

COP28 SUMMIT

130 nations agree to include food, agriculture in climate plans

AFP, Dubai

More than 130 countries agreed to prioritise food and agriculture in their national climate plans at COP28 in Dubai yesterday in a move hailed by observers despite fears over its silence on the role of fossil fuels.

Food systems are estimated to be responsible for roughly a third of greenhouse gases, but are increasingly threatened by global warming and biodiversity loss.

A total of 134 countries who produce 70 percent of the food eaten worldwide signed the declaration, summit hosts the United Arab Emirates said.

"There is no path to achieving the goals of the Paris climate agreement and keeping 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach that does not urgently address the interactions between food systems, agriculture and climate," the UAE's climate change minister Mariam Almheiri said.

The declaration said that countries will strengthen efforts to integrate food systems into their emissions-cutting plans.

Nations would also pursue efforts to support farmers and other vulnerable food producers, including through increased funding, more infrastructure and developing early warning systems, it added.

It also emphasised the importance of restoring land, changing away from greenhouse-gas emitting agricultural practices and reducing food loss.



Participating world leaders and delegates arrive to pose for a family photo during the COP28 United Nations climate summit in Dubai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

World Bank to operate ‘loss and damage’ climate fund

AFP, Dubai

The World Bank will “operate” an ambitious new climate change fund, but donors and recipients will likely control how the money is actually spent, the head of the development lender said yesterday.

More than \$400 million has been pledged initially to the new “loss and damage” fund for countries impacted by climate change since it was approved by nations attending the UN’s COP 28 climate summit in Dubai on Thursday.

The amount so far falls well short of the \$100 billion developing nations say are needed to meet the costs of changing climate, but more pledges are expected in coming days.

“The reality is the bank is currently not planning to play the role of allocating the money,” World Bank President Ajay Banga told an event at the summit in Dubai.

“That will be done by a governing board that needs to be created, that should have representation from the donor countries as well as the recipient countries,” he added.

The World Bank will play a more limited role, managing the day-to-day operations of the fund, Banga explained.

“Our job is like a trustee: We run it, we operate it, we hope to make sure the money goes the right places – because we know how to do that,” he said, adding that the fund was still in its early stages.

The loss and damage fund has been hailed as a positive start to this year’s COP summit

in the United Arab Emirates, which has been billed as the largest summit to date, with more than 140 world leaders due to speak on Friday and Saturday.

Climate finance has been a key sticking point, with wealthy nations most responsible for emissions not delivering on promises to support the vulnerable states who are worst affected but least responsible for global warming.

On Friday, Banga said the new loss and damage fund would initially look to help finance “technical assistance and analytics,” for countries impacted by climate change.

“If this gets done well, sometime next year is when you’ll start seeing money actually be put out to help countries on the ground,” he added.

Malaysian cop

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Bernama, the national news agency of Malaysia, on Thursday quoted the country’s police chief Datuk Allaudeen Abdul Majid saying that three other police officers from the Special Branch, an intelligence agency attached to the Royal Malaysia Police, were involved in the incident.

The Bangladeshi journalist recounted his ordeal while speaking to The Daily Star on Thursday.

“Two of the cops were in the car, while one came to my house. He said that a police report has been filed against me and that I would need to go with him,” said the journalist.

He was driven around for about one and a half hours and taken to a forested area in Shah Alam, the capital of the state of Selangor.

“There was a house in the woods. I was handed over to a group of Indian and Bangladeshi men. There were two Bangladeshis there,” he said, adding that the gang were related to the labour trafficking syndicate that operates between Bangladesh and Malaysia.

The journalist said he was caned, beaten, and his arm was slashed with a knife. He was held there for three days.

“They demanded ransom. I got in touch with my nephew and asked him to transfer 50,000 ringgits to the captors. They alerted the police,” he described.

The police supposedly conducted a raid in the area, and the captors, upon getting wind of the raid, fled the house along with him, the journalist said. He was dropped off in front of a bank in the area.

“I went to the nearest police station and filed a report,” he said.

According to a separate report by FMT, the journalist said he was still recovering from injuries to his head and body, which he had sustained during his ordeal. He said his abductors assaulted him every hour.

He said his abductors were upset that he had asked “tough questions” to several Bangladeshi labour agents on a live TV programme.

“I had evidence of their wrongdoing. I suspect they sent people to attack me,” he said.

Sufi Abdullahil Maruf, first secretary of the press wing at Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, confirmed the matter.

However, he said the victim has not reported to the embassy, nor has the Malaysian police shared with them the names and details of the cops and the captors.

“There is an investigation going on, and the Malaysian police will take departmental action,” he said on Thursday.

Calm yet fierce determination

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impacted by climate change. He was a member of countless climate negotiators and scientists from the least developed countries went through his negotiator training workshops. He will be fondly remembered for his endearing smile and his calm yet fierce determination,” Shoukry said.

