

What Bangladesh can do before COP29



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This year's climate summit—the 28th Conference of the Parties for climate change (COP28)—started with a surprise on the very first day: the operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund, where the COP28 presidency pioneered a pledge of \$100 million. By the end of the event, the pledges totalled almost \$700 million. Though this amount is paltry compared to what is needed to combat loss and damage from climate change, the apprehension of shifting funds from adaptation and other disaster risk reduction sources appears not unfounded, given the tiny pledges of less than \$200 million for the Adaptation Fund against the measly target of \$300 million.

In other areas of finance, we witnessed a short shrift, a really bleak picture. Against the Glasgow decision, no clear roadmap was drawn to double adaptation finance by 2025, compared to the 2019 level. In long-term finance, a decision was made to draft a post-2025 target ahead of COP29, to be held in Azerbaijan next year. But the Green Climate Fund was pledged an additional \$3.5 billion for its second replenishment, which now totals \$12.8 billion—an increase of almost 30 percent more than the first one. Past trends, however, show a persistently huge discrepancy between pledges and actual delivery on the ground.

Apart from initial capitalisation of the L&D Fund, the other area that COP28 is praised for by many is the decision of "a transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems."

Actually, this was the first time in the history of COP that the term "fossil fuels" was included in the decision text. But analysts apprehend that the softer language could give fossil fuel powers the loopholes to continue their production through scaling carbon capture and storage—an untested technology.

In any case, the decision was welcomed by the UK, the EU, and the US. But Dubai, being also a climate expo, witnessed a flurry of deals between oil giants running into billions of new investments. This COP also witnessed the highest ever presence of business lobbyists, particularly those representing the fossil fuel industry. A recent United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report says that the global fossil fuel production by 2030 is set to be more than double the amount needed to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Also, there is passing reference of "transition fuels" (meaning natural gas) in the Global Stocktake framework.

Another positive decision is about tripling renewable energy and doubling energy efficiency by 2030. But the financing for this is not elaborated on, as renewable energy investment was just about \$20 billion in 2022—only around 2.5 percent of its total capital spending, according to the International Energy Agency. This is against a huge subsidy of about \$700 billion in 2022 for the fossil fuel industry.

Thus, looking at the total COP28



FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

Climate activists protest against fossil fuels at Dubai's Expo City during the COP28 climate talks in Dubai.

package, we can say that the UAE on the decision of renewable and energy efficiency. The Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCPP) has an ambitious target in terms of renewable energy: 40 percent of our total energy mix being renewable by 2040. Then we have the master plan for scaling energy efficiency. To capitalise on these targets, we need to do two things: 1) a dispassionate analysis of our extreme lack of progress so far in scaling renewable energy, which is still below five percent of our total energy; and 2) draw an operational plan on scaling energy efficiency and energy conservation.

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Third, the Global Goal on Adaptation has set some non-quantified targets. Bangladesh has already met some of them, like developing a national adaptation plan (NAP) and mainstreaming adaptation in development policies. So, Bangladesh is already regarded as a global leader, together with its recognition as a role model in disaster management. The time has come to realise the target in the GGA framework—a monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) mechanism. Together with endorsing the eight principles of locally-led adaptation, as many countries

have already done, developing and operationalising an MEL mechanism can be a lesson for other countries.

Fourth, we know that an overwhelming share of very inadequate climate finance goes for mitigation, compared to adaptation. Even for the least developed countries, which are "nano-emitters," where adaptation is of utmost priority, more than half of climate finance goes for mitigation. This is a double injustice. So, we in Bangladesh can initiate a review of international support going for adaptation versus mitigation.

Fifth, in the first of its kind "Local Climate Action Summit," more than 500 mayors, governors, and other subnational leaders attended to highlight the role of cities in climate action. Seventy-one countries joined the Coalition for High Ambition Multi-level Partnerships (CHAMP) initiative committing to robust urban climate actions through their NDCs, and enhancing collaboration among locals, national and international actors. Governments, companies, and philanthropies announced over \$1 billion in new grants for this area. We have a good space here in which to act, where city and town mayors can adopt local adaptation plans to mobilise investment for diverting the inflow of displaced people away from an overcrowded Dhaka to other cities, towns, and growth centres. With spectacular improvements in communications under the present government, we can turn them climate-resilient and migrant-friendly.

