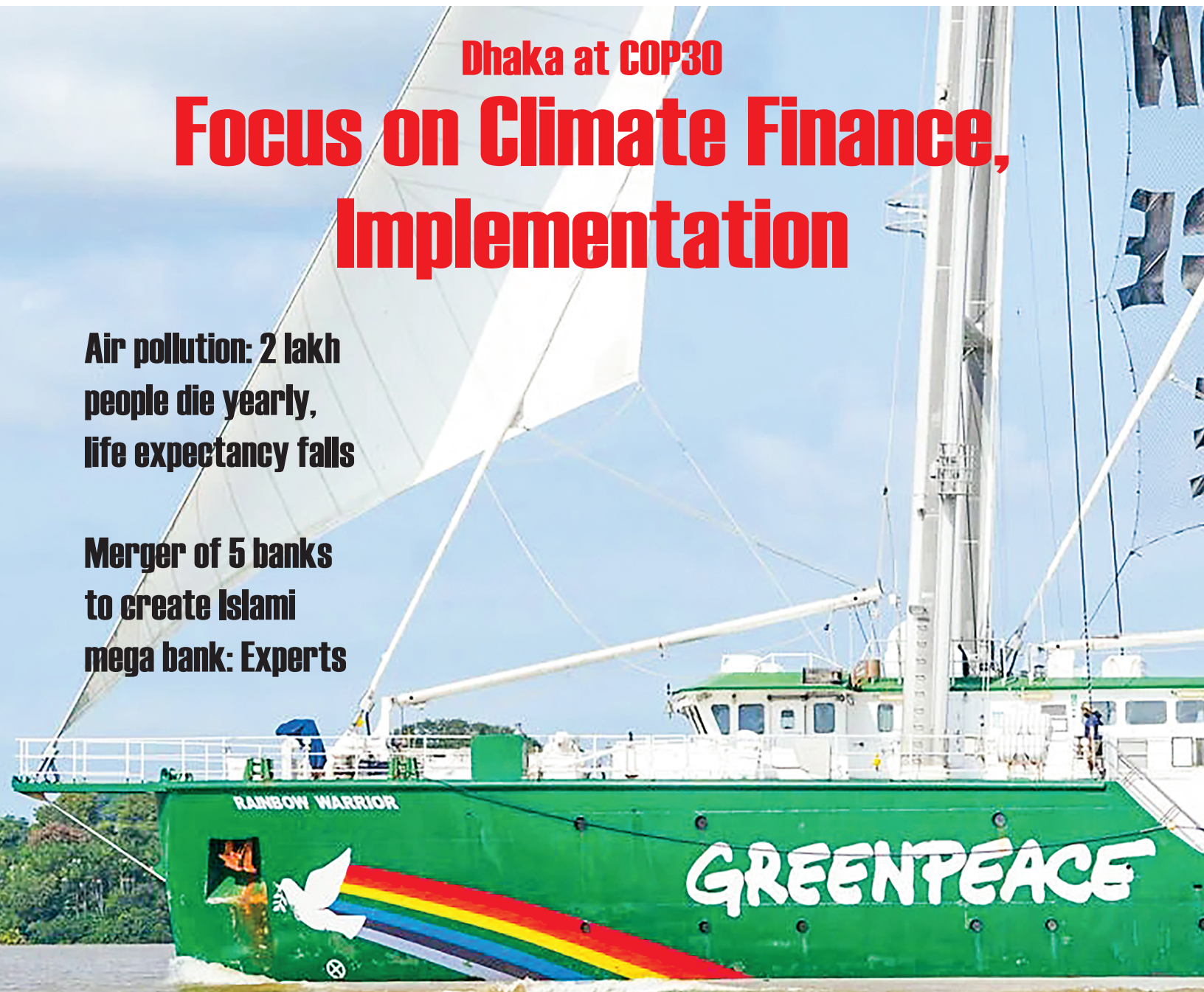


Dhaka at COP30 Focus on Climate Finance, Implementation

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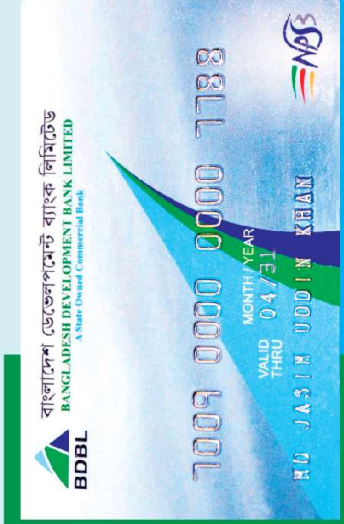
**Teesta rendered dry after 5
flood waves last wet season**

ডিজিটাল ব্যাংকিং-এর সকল সেবা

২৪/৭ এখন বিডিবিএল এ

সেবাসমূহ

- মোবাইল এ্যাপস্
- ইন্টারনেট ব্যাংকিং
- ই-একাউন্ট (নিজের একাউন্ট নিজে করি)
- ডেবিট কার্ড



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- NPSB এর মাধ্যমে মুহূর্তেই টাকা পাঠান অন্য ব্যাংকে
- ক্রেডিট কার্ডের বিল পে-করুন
- ইএফটিএন ও আরটিজিএস সেবা নিন
- এ চালান সিস্টেম (ACS) এ আয়কর, ভ্যাট, ট্যাক্স ও পাসপোর্টের ফি জমা দিন
- NESCO, DPDC ও BGDCL এর বিল সেমেন্ট করুন
- সকল অপারেটরে মোবাইল রিচার্জ করুন

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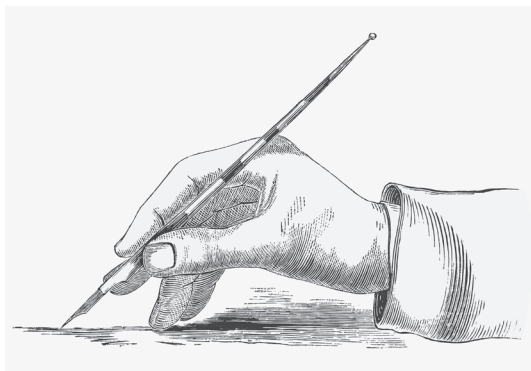
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Cover image credit: Greenpeace iconic ship, the Rainbow Warrior, arrived in Belém, Pará, ahead of the United Nations Climate Conference COP30.

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EDITORIAL



Making politics sustainable

Bangladesh is at a crossroads in as far as transition to democracy is concerned. After the mass upsurge of July 2024 that unseated 16 years of autocratic rule, the people want the taste of democracy denied all those years. As free and fair elections, freedom of expression and assembly were not allowed, economy was plundered, banks looted and billions of dollars laundered, the people waited for the time to rise unitedly to end misrule.

Unguarded statements against the anti-quota movement of the students plus excessive use of force solidified student-unity, brought the support of the people to their favour and ignited the fire that made the mass upsurge a grand success with millions across the country coming out to the streets and joining the resistance. After the glorious success of the movement and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's fleeing to India, the Interim Government of Nobel Laureate Dr. Muhammad Yunus took charge to create an atmosphere for democratic transition.

The government has done a lot of work including the formulation of the July Charter in consultation with the political parties most of them signing it. Now a July Charter Order has been issued giving it a legal basis but creating mixed reactions among the political parties.

The BNP and its allies say that the July Charter Order cannot deprive an elected parliament of its powers, but accept Chief Adviser Dr. Yunus' decision to hold the national election and the proposed referendum on the same day. Jamaat and seven other Islamic parties on the other hand say that referendum on one day will diminish its importance. The Interim Government has 'sided with one party' in taking this decision, Jamaat alleged. 8 parties have also alleged that one party did not want the reforms incorporated in the July Charter. The eight parties have called a programme of agitations to press the demand for referendum before the next general elections. BNP on its part has responded by reminding Jamaat of its 1971 roles and alleging that they had never been with the people.

The average people are shocked at this turn in politics in just 16 months. It is good for all to remember that any reform cannot be coerced, but be based on the willing consent of the stakeholders. Use of force or other forms of compulsion to agree to a decision cannot and will not last. This is the lesson of history. In other words, reforms based only on the considered opinion of the political parties will last and be sustainable. The parties should realise that faith in democracy lies in respect for each other's opinion as stated by French philosopher Voltaire - I don't support what you do say, but I shall defend to the last your right of saying so. Our leaders should mind this. Democracy has a price. There should be mutual acceptance and respect for each other. Please realise that there can be no consensus minus any party. Artificial consensus will never be sustainable.

Mostafa Kamal Majumder

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COP30

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COP30 negotiations in progress in Balem, Amazon, Brazil on Thursday 13 November 2025.

Dhaka at COP30: Focus on Climate Finance, Implementation

Mostafa Kamal Majumder

Climate experts and activists from around the globe have assembled in Belem inside Brazilian Amazon for COP30 with high hopes to go for implementation of what has been agreed upon so far in climate negotiations. These are in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, generation of climate financing of \$1.3 trillion a year by 2035, to support Least Developed and Developing countries in adaptation and mitigation, coping up with loss and damage and technologies to speed them up.

However, as nations haven't reduced emissions as per plans, science now in-

dicates that a temporary overshoot, from the Paris Agreement target to limit global warming to 1.5°C, is likely in the early 2030s, which could push ecosystems beyond irreversible tipping points and expose billions to severe risks. Bad news for countries like Bangladesh regularly facing natural disasters amplified by climate change.

As a climate induced disaster-prone country, Bangladesh's hope, like other LDCs and developing countries, is to bank on success of the 12-day meet to rescue the humankind from manmade catastrophes. But threats are still there. With the Donald Trump administration in the United States

deciding not to send senior officials to COP30 negotiations against the backdrop of an inadequate determination for emissions cuts and a slow pace of generation of climate finance from the developed countries, the final outcome of climate negotiations remains highly unpredictable.

Yet a positive strain is found in campaigner John Noel of Greenpeace International who calls US decision not to send senior officials to COP30, tragic, but not surprising. "But those of us travelling to Belém from the United States know we have strong public support for the Paris Agreement and remain committed." He points out that there are still avenues for

climate action at the state and local level, including “polluter pays” policies and incentives for clean energy.

And a positive aspect is that the majority of the world’s population – an estimated 80 to 89 percent – wants stronger climate action. Clean energy technologies are now attracting twice as much investment as fossil fuels, and solar power and regenerative agriculture are expanding across the Global South.

Reports coming from Belem say, before the start of COP30 negotiations, world leaders gathered for two days of climate talks in Brazil, with a major focus on protecting tropical forests worldwide. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva proposed the “Tropical Forests Forever Facility,” a fund designed to pay 74 developing countries to preserve their forests. Norway pledged \$3 billion to the fund, the largest commitment so far, while Germany is expected to announce support. Brazilian officials reported a total of \$5.5 billion in pledges, with 20% earmarked for Indigenous communities, who have historically managed and protected these lands. But leaders from China, the United States, and India—three of the world’s biggest polluters—did not attend the preliminary gathering.

Agencies reported, speaking at the Leaders’ Summit, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said: “It’s no longer time for negotiations. It’s time for implementation, implementation, and implementation.”

Under Brazil’s presidency, COP30 will focus on an action agenda of 30 key goals, each guided by an “activation group” tasked with scaling up solutions. The effort, called a *mutirão*—an Indigenous term meaning “collective task”—reflects Brazil’s aim to highlight Indigenous leadership in climate action, the reports said.

To well articulate its stand in In the position paper on COP30, Bangladesh draws on the 2025 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) as a historic milestone affirming that States hold binding obligations under international law to take ambitious action for both mitigation and adaptation, and to safeguard the rights of present and future generations.

The Opinion further emphasizes that developed countries, in light of their historical responsibilities and respective capabilities, bear a legal and moral duty to provide adequate, predictable, and accessible finance, technology transfer, and capacity-building support to developing

nations.

This, the position paper says, reinforces Bangladesh’s long-standing call for equitable climate justice, enhanced international support for vulnerable countries, and heightened global ambition consistent with the 1.5°C pathway, the position paper says.

Key elements of Bangladesh Position are: Developed countries must fully deliver the USD 100 billion per year commitment by 2020, avoid arrears, loans, and double counting, and ensure this serves as a floor for the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), which must reach USD 300 billion per year and \$1.3 trillion cumulative by 2035, with focus on grants, adaptation, and loss & damage.

Finance must prioritize LDCs, SIDS, and climate-vulnerable countries, ensuring at least 50% of public climate finance goes to adaptation, delivered through grants and direct access modalities.

.....

COP30 will focus on an action agenda of 30 key goals, each guided by an “activation group” tasked with scaling up solutions. The effort, called a *mutirão*—an Indigenous term meaning “collective task”—reflects Brazil’s aim to highlight Indigenous leadership in climate action

.....

Access to climate finance must be simplified and harmonized, empowering national entities and Direct Access Entities to accelerate implementation and strengthen country ownership.

