



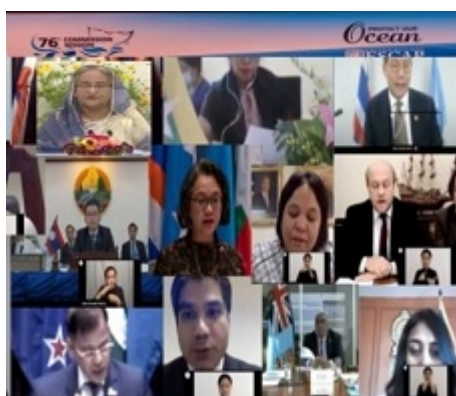
## SOUTH ASIA SDG UPDATE



April and July 2020



## 1. South Asian Countries Participate in the 76th Commission Session of UNESCAP



**BANGKOK, THAILAND, 21 MAY 2020** All the South Asian countries participated in the 76th Commission Session of UNESCAP under the theme "Promoting economic, social and environmental cooperation on oceans for sustainable development." Governments of Asia and the Pacific agreed to pursue coordinated and decisive actions, as well as reinforce regional and global cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and declared profound solidarity and vowed to provide unlimited support and technical assistance to those most affected, particularly in developing countries with weaker health systems and vulnerable populations. **Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina** of Bangladesh said while delivering her speech through a video message at the 76th Commission Session that although COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the economy along with public health, it has a silver lining in the form of changes in global efforts to deal with climate change and

growing competition for natural resources. The Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), **Ms. Armida Alisjahbana**, underscored that when addressing this health crisis, countries face an unprecedented dilemma: the need to balance measures to contain the pandemic against those for socio-economic recovery. To support countries in building back better, refocusing our work is necessary. She further highlighted three priority areas – helping economic recovery, protecting people and enhancing resilience, and restoring supply chains and supporting small and medium enterprises, and urged countries to align policies with environmental protection and climate action. The highlights of the country statements made at the APFSD by South Asian countries are reported later.

Read more [here](#) [Read the Theme Study](#)



## 2. South Asian Countries Participate in the 7th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

**BANGKOK, THAILAND, 20 MAY 2020** The 7th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) was held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand with the theme "Accelerating action for and delivery of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific". As a preparatory of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), the Forum provided a regional platform to support countries, particularly those with special needs, in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Among others, the Forum reviewed the five years of regional progress on SDGs, identified opportunities and entry points for accelerated action, launched the Asia-Pacific SDG Partnership theme report for the APFSD 2020 and discussed issues related to strengthening of follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the national level, subregional and regional levels. In preparation of the Forum a number of webinars were organized besides the subregional forums that were

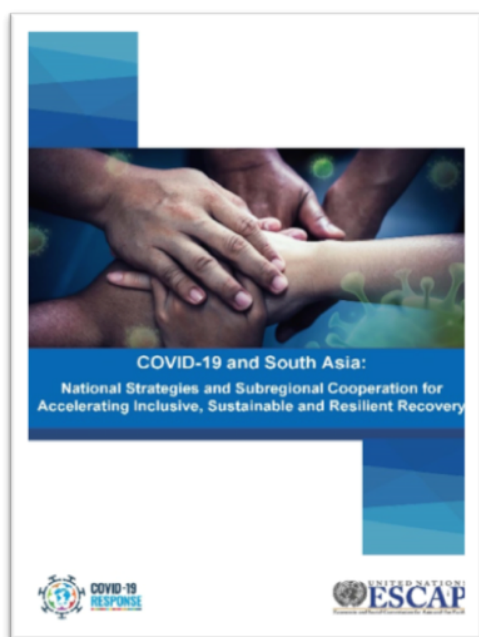


organized by its subregional offices including the South Asia SDG Forum organized in Dhaka in December 2019. The opening session was also addressed by Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Dr. Armida Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary of ESCAP, among other dignitaries. Highlighted speakers from South and South-West Asia included Ms Deki Yangzom, Peer Educator-PEER, Bhutan, and Ambassador Samantha K. Jayasuriya, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to ESCAP, who was elected as the APFSD Chair. The highlights of the country statements made at the APFSD by South Asian countries are reported later.

Read more [here](#)



### 3. COVID-19 and South Asia: National Strategies and Subregional Cooperation for Accelerating Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Recovery



**NEW DELHI, INDIA, 25 JUNE 2020** COVID-19 the global pandemic has evolved into an economic and a 'human crisis,' of mammoth proportions. South Asia, a subregion with nearly a quarter of world's population but over a third of world's people living in extreme poverty and hunger, has been impacted severely given the vast proportion of population living at the margins, fragmented coverage of social protection, pervasive informality in economic activities and employment, and wide gaps in public health infrastructure.