Finally, capacity-building is direly needed in two areas. First, we need to prepare a cohort of young negotiators, because some of the experienced government and non-government negotiators will retire soon. The other area for capacity development is the writing of science-based fundable projects, for which the government may forge partnerships with universities.

How well did we play in 2023?



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promise of steady improvement.

Men's football

The Bangladesh men's football team qualified for the semi-finals in the SAFF championship. The award for best goalkeeper of the tournament was given to Anisur Rahman Zico. While they failed to qualify for the AFC Cup, the men's team managed to secure their best performance till date in the FIFA World Cup qualifiers. Although they were beaten heavily by Australia, proceeding to the second round remains a landmark moment for the team.

Triumphs in women's cricket

Bangladesh women's cricket team shone brightly in 2023, securing notable victories against formidable opponents. Even though, in February, Bangladesh women finished at the bottom of their group in the ICC Women's T20

chased it with five wickets remaining.

Bangladesh then hosted a T20 series and an ODI series against Pakistan, both of which they won 2-1. The women's team just concluded their tour of South Africa, where they won the T20 series 1-1 but lost the ODI series 1-2.

At every level this year, Bangladesh women's cricket team has shown competitiveness and determination.

especially in a manner which matches their yields of success. In November, it was reported that the contracted women's team players had not been paid their salaries for five months.

U-19 men's cricket team conquering Asia Cup

The U-19 men's cricket team added to our cricketing successes by winning the Asia Cup. The young talents displayed a hunger for victory,

On March 29, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) decided to withdraw the women's team from the 2024 AFC Women's Olympic Qualifying Tournament—just six days before the event started. This decision was attributed to financial constraints and led to a protest by players. The incident highlighted the challenges faced by women footballers in the country, and raised questions about support and infrastructure.

The team has developed to be high in self-confidence and are able to present themselves as a side to be taken seriously at nearly all outings. Unsurprisingly however, much like the women's football team, the women's cricket team has also been highlighted as lacking adequate resources dedicated to them, bringing hope for the future of Bangladesh cricket. In the past, the Bangladesh under-19 men's cricket team won the Under-19 Cricket World Cup in 2020, some of whom now represent the Bangladesh men's national cricket team. This shows that Bangladesh is capable of producing talents, but needs to nurture the youth so that their skills remain

competitive at the more challenging levels of the game.

Setbacks for the men's cricket team

However, the year in sports was not without disappointments for Bangladesh. The men's cricket team faced a setback in the World Cup, failing to advance as far as anticipated. The team spirit seemed to reflect the dramatic unfoldings that happened off field. Many had predicted that the Bangladeshi men were poised to make their mark in this World Cup with their combination of experience and talent, but the team completely failed against that expectation. The men's team played reasonably well in their last ODI series of the year in New Zealand, losing 1-2 to the Kiwis.

The successes in women's football and cricket showcased the country's potential and growing prowess on the global stage. Simultaneously, the challenges faced by the women's teams amplify their need for sustained support and investment.

As the nation looks ahead to 2024, the lessons learned in 2023 will ideally shape the future of sports in Bangladesh. With continued dedication, investment, and a focus on nurturing talent, the country can build on its successes and overcome challenges to make its mark on the map of international sports.



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

football team secured a historic win in the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship. The team displayed exceptional skill and teamwork, clinching the title with a 3-0 victory against Nepal. This achievement marked a significant milestone in the development of women's football in the country, as the Bangladesh women's team now boast SAFF championships in three categories: U-17, U-19, and Senior.

SAFF U-17 Women's Championship Runners-up

In March this year, Bangladesh's Under-17 women's team put up a commendable performance and

the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) decided to withdraw the women's team from the 2024 AFC Women's Olympic Qualifying Tournament—just six days before the event started. This decision was attributed to financial constraints and led to a protest by players. The incident highlighted the challenges faced by women footballers in the country, and raised questions about support and infrastructure.

Bangladesh women also participated in the Asian Games 2023 in China, where cricket was included for the first time since 2014. There, they qualified for the semi-finals but lost to India. However, they did end the tournament on a sweet note by winning the bronze medal. Bangladesh restricted opponent Pakistan to a meagre 64-9 in the 20-over game and