The GCF, GEF, FRLD, and Adaptation Fund must improve transparency, reporting, and accountability, including standardized climate finance definitions, monitoring flows, and tracking the balance between adaptation, mitigation, and loss & damage.

Climate finance must focus on grants rather than loans to prevent debt distress,

particularly in highly vulnerable countries like Bangladesh.

The GCF, GEF, FRLD, and Adaptation Fund, must be rapidly operationalized, replenished, and scaled up to meet urgent climate needs, aligned with national adaptation priorities and global frameworks.

As has been in past climate negotiations, Bangladesh is aligning its position with LDCs and G77 and China. Bangladesh delegates to COP30 have participated in the preparatory meeting of the LDCs that was scheduled for 4-5 November and that of the Group of 77 and China which was held on 8 and 9 November.

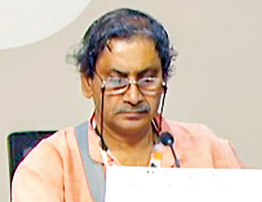
Action agendas at COPs rely on voluntary pledges rather than binding laws. Yet the scale of change needed is immense: at least \$1.3 trillion in climate investments per year by 2035. Without urgent action, global temperatures could rise 2.3-2.8°C by century’s end, leaving vast regions uninhabitable due to flooding, extreme heat, and ecosystem collapse.

A central feature of COP30 will be the Baku-to-Belém Roadmap Report for \$1.3 trillion, prepared by COP29 and COP30 presidencies. It outlines priorities for mobilizing resources, including strengthening multilateral climate funds, taxing polluting activities, and converting sovereign debt into climate investment—potentially unlocking \$100 billion for developing nations.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change remains the leading forum for tackling the climate crisis. Decisions are made by consensus, driving global cooperation on mitigation, adaptation, and finance.

Over the years, COPs have delivered landmark agreements. The 2015 Paris Agreement aimed to keep temperature rise well below 2°C, striving for 1.5°C. At COP28 in Dubai, nations committed to a just, orderly transition from fossil fuels and to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030. COP29 in Baku raised the annual climate finance target for developing countries from \$100 billion to \$300 billion, with a roadmap to \$1.3 trillion.

Together, these efforts under the UN-FCCC framework have helped avert a projected 4°C temperature rise by century’s end. Yet the gap between expectations and actual performance remains wide and an overshoot over the 1.5°C level is still feared. It’s our hope that COP30 negotiators will rise to the occasion and help prevent this from happening.



CLIMATE



United Nations
Climate Change

COP30
BRASIL
AMAZÔNIA
BELÉM 2025

COAST Press release from the Belém COP30 climate conference. Dated 11 Nov 2025

Struggle to continue until trillion-dollar needs met: CSOs tell Belém COP30

During the Belém COP30 Climate Conference, leaders of South Asian Civil Society Organisations gathered in a press conference and demanded assurance of the “Baku to Belém” Roadmap and vowed to continue struggle and advocacy with developed countries until trillion-dollar climate finance needs are met. They hope the Parties must submit their NDC 3.0 with consistently ambitious, transformative, and 1.5°C temperature-integrated mitigation goals, and triple adaptation finance by 2030 as part of an ambitious New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) to effectively protect vulnerable communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

The press conference, titled “LDCs & MVC Peoples’ Expectations and COP30,” took place at the COP30 climate conference centre in Belém, Brazil. Representatives from various Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including Shoumya Dutta from India, Ahsanul Wahed from MJF, Jakaria from Bangladesh, and many others, participated and shared their valuable insights during the discussion. In the event a written statement was read out by M.A. Hasan of COAST Foundation.

M. A. Hasan criticized developed countries for creating frameworks that look good on paper but fail to deliver in practice. After ten years of Paris Agreement,

COP30 is a great opportunity for a reality check on progress, identifying gaps, and defining our role and contribution to appropriate financial support & techniques to achieve the goal of keeping temperature at 1.5 degrees through phase out of fossil fuel, he added. He demanded a clear, fair, and time-bound pathway to implement NCQG decision, which must address the trillion-dollar annual goal by 2035 through public finance, while fully considering the needs & special circumstances of LDCs & MVCs.

Shoumya Dutta said, we anticipate that COP30 will be able to establish a definitive timeline for phasing out fossil fuels, leading to their complete elimination and aligning with the submitted NDC-3. It should also make a significant decision to immediately phase out all coal-based power plants and fossil fuel subsidies. Parties must go for deeper emissions cuts through shift away the fossil fuels as urgent, tripling global renewable energy capacity, and doubling global energy efficiency by 2030. He called for detailed roadmaps on implementation strategies, including sector-specific targets, timelines, and comprehensive plans for necessary resources and funding.

Ahsanul Wahed said, we are calling for a clear and credible roadmap to finalize

measurable and meaningful indicators for the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA). Developed countries always move with vague commitments that cause suffering to vulnerable countries. They should avoid this behaviour and give a real commitment to drive real progress in enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing climate vulnerability.

Zakaria said, our demand is for rapid, direct, and simplified access to the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), prioritizing frontline communities who are already bearing the brunt of climate impacts. The COP29 outcome on the NCQG failed to secure long-term finance to address loss and damage. It is therefore imperative for COP30 that the NCQG Roadmap include a sub-goal on Loss and Damage finance with clear options for the provision of public, grant-based resources to developing countries.

Participants in the press conference put their opinion and expect the COP30 would reach a real commitment in reducing global temperature, obviously led by necessary finance and technology support for climate vulnerable countries from developed countries.

(Mustafa Kamal Akand, Director, COAST Foundation
01711455591, kamal@coastbd.net)



Air pollution: 2 lakh people die yearly, life expectancy falls

Rafiqul Islam Azad

Bangladesh is facing a severe air pollution crisis that has affected public health, economic growth, and life expectancy. Recent international studies reveal that the country has emerged as the most polluted in the world, with particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) levels far exceeding national and global safety standards.

In Dhaka, the nation's capital, the average PM_{2.5} concentration is nearly 18 times higher than the World Health Organization (WHO) guideline of five micrograms per cubic metre (mcg/m). These fine particles, smaller than 2.5 micrometres in diameter, penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream, causing a wide range of health problems. Millions of residents struggle daily with the effects of toxic air, particularly during winter, when pollution levels spike.

According to the 2025 Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) Annual Update, air pollution in Bangladesh is the single greatest external threat to life expectancy, reducing the average citizen's lifespan by 5.5 years. The report, published by the University of Chicago's Energy Policy Institute, notes that

all 166.8 million Bangladeshis live in areas exceeding both WHO and national air quality standards. Even the least polluted districts, such as Lalmonirhat, register PM_{2.5} levels seven times above safe limits.

South Asia remains the most polluted region globally, but Bangladesh now stands out as the worst-affected nation. The AQLI highlights that particulate pollution has a greater impact on life expectancy than childhood and maternal malnutrition and is more than five times deadlier than unsafe water and sanitation.

Economic Impact

The economic cost of pollution is staggering. The World Bank estimates that air pollution cost Bangladesh between 3.9% and 4.4% of its GDP in 2019, amounting to losses of approximately USD 11 billion. Household and outdoor pollution alone account for nearly 55% of premature deaths, representing around Tk 43,529 crore (8.3% of GDP). The burden of illness includes 2.5 billion days of lost productivity and extensive healthcare expenses.

In Dhaka, which houses over 20 million residents in a 306-square-kilometre area, the annual economic impact of air pollu-

tion is estimated at USD 192 million. The city consistently ranks among the world's least livable due to poor air quality, with an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 215 recorded in December 2019 and 187 in November 2025.

Health Consequences

Exposure to high PM_{2.5} levels significantly increases risks of respiratory diseases such as asthma, bronchitis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). It also contributes to cardiovascular diseases, stroke, lung cancer, and depression. Vulnerable populations include children under five, the elderly, and people with pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or heart disease.

A health impact assessment (HIA) shows that reducing PM_{2.5} exposure could prevent roughly 102,456 deaths annually. This includes fatalities from ischemic heart disease (29,920), stroke (23,075), COPD (20,976), lower respiratory infections (9,720), and lung cancer (3,063). Additionally, lead poisoning from air and household pollution contributes to irreversible brain damage in children, resulting in an estimated annual loss of nearly 20 million IQ points.

Major Sources of Pollution

Dhaka's hazardous air quality results from multiple urban and industrial sources:

- Vehicular emissions: Aging and poorly maintained vehicles release carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides.
- Brick kilns: Hundreds of kilns burn coal and wood, releasing dense smoke and fine particulate matter.
- Industrial discharge: Factories, particularly in the textile and cement sectors, often operate without adequate pollution controls.
- Construction activities: Dust and debris from unregulated sites add to particulate pollution.
- Household emissions: Burning solid fuels contributes 28% of total pollution, disproportionately affecting rural women.
- Other sources: Power plants (24%), open municipal waste burning (11%), road dust (8%), and transport emissions (4%).

Seasonal factors, such as dry winters with low wind and rainfall, exacerbate the problem. Two-thirds of pollutants are generated locally, while one-third originates from cross-border sources.

Policy and Governance Challenges

Despite clear evidence, policy response remains inadequate. Brick kilns continue to operate with minimal oversight, vehicle emissions rise unchecked, and industrial discharges remain poorly regulated. En-

forcement of air quality standards is inconsistent, and environmental institutions often lack the resources or authority to address these challenges. Transboundary pollution further complicates efforts, while regional cooperation remains limited.

A Window of Hope

Experts emphasize that air pollution is not an inevitable byproduct of development but a result of policy choices. Meeting WHO air quality standards could add nearly one billion life-years to the population collectively. The government, with World Bank support, plans to launch the five-year "Bangladesh Clean Air Project" in July 2026, aiming to reduce annual PM_{2.5} levels by 15 mcg/m nationwide and 30 mcg/m in Dhaka. The initiative will focus on improving air quality governance, reducing emissions, and raising public awareness.

Protecting Yourself from Poor Air Quality

Experts advise citizens to adopt precautionary measures, particularly during high-pollution periods:

- Exercise indoors: Avoid outdoor workouts when the AQI is high.
- Keep indoor air clean: Close windows, use air purifiers, or maintain air-purifying plants.
- Monitor AQI: Stay informed through newspapers, apps, and media updates.
- Wear a mask: Face masks can reduce exposure to larger airborne

particles.

- Boost immunity: A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, and healthy fats supports lung function and overall immunity. Drinks such as green tea and turmeric milk may also help.

The Human Toll

Bangladesh, one of the fastest-growing economies, has seen improvements in human development indicators. However, these gains are threatened by the surging air pollution crisis. In 2023, the annual average PM_{2.5} concentration reached 79.9 g/m, more than double the national standard and 15 times the WHO guideline. Air pollution now ranks as the leading environmental risk, contributing to over 200,000 deaths annually and reducing life expectancy by nearly five years.

Experts warn that without urgent reforms and enforcement of clean air policies, the country will remain trapped in a cycle where economic growth comes at the expense of public health. International examples from China and the United States demonstrate that robust policies and strong enforcement can significantly improve air quality and save lives.

Air pollution is a public health emergency that demands immediate attention. While solutions exist, success will require coordinated policy action, effective governance, and public participation to protect citizens and safeguard the nation's economic and social development.



Air quality in Dhaka was worst in the world on Friday 23 May 2025



Merger of 5 banks to create Islami mega bank: Expert Bankers

The condition of the five banks had deteriorated to such an extent that their combined provision shortfall reached an estimated Tk135,000 crore by August 2025. Each bank carried enormous financial weaknesses, from inflated loan books to staggering volumes of unclassified loans, ultimately leaving millions of depositors vulnerable

Rafiqul Islam Azad

Despite the anxiety expressed about the merger of five Islamic banks by some of their sponsors and the academia, senior bankers including Mohammad Abdul Mannan consider it a good move to establish a big bank combining the once-flourishing Banks that were looted and made sick during the rule of the immediate past government.

Five sick and struggling Islamic banks in Bangladesh – First Security Islami Bank, Union Bank, Global Islami Bank, Social Islami Bank, and EXIM Bank – were merging into a single, state-backed entity tentatively named "United Islami Bank".

The merger, orchestrated by the Bangladesh Bank, aims to stabilise the financial sector, restore public confidence, and improve governance after the banks faced significant financial distress. The govern-

ment will inject billions of Taka to recapitalize the new bank, which will become the largest in the country.

According to senior officials at the Bangladesh Bank, the condition of the five banks had deteriorated to such an extent that their combined provision shortfall reached an estimated Tk135,000 crore by August 2025. Each bank carried enormous financial weaknesses, from inflated loan books to staggering volumes of unclassified loans, ultimately leaving millions of depositors vulnerable. First Security Islami Bank had the highest shortfall at Tk53,890 crore, followed by Social Islami Bank with Tk24,845 crore. Union Bank, EXIM Bank, and Global Islami Bank also carried huge deficits, indicating a systemic collapse rather than isolated failures. Regulators concluded that without immediate intervention, these institutions risked a domino effect that could destabilise the

entire banking sector.

