

# We must restore momentum in environmental governance



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The environment remains a priority concern in Bangladesh given its status as one of the most vulnerable countries in terms of environmental degradation and climate change impacts. The country's riverine geography, low-lying coastal regions, high population density, and inadequate capacity to cope with environmental changes have made millions of people vulnerable to floods, storms, cyclones, ecosystem degradation, and pollution-related hazards. Changes in climatic patterns have become increasingly evident in recent decades, affecting lives, livelihoods, and overall wellbeing. Bangladesh currently ranks 13th globally in the Long-Term Climate Risk Index, and over the past two decades, some 185 extreme weather events have resulted in 11,450 deaths and Tk 372 crore in economic losses. Continued degradation of environmental conditions is also threatening its broader social stability. Environmental considerations, therefore, are becoming increasingly critical to national policy debates.



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

**Without strengthening the capacity of regulatory institutions, improving coordination across ministries, and ensuring consistent environmental financing, even well-designed initiatives—such as large-scale tree plantations, waste management programmes, or river restoration projects—may struggle to deliver sustainable outcomes.**

Over the last two decades, Bangladesh has experienced clear momentum in environmental governance. Significant progress has been made in recognising the country's environmental vulnerability and in shaping a policy environment with stronger institutional arrangements to tackle environmental challenges. The Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP), acknowledged as one of the earliest comprehensive national-level climate-related policy frameworks among the developing nations, was adopted in 2009, outlining priorities for adaptation, mitigation, and institutional capacity building. In 2010, The Environment Court Act was enacted, providing

for specialised courts to address environment-related offences and strengthening the enforcement of environmental laws. The establishment of the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF), in the same year further demonstrated the commitment to finance climate adaptation and resilience initiatives using domestic resources, marking an important step towards sustainable climate finance.

The policy momentum continued in 2011, when environmental protection received constitutional recognition through the inclusion of Article 18A, which mandates the state to protect natural resources, biodiversity, forests, wildlife, and wetlands. In 2018, the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 was developed, integrating water management, climate change, and land-use strategies across six specific hotspots to reduce floods, droughts, and salinity risks. All these initiatives laid a strong foundation for environmental governance and created significant policy momentum in addressing the country's environmental priorities. However, the momentum that had

gradually developed over previous decades could not be sustained during the interim administration, which assumed office in August 2024 and transferred power in February 2026. Development planning and implementation trends during that period reflected a weaker performance in environmental and climate change actions. In both FY2024-25 and FY2025-26, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change received only about 0.23 percent and 0.27 percent of the national budget respectively—allocations that remain far below the roughly one percent level that many policy analysts consider necessary to effectively address Bangladesh's environmental challenges. The implementation of environmental actions by the interim government also showed similar weaknesses. Overall Annual Development Programme (ADP) spending fell to only 68 percent in FY2024-25—the lowest in 49 years—while development spending up to December 2025 in FY2025-26 reached only 17.54 percent, the lowest first-half implementation rate in the past five years. These trends indicate persistent gaps between the country's environmental policy commitments and their actual delivery. The period of the interim government also witnessed several incidents related to the protection of natural resources and ecologically sensitive landscapes that drew widespread public criticism. The looting of white stones from Sylhet's Sada Pathor area and continued illegal sand extraction from rivers across the country caused serious ecological damage, clearly reflecting weaknesses in regulatory enforcement during that period. With the end of the interim administration and new political leadership now in the driving seat, Bangladesh has another important opportunity to restore momentum in its environmental governance. The new government has made a number of commitments in its election manifesto that signal a positive intention to strengthen environmental governance. These include the plantation of 250 million trees and creation of green employment opportunities by linking ecological

