

The budget must provide for disaster management and recovery



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EVEN after a lifetime of struggling to turn their lives around, a large number of vulnerable Bangladeshis face continuous climate-induced disasters, and each one brings them back to square one. Identifying the likelihood of disasters and carrying out precautionary responsibilities through intensification of early warning systems and anticipatory actions within areas prone to floods, cyclones, and other disasters can help bring down the damage and expenditure on consequent humanitarian response by at least 50 percent, according to research. This would also make the country more proactive towards shaping disaster management and humanitarian responses, rather than the less effective damage control methods that are currently in use.

Anticipation and risk-financing allow humanitarian services to prepare themselves better to cope with imminent disasters. A model needs to be put in place where risks are quantified in advance, costs pre-calculated, and activities pre-defined, all of it utilising scientific knowledge and data, and keeping in mind the local context. The existence of a pre-positioning fund and agreed-upon protocols can make it possible for first responders to act immediately. Bangladesh already has a detailed and rather advanced document called the “Standing Orders on Disaster” and is well on its way to finalising another document called the “National Adaptation Plan,” both of which can support the proposed model. The national budget needs to reflect the existence of these documents and



support the work that is going on for the country’s climate vulnerable people. One of the primary reasons people are hesitant about evacuating when floods hit the northern char areas or northeastern areas of the country is because they fear losing the livestock and other valuables they have so painstakingly bought and cared for over the years. Allocating safe spaces for the people and for their livestock will make the evacuation process much smoother. Spaces for congregational prayers, public places, or school playgrounds can be prepared in anticipation of these disasters. This hypothetical structure should be complete with shelter, water, sanitation, satellite clinics, an education centre, legal aid, community spaces, solar station, and a cattle shed along with insurance coverage. The authorities

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PHOTO: REUTERS

of sub-district and union councils should have detailed budget planning including funds, logistics, designated people, and transportation. Millions of people have newly been plunged into poverty due to the Covid pandemic and runaway inflation. Attempts must be made to bring these people back into the economic mainstream and hand them back their power. The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres once said that, for each dollar invested in climate resilient infrastructure, USD 6 is saved in adaptation costs. Similarly, a storm or heatwave warning just 24 hours ahead of time can help people mitigate damage by about 30 percent, a 2019 Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA) report said. GCA added, an expenditure of USD

800 million on early warning services in developing countries would potentially avert losses of USD 3 to 16 billion annually. Options that build people’s resilience, like financial inclusion or social protection schemes, are good poverty reduction and alleviation policies for low- and middle-income nations. Investments in the adaptation and mitigation of climate change are expected to translate into significant savings in the food and agricultural sectors. Initiatives such as mangrove plantations can save up to USD 80 billion in coastal flooding spending globally and protect some 18 million vulnerable populations around the world. Another USD 50 billion can be saved through non-market benefits. For Bangladesh especially, mangrove forests are not only a carbon sequestration method, but also an environmentally viable way to prevent coastal erosion. These forests also help in the generation of livelihood for the people and communities living around them. Government and non-government stakeholders need to work together to ensure more mangrove conservation and plantation initiatives, and the yearly budget should have a provision to create opportunities for these endeavours. Water is a crucial element for survival and should be within arm’s length of any Bangladeshi. In a study, it is mentioned that by the year 2030, the costs of securing water for our society would be a little over one percent of total GDP. This is a 29 percent rise in the cost of water per person per day, from 2015 till 2030. The economic benefit of investing in clean water and sanitation is USD 6.80 per USD 1 invested. A country’s development should not simply be based on its economic development and its reserves. Access to water-sanitation, food security, education, health services, transportation, protection from the impacts of climate-induced disasters, gender equality, and rights-based provisions are also determining indicators for development.

Our burning world needs a renewables revolution



ANTÓNIO GUTERRES

António Guterres is the secretary-general of the United Nations.