In such a context, the merger was seen as the only viable alternative to outright liquidation. Mohammad Abdul Mannan, Chairman of First Security Islami Bank PLC, described the move as both pragmatic and essential. Speaking to this correspondent, he explained that Bangladesh Bank had taken the decision after long consultations with the bank managements and conducting a detailed forensic audit. According to him, liquidation would have wreaked havoc on depositors and the broader financial system.

“The government has taken a good move by deciding to merge the five Islamic banks into a united bank instead of closing them and following a liquidation process. It will create a strong bank capable of fair competition with Islami Bank Bangladesh as well as the proposed state-run Islamic bank,” he said.

Mannan, a former Managing Director of Islami Bank Bangladesh PLC, acknowledged the complexity of the process, calling it one of the nation’s largest banking restructurings. He believes the new bank has the potential to regain public confidence if its management is handled professionally and transparently.

“This is a major case of merger. Naturally, many issues will emerge and come to the frontline. But I believe that if the process is carried out properly, the bank will turn around. The government has already assured investors, and I have witnessed Bangladesh Bank’s seriousness in ensuring the transformation of the five Islamic banks into a united one,” he said.

He also emphasised the need for balanced lending, noting that Islamic banks often concentrate deposit investments predominantly in urban regions, leaving rural areas underserved. Mannan urged the new institution to adopt a more inclusive lending policy. When asked about the fate of the shareholders who suffered losses due to years of mismanagement and alleged looting under the previous government, he said the government must make a policy decision to address their grievances.

Former Managing Director of Global Islami Bank PLC, Syed Habib Hasnat, echoed Mannan’s support for the merger. He described it as a prudent step to prevent a deeper financial crisis. “The government has taken responsibility for the weak banks. People should not panic. They should continue normal transactions,” he said.

Hasnat believes the new bank is capable of recovering, provided there is strong cooperation between regulators, management teams, and clients. However, he cautioned that the merger process may take up to two years to complete, given its unprecedented scale. With nearly one crore clients spread across the five banks, panic-driven withdrawals would be dangerous, he warned.

The merger has effectively brought an end to the independent existence of the five banks. Their histories reveal years of underlying weaknesses—irregularities, inefficient management, political interference, and lack of oversight. Social Islami Bank, which began in 1995, had non-performing loans equal to 38 percent of its

The government has taken a good move by deciding to merge the five Islamic banks into a united bank instead of closing them and following a liquidation process. It will create a strong bank capable of fair competition with Islami Bank Bangladesh as well as the proposed state-run Islamic bank

total loan portfolio by March 2025. First Security Islami Bank, established in 1999, had a similar burden, with default loans reaching 37 percent. EXIM Bank, once considered one of the better-performing Shariah-compliant banks, only fell into trouble after uncertainty arose following the merger announcement. Union Bank, perhaps the worst case among the five, saw an unimaginable 90 percent of its loans turn non-performing by March 2025. Global Islami Bank, earlier known as NRB Global Bank, also suffered severe deterioration, with its default loan ratio climbing to 60 percent.

The crisis extended beyond banking halls to the share market. Over the past year, the stock prices of the five banks plunged dramatically, wiping out around

Tk926 crore in market value within just three months after the political changeover and rising uncertainty about their future. On 30 September 2025, share prices fell to record lows—First Security Islami Bank at Tk2.6, Global Islami Bank at Tk1.8, Union Bank at Tk1.9, Social Islami Bank at Tk4.4, and EXIM Bank at Tk4.0. This collapse has left ordinary shareholders anxious about their financial fate, since the central bank and the government have guaranteed depositor protection but have not issued similar assurances for equity investors.

As the crisis intensified, the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission suspended trading of the five banks’ shares. The Bangladesh Bank then moved decisively, declaring all five institutions “non-functional”, dissolving their boards, and appointing administrators to take charge. These administrators, supported by dedicated teams, were instructed to ensure uninterrupted banking activities, stabilise remittance and LC settlements, restructure staffing, and begin the integration of IT infrastructure.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Ahsan H. Mansur explained that the goal was to revive the banks through a disciplined and centralised approach. He emphasised that the new bank, once formed, would have a paid-up capital of Tk35,000 crore—the largest in the country’s banking history—and would be run professionally despite being state-owned initially.

The governor urged depositors not to withdraw funds unnecessarily, assuring them that their money was secure and that the merger would ultimately strengthen the stability of the Islamic banking sector. The new bank, he said, would protect more than 7.5 million depositors, making it one of the most significant financial restructurings ever undertaken in Bangladesh.

The creation of United Islami Bank marks a turning point for the country’s Islamic banking industry. While the challenges ahead—cleaning up toxic assets, restoring governance, and regaining public trust—remain daunting, bankers and regulators believe that the merger provides the only viable path towards long-term sustainability. For the new bank to succeed, transparency, strong oversight, and a commitment to ethical and professional management will be essential. Only then will the newly formed institution be able to rise from the failures of the past and function as a strong, stable, and trustworthy financial pillar for the country’s economy.

Bangladesh labour migration slows as markets shift



Imtiaz Ahmed

Bangladesh's overseas labour migration, one of the major pillars of its economy and a key source of foreign exchange, has experienced a slowdown in the past two months. While temporary fluctuations in labour markets are not unusual, the current downtrend has raised renewed discussions about the need to diversify job destinations, enhance worker skills, and better protect labour rights abroad.

According to data from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), the number of Bangladeshi workers who migrated overseas in October stood at 78,027, marking a decline of about 20 percent from 95,694 in September. This drop follows an even larger peak earlier in the year, when overseas employment in August reached an unprecedented 142,665 workers, the highest in a single month in Bangladesh's labour migration history.

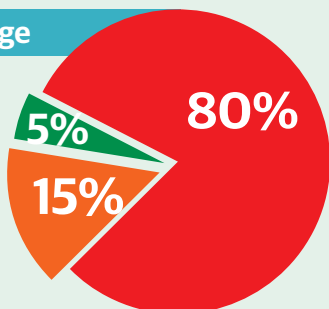
Several factors have contributed to the recent decline. One major reason is the closure of manpower recruitment to Malaysia, a significant destination for Bangladeshi workers in previous years. Additionally, labour deployments to some Gulf states and Middle Eastern countries have slowed due to regulatory changes, labour market adjustments, and new skill requirements. Stakeholders also point to ongoing challenges in ensuring contract transparency, wage guarantees, and legal residency documentation for migrant workers.

Despite the slowdown, the distribution of workers among receiving countries reflects both long-standing migration trends and emerging shifts. In October, the largest share of workers—40,612 individuals—migrated to Saudi Arabia, followed by 11,408 to Qatar, 6,263 to Singapore, 5,041 to the Maldives, 3,353

WORKER CATEGORY

The skill gap challenge

- Low-skilled: 80%
- Semi-skilled: 15%
- Skilled: 5%



to Cambodia, and 2,122 to Kuwait. Smaller numbers travelled to Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Italy, Portugal, and other countries.

These figures reaffirm Saudi Arabia's role as the largest single market for Bangladeshi labour migration. Over the past five years, the Kingdom absorbed nearly 57 percent of the approximately 4.5 million Bangladeshi workers who went abroad. However, most of these workers belong to the low-skilled category. Around 80 percent are employed in construction, cleaning, caregiving, and other manual labour sectors—occupations that often offer low wages and limited job security.

A number of migrant workers have reported issues such as irregular salary payments, poor living conditions, and complications related to residency permits (Iqama). Many arrive abroad after paying high recruitment fees, only to find that their job roles or wages do not match what they were promised.

Despite such challenges, recent diplomatic developments may help reshape the labour environment. For the first time since diplomatic ties between the two nations began, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia have signed a formal recruitment agreement for general workers. Although Bangladeshi workers have been migrating to the Kingdom since 1976, migration largely took place without a binding framework protecting labour rights. Earlier agreements in 2015 and 2022 focused only on domestic workers and skills verification, respectively.

Stakeholders view the new agreement as a milestone that could open the door for greater numbers of skilled workers to enter the Saudi labour market. Skilled migration not only promises higher salaries but also better working and living conditions, contributing to increased remittance earnings and improved worker welfare.

However, policy adjustments in host countries can create new challenges. Saudi Arabia recently introduced a mandatory skilled verification certification (SVP) for workers in certain categories. Although the requirement has been temporarily relaxed for some sectors at Bangladesh's request, it signals a broader shift toward skill-based recruitment. This means that future migration will depend heavily on whether Bangladesh can expand effective technical and vocational training for prospective migrant workers.

Meanwhile, the halt in manpower recruitment to Malaysia—previously a sig-

nificant destination for both skilled and low-skilled workers—has added pressure to the labour outflow. The suspension is linked to allegations of irregularities in the recruitment process, labour exploitation risks, and a need for regulatory review in both countries. Recruitment to Dubai has also remained limited, while worker deployments to Qatar, Kuwait, and even Saudi Arabia have slowed in recent weeks.

However, not all developments are negative. Bangladesh is exploring new labour markets and strengthening cooperation with countries that are seeking semi-skilled and skilled manpower. One notable example is Uzbekistan, with whom Bangladesh has recently reached an understanding to expand labour cooperation. In a bilateral meeting held on the sidelines of the 80th UN General Assembly, the two countries discussed opportunities not only for manpower recruitment but also for collaboration in education, investment, and trade.

An agreement on visa exemption for diplomatic passport holders was signed during the meeting, signalling stronger diplomatic relations. Officials noted that Uzbekistan's growing economy may benefit from Bangladeshi labour in construction, hospitality, manufacturing, and service sectors. Discussions also explored pathways for Bangladeshi students to pursue higher education in Uzbek universities, opening the door for academic exchange and mobility.

Experts and industry representatives believe that the current dip in labour migration is temporary and not a sign of long-term decline. According to recruiting sector representatives, Bangladesh sent around one million workers abroad annually in recent years, and nearly 900,000 workers have already migrated this year. This suggests that the total figure for the year may

still approach the previous average.

Shamim Ahmed Chowdhury Noman, a former leader in the recruiting sector, said that the labour market is inherently dynamic and often influenced by shifting economic and political conditions. He stressed that the focus should now be on upskilling workers and expanding market access.

"We continue to rely heavily on a few destinations and send mainly low-skilled workers," he said. "If we can train and send more skilled workers—especially to Europe, Japan, and newly developing markets—the benefits will be greater for both workers and the national economy. Skilled workers earn more, face fewer risks, and contribute higher remittance inflows."

He further noted that negotiations have been ongoing to increase the minimum wage range for Bangladeshi workers in the Gulf region. Currently, many workers earn between 600 to 800 Saudi Riyals per month. If wages can be increased to 1,000 Riyals or more, migration would become more financially viable and secure for workers and their families.

As the global labour landscape continues to evolve, Bangladesh faces a critical moment. The country must strengthen technical education, language training, and certification systems to prepare workers for skilled positions. At the same time, diplomatic engagement remains essential to secure migration opportunities and protect labour rights.

While the short-term slowdown has sparked concern, experts emphasise that it should also be viewed as an opportunity—an opportunity to transition from low-wage, low-skilled labour migration towards a model that values skills, dignity, and long-term welfare for Bangladeshi workers abroad.





People redefine leisure

Sadia Islam Raka

As Bangladesh's economy continues to expand and people's purchasing power rises, a subtle yet visible transformation is unfolding in how the country's well-off and upper-middle-class citizens spend their free time. The once modest culture of family picnics, quiet evenings at home, or occasional visits to relatives is being replaced by a more dynamic lifestyle – one that celebrates travel, exploration, and indulgence.

From the golden sands of Cox's Bazar to the misty hills of Sajek and the emerald valleys of Jaflong, Bangladesh's leisure map has never looked more vibrant. Weekend getaways, short domestic flights, and even spontaneous foreign trips have become common among those who can now afford to escape the rush of city life.

The Rise of a New Leisure Culture

Just a generation ago, the concept of “vacationing” was limited to a privileged few.

Today, it's part of a growing cultural shift. With better jobs, global exposure, and an expanding economy, Bangladesh's affluent classes are not only earning more – they're learning to enjoy it.

“People now see relaxation as a necessity, not a luxury,” said Dr. Farid Hossain, a sociologist and lifestyle researcher. “Leisure travel reflects a changing mindset – one that values experiences and well-being alongside work and ambition.”

The transformation is visible in every sphere. Luxury hotels, boutique resorts, and eco-lodges are mushrooming across popular destinations. Tour operators now offer tailored vacation packages, from two-day coastal retreats to week-long family adventures. The once daunting journey to Sajek or Bandarban has become a comfortable road trip in air-conditioned micro-buses or SUVs.

Rediscovering the Beauty of Bangladesh

Domestic tourism has flourished over the

past decade as more Bangladeshis choose to explore their own country. The appeal lies not only in affordability but also in rediscovering local beauty with upgraded comfort.

Cox's Bazar, the world's longest natural sea beach, remains the prime magnet for domestic travellers. Luxury hotels and rooftop restaurants now line the coast, offering panoramic views, infinity pools, and seafood buffets that rival international standards. Families stroll along the beach at sunset, while young people flock to nearby spots like Himchhari and Inani for photo sessions and beach drives.

