

'Climate justice is all about wealthier nations'

Saber Chy tells IPS in exclusive interview

IPS, Dubai



Wealthier nations must deliver the climate finances to developing countries as promised without any excuses, said Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Bangladesh's special envoy for climate change in the Prime Minister's Office, on the sidelines of COP28 climate summit in Dubai Sunday.

In a wide-ranging exclusive interview with Inter Press Service news agency, Saber said climate change was at the forefront of Bangladesh's focus, as one in seven people in the country faces forced displacement due to climate crises.

However, Bangladesh is facing numerous challenges despite paying

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FULL INTERVIEW ON THE DAILY STAR ONLINE



With a fresh 36-hour blockade imposed by BNP starting today morning, heavy traffic was seen on the city roads throughout yesterday evening. The photo was taken at the capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

NATIONAL POLLS

Another 51 aspirants get back candidacy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another 51 aspirants got their candidacy back yesterday, winning appeals against the cancellation of their candidacy for the upcoming parliamentary election by the returning officers during the scrutiny of their nomination papers.

Of them, one is from the Awami League, four each from Jatiya Party and Trinamool BNP, two each from Gonorom and Jatiya Samantantrik Dal, and 26 are independents, Election Commission sources said last night.

With this, a total of 107 candidates got back their candidacy.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal and the other four election commissioners held a total of 99 hearings at the EC office yesterday.

EC officials said they rejected 41 appeals and said decisions regarding six others would be made later, while one applicant failed to show up.

During the first day of hearings on Sunday, a total of 56 aspirants got

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COP28 SUMMIT Draft deal stops short of calling for fossil fuel's phase out

REUTERS, Dubai

A draft of a potential climate deal at the COP28 summit yesterday offered various options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but stopped short of the full "phase out" of fossil fuels many nations have demanded.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said a central benchmark of success for COP28 would be whether it yields a deal to reduce coal, oil and gas use fast enough to avert disastrous climate change.

"That doesn't mean that all countries must phase out fossil fuels at the same time," he told reporters at the Dubai summit, which is scheduled to end today but could go on longer if negotiations drag on.

A new draft of a COP28 agreement, published by the United Arab Emirates' presidency of the summit, proposed various options but did not refer to a "phase out" of all fossil fuels, which had been included in a previous draft.

The draft deal listed eight options that countries "could" use to cut emissions, including by: "reducing both consumption

and production of fossil fuels, in a just, orderly and equitable manner so as to achieve net zero by, before, or around 2050".

Other actions listed included tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030, "rapidly phasing down unabated coal" and scaling up technologies including those to capture CO2 emissions out of the atmosphere.

A coalition of more than 100 countries including oil and gas producers the United States, Canada and Norway, as well as the European Union and climate-vulnerable island nations, wanted an agreement that included language to phase out fossil fuels, a feat not achieved in 30 years of the UN summits.

The emissions from burning fossil fuels are by far the main driver of climate change.

Sources familiar with the discussions said the UAE had come under pressure from Saudi Arabia to drop any mention of fossil fuels from the text.

Negotiators and observers inside the COP28 talks told Reuters that Saudi Arabia, de facto leader of the OPEC oil producers' group, was among the main opponents of a deal to phase out oil and gas.

Putin critic Navalny missing from prison Says his team

REUTERS, London

Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny has been removed from the penal colony where he had been imprisoned since the middle of last year and his current whereabouts are not known, his allies said yesterday.

Navalny aides have been preparing for his expected transfer to a "special regime" colony, the harshest grade in Russia's prison system, after the Putin critic was sentenced in August to an additional 19 years in prison on top of 11-1/2 years he was already serving.

Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh said staff at the IK-6 facility in Melekhovo, 235 km (145 miles) east of Moscow, had told his lawyer waiting outside that the opposition leader was no longer among its inmates.

"Where they have taken him, they refuse to say," she said on social media platform X.

His disappearance comes at the start of the campaign period for a presidential election in which Vladimir Putin confirmed on Friday that he would stand for another six-year term.

India SC backs govt decision to revoke J&K's special status

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"International law doesn't recognise India's unilateral and illegal actions" of 2019, caretaker Foreign Minister Jai Lal Abbas Jilani posted on X.

Islamabad would write to the UN, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the European Union to apprise them of the Indian court decision and its "illegality", Jilani added.