The floor was then given to the UK delegation, a member of which said, “I first want to offer condolences on behalf of the UK to the government of Bangladesh for the passing of Saleem, to all of his family and friends. Saleem was a good friend to the UK, a critical friend when we needed it, and he fought tirelessly for action on loss and damage. I hope we’re able to honour him with a fitting outcome from this COP.”

The delegation from the EU, whom Pete Betts represented as chief negotiator, said, “We would like to join the United Kingdom in marking his [Betts’] passing as well as Saleem’s passing with gratitude, respect, and sadness.”

From the Bangladeshi delegation, Farhina Ahmed, secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, paid tribute to Huq.

“Professor Dr Saleemul Huq was an outstanding and very well spoken gentleman loved by all. He was an academician, he worked for Independent University, Bangladesh, and he established a department to study tertiary level education for

environment and climate change and a centre dedicated to climate change.

“We are very happy and proud that he was a Bangladeshi. His voice was not only for Bangladesh; it was for the vulnerable people of the planet, and we would especially like to recall his contribution to the climate change movement to establish the loss and damage concept and fund.”

Huq has been a part of every COP since the inaugural conference held in Berlin in 1995. He was a proponent of the idea that wealthy countries who had benefited from the industrial revolution had a responsibility to help lesser developed nations recover from climate disasters.

An opinion piece co-authored by Huq, published in The Guardian after his death, succinctly captures the status quo of climate justice. Huq wrote about his expectations from COP28: “As the world prepares for COP28, the onus is on global leaders, corporations and individuals to rise to the occasion and champion the cause of climate justice. Wealthy nations must start putting real funding towards loss and damage, while ramping up their mitigation and adaptation efforts, and reining in the influence of the fossil fuel industry in climate policies.”

The 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference or Conference of the Parties (COP28) of the UNFCCC, is being held in Expo City, Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates from November 30 to December 12, 2023.

Put victims in charge

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channel all necessary funding to locally led climate-resilience initiatives. This calls for fresh thinking and a new approach,” it added.

The premier said in order to ensure that adaptation finance flows from developed to developing countries double to reach \$40 billion by 2025, as pledged at COP26 in Glasgow, finance providers must on average increase annual adaptation flows by at least 16 percent between 2022 and 2025.

“Yet adaptation finance flows to developing countries declined 15 percent in 2021 to \$21.3 billion. That is clearly too little. Yet less than 6 percent of this sum, and perhaps as little as 2 percent, reaches climate-resilience projects led by local communities,” the article reads.

It also states that the COP28 will only be a success if it achieves real benefits for the communities most affected by the climate crisis.

“This year’s climate summit must ensure that finance flows to the poor communities most affected by climate change, and into locally

led, appropriate, and effective adaptation,” added the article.

HASINA AWARDED

The Global Centre for Climate Mobility, supported by IOM and the UN system, yesterday conferred the Asia Climate Mobility Champion Leader Award to Hasina, acknowledging her leadership in championing climate actions.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud, who is leading the Bangladesh delegation to the COP28’s high level segment, received the award on behalf of the prime minister, said a press release.

President of the UN General Assembly Ambassador Dennis Francis and Director General of IOM Amy Pope co-hosted the high-level panel.

Hasan Mahmud also presented a keynote speech at the event highlighting Bangladesh’s initiatives under the leadership of Hasina to offset the climate change challenges, including construction of the world’s largest multi-storied social housing project in Cox’s Bazar for rehabilitating 4,400 families displaced due to climate impacts.

Excitement

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feels like I’m going home after a big achievement.”

Bithi Khatun, a resident of Dhaka, said her in-laws’ home is in Cox’s Bazar and never thought that they would get a train on Cox’s Bazar route. “Today I’m the happiest person for being one of the first passengers of the train.”

Abdul Awal Rana, the train driver, said he could not believe that he was operating this train that which is making history.

Railways Ministry Secretary Humayun Kabir inaugurated the first commercial train journey. Before the train left the station, he told reporters that those 1,020 passengers became a part of history.

This will bring prosperity to Cox’s Bazar tourism and business, he added.

Mentioning that the demand for trains is increasing rapidly, he said tickets for the next 10 days have already been booked in advance.

The number of carriages will be increased due to the growing demand for tickets, but the number of trains will not go up soon, he said.

Muhammad Shaheen Imran, Cox’s Bazar deputy commissioner, and senior railway officials were present.

According to railway sources, two types of tickets – Shobhon and AC chair – are currently available for the Cox’s Bazar Express train.

From Dhaka to Cox’s Bazar, the price for a Shobhon class ticket is Tk 695 and Snigdha AC chair is Tk 1,325.

On November 11, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated Chattogram-Cox’s Bazar rail line.