Kuakata, known as the "Daughter of the Sea," offers a quieter seaside escape. The rare spectacle of both sunrise and sunset over the sea draws tourists who seek peace over parties. Meanwhile, Jaflong and Sylhet attract those enchanted by rivers, tea gardens, and the rolling green hills of the northeast.

In contrast, Sajek Valley in the Chitragong Hill Tracts has become a symbol of modern adventure tourism. Once remote and rugged, the valley is now a hilltop haven for travellers seeking fresh mountain air, breathtaking views, and social-media-worthy moments.

The Social Media Effect

One of the strongest forces behind this new travel culture is social media. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have turned travel into a visual lifestyle statement.

"Every trip is now part of your identity," said Arefin Hasan, a 28-year-old entrepreneur from Dhaka. "You don't just go to Sajek; you show people you've been there."

Hotels and tour companies have adapted quickly, designing "Instagrammable" spaces – flower walls, glass balconies, and scenic breakfast spots – to attract a generation that loves to share experiences online.

Social media has also made travel more aspirational. Seeing friends post photos from Bali or Dubai has inspired many to plan their own trips abroad, often marking milestones such as anniversaries, Eid holidays, or birthdays.

Luxury and Comfort on Demand

The modern leisure seeker values both comfort and exclusivity. Five-star hotels like the Radisson Blu, Royal Tulip, and Marriott have redefined hospitality standards within Bangladesh, offering spa treatments, rooftop lounges, and fine dining.

Boutique resorts in Sylhet, Bandarban, and Gazipur cater to families who prefer short escapes from the urban grind.

Private tour operators now arrange everything – from transport and meals to photography and guided tours – allowing travellers to relax without logistical worries. Some even offer helicopter rides over Cox's Bazar or Saint Martin's Island for those seeking a one-of-a-kind experience.

"The demand for premium services has doubled in the last five years," noted Mohammad Imran, a Dhaka-based tour operator. "People are willing to pay more for comfort and convenience. For many, it's not just a trip – it's a lifestyle statement."

Going Global: Leisure Beyond Borders

Alongside domestic tourism, international leisure travel has become increasingly common among Bangladesh's wealthy and upper-middle-class families.

The annual Eid holidays and winter vacations see airports filled with travellers heading for beaches in Bali or safaris in Kenya.

Destinations like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Maldives remain top picks for short holidays, while Europe, Turkey, and Dubai attract those looking for longer, more luxurious vacations. Travel agencies have responded with flexible packages covering flights, accommodation, and sightseeing.

"Earlier, travelling abroad was a dream. Now it's almost routine," said Rezaul Karim, a garments exporter who travels overseas twice a year. "Families want to shop, dine, and experience cultures they see on TV or online."

The annual Eid holidays and winter vacations see airports filled with travellers heading for beaches in Bali or safaris in Kenya. For students and young professionals, travel is no longer just recreation – it's an opportunity for global exposure and cultural learning.

The Economic Ripple

Behind the growing travel culture lies a

strong economic pulse. Bangladesh's GDP growth, expanding urbanisation, and a rising middle class have all contributed to increased disposable income.

According to industry estimates, the domestic tourism sector contributes billions to the national economy, generating jobs in hospitality, transport, and food services. Small businesses in tourist areas – from local guides to handicraft sellers – benefit directly from this influx.

"The leisure economy is one of Bangladesh's untapped success stories," said Tourism Board official Rahat Chowdhury. "Every vacationer creates a chain of local employment, from drivers to chefs to boatmen."

From Possession to Experience

The shift in leisure habits also reflects a global trend – valuing experiences over possessions. Younger Bangladeshis, in particular, are spending more on travel than on jewellery or furniture.

"Earlier, people showed success by buying cars or gold," explained Dr. Hossain. "Now, it's about the experiences they collect – where they've been, what they've seen, who they've met."

This experiential mindset is fostering a culture of exploration. Couples are hiking in Bandarban, families are trying river cruises in Barishal, and friend groups are camping in hills – activities once unheard of among urban Bangladeshis.

The Road Ahead

As Bangladesh invests in new infrastructure – expressways, upgraded airports, and modern rail lines – leisure travel is expected to expand even further. Upcoming mega projects like the Padma Bridge have already boosted tourism in the country's southern regions, making places like Kuakata and Barishal easier to reach.

At the same time, the rise of eco-tourism and sustainable travel signals a more responsible future. Environment-conscious travellers are increasingly seeking destinations that preserve nature and support local communities.

For many, leisure is no longer just a weekend plan – it's a lifestyle priority. Whether it's watching the sun dip into the Bay of Bengal, sipping tea in the hills of Sylhet, or shopping in Kuala Lumpur, affluent Bangladeshis are embracing the art of living well.

Their journeys tell a larger story: of a nation growing not just in wealth, but in its ability to enjoy life.

Can Saint Martin's ecosystem be saved by allowing restricted tourism?

GreenWatch News Desk

With the reopening of the Saint Martin's Island to tourists on November 1 last, a fresh enthusiasm is being noticed among domestic tourists who were awaiting the opportunity. Although ship operators are not happy that overnight stay in the island has not been allowed for the whole month of November, this facility will be available in the following two months. Ships ferry tourists between Cox's Bazar and the Saint Martin's Island, locally known as Jinjira Dwip.

Visit to the island was unrestricted before. In view of damages that are caused to the coral reefs by plastics and other wastes thrown by tourists, and their unguided movement in the tiny island the department and the ministry of environment and forests have set some conditions which

should be observed to protect the land's flora and fauna.

Saint Martin's Island is a marvellous blessing of nature on the Bay of Bengal. This heavenly island bestows a cherished retreat for both domestic and foreign visitors drawn to its calm, coral-fringed shores.

Despite recent travel restrictions and environmental limitations, tourists still find their way to the country's only coral island. The transport system, however, remains limited; only a few authorised ships operate on fixed schedules. Ticketing and travel pass regulations are now more stringent, with tied permits for visits and overnight stays.

Let's unravel all the necessary details of how tourists can visit Saint Martin in the tourist season (2025-26).

Saint Martin Visiting Time This Winter

Considering the weather conditions and safety protocols, passenger ships to Saint Martin's Island are permitted to operate only upon approval from the concerned administration. For the ongoing open season, travel is allowed from November 1, 2025, to January 2026.

During November, visitors must complete their trips within the same day, as overnight stays are restricted. However, from December through January, night halts are authorised, enabling short-term accommodation under regulated supervision.

For security and administrative reasons, all authorised tourist vessels to the coral island will operate solely from Cox's Bazar. The Teknaf and Ukhia Inani routes

remain legally prohibited.

Only authorised passenger ships are allowed to operate; small boats, trawlers, and speedboats remain strictly prohibited under current regulations. Ships will depart from the Nuniya Chhara BIWTA Ghat between 7:00 and 10:00 am, their schedules aligned with the low tide. Return trips from the island are set between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m., also based on tidal conditions. Depending on weather and sea currents, the voyage typically takes five to five and a half hours each way.

Visitors may remain on the island without a fixed time limit during December and January, when night stays are allowed.

Ship Ticket and Travel Pass for Saint Martin

Like in the previous year, a travel clearance remains a mandatory requirement for entry to the marine haven. The pass is automatically issued after the purchase of an official ship ticket, ensuring that only verified travellers are permitted to board. All tickets must be obtained exclusively through the Bangladesh Tourism Board's authorised online portal. Once a ticket is confirmed, the respective ship authority completes all formalities related to the travel token, linking it directly to the passenger's booking information.

Alternatively, travellers may access the official travelpass.gov.bd platform. The required documents, primarily a national identity card and basic travel details, must be submitted to generate the pass.

Each valid ticket is embedded with a unique QR code, serving as proof of authentication. The QR code will be digitally

verified during boarding, and tickets lacking such authentication will be treated as invalid. Passengers are instructed to carry a printed copy of the ticket throughout the journey for verification purposes.

Children aged five years and under are exempt from ticket requirements, whereas anyone above that age must hold an individual ticket. Depending on seating arrangements, ranging from deck and lounge spaces to private cabins, the round-trip fare varies between BDT 3,500 and BDT 20,000.

Final Words

Understanding the new rules and regulations for visiting Saint Martin's Island in the current tourist season requires careful planning under renewed regulations. The island remains open from November to January. Though travellers are not permitted to stay on the island during night hours in November, they may stay overnight from December to January. All passenger ships will depart exclusively from the Nuniya Chhara BIWTA Jetty in Cox's Bazar, which is currently the only authorised route. The mandatory travel pass, issued with each ship ticket, continues as part of the official process. Despite these strict measures, the coral island's allure endures, reflecting its timeless appeal among travellers.

The Department of Environment and the Tourism Board should monitor the implementation of the tourism restrictions and whether they yield the desired impacts to protect the coral island from destruction. After all, loss of ecosystem will turn Saint Martin's a barren island which will no longer attract tourists. - With inputs from United News of Bangladesh



Lung cancer: Awareness is the first step in prevention



Dr. Md. Dayem Uddin
FCPS, FRCP, PhD

About 19 million people worldwide are diagnosed with cancer every year and about 10 million people die from this disease. Lung cancer is at the top of the death statistics.

Lung cancer is a life-threatening disease caused by the abnormal growth and uncontrolled division of lung cells. It usually begins in the lung tissue and can spread to other parts of the body over time, which is called metastasis. Cancer that originates from lung cells is called lung cancer. When cancer spreads to the lungs from another organ, it is not called lung cancer but 'secondary cancer'.

Currently, about 19 million people worldwide are diagnosed with cancer every year and about 10 million people die from this disease. Lung cancer is at the top of the death statistics. In the United States alone, about 230,000 people are diagnosed with this cancer every year and about 150,000 people die. In Bangladesh, an average of 156,000 people is newly diagnosed with cancer every year, of which about 15,000 are diagnosed with lung cancer. Unfortunately, about half of them die.

Lung cancer is the most common cancer

in men. According to statistics, lung cancer accounts for more than 20 percent of all cancers. Currently, the rate of this disease is increasing alarmingly among women. One of the reasons for this is the increase in smoking among women. Lung cancer is currently in fifth place among women, accounting for 6.6 percent of all cancers.

Lung cancer is mainly of two types - small cell lung cancer and non-small cell lung cancer. Smoking is the first and foremost among the main causes of this disease. More than 60 harmful chemical components in cigarettes, bidis or tobacco products can cause cancer. Smoking for a long time damages the DNA of lung cells, thereby increasing the risk of cancer many times over. Even those who do not smoke but regularly live around smokers are also at risk through secondhand smoke.

In addition, air pollution, especially toxic gases and dust particles, causes long-term damage to the lungs, which increases the risk of cancer. Exposure to chemicals



amination are important. Then, the presence of cancer in the lungs and other parts of the body is checked through X-rays, CT scans, PET scans, and MRIs. In addition, the presence of cancer cells is confirmed through sputum tests, biopsies, and blood tests. Sometimes, genetic tests are performed to identify EGFR, ALK, KRAS proteins or gene mutations, which are helpful in planning treatment.

Treatment depends on the type of cancer, its location, and the patient's physical ability. If cancer is detected in the early stages, it is removed through surgery. In advanced stages, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy are used. Palliative care or comfort treatment helps improve the quality of life of advanced stage patients.

The most effective way to prevent lung cancer is to avoid smoking. Smokers should gradually quit the habit and it is also important to protect themselves from secondhand smoke. It is also very important to stay away from polluted areas, avoid occupational hazards and take protective measures. A healthy diet, regular

exercise, drinking enough water and reducing stress are also helpful in preventing the disease.

As part of preventive activities, it is necessary to strengthen information dissemination and education activities to increase awareness in the society. Health seminars, distribution of posters-leaflets, promotion through social media, and participation of local leadership including schools and colleges can play a very effective role in increasing health awareness. Sharing the experiences of those who have recovered from cancer can also inspire others. In addition, getting vaccines and vaccinations, such as flu and pneumonia vaccines, can also be helpful.