Political parties in Kashmir that opposed the revocation, and were among those that went to court, said they were disappointed by the verdict.

"Disappointed but not disheartened," Omar Abdullah, a former chief minister and vice president of the Jammu & Kashmir

National Conference party, posted on X. "The struggle will continue. It took the BJP decades to reach here. We are also prepared for the long haul."

Mehbooba Mufti, another former chief minister and president of the Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party, echoed those views.

"The people of J&K are not going to lose hope or give up. Our fight for honour and dignity will continue regardless. This isn't the end of the road for us," she posted on X.

The Indian Supreme Court said special status was a temporary constitutional provision that could be revoked. It ordered that Jammu and Kashmir should return to being a state at the earliest opportunity.

"Article 370 was an interim arrangement due to war conditions in the state," Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said, referring to the provision of the Indian constitution which provided the special status after the first India-Pakistan war over the Himalayan region.

"Textual reading also indicates that it is a temporary provision," Chandrachud said.

Security was stepped up before the verdict in Jammu and Kashmir region roiled by militant violence and protests since the start of an anti-India insurgency in 1989. Tens of thousands of people have been killed although violence has tapered off in recent years.

Onion prices soar despite sufficient supply

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India is a major sourcing destination for onion.

At best, 30-35 percent of the annual demand for onion is met through imports, according to the BTTC report.

Although India is a major source of onions, the lightning speed at which the prices shot up following India's announcement of the export embargo is unacceptable, said Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of the Research and Policy Integration for Development.

"I have never heard of any commodity's price going up so much due to the announcement of an export ban. This means the market is still controlled by syndicates," he added.

The same situation was seen in

2019 but no robust punitive action was taken against the unscrupulous traders then, Raihan said. "Why do we still don't know who is behind these syndicates?"

Meanwhile, the commerce ministry has called for checking the purchase vouchers of traders to deduce whether they are profiting abnormally. The prices of onion on December 7 can be used as the reference price.

The government has called for heightened monitoring of the kitchen markets to cool down the prices of onions.

To further rein in the prices of onions, BTTC has recommended withdrawing the import duty on onions until March next year and relaxing the interest rates and letters of credit margins for importers.

It also called for directly importing

onion from the international market to prop up supply in the local market.

Egypt, China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Netherlands and Malaysia can be considered for imports, the report added.

Raihan, who is also the executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling, called for bringing down the dependency on India for onions for good.

The BTTC also called for revisiting the reported local production data of onion.

The upward trend in prices of the key cooking ingredient despite the substantially higher imports can only be explained by markedly lower local production this year.

"That's why the accuracy of the reported local production data needs to be re-examined," the report said.

Caught up in extreme weather events

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and livelihoods."

Ashraf Dewan, a professor at the School of Earth and Planetary Sciences of Curtin University, Australia, said global climatic change and local changes in climate caused by intense human activities are triggering unusual weather patterns in many places of the world, including in Bangladesh.

"If local level anthropogenic activities, like land transformations, cannot be controlled, weather extremes such as heatwaves and little monsoon rain will continue to aggravate in the coming days," he said.

He said land-use changes at the local level have a significant impact on land-atmosphere interactions, resulting in unusual weather patterns.

Mohan Kumar Das, executive director at the National Oceanographic and Maritime Institute, said the unusual weather patterns observed in Bangladesh and

in the Bay of Bengal, characterised by prolonged heatwaves, deficient rainfall, and increased cyclonic activity, can be attributed to a combination of natural and anthropogenic factors.

He said global climate change, primarily driven by rising greenhouse gas emissions, influences the overall climate system, leading to alterations in temperature and precipitation patterns.

Several experts believe that unusual weather patterns have an impact on agriculture and healthcare.

"The Bay of Bengal's oceanic conditions, including sea surface temperature fluctuations and atmospheric circulation changes, play a pivotal role in shaping the region's climate," Mohan said.

The periodic El Niño and La Niña events in the Pacific Ocean

contribute to variability in weather patterns, impacting heatwaves, rainfall, and cyclone intensity. Local factors such as land use changes, air pollution, and geographic features amplify these effects, he said.

El Niño is a unique state of the global climate, which warms the surface waters of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, affecting the ionosphere and surrounding climate.

M Asaduzzaman, former research director at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said phenological changes caused by unusual weather patterns were evident and they were creating a burden for farmers.