NERO was famously accused of fiddling while Rome burned. Today, some leaders are doing worse. They are throwing fuel on the fire. As the fallout of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine ripples across the globe, the response of some nations to the growing energy crisis has been to double down on fossil fuels – pouring billions more dollars into the coal, oil, and gas that are driving our deepening climate emergency. Meanwhile, all climate indicators continue to break records, forecasting a future of ferocious storms, floods, droughts, wildfires, and unliveable temperatures in vast swathes of the planet. New funding for fossil fuel exploration and production infrastructure is delusional. We can see the damage we are doing to the planet and our societies, and no one is immune. Fossil fuels are the cause of the climate crisis. Renewable energy is the answer – to limit climate disruption and boost

energy security. Had we invested earlier and massively in renewable energy, we would not find ourselves once again at the mercy of unstable fossil fuel markets. Renewables are the peace plan of the 21st century. But the battle for a rapid and just energy transition is not being fought on a level field. Investors are still backing fossil fuels, and governments still hand out billions in subsidies for coal, oil, and gas – some USD 11 million every minute. There is a word for favouring short-term relief over long-term well-being: Addiction. We are still addicted to fossil fuels. For the health of our societies and planet, we need to quit. The only true path to energy security, stable power prices, prosperity, and a liveable planet lies in abandoning polluting fossil fuels and accelerating the renewables-based energy transition. To that end, I have called on G20 governments to dismantle coal infrastructure, with a full phase-out by 2030 for OECD countries and by 2040 for all others. I have urged financial actors to abandon fossil fuel finance and invest in renewable energy. And I have proposed a five-point plan to boost renewable energy around the world. First, we must make renewable energy technology a global public good, including removing intellectual property barriers to technology transfer. Second, we must improve global access



to supply chains for renewable energy technologies, components, and raw materials. In 2020, the world installed five gigawatts of battery storage. We need 600 gigawatts of storage capacity by 2030. Clearly, we need a global coalition to get there. Shipping bottlenecks and supply-chain constraints, as well as higher costs for lithium and other battery metals, are hurting deployment of such technologies and materials just when we need them most. Third, we must cut the red tape that holds up solar and wind projects. We need fast-track approvals and more effort to modernise electricity grids. In the EU, it takes eight years to approve a wind farm, and 10 years in the US. In the Republic of Korea, onshore wind projects need 22 permits from eight different ministries. Fourth, the world must shift energy subsidies from fossil fuels to protect vulnerable people from energy shocks and invest in a just transition to a sustainable future. Lastly, we need to triple investments in renewables. This includes multilateral development banks and development finance institutions, as well as commercial banks. All must step up and dramatically boost investments in renewables. We need more urgency from all global leaders. We are already perilously close to hitting the 1.5°C limit that science tells us is the maximum level of warming to avoid the worst climate impacts. To keep

1.5 alive, we must reduce emissions by 45 percent by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050. But current national commitments will lead to an increase of almost 14 percent this decade. That spells catastrophe. The answer lies in renewables – for climate action, for energy security, and for providing clean electricity to the hundreds of millions of people who currently lack it. There is no excuse for anyone to reject a renewables revolution. While oil and gas prices have reached record levels, renewables are getting cheaper all the time. The cost of solar energy and batteries has plummeted 85 percent over the past decade. The cost of wind power fell by 55 percent. And investment in renewables creates three times more jobs than fossil fuels. Of course, renewables are not the only answer to the climate crisis. Nature-based solutions, such as reversing deforestation and land degradation, are essential. So too are efforts to promote energy efficiency. But a rapid renewable energy transition must be our ambition. As we wean ourselves off fossil fuels, the benefits will be vast, and not just to the climate. Energy prices will be lower and more predictable, with positive knock-on effects for food and economic security. When energy prices rise, so do the costs of food and all the goods we rely on. So, let us all agree that a rapid renewables revolution is necessary and stop fiddling while our future burns.

Renewables are the peace plan of the 21st century. But the battle for a rapid and just energy transition is not being fought on a level field.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Church event
5 Eccentric fellow
9 Wash against
10 Entices
12 Make amends
13 Site of action
14 Denver team
16 Like some
18 Parade participants
17 Before, to bards
18 Detroit team
20 Intensely
22 Aware of
23 Camera creator Land
25 NBA players
28 Relaxed
32 Toronto team

34 Power, in old Rome
35 Poem of praise
36 Boston team
38 Singer Shore
40 Not out
41 Pickled pork dish
42 Carries
43 Rigging support
44 Genesis garden

DOWN
1 Full grown
2 Orbital point
3 Joined the choir
4 Soaked in hot water

5 Elegance
6 Possessive word
7 Trail Blazers’ state
8 Lease signer
9 Like Olympic pools
11 Authority
15 Old dishes
19 Muscle quality
21 Nuisance
24 “I should be going”
25 Eggs on
26 Hams’ needs
27 “Let me in!”
29 Take wing
30 Nauseate
31 Road curves
33 Earthy color
37 Lacking depth
39 Simile center

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SUNDAY’S ANSWERS

V	E	T	S		R	E	F	S	
A	V	O	I	D	A	L	I	C	E
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