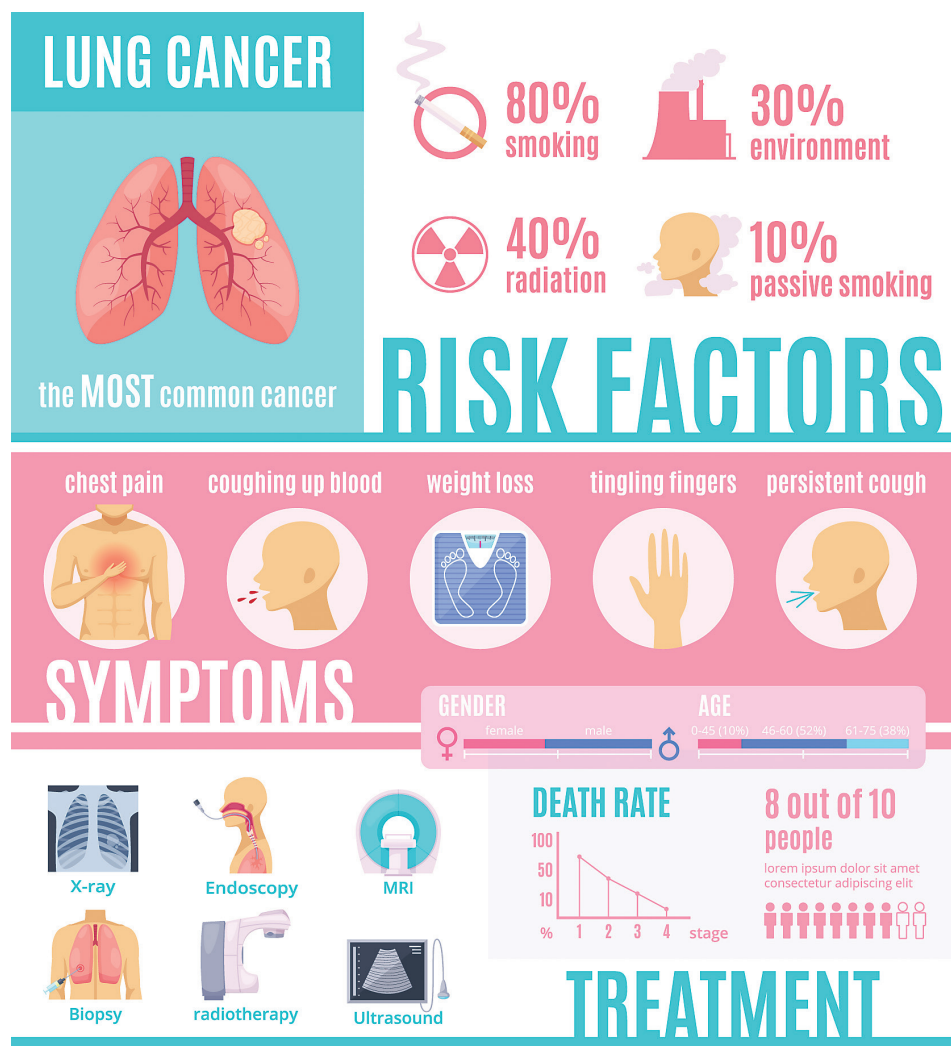
The first step in the fight against lung cancer is awareness. Make yourself aware, make your family members and society aware. Because an informed decision may give you or your loved one a long and healthy life.

(Professor Dr. Md. Dayem Uddin, FCPS, FRCP, PhD is a Senior Consultant, Department of Clinical Oncology, Delta Hospital Limited, Mirpur, Dhaka.)

such as radon gas, asbestos, arsenic, nickel and chromium also increases the risk of this disease. Family history, chronic lung diseases (such as COPD or bronchitis) and an uncontrolled lifestyle are also among the sources of risk. Unhealthy eating habits, lack of exercise and living in a polluted environment for a long-time act as catalysts for this disease.

The initial symptoms of this disease are often not clearly understood. However, over time, some symptoms begin to appear, such as: chronic cough, coughing up blood or blood-mixed phlegm, shortness of breath, pain in the middle or side of the chest. In the later stages of the disease, weight loss, weakness, wheezing, back or bone pain, voice changes, and loss of appetite may occur. Sometimes, swelling of the throat or face or frequent lung infections also occur.

There are several steps to follow to properly diagnose lung cancer. First, the patient's medical history and physical ex-





Leave no one behind voice, Abdus Sattar Dulal, gets global

Under his leadership hundreds of national and international events have been organised including the DPI 11th Regional Leadership Training in Bangladesh in 1993.

Executive Director of Bangladesh Protibandhi Kallyan Somity (BPKS), Abdus Sattar Dulal is now the elected President of Disabled Peoples International (DPI), the largest international organization of disabled people with more than 140 member countries in the world, and recognized with consultative status with the United Nations. He has earned honour for Bangladesh by his successful contest for the post of President of DPI. The world leader of disabled persons was accorded a reception in Dhaka on November 3 by leaders of disabled peoples' organisations from across Bangladesh and the society.

A Disability Rights Champion of UNESCO for many years, Abdus Sattar Dulal, a well-known and beloved figure of disabled people in Bangladesh, gained equal recognition and respect beyond the borders of Bangladesh and the outside world. He was elected the Global Secretary of Disabled People's International (DPI), from 2008 to 2011. Earlier, he served as the Vice Chairman, later as Secretary and President of the DPI Asia and Pacific Regional Council

and SAARC Region.

Dulal was born in a respectable family in Noakhali in 1960. He was fortunate enough that the grace of Allah saved him from fatal consequences when he fell from a tree at 15 years of age. He experienced a prolonged period of convalescence, including a coma lasting 42 days and a seven-year recovery process. He lives now with a physical disability, using a wheelchair. He has married a woman with severe disability and the couple has sons.

While Dulal was undergoing treatment, he started volunteering activities in 1978 with his disability in the implementation of the programs such as non-formal education for the illiterate elderly in his village, planting trees, digging canals and raising awareness for dowry-free marriage of poor girls. Dulal then started a job with the Social Welfare Department of the government in 1983, a program which was funded by the Swedish Government. Dulal founded the Bangladesh Protibandhi Kallyan Somity (BPKS) in 1985 and performed the role as its Secretary General. Later, he re-

signed from his government job in 1994 and joined BPKS as its Executive Director (CEO) full-time with a volunteer commitment and donated the provident fund he received to BPKS. At that time, BPKS was a new type of not-for-profit Organization of Persons with Disabilities (OPD) that he innovated.

Dulal has received several praises, honours, recognitions and awards, including 'Disability Rights Champion' by the UN, which he received at the High-Level Inter-governmental Meeting in Korea for his outstanding substantive expertise, experience and exceptional record of achievements. His engagement from 1992 continues with the United Nations (UN) as an Expert on Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). He is dedicating himself to different leadership positions.

Dulal is also a member of 7 other international organizations and an APCD Resource Person in Thailand. In Bangladesh, he is a founding initiator of 30 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and together he builds capacity of 200 OPDs in Bangladesh, mostly working to promote rights and development of PwDs. He is the founder President of the National Alliance of Disabled People's Organizations (NADPO) and Founder of BPKS, founding trustee of the Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID), founding treasurer of the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD), founding convening member of NFOWD and founding initiator of WDDF.

Dulal's initiatives have national and worldwide impacts that led to improving the rights and development of PwDs. He contributed to the development of many national and international documents on persons with disabilities such as UNESCAP's action plan, mandate, framework, and strategy for four consecutive decades from 1993-2032 for PwDs and UN-CRPD-2006, SDGs, the Poverty and Social Development Papers of Asian Development Bank, the World Report on Disability of WHO, the AusAid policy 'Development for All' and Handicapped International's long term plan and many others.

He has been instrumental to the formulation of national policies and programs such as the Bangladesh National Skills Development Policy 2011, the 1st disability-specific national policy of 1995, the 1996 Action Plan and several mainstreaming policies and plans covering the interests of PwDs. The government's agriculture, livestock and fisheries ministry decided in 2009 to ensure PwDs are included in their program. His con-

tributed to the establishment of The National Disabled Development Foundation (JPUF) run by the Bangladesh Government. He facilitated the formulation 10 years of strategic plan of 50 OPDs, including DPI, AP. In addition, under his leadership engagement (chair), many policies, technical documents, declarations, statements, recommendations were prepared for several governments, including in Bangladesh and organisations like the Asian Development Bank Manila, DPI, WHO, JPUF, APCD, NADPO and several others. His actions are not only included in many documents but also aired in news media, raising awareness, creating a huge impact on improving perceptions of global leaders, policymakers, and duty bearers and professionals for world's 1.3 billion PwDs. Dulal visited 71 countries in Asia & Pacific, Europe, North America and the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East to participate, facilitate and organize events such as workshops, seminars, meetings, consultations and advocacy. Dulal is a

Dulal is also a member of 7 other international organizations and an APCD Resource Person in Thailand

distinguished expert, activist, leader, mentor, movement promoter for the rights and sustainable development of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) worldwide. He is also the promoter of many people with disabilities as peacemakers in society, Organizations of PwDs (OPDs) worldwide, including Bangladesh since 1982. His own organisation BPKS, which is an OPD model is recognized by most of the relevant actors, including the UN and the US Department of State. From the 1990's most of the actors of the world, such as ICACBR-Canada, UN, WHO, ILO, Universities, CBM, World Bank, Diplomats, Asian Development Bank and Many others visited Dulal and his works to learn practically how he has been successful in the field and promotes the rights and development of PwDs.

Under his leadership hundreds of national and international events have been organised including the DPI 11th Regional Leadership Training in Bangladesh in 1993. Under his leadership two world's largest congregations disabled people were organised in Dhaka in 2006 and 2010 and more than 100,000 PwDs participated in each. Dulal works silently, he has 46 years of experience in safeguarding the rights

of PwDs, promoting PwDs as the centres of development and building the capacity of their OPDs and their representatives' effective participation. He was recognized with membership of about 50 government committees on different issues. He conducted more than 560 high-level advocacy meetings from 1986, covering all Presidents from 1988, all Prime Ministers, the First Lady, most of the Ministers, political parties, the Chief Justice, Chief Election Commissioner, the Human Rights Commission, the Law Commission, the Public Service Commission, Bangladesh Bank, and other key stakeholders in Bangladesh. As a result, in 1992, various policies and programs were initiated for PwDs.

Dulal also did advocacy worldwide, including with governments of Sri Lanka, France, Panama, Australia, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, the USA, the EU and many other countries, the UN and international bodies that instrumentally contributed to the promotion of non-discriminatory systems and policies in Bangladesh and worldwide. He innovates a PwDs-led human rights and holistic development approach - PSID (Persons with Disabilities Self-Initiative to Development) that most of the key actors in the world recognize.

Under his initiatives the Women with Disabilities (WwDs) organization and WwDs network and 23 district-level committees on Children with Disabilities' right to education and health have been set up. Dulal was interviewed by hundreds of print and electronic media in and outside of the country. Under his leadership, BPKS managed about 25 foreign-funded projects with support from the EU, UN, the government of Germany, Netherlands, Spain, Japan, United States, Australia and Canada and ACTability e.V of Europe, CordAid, Oxfam - together valued about 15 million USD. 12 highly skilled professionals from developed nations worked under him in BPKS and hundreds of professionals and university students gained knowledge on persons with disabilities from Dulal directly. His work changed millions of PwDs' lives and disability issues. PwDs and representatives of OPDs act as catalysts and their actions create the impact that increasingly leads to promoting human rights for all and making the development acceptable, enjoyable and sustainable for all.

Dulal's favourite game is chess. He came third in the International Chess Championship held in Perth, Australia in 1995. He came first in the wheelchair race at the Army Stadium in Dhaka in 1983.

Teesta rendered dry after 5 flood waves last wet season

The beginning of this decline to the construction of India's barrages at Gajoldoba near the Teesta's entry point and at Doani in Lalmonirhat, which disrupted the river's natural flow

GreenWatch News Desk

Once a mighty river that breathed life into northern Bangladesh, the Teesta now lies silent and broken, as its shimmering waters replaced by stretches of sand and its flow reduced to a faint memory for the millions who once depended on it.

The lifeline of two crore people lies gasping for breath as its waters vanishing, its banks eroding and its people left clinging to the memories of a river that once defined their existence.

Once a symbol of abundance, locals said, the Teesta today survives only in fragments, swelling briefly during monsoon, then receding into a barren desert of cracked sandbanks as winter approaches. The river's decline has plunged the lives of Teesta basin residents into uncertainty, threatening their farms, fisheries and future.

By late October, the mighty Teesta had already dried up, long before the arrival of the dry season.

According to the Water Development Board (WDB), water flow at the Teesta Barrage point over the past 10 days averaged only 17,000 cusecs and continues to drop daily.

As the water disappears, so too does the livelihood of thousands. Farmers and fishermen along the Teesta's banks say they

are 'dying along with the river', WDB officials said.

Experts trace the beginning of this decline to the construction of India's barrages at Gajoldoba near the Teesta's entry point and at Doani in Lalmonirhat, which disrupted the river's natural flow. Over time, its life-giving waters have been diverted through canals, leaving vast stretches of the riverbed dry.

Standing along the Teesta today, one can almost hear what locals describe as the 'sigh of a dying river', echoing across endless sand where strong currents once flowed.

The river's navigability has dropped so drastically that irrigation under the Teesta Barrage – the country's largest irrigation project – may face severe challenges in the coming dry season. Large parts of the riverbed now lie exposed, marked only by shallow pools and scattered dunes, according to the officials.

Originating from Himalayan glaciers, the Teesta flows through India's Sikkim, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri before entering Bangladesh through Dahagram in Lalmonirhat. From there, it meanders through Nilphamari, Rangpur and Gaibandha before merging with the Brahmaputra. Once, its fertile chars produced rice, jute, maize, sesame and vegetables in abundance,

shaping the region's agriculture, culture and livelihoods.