restoration with livelihood generation; promoting integrated waste management and recycling initiatives under a circular economy framework; strengthening pollution control and environmental monitoring; exploring the development of a national carbon trading mechanism; and improving river and water resource management, along with the protection of coastal ecosystems. These commitments could play a critical role in restoring Bangladesh's environmental momentum and reinforcing the country's long-term sustainability agenda. While the commitments outlined in the election manifesto reflect positive intent, many of the proposed initiatives appear more as individual actions rather than elements of a comprehensive governance framework. Over the past two decades, Bangladesh has been able to build a strong policy foundation for environmental governance, but translating this policy momentum into effective institutional practice—through stronger regulatory enforcement and adequate financial resources—remains a challenge. Addressing this should be a priority for the new government. Without strengthening the capacity of regulatory institutions, improving coordination across ministries, and ensuring consistent environmental financing, even well-designed initiatives—such as large-scale tree plantations, waste management programmes, or river restoration projects—may struggle to deliver sustainable outcomes. Bangladesh's environmental governance has evolved through decades of policy development shaped by the country's acute vulnerability. Although the interim administration struggled to sustain the policy and institutional momentum built in previous years, the return of elected political leadership now presents an opportunity to restore that momentum. With stronger institutional commitment, effective regulatory enforcement, and strategic investment, Bangladesh can translate its policy foundations into concrete environmental action and move towards a more resilient and sustainable future.

# Building energy resilience in an age of global shocks



**A CLOSER LOOK**  
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TASNEEM TAYEB

Global energy shocks don't always create vulnerabilities for countries; often they expose the ones that already exist. The latest Middle East escalation is doing exactly that for Bangladesh's energy system, revealing how closely the country's economic stability is now tied to developments far beyond its own borders. For decades, the country has relied primarily on domestic natural gas to power its economy. Fields such as Bibiyana, Habiganj, and Titas supported electricity generation and industrial expansion. But by the early 2010s, demand rose faster than domestic supply, forcing policymakers to confront an uncomfortable reality: the reserves that had sustained the system would not last indefinitely. Bangladesh began to look outwards. Infrastructure was developed to import LNG, linking the national grid to international energy markets. Floating storage and regasification units were installed off the coast so that LNG cargoes arriving by tankers could be converted back into gas and injected into the national grid. The first of these terminals began operating in 2018, marking a significant shift in the architecture of the country's energy system. The system now stretches far beyond its own geography, from gas fields in Sylhet to LNG tankers crossing the Strait of Hormuz. With that shift came a new form of exposure. Much of the country's imported LNG is tied to volatile global spot markets, where geopolitical disruptions push prices sharply upwards within weeks. The transition helped avert an immediate crisis, but it also altered the system's risk profile. Over the past decade, Bangladesh has moved from a system largely reliant

on domestic resource security to one increasingly exposed to global fuel markets. The decision was difficult to avoid. Gas discoveries slowed and exploration investment lagged—partly reflecting regulatory constraints and pricing structures that discouraged heavier investment—while electricity demand rose rapidly alongside industrial expansion. Policymakers faced a stark choice: constrain growth through shortages or connect the system to global fuel markets through LNG imports. Imported fuel now plays a central role in meeting the country's energy needs. It relies heavily on imported oil and coal, while LNG imports—approaching 70 lakh tonnes annually—supply power plants across the economy. A significant share of these cargoes is purchased on the spot market—roughly 29 percent of Tk 55,000 crore allocated for LNG imports in the current fiscal year—leaving the system widely exposed to sudden price movements. More broadly, Bangladesh now relies on imports for around 95 percent of its primary energy inputs. In such systems, volatility in the global market can quickly spill over into forex reserve pressures, fiscal constraints, and domestic energy pricing. The effects of these disruptions are not always visible in energy statistics. During the recent fuel rationing imposed on refilling stations on March 6, and subsequently withdrawn on March 15, long queues formed outside the stations in Dhaka and elsewhere as people waited hours for limited allocations. For households and businesses alike, these scenes illustrate that energy shocks are not distant geopolitical events but real social and economic