"The weather pattern is changing and so is agriculture. To have a deeper understanding of this change, we need a more evidence-based information," he said.

Several experts believe that unusual weather patterns have an impact on agriculture and healthcare.

Peter Haas meets CAAB chairman

BSS, DHAKA

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas met with the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman at the CAAB headquarters yesterday afternoon.

"During the talk, I sought US support in the further development of Bangladesh's aviation sector," Rahman told BSS after the meeting.

The CAAB chairman also urged the US government's cooperation to uplift Bangladesh to "Category-1" from "Category-2" so that the country's local carriers, including Biman Bangladesh Airlines, are allowed to operate flights to the US.

The chairman informed the envoy about various improvements made by the CAAB and Biman for the process of graduating Bangladesh to "Category-1" following the guidelines of the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) of the US.

In reply, the US ambassador assured his government's cooperation so Biman could resume the Dhaka-New York flight.

Man shot during police raid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

An innocent bystander got hit by stray shotgun pellets during a police raid conducted to recover a stolen motorcycle in Araihaazar upazila of Narayanganj early yesterday.

The injured Md Sharif, 35, was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) following the incident that took place around 3:30am at New Banti village under the upazila's Duptara union, said Ahsan Ullah, officer-in-charge (OC) of Araihaazar Police Station.

Inspector Bacchu Mia, in charge of the police outpost at DMCH, said, "Sharif has several bullet wounds in his abdomen."

Police claimed to have acted on a tip-off and conducted the raid to recover a stolen motorcycle from the area.

OC Ahsan Ullah said, "During the raid, police detained a suspect named Mostakim, who then identified one Pavel as someone who is involved in selling stolen motorcycles."

"After the police reached Pavel's house and detained him, his family members and villagers surrounded the law enforcers, engaged in a scuffle, and helped Pavel get away."

"Then police fired a round from a shotgun to disperse the attackers. Stray pellets hit Md Sharif, who was later taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital by his family members."

MOHAKHALI PETROL PUMP FIRE

Death toll rises to 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The death toll in the explosion that took place at Royal Filling Station in the capital's Mohakhali on December 6, reached four as two more persons succumbed to their injuries yesterday.

Amir Hossain, 32, a cashier, and Md Masum, 24, an operator at the petrol pump, died around 8:30am and 11:00am respectively, said Md Tariqul Islam, a resident surgeon at Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

Amir suffered 35 percent burns while Masum suffered 60 percent burns, said the doctor.

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one knows what it would do and when. She said the country is heading for a free and fair election and everyone will have to walk that path. The election will not wait for anyone, she added.

The JP recently had a series of meetings with AL teams over seat-sharing for the January 7 polls.

According to JP sources, the party will stick to its demand that all AL nominees and "AL independents" withdraw from at least 30 to 35 seats so that the JP candidates there have easy wins.

Many leaders in the party think that the JP should quit the race if the demand is not met, said JP sources.

When some ministers at yesterday's meeting wanted to know Hasina's stance on "AL independents", she said the government has taken all measures to make the election free, fair, and acceptable.

"Everyone will have to face

competition ...," Hasina was quoted by a minister.

A minister then requested her not to allow the "AL independents" to use her photo in their campaign posters.

She responded by saying that there was no way to do that. "What can I do?"

Partners of the AL-led 14-party alliance at their meetings with Hasina and other AL leaders recently made repeated requests that the ruling party withdraw "AL independents" in constituencies where they would run. The AL did not make its stance clear to them.

Even some AL incumbents are worried about the "AL independents" in their races as some of the so-called independents would pose a serious challenge for them.

Cabinet Secretary Md Mahub Hossain, during the post-cabinet meeting briefing yesterday, said the government has ordered the

authorities concerned to step up field-level monitoring to curb onion prices and bring those making a quick buck to book.

"After receiving the instructions, our teams are working on the ground," he said.

During the cabinet meeting, the PM asked the authorities concerned to build jetties and terminals in convenient coastal areas.

She also gave directives for ensuring proper utilisation of the newly discovered oil in the country, BSS quoted the cabinet secretary as saying.

The cabinet approved the draft of the bilateral agreement to be inked between Bangladesh and the EU on aviation; the draft of the national volunteer policy-2023; the draft of the marine tourism policy-2023; and a draft agreement between Bangladesh and Kosovo on cultural cooperation.