However, the construction of the Gajoldoba Barrage in 1983 disrupted Teesta's natural course – triggering water shortages in dry months and devastating floods in monsoon.

According to WDB data, more than 20,000 families have been displaced by river erosion in the past decade, with nearly 35 kilometres of riverbank severely eroded. Recently, a 350-metre stretch of the Teesta bridge protection embankment at Mahipur in Lalmonirhat caved into the river.

In Kurigram's Ulipur upazila, over 100 homes have been lost to erosion, while in Gangachara more than 50 families have been displaced. Hundreds more remain marooned in four villages of Rajarhat upazila.

For years, residents of northern Bangladesh have taken to the streets under the slogan 'Save Teesta, Save North Bengal'.

Environmental activists and locals have recently organised human chains, sit-ins and torch processions across Rangpur division, demanding immediate action.

During a recent 48-hour campaign along the 115-kilometre river stretch, thousands from Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Nilphamari, Rangpur and Gaibandha joined to demand

the long-delayed Bangladesh-India Teesta water-sharing agreement and implementation of the Teesta Master Plan.

The proposed master plan includes river dredging, rehabilitation of char dwellers and repair of embankments, with an estimated cost of Tk 8,000 crore.

Water flow at the Teesta Barrage point over the past 10 days averaged only 17,000 cusecs and continues to drop daily

According to sources in the Teesta River Protection Movement, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, advisor to the Ministry of Water Resources, confirmed that work on the Teesta Master Plan will begin in January 2026. The 10-year project will be implemented in two phases at a total cost of Tk 12,000 crore – with Tk 6,700 crore financed through Chinese loans and Tk 2,450 crore from government funds in the first phase.

Teesta River Protection Movement coordinator and BNP central organising secre-

tary Asadul Habib Dulu warned that if the government fails to start the project with its own funds before the election schedule is announced, a larger movement will be launched with Teesta basin residents.

"The government has already allocated Tk 2,450 crore for the first phase. It's time for action, not promises," he said.

Ahsan Habib, superintending engineer of the WDB's Rangpur region, said the Teesta's water level has been falling since mid-October due to sedimentation.

He, however, assured that the barrage still holds sufficient water for the upcoming irrigation season, while stressing the urgent need for large-scale dredging.

River expert Dr Tuhin Wadud warned that unless the Teesta is scientifically dredged, the entire northern region could eventually turn into a desert, reports UNB.

"The Teesta's decline has already disrupted the natural rhythm of the region's seasons. India's unilateral withdrawal of water has killed the river and now it is the government's responsibility to save it," he said.

As the Teesta continues to shrink, its once vibrant rhythm is being replaced by silence – and with it, the fate of millions who depend on its flow hangs in the balance, Wadud added.

Teesta activists recently organised huge torch processions in 5 districts of the region demanding resolution of recurrent flood and drought problem.



Don't subsidise deadly heat: Save life, save Planet

One dies every minute from extreme heat

Rising global heat is now killing one person a minute around the world, a major report on the health impact of the climate crisis has revealed.

It says the world's addiction to fossil fuels also causes toxic air pollution, wildfires and the spread of diseases such as dengue fever, and millions each year are dying owing to the failure to tackle global heating.

The report, the most comprehensive to date, says the damage to health will get worse with leaders such as Donald Trump ripping up climate policies and oil companies continuing to exploit new reserves.

Governments gave out \$2.5bn a day in direct subsidies to fossil fuel users and producers in 2023, the researchers found, while people lost about the same amount because of high temperatures preventing them from working on farms and building sites.

Reduced coal burning has saved about 400 lives a day in the last decade, the report says, and renewable energy production is rising fast. But the experts say a healthy future is impossible if fossil fuels continue to be financed at current rates.

Dr Marina Romanello, of University College London (UCL), who led the analysis, said: "This [report] paints a bleak and undeniable picture of the devastating health harms reaching all corners of the world. The destruction to lives and livelihoods will con-

tinue to escalate until we end our fossil fuel addiction.

"We're seeing millions of deaths occurring needlessly every year because of our delay in mitigating climate change and our delay in adapting to the climate change that cannot be avoided. We're seeing key leaders, governments and corporations backsliding on climate commitments and putting people increasingly in harm's way."

The report says the rate of heat-related deaths has surged by 23% since the 1990s, even after accounting for increases in populations, to an average of 546,000 a year between 2012 and 2021.

"That is approximately one heat-related

death every minute throughout the year," said Prof Ollie Jay, of the University of Sydney, Australia, who was part of the analysis team. "It is a really startling number and the numbers are going up."

Jay said: "We constantly emphasise to people that heat stress can affect everybody and it can be deadly - I think a lot

of people don't understand that - and that every heat-related death is preventable."

Laura Clarke, the chief executive of the environmental law firm ClientEarth, said: "We are living through the era of climate consequences. Heatwaves, floods, drought and disease are no longer distant warnings - they're here now. But as attribution science, climate litigation and grassroots activism grow, accountability for climate impacts is no longer a question of if but when."

The 2025 edition of the Lancet Countdown on

says. Overall, exposure to high temperatures resulted in a record 639bn hours of lost labour in 2024, which caused losses of 6% of national GDP in the least developed nations.

The continued burning of fossil fuels not only heats the planet but also produces air pollution, causing millions of deaths a year. Wildfires, stoked by increasingly

hot and dry conditions, are adding to the deaths caused by smoke,

with a record 154,000 deaths recorded in 2024, the report says. Droughts and heatwaves damage crops and livestock and 123 million more people endured food insecurity in 2023, compared with the annual average between 1981 and 2010.

Despite the harm, the world's governments provided \$956bn in direct fossil fuel subsidies in 2023, which was the world's hottest year on record until it was surpassed by 2024. The researchers said this dwarfed the \$300bn a year pledged at the UN climate summit Cop29 in 2024 to support the most climate-vulnerable countries.

The report says the UK provided \$28bn in fossil fuel subsidies in 2023 and Australia allocated \$11bn. Fifteen countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Venezuela and Algeria spent more on fossil fuel subsidies than on their national health budgets.

The world's 100 largest fossil fuel companies increased their projected production in the year up to March 2025, which would lead to carbon dioxide emissions three times those compatible with the Paris climate agreement target of limiting heating to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, the report says. Commercial banks are supporting this expansion, with the top 40 lenders to the fossil fuel sector collectively investing a five-year high of \$611bn in 2024. Their green sector lending was lower at \$532bn.

Romanello said: "If we keep on financing fossil fuels and enabling this expansion of fossil fuels, we know that a healthy future is not possible."

She said the solutions to avoid a climate catastrophe and protect lives existed, from clean energy to city adaptation to healthier, climate-friendly diets.

"If there's any optimism it comes from the action by local communities and authorities, and by the health sector - those that are really in contact with people on the ground," she said. "They are seeing the impacts with their own eyes and are stepping up because they just become undeniable, but we must keep up the momentum."

- Courtesy The Guardian

Health and Climate Change was led by UCL in collaboration with the World Health Organization and produced by 128 experts from more than 70 academic institutions and UN agencies.

In the past four years, the average person has been exposed to 19 days a year of life-threatening heat and 16 of those days would not have happened without human-caused global heating, the report



Safeguarding Bangladesh's Last Wild Elephants

By Rafiqul Islam

COX'S BAZAR, Bangladesh, Oct 22 2025 (IPS) - When wild elephant herds come down from the hills in search of food, Sona Miahm, with community volunteers, steps forward to help prevent human-elephant conflicts.

Miah is leading a 14-member elephant response team (ERT) in the Inani forest range under the Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar, one of the last natural elephant habitats in Bangladesh.

"For lack of food in reserve forests, wild elephants often rush to localities and damage crop fields. And, once we get informed, we go to the spot and try to return the elephant herd to the forest," he said.

According to the Forest Department, there are now about 64 wild elephants in the reserve forests in Ukhiya and Teknaf in Bangladesh's southeastern coastal district, Cox's Bazar.

Community volunteers often risk their lives in returning the wild elephants to the forests, but they do so to protect the country's last wild mammoths.

He explained how they mitigate human-elephant conflicts in their locality in the Inani area.

"The elephant response teams use hand-mikes and torches to encourage the elephants to return to the forest," he said.

With a small grant from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Arannayk Foundation, a Dhaka-based conservation organization, formed four elephant response teams (ERTs) in Inani and Ukhiya forest ranges in Cox's Bazar, comprising 40 men.

Working alongside the Bangladesh Forest Department, these ERTs aim to minimize human-elephant conflicts and support wildlife rescues. The ERTs have helped prevent 127 potential human-elephant conflicts in the past two years.

Dr. Mohammed Muzammel Hoque, national coordinator of UNDP's GEF Small Grants Program, said the UNDP provided a small grant of USD 39,182 in September 2023 to the Arannayk Foundation to implement its two-year Ecosystem Awareness and Restoration Through Harmony (EARTH) project.

Programme coordinator Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal said the project was implemented to restore forest ecosystems and involve local communities in wildlife conservation.

Human-Elephant Conflicts Rise

Due to the destruction of their natural habitats caused by deforestation, hill-cutting, and unplanned industrial expansion, the wild elephants come into localities in search of food, resulting in the rise of human-elephant conflicts.

Conflicts have resulted in the deaths of both community members and elephants.

Elephants are often being killed by electrocution in the Bangladesh southeast region since farmers install electric fences around their crop fields to protect crops from damage.

The most recent incident of an elephant being killed occurred in the Dochhari beat within the Ukhiya forest range in Cox's Bazar on September 17, 2025. Mozammel Hossain, a resident of Ukhiya, said farmers had used electrified traps around their croplands and this electrocuted the elephant.

He said food shortages push elephant herds to enter crop fields, while some farmers resort to illegal and lethal methods against the mammoths.

The Ukhiya and Teknaf regions have reported at least four elephant deaths in the past year.

Abdul Karim, an ERT member in the Boro Inani area of Cox's Bazar, said ele-

phants often attack human settlements and damage crops and orchards, increasing their conflicts with humans.

“We try to mitigate human-elephant conflicts and save both humans and mammoths. But, since 2021, four people have been killed in elephant attacks near the Inani forest range,” he said.

According to the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division of the Bangladesh Forest Department, from 2016 to January 2025, 102 elephant deaths were recorded alone in Chattogram.

Retaliatory killings, electrocution, poaching, and train collisions have caused many of these deaths.

Saiful Islam, a resident of the Inani area, said wild elephants have been trapped within their habitat too after the influx of Rohingyas there in 2017.

Introduce Elephant Non-Preferred Crops

Crops typically eschewed by elephants, including citrus, pepper, bitter gourd, chili, cane, and okra, should be introduced around the elephant habitats.

“We are encouraging farmers to start such crops to avoid conflicts with elephants. We are also making them aware of elephant conservation,” Saiful Islam, also a community volunteer at Choto Inani, told IPS.

Firoz Al Amin, range officer of the Inani forest range in Ukhiya, said the Forest

Department arranged 12 awareness programmes on elephant conservation in the Inani range.

Arannayk Foundation identified elephant non-preferred plots adjacent to high human-elephant conflict zones within the buffer area. With community involvement, five demonstration plots were created on portions of land belonging to five beneficiaries to mitigate elephant crop raiding.

It established four chili-coated rope bio-fences: two at Mohammad Shofir Bill and one each at Boro Inani and Imamerdeil to reduce crop damage caused by elephants. These bio-fencing interventions have benefited 85 vulnerable households in these locations. The fences consist of coconut ropes coated with a deterrent blend of chili powder, tobacco, and grease, suspended at human height between trees to prevent elephant access to agricultural and residential areas.

Urgent Measures Needed to Save Elephants

A 2016 survey by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said that there were only 457 elephants left in Bangladesh, of which 268 were wild, 93 were migratory, and 96 were captive.

However, about 124 wild elephants died across Bangladesh’s main elephant habitats—Cox’s Bazar, Chattogram, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Mymensingh—

over the last decade.

Experts suggest a comprehensive strategy for restoring elephant habitats to prevent their extinction, which requires long-term planning, reducing encroachment on forest areas, and removing unlawful occupants. Dr. Monirul H. Khan, a zoology professor at Jahangirnagar University, said forests and elephant habitats must be protected at any cost to save the mammoths, as their number is dwindling day by day in Bangladesh.

Many new settlements and crop cultivations have taken place inside the country’s elephant habitats, he said, accelerating human-elephant conflicts.

Growing crops that elephants typically do not prefer, improving bio-fencing with trip alarms, and creating salt lick areas can all help reduce human-elephant conflicts.

The experts say implementing beehive fencing not only safeguards crops but also generates job and income opportunities for the local community. Therefore, it is possible to achieve elephant conservation while simultaneously minimizing human-elephant conflicts.

Monirul said the Bangladesh government has taken on an elephant conservation project with its own funding for the first time. “I hope the project will help conserve the mammoths in Bangladesh,” he added.