109 reported

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Abu Elneen, whose father owns the house, said it was sheltering people displaced from elsewhere. At the nearby Abu Youssef al-Najjar hospital, the first wave of wounded were men and boys.

Gazans said they feared that the bombing of southern parts of the enclave could herald an expansion of the war into areas Israel had previously described as safe.

Leaflets dropped on eastern areas of the main southern city Khan Younis ordered residents of four towns to evacuate – not to other areas in Khan Younis as in the past, but further south to the crowded town of Rafah on the Egyptian border.

“You have to evacuate immediately and go to the shelters in the Rafah area. Khan Younis is a dangerous fighting zone. You have been warned,” said the leaflets, written in Arabic.

Lebanon army intercepts 110 on migrant boat

AFP, Beirut



Lebanon’s army said it disrupted a smuggling operation yesterday that saw more than 100 migrants from neighbouring Syria attempting to leave the country by sea. Naval forces thwarted “a people-smuggling operation on a boat carrying 110 people”, two of them Lebanese and the rest Syrian nationals, an army statement said. The boat was intercepted off the northern city of Tripoli, it added, without saying where the vessel was headed. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees leaving by boat from Lebanon are generally seeking a better life in Europe, and often head for the east Mediterranean island of Cyprus, less than 200 kilometres (125 miles) away. Authorities in Lebanon say the country hosts around two million Syrians, while some 800,000 are registered with the United Nations – the world’s highest number of refugees per capita. Syria’s civil war erupted in 2011 after the government repressed peaceful pro-democracy protests. Lebanon’s economy collapsed in late 2019, turning the country into a launchpad for migrants.

BOMB HOAX Schools evacuated in India’s Bengaluru

REUTERS

Fifteen schools in India’s tech hub of Bengaluru cancelled classes yesterday in response to emailed bomb threats, evacuating the premises as police and bomb detection squads launched search efforts. But the emails appeared to be a hoax, said B Dayananda, the top police officer in the city, also known as “India’s Silicon Valley”, since it is home to multinationals such as Amazon AMZN.O, Alphabet’s GOOGL.O Google and Infosys INFY. NS. “Last year also, similar hoax emails were sent, and these (new mails) also appear to be a hoax,” Dayananda, the police commissioner, told Reuters. “We will verify and try and find out who has sent these emails.” He said the city had stopped short of closing all schools, but added, “We have sent anti-sabotage teams to all the schools.” In April 2022, six Bengaluru schools had received similar bomb threats.



Students march against the draft of the new constitution in Santiago, Chile on Thursday. Chileans will participate in the plebiscite to accept or not this Proposal for the Political Constitution of the Republic of Chile of 2023 on December 17.

PHOTO: AFP

Party to decide their fate

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the go-ahead to her party colleagues to run as independents in efforts to make the election competitive and draw more voters to the polling centres. The party later shifted its position, saying any AL leaders seeking to run as independents must get the party nod.

To join the race, slated for January 7, at least 61 elected representatives quit their posts – all of them from the ruling camp. Of them, four were district council chairmen, one was a member of district council, 52 upazila parishad chairmen and four municipality mayors.

Of the four district council chairmen, three resigned after getting party nominations. Of the 52 upazila chairmen, 11 resigned before nomination to contest the poll.

One district council chairman, 42 upazila parishad chairmen, four municipality mayors and one district council member resigned to take a shot at parliament as independent runners.

Multiple AL leaders said a large number of elected representatives did not get party nomination, and yet they resigned to contest the national election as the five-year tenure of upazila chairmen is nearing its end.

Upazila elections were held in phases in 2019.

As their tenure will end soon, many have taken the risk to leave office and vie for the national polls, an AL leader said wishing anonymity.

The Awami League charter prohibits running against party-prohibited candidates both in national and local elections. This is punishable

by up to expulsion. However, not everyone will face the same consequence this time for running against the party pick, according to the party sources.

Already, many party-backed candidates are worried about their win as they will have to face a stiff challenge from party colleagues. Many also fear about intra-party feuds and breach of party discipline across the country, with so many candidates from the same party challenging each other.

In the 2018 national polls, AL shared 11 seats with its 14-party alliance partners and two with its electoral partner, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh.

Currently, there are eight lawmakers from the AL’s alliance partners – three each from the JSD and Workers Party, one from Jatiya Party (Manju) and one from Tarikat Federation. Two MPs were elected from Bikalpa Dhara. All of them ran with AL’s electoral symbol, boat, in the 2018 election.

This time, AL fielded candidates even in the seats now held by its partners except for Kustia-2, where JSD leader Hasanul Haq Inu is the sitting MP.

The other seat where AL did not nominate anyone is Narayanganj-5, where the ruling party did not field its candidate in 2018 as well. Jatiya Party leader Selim Osman is the sitting MP there.

AL sources said they will ask their party nominees and the independents to withdraw in the seats that the party will likely share with its partners.