disruptions that ripple through everyday life. Energy shocks quickly spill into transport costs, food prices, and industrial production. For an economy already grappling with inflation of over nine percent, energy security is not only about keeping power plants running but also about protecting economic stability. Many countries have faced similar challenges. The difference lies in how energy systems are designed to absorb shocks. After the oil crises of the 1970s, Japan developed large strategic petroleum reserves to cushion supply disruptions. India has constructed underground storage caverns for similar purposes. Bangladesh, by contrast, typically holds only a few weeks of fuel stocks and relies heavily on continuous LNG deliveries. Unlike crude oil, LNG is difficult and costly to store in large quantities, leaving the system with limited room to manoeuvre when markets tighten. Countries manage this vulnerability through diversified supply contracts and flexible import infrastructure rather than large fuel stockpiles. Energy security is ultimately defined by the buffers that prevent global market turbulence from spilling directly into domestic disruption. The safeguard principle is familiar in corporate risk management: business continuity planning. Organisations that operate across volatile markets do not assume stability; they build redundancy into critical systems so that disruptions in one part of the network do not halt operations entirely. National energy systems require a similar discipline. When imports become central to a country's energy system, resilience depends not only on expanding supply but also on the institutional capacity to anticipate and mitigate risks. Bangladesh has begun exploring ways to diversify its energy mix, gradually expanding renewable capacity while pursuing nuclear generation as an additional source of baseload power. These shifts reflect a longer-term effort to reduce reliance on imported fuels and align with global energy transition trends. However,

managing that transition while maintaining affordable and reliable supply presents its own set of challenges for policymakers. Diversifying the energy mix, for instance, will require more than vision statements and setting new targets. Expanding renewable power depends on building the right conditions for investment—clear policies, reliable regulatory framework, adequate incentives, and sustained structured financing that can support projects over the long term. Private companies will ultimately play a major role in that transition, and it is important that they are given the right ecosystem to attract that investment. Without those foundations, the new government's pledge to raise the country's renewable energy capacity from its current five percent to 20 percent by 2030 will remain an unrealised aspiration. The energy sector is not without planning frameworks, though. The Integrated Energy and Power Master Plan (IEPMP) adopted in 2023 outlines a long-term roadmap for the sector through 2050, while earlier initiatives such as the Renewable Energy Policy and the Energy Security Fund were intended to strengthen domestic capacity and fuel supply stability. Even so, much of the current strategy continues to rely heavily on imported fuels to meet rising demand. In practice, policy has focused more on expanding supply than on building resilience against external shocks. For Bangladesh, the latest tensions in the Middle East highlight how intricately national energy systems and domestic economic stability are now intertwined with global political developments. Eventually this crisis will subside, energy prices will stabilise, and shipping routes will return to normal. But the structural capability gaps it has revealed will remain. Can Bangladesh's energy system absorb the next crisis? Strengthening strategic reserves, diversifying supply contracts, broadening the energy mix, and developing a robust energy continuity framework will determine whether future shocks will be manageable.

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Headed out
  - 5 Hotel workers
  - 10 Wise saying
  - 12 Don Draper, e.g.
  - 13 "Oh, how — to get up..."
  - 14 Lofty
  - 15 Ring wins, for short
  - 16 Brunched
  - 18 Saloon order
  - 19 Secret stuff
  - 21 Surgery souvenir
  - 22 Road rescuers
  - 24 Thingamajig
  - 25 Lively tune
  - 29 Wander
  - 30 Girls in the family
  - 32 Verb for you
  - 33 Mayo buy
  - 34 Energy
  - 35 Date qualifier
  - 37 Justice Kagan
  - 39 Supply with funds
  - 40 Stadium tops
  - 41 Alex Haley work
  - 42 Cordial
  - DOWN**
  - 1 Early space dog
  - 2 Urge
  - 3 Utter failure
  - 4 Young one
  - 5 Lion's pride
  - 6 Bustle
  - 7 Return announcement
  - 8 Cowboys' home
  - 9 Insolent look
  - 11 Was serious
  - 17 Los Angeles section
  - 20 "Shucks!"
  - 21 Extent
  - 23 Called a game
  - 25 2006 Winter Games setting
  - 26 Carry too far
  - 27 Skin problem
  - 28 "Stand by Me" director
  - 29 Daytona entrant
  - 31 Twitch
  - 33 Spielberg movie
  - 36 Guest bed
  - 38 Depressed

## SATURDAY'S ANSWERS

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11-18

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D	O	T		U	P	B	R	A	I	D	
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		T	A	X	I	S		E	B	B	
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C	L	O	S	E		M	O	O	R	E	
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