IPS UN Bureau Report



Reflections on forest management in Moulvibazar



Md. Yunus Ali

Former Chief Conservator of Forests

Deforestation accelerates greenhouse gas emissions, causing rising temperatures and frequent landslides due to exposed hill slopes. Local communities face flash floods during monsoon and droughts in dry seasons, leading to severe water scarcity

I began my forestry career in 1986 after completing a Master's in Forestry from the Pakistan Forestry Institute, under the University of Peshawar. Upon returning from Peshawar in mid-October 1986, I joined the Sylhet Forest Division as a probationer in Kulaura Range, Moulvibazar district.

Initially, I could not take charge of the range, as the then Forest Ranger had financial liabilities pending from timber auction expenses. He settled the matter later in November when the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) conducted the auction.

Tea Garden Management:

One incident during my probation stands out. One night, a Ferguson tractor carrying illegal timber was seized by the night guard while crossing our office. The next morning, as I was having tea, the Assistant Manager of Kaliti Tea Estate arrived, requesting the release of the vehicle, claiming the timber belonged to the estate and was being transported to the manager's Sylhet residence.

I explained that once the timber was seized, it became a legal matter, and I could not release it without due process. Later, the Manager of Gazipur Tea Estate came himself, attempting to pressure me, supported by local influential figures, in-

cluding the Union Parishad Chairman and a traditional leader, Abdul Muktdir Choudhury (Jobed Choudhury).

To ease tensions, we decided to compound the offence, as per legal provisions, after verifying ownership. A compensation report was drawn, and the manager of Kaliti Tea Estate paid Tk 1,000 along with the timber price. This was my first experience handling a legal forest offence as an Assistant Conservator of Forests.

That afternoon, the DFO visited my range office. Kulaura upazila hosts many tea gardens within forest areas, such as Rangichara Tea Garden. Some estates had illegal timber stockpiles, prompting us to conduct salvage operations. Many derelict tea gardens suffered from poor management, leading to timber pilferage and deforestation.

Charge Handover:

In mid-November 1986, I formally took charge of Kulaura Range from my predecessor, a trained Forest Ranger from Chittagong Forest Academy. The range consisted of six beats—Muraichera, Nalduri, Monchera, Bramchal, Vatera, and Gazipur Sadar. The first three were part of the Prithimpasha Acquired Forest, while Bramchal and Vatera were smaller and

partly encroached by Khasia communities. Parts of the range were also leased to BFIDC for rubber plantations.

Professional Forestry During Probation:

During my training, I was tasked with raising a 25-acre plantation in Ragna Beat under Juri Range, near the Indian border, and conducting sale marking in Putichera and Ragna coupes. I also carried out thinning in teak plantations at Lathtilla Beat.

Floristic Composition:

The forests were evergreen and semi-evergreen, with a mix of bamboo and teak. The Purbogogali Reserved Forest in Gazipur Sadar contained notable teak plantations. Bamboo coupes in Nalduri and Muraichera were sold every three years—some to the Satok Pulp and Paper Mill, others through public auctions.

Forest Extraction and Trade:

The area, close to the Indian border, had railway access and the large Hakaluki Haor spread across several upazilas. While agriculture and fishing were the main livelihoods, some locals engaged in timber trade as mohaldars. Timber theft was ram-

pant, especially of teak and chapalish, often backed by local elites.

Pan Punji Settlements:

Khasia communities illegally occupied forest land for betel leaf and areca palm cultivation, damaging the region's biodiversity. There were over 20 pan punjis (Khasia settlements) in Kulaura Range, each led by a moentry (headman). These leaders maintained strong ties with local administration.

Once, the Deputy Commissioner of Moulvibazar visited Begunchera Punji in Nalduri Beat, accompanied by local leaders and myself. Despite efforts, eviction drives were resisted due to the backing of INGOs and Christian missionary groups.

According to Forest Department data, there were 27 pan punjis in Kulaura Range, occupying significant forest land.

Prithimpasha Acquired Forest:

The Prithimpasha Estate, located in Nalduri Union, had several thousand acres acquired by the Forest Department but was yet to be declared a reserved forest by 1988. The estate originally belonged to Nawab Ali Amjad Khan of the Shia royal family of Longla, known for the iconic Ali

Amjad Clock Tower in Sylhet.

Governance and Training:

During my 21-month probation, I trained under two experienced officers. One, skilled in forest inventory, organized annual surveys in Sreemangal. We practiced plain table, chain, and compass surveys, and sampling exercises in Rajkandi and Juri Ranges for yield table preparation.

Our mentors, including DFO Dr. Zakir Hossain and the late Chief Conservator of Forests, Bahauddin Choudhury, guided us in practical forestry and data-based management.

Conclusion:

Deforestation accelerates greenhouse gas emissions, causing rising temperatures and frequent landslides due to exposed hill slopes. Local communities face flash floods during monsoon and droughts in dry seasons, leading to severe water scarcity.

Khasia settlements, though lacking land rights, continue clearing forest areas for cultivation, gradually destroying the precious evergreen forests of Sylhet.

(The writer is a former Chief Conservator of Forests)



Festive return of cricket to Bogura after 19 years

Adnan Hadi

19 years to be precise, the last International match played at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogura was held between Zimbabwe and Bangladesh, in December 5, 2006, and it was a thriller which Bangladesh won by 26 runs. The ground has hosted five ODIs and only Test match against Sri Lanka in 2006. And since then, the stadium has been neglected.

The ground has hosted five One Day Internationals and its only Test match, played against Sri Lanka in 2006. However, due to political vendetta, no international fixture has been scheduled there for the past 19 years. Even domestic cricket has not been spared, as the stadium too has suffered from political interference and neglect.

After nearly two decades, the long-silent Shaheed Chandu Stadium finally came alive again with the roar of an international match. Bangladesh Under-19 team played two youth ODIs of the three-match series against Afghanistan Under-19 team.

The stands overflowed with spectators of all ages who braved the extreme heat to witness the long-awaited return of international cricket to their city.

The huge local Bogura crowd celebrated the occasion with Bangladesh secured five-run victory over Afghanistan in the first match via the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method on October 28 while the second ODI was called off without a ball being bowled due to persistent rain.

There was no ticket system in place, and as a result, most of the galleries were packed to capacity. While attendance was modest in the morning, the crowd swelled as the day went on, transforming the ground into a sea of excitement and emotion.

Many spectators expressed frustration that this international-standard venue had been neglected for so long. They alleged that during the “fascist Hasina era,” political vendetta had deprived Bogura of hosting international matches. “Compared to any other international stadium in the country, Shaheed Chandu Stadium

in no way lags behind,” one fan said passionately. “We’ve suffered only because of politics.”

The locals urged authorities to complete the remaining infrastructural works – including floodlights – and bring the national team back to this ground.

The long-awaited match also turned the entire city festive. Streets around the stadium were decorated, and an air of celebration swept through Bogura.

No international match had been held at this venue since 2006. Despite occasionally hosting National Cricket League fixtures, Youth World Cup preparation camps, and the Bengal Tigers’ practice sessions, Bogura was consistently overlooked for major events. This prolonged absence international events left local cricket lovers frustrated and disheartened.

On that historic day in 2006, when Bangladesh clinched their first-ever victory against Sri Lanka at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium had around 24,000 passionate fans from Bogura and across the northern region packing the stands, as against the capacity to hold 18,000 spectators, and celebrated the triumph with songs, dances, and unbridled joy. Sadly, the people of Bogura never got the chance to experience such cricketing excitement again in their hometown for nearly two subsequent decades.

Political animosity or rivalry may exist between parties or individuals, but nowhere else in the world has an international Test venue been abandoned solely due to political vendetta—except in Bangladesh. The Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogura stands today as a grim witness to the extreme negligence and discrimination of the previous government.

In these nineteen long years from 2006 to 2025 a new generation has grown up in Bangladesh whose favorite game is cricket. Many of them have already started playing in age-group teams; for many, heroes like Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiquir Rahim de-

fine the spirit of the game.

Yet, the sad truth is that most cricket lovers of this generation don’t even know that Bogura once had its own international cricket venue – the Shaheed Chandu Stadium.



History records that Shaheed Chandu Stadium was established in Bogura city in 1962. From 1970 onwards, the venue hosted numerous local tournaments, including football and cricket. In 2003, the foundation stone of a modern sports

complex within the stadium was laid by the then Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia. A year later, the renovated venue began operations ahead of the ICC Under-19 World Cup.

After successfully hosting matches during the 2004 Under-19 World Cup, the stadium earned international status in 2006. However over time the once-vibrant ground fell into neglect. For nearly two decades, no international or Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) matches have been held there, leaving local fans disheartened.

Despite the ICC's recognition for hosting international matches in Bogura, some

Stadium, the BCB organised a one-month camp in Bogura for the youth team before going to the Under-19 World Cup in 2020, keeping in mind the conditions in South Africa. And it was then that the Bangladeshi youth tasted the title in the Under-19 World Cup for the first time under the leadership of Akbar Ali. Not only that, Bangladeshi girls had their first camp here before making their international debut. Bangladeshi girls made their debut in international cricket through the Asia Cup in 2008. Girls have camped here many times. First-class matches have been held here.

Veteran sports journalist Shamim Chowdhury who is currently head of development and research of T Sports witnessed Bangladesh's memorable series against Sri Lanka at Shaheed Chandu stadium in 2006 from the press-box. He believes that the reason for the absence of matches at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium is less about cricketing or infrastructural concerns and more about political reasons. He shared many other untold stories.

"This stadium was built in just 8 months. A total of 8 stadiums were prepared ahead of the 2004 Under-19 World Cup. Shaheed Chandu Stadium is one of them. The late Arafat Rahman Koko, the youngest son of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman and former prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia, himself, since his ancestral home is in Bogura, took the initiative to build a stadium in Bogura." Shamim Chowdhury said.

"Before building this stadium, the ICC gave several conditions to the BCB. For example: There was a barrier here as there were no three-star or four-star hotels. Local MP Md Shokrana took a huge initiative under the government's guidance, and built Naz Garden Hotel, and at that time it was a four-star hotel. Now it has become a five-star hotel. Only after ensuring players and match officials' world-class accommodation, Bogura's Chandu Stadium finally got international status," he added.

Shaheed Chandu Stadium entered the international cricket history when it became the 166th venue of the international (ODI) cricket. One of the five purpose-built cricket grounds established for the under-19 world cup in 2004, it was granted international status in 2006 with the Test match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the third ICC approved venue in country. The stadium turned into a human sea on its debut.

"Bogra witnessed a record number of spectators in the 2004 Under-19 World Cup. The stadium was packed with spectators in every match. The stadium was inaugurated in several stages. It was inaugurated once with a match against Zimbabwe. There were a lot of spectators there." Shamim Chowdhury said.

Mushfiqur Rahim, one of the best players of the national team, called the Bogura wicket probably the best wicket in the country. In addition, almost all the cricketers of the national team, including Habibul Basar, Mohammad Ashraful, Mashrafe, Shakib, Tamim, have praised this ground.

West Indies World Cup winning captain Legendary cricketer Clive Lloyd came to the stadium at the beginning of its construction and said, 'This will be the best stadium in Bangladesh.' Not only that, the stadium has the praise of legendary cricketers like Pakistan captain Wasim Akram, former Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene, and Kumar Sangakkara.

It seems that no stadium in this country has received such a good words of praise. But all the negligence was from the BCB.

Strong crowd attendance during the recent youth ODI series between Bangladesh and Afghanistan has encouraged the BCB to further invest in developing the venue and increasing its cricketing calendar.

At a recent reception held at the RDA auditorium, newly elected BCB director Mokhsedul Kamal Babu made a heartfelt pledge to restore the lost glory of Shaheed Chandu Stadium.

"Cricket is a symbol of our national unity," he said. "As a person from Bogura, my first priority will be to renovate Shaheed Chandu Stadium and bring international matches back here. However, to make that happen, we must also focus on developing the airport, hotels, and communication infrastructure."

He added, "If the Bogura airport was operational, three to four matches of this year's BPL could have been organised here. Still, we're happy that two of the five Under-19 matches are being held in Bogura – this is a big start."

After a long 19-year wait, the passion of Bogura's cricket fans has been reignited. They now look to the future with renewed optimism – hoping that the light shining once again at Shaheed Chandu Stadium will never fade away.

(Adnan Hadi is a senior journalist mainly writing on archeological sites and sports. He can be reached at adnangreenblack1987@gmail.com)



BCB officials have been accused of not hosting matches here out of political hate. Since then, the stadium has remained neglected.

Interestingly, because of the excellent outfield and bouncy wicket at Chandu

Tuberculosis

Clinical Trial Results Show Potential to Shorten TB Treatment Time

Sorfequiline, previously known as TBAJ-876, was evaluated in combination with pretomanid and linezolid in a randomized, controlled trial in people with drug-sensitive TB

COPENHAGEN (November 19, 2025)—New clinical trial results presented by TB Alliance at the Union World Conference on Lung Health show that the novel antibiotic candidate sorfequiline (TBAJ-876), a next-generation diarylquinoline, has the potential to improve tuberculosis (TB) treatment when combined with pretomanid and linezolid in a treatment regimen known as “SPaL.”

