, resource efficiency, and productivity.

The challenge for Bangladesh in COP26 now is to rise to this task and seize the opportunities that a green economy presents. It's not just a matter of survival; it's also necessary for Bangladesh to thrive.

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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

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Bangladesh's economy and supply chains to more environmentally conscious consumers. This not only includes obtaining support in the form of Article 6 measures that allow wealthier countries to compensate Bangladesh through clean development projects, but also making emission trading scheme participation contingent on contributions from developed countries towards the Climate Change Fund or even trade facilitation efforts for Bangladesh's green sectors.

The Bangladesh delegates to COP26 will

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



**A**S 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.

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



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

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

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

pandemic and climate change is expanding the number of people in vulnerable situations and raising the "riskscape." Countries are ill-prepared for complex overlapping crises; the intersection of Covid-19 with natural hazards and climate change remains poorly understood and gives rise to hotspots of emerging and intensifying risks. Building resilience must combine climate mitigation efforts and investments in nature-based climate solutions. Moreover, it also requires increasing investments in universal social protection systems that provide adequate benefits over the lifecycle to people and households. The active engagement of women and girls is critical to ensuring inclusive climate action and sustainable outcomes as well.

**The way forward**

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.

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

**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 choice
- 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

**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

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**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
T	A	U	T	S	A	L	A	M	I
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
R	E	T	R	O	A	G	E	S	
A	K	I	N	C	A	N	A		
W	I	N	G	A	N	G	O	L	A
E	D	G	E	T	I	L	L	E	D

**BEETLE BAILEY** by Mort Walker

**BABY BLUES** by Kirkman & Scott