The NC-009 trial (a pan-Phase 2 clinical trial) showed that, overall, sorfequiline had greater activity than bedaquiline. The 100 mg SPaL regimen had greater activity against TB than the standard of care HRZE (isoniazid, rifampin, pyrazinamide, and ethambutol), indicating the potential to shorten treatment time for active TB. In addition, the SPaL regimen had a comparable safety profile to the standard of care

for people with drug-sensitive TB (DS-TB).

TB Alliance conducted the trial in 22 sites in South Africa, the Philippines, Georgia, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda.

“Science continues to surge forward, to the benefit of health care systems, people with TB, their families, and their communities,” said Dr. Mel Spigelman, President and CEO of TB Alliance.

“The development of the BPaL regimen allowed us to reduce treatment time for most drug-resistant TB to six months, a critical development for patients. Now, we have an opportunity to shorten treatment even further – representing an important milestone toward our goal of developing an ultra-short regimen capable of treating both drug-sensitive and drug-resistant TB.”

Sorfequiline and bedaquiline both belong to the diarylquinoline class of antibiotics, which target a key enzyme of the tuberculosis bacteria involved in energy production. In 2012, bedaquiline was approved for drug-resistant TB treatment, making it the first new antibiotic to be approved in decades. However, recent years have seen a rise in strains of TB that are resistant to bedaquiline.

TB Alliance has been developing sorfequiline all the way through the R&D process, from early discovery to, now, late-stage clinical trials. Trial results show that sorfequiline could have a potentially a better safety profile than bedaquiline along with the potential to treat many of the strains that are resistant to bedaquiline.

“The research pipelines addressing a neglected disease like TB continue to deliver the promise of shorter and safer treatment for the millions affected around the world,” said Dr. Rod Dawson, Principal Investigator for NC-009 and Managing Director & Clinical Research Unit Head at the University of Cape Town Lung Institute. “Goals that once seemed wholly aspirational, like the eradication of TB, are made increasingly possible because of advancements like sorfequiline and, before that, pretomanid. But we have a lot of work ahead of us and cannot stop until TB is no longer a threat.”

TB Alliance is strengthening partnerships with high-burden countries like India, China, Indonesia, South Africa and Brazil in advance of launching a Phase 3 clinical trial in 2026. This upcoming trial is an opportunity to earn approval for a new drug and regimen, as well as the first step

in the process of developing an ultra-short regimen. These partnerships build from the work performed in the development and roll out of BPAL-based regimens, and they seek to further streamline the process of developing new TB treatments and accelerate the pace at which those impacted by TB can access improved treatments.

“The treatment was amazing. It was shorter and easier than I expected,” said Thuto Pulane, a participant in the NC-009 clinical trial. “I’d tell anyone not to be afraid. TB treatment has come a long way, and this new research gives us even more hope.”

Sorfequiline has been developed in pill form, and SPaL will also be an all-oral TB treatment. In addition to the upcoming SPaL Phase 3 trial, TB Alliance plans to explore delivering a sorfequiline-based regimen as a long-acting injectable (LAI), a formulation that could potentially help reduce treatment duration to as little as one month.

“For decades, the standard treatment time for tuberculosis has been six months,” said Dr. Maria Beumont, Vice President and Chief Medical Officer at TB Alliance. “With BPAL, we proved that we can dramatically simplify and shorten drug-resistant TB treatment, but that was just the first step. With regimens currently in development, we believe we can shorten and simplify treatment even further – for all forms of TB. The results from this trial bring us closer to our goal and the eventual eradication of TB as a global health threat.”

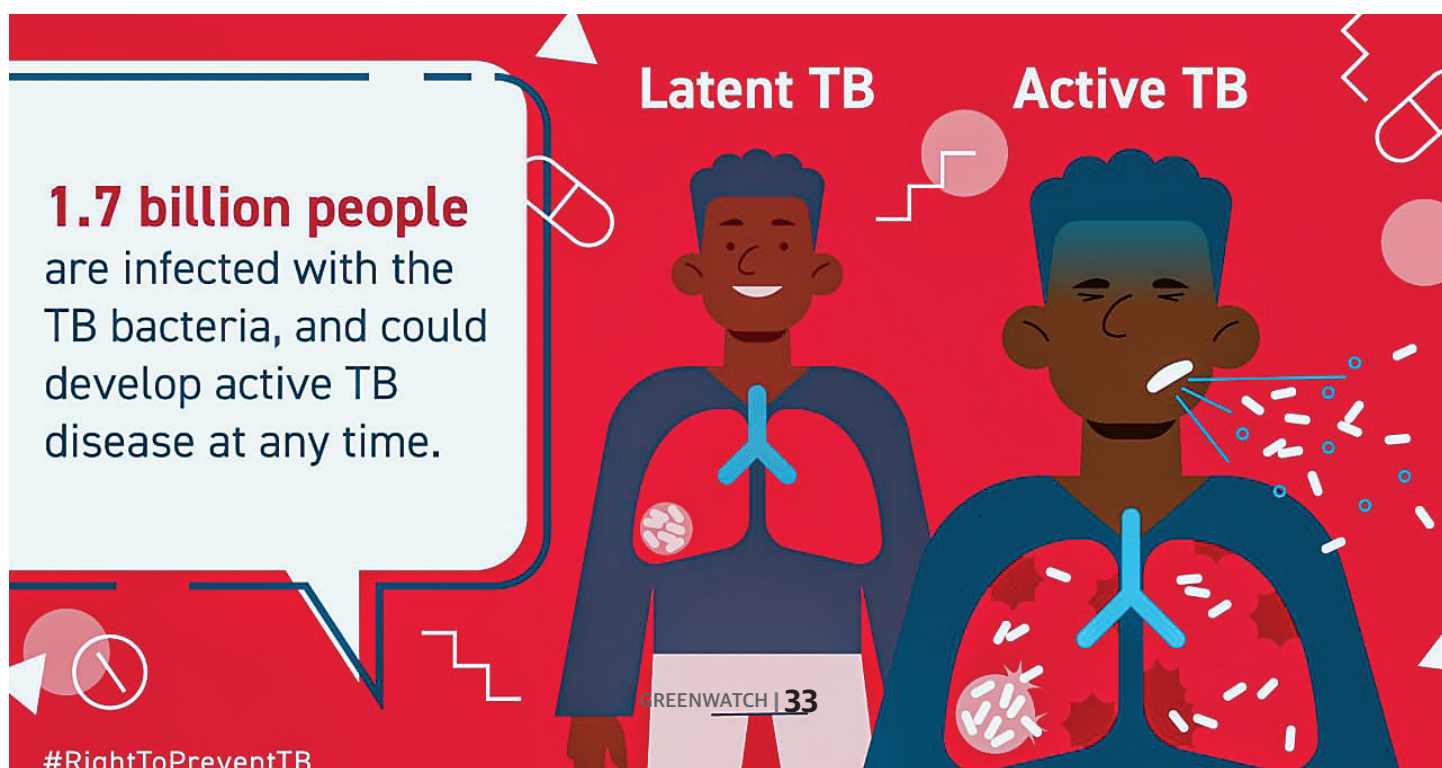
Background

TB is a difficult infection to cure, requiring

patients to take a combination of medicines for at least four to six months. Even after symptoms disappear, medicines still need to be taken so that all traces of the disease can be fully eradicated. The scope and intensity of TB globally is in large part fueled by antiquated and inadequate TB drugs. Novel drug regimens are urgently needed to bring the TB pandemic under control.

The BPAL regimen – which combines the antibiotics bedaquiline (B), pretomanid (Pa), and linezolid (L) – was first clinically studied by TB Alliance. Pretomanid, as part of the BPAL regimen, received its first regulatory approval in August 2019 for use against highly drug-resistant strains of TB. This marked the first-ever regulatory approval of a TB drug developed by a non-profit. Previously, fewer than two-thirds of drug-resistant TB patients around the world had been successfully treated. Treatment options were limited, expensive, toxic, and lengthy – requiring patients to take more than 20 pills per day for 9 months to two years or longer. Since approval, more than 210,000 courses of pretomanid have been ordered globally, leading to an estimated 11,000 lives and \$100 million USD saved globally.

In past in vitro studies, sorfequiline demonstrated anti mycobacterial activity approximately 10-fold greater than bedaquiline and, in preclinical studies, sorfequiline showed the potential to be safer than bedaquiline, including low potential for QT prolongation. In Phase 1 studies involving 165 healthy subjects, few, generally mild, adverse events were observed.



Dispatch From UN Climate Change Conference



Danielle Nierenberg

As the first week of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) draws to a close, we've had valuable and urgent discussions about the systems and interventions and investment structures we can build to more ambitiously tackle the climate crisis.

But like any building, our work will crumble if the foundations aren't strong—and here in Belém, I think that's true both in a literal sense and a figurative one.

Quite simply, what's under our feet matters. The literal foundations of regenerative ecosystems—healthy soils—are the basis for everything we're working to build here at COP30.

"Soil is one of the biggest potential [ways] to address the issue of climate change...Soil is life," Rosinah Mbenya, Country Coordinator for PELUM Kenya, told us yesterday at the Action on Food Hub.

Healthy soils not only help nourish people and animals but also sequester carbon from the atmosphere and contribute to a vibrant microbiome that can actually reduce the need for pesticides, making them all-around vital to a variety of climate solutions. And as experts discussed yesterday, the folks who can shepherd those healthy soils are farmers!

"Slowly, intensification has degraded soils, and yet farmers are the ones who can aggrade. They are actually land managers and many of them manage to increase soil health," says Sieg Snapp, Director of the Global Change Biology Initiative at Michigan State University and Senior Advisor to CGIAR.

As we continued to discuss at a UNFCCC Side Event yesterday afternoon, support-

ing farmers is key to achieving the climate mitigation and adaptation goals we desperately need to meet. When farmers are making the transition toward regenerative practices, the first year is critical, farmer and ecologist Anand Ethirajalu said. It's not always easy to see an immediate payoff—but the benefits are undeniable.

Soil is one of the biggest potential [ways] to address the issue of climate change...Soil is life

"Farmers that are farming conventionally are sometimes scared if they don't have proof that a transition is viable," said Thomas Cooper Patriota, Advisor to the Brazil Ministry of Agrarian

Follow me here: This is what leads to the more figurative "foundation"—the truth.

Here at COP30, information integrity has been made part of the Action Agenda for the first time, which I applaud because it's crucial to recognize that we can only solve the climate crisis when we have reliable data, factual analysis, and proof that solutions like regenerative farming work. Earlier this week, ten countries endorsed a Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change, and I hope many more follow suit.

Frankly, it's disheartening to see misinformation and falsehoods circulating about COP30 and the facts of climate change in general—including from people here on the ground. According to the

organization Transparency International, more than half of COP30 national delegation members did not fully disclose other potentially conflicting affiliations they might have.

"Transparency is the cornerstone of trust in global climate negotiations," Brice Böhmer, climate and environment lead at Transparency International, told *The Guardian* this week.

When we talk about large-scale investments from the private and philanthropic sectors, we need transparency on where that money goes. New reporting from *The Guardian* yesterday shows that, without oversight in 2021 and 2022, a significant portion of global climate financing never actually was allocated to the poorest countries that need it most. Without transparency, there's no accountability.

When we talk about supporting farmers, we need to allow them a platform to be transparent about issues that are front-and-center. Yesterday morning, about 100 peaceful Indigenous protesters blocked the main entrance to COP for about 90 minutes, one of several protests in recent days to draw attention to the harm being done to the Amazon. Without transparency, there's no climate justice.

Tomorrow is a rest day here at COP30; a time to regroup and recharge before we head into a busy second week. I hope you'll join me in continuing to reflect on strengthening the foundations—both literally and figuratively—so that the solutions we build can be stable and long-lasting.

(Danielle Nierenberg is the President of Food Tank and can be reached at danielle@foodtank.com)

Ad



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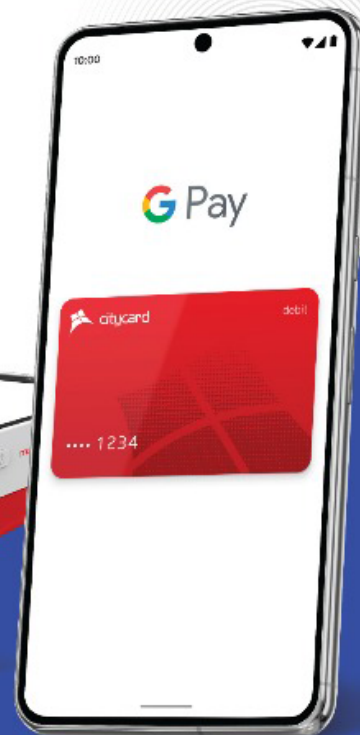
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