Prepared as a part of the UNESCAP Framework on Socio-Economic Response to the pandemic, ***COVID-19 and South Asia: National Strategies and Subregional Cooperation for Accelerating Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Recovery***, the new UNESCAP policy paper finds that upto 132 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty in South Asia due to measures related to the pandemic, reversing the gains in poverty reduction of a whole decade, undermining the progress made by the subregion towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

This paper, prepared by UNESCAP's South and South-West Asia Office, argues that the objective of the policy actions should, be not to go back to the *status quo ante* but to *build back better* by turning the crisis into an opportunity to create more equal, sustainable and resilient societies in South Asia,

for the future, helping the subregion close the SDG gaps expeditiously. The paper goes on to identify some national strategies for a speedy, inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery. Subregional cooperation in South Asia, whether bilaterally as well as within the frameworks provided by SAARC, BIMSTEC, BBIN, and UNESCAP, could usefully supplement the national actions in addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic and related measures. It outlines some areas of mutually beneficial subregional cooperation.

Read more [here](#)



### 4. UNESCAP-EIF Project launched in Bhutan to build capacity of e-Commerce capacity of Women-led MSMEs



**THIMPHU, BHUTAN, 4-5 FEBRUARY 2020** ESCAP, in partnership with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) and Royal Government of Bhutan, held a national consultation with more than 60 policymakers, MSME representatives and other stakeholders in Thimphu in line with the launch of the 'E-Commerce Capacity Building for Women-Led MSMEs in South Asia' project. The three-year project aims to enhance the knowledge and capacity of women entrepreneurs in the application of e-commerce platforms to expand their business exports and participate in local, regional, and global supply chains.

Read more [here](#)



## 5. Policy Dialogue highlights Significant Sustainable Development Challenges Created by COVID-19 in South Asia



**NEW DELHI, 13 MAY 2020** UNESCAP organized a virtual policy dialogue to discuss the sustainable development challenges created by the COVID-19 before South Asian countries based on the key findings of the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2020*. Moderated by Dr Nagesh Kumar, the dialogue had heads of prominent think-tanks among the panellists namely Dr Rathin Roy of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, Dr Sachin Chaturvedi of Research and Information System for Developing Countries, Professor Shaleen Singhal of TERI University. Mr Daniel Lee of Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division at UNESCAP headquarters made a introductory presentation. It was followed by a rich open discussion in which Professor Jyoti Chandiramani, Director of Symbiosis School of Economics, Ambassador Tariq Karim from Dhaka participated, among others.

Read more [Here](#) Other references can be found [Here](#) and [Here](#)



## 6. Strengthening South Asia's Freight Corridors in the context of COVID-19

**NEW DELHI, INDIA, 15 MAY 2020** Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous countries have gone into the lockdown to contain the spread of the notorious virus that has created an unprecedented challenge to the international freight sector and exposed its weaknesses. The UNESCAP-SSWA office published a policy brief on the challenges in strengthening the freight corridors in the South Asia region amid the COVID-19 crisis to improve the resilience of the sector and seize the long-term benefit and development. Due to exposure to the crisis, the need for the region to speed-up its pace to utilize the cross-border rail network and digitalizing the cargo tracking and clearance procedures would be critical.

Read more: [here](#) | Download policy brief: [here](#)



## 7. Bangladesh Confronts COVID-19 in the Path to Graduation



**NEW DELHI, INDIA, 22 JUNE 2020** UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office (UNESCAP-SSWA) partnered with the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Bangladesh to organize a webinar to discuss the way forward for Bangladesh's potential LDC graduation amid the COVID crisis. Bangladesh has already fulfilled the graduation criteria in 2018. Still, the economic impact brought by COVID threatens to reverse a lot of economic progress and to create extra stress on the nation's economy. The panelists discussed a wide range of socio-economic impacts and other challenges for Bangladesh that will impinge on its sustainable graduation process. The panelists included experts from Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka; Bangladesh Rural Advancement Centre (BRAC); Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers Association, the World Bank Country Office, and UNESCAP-SSWA. A lively discussion involved participants from similarly placed LDCs in South Asia viz. Bhutan and Nepal.

View webinar: [here](#)



## 8. South Asian Launch of *World Economic Situation and Prospect 2020* Highlights Development Challenges



**NEW DELHI, INDIA, 17 JANUARY 2020** Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Head, ESCAP-SSWA, presented the WESP report 2020 to the media and other stakeholders in New Delhi, highlighting the key findings for South Asian countries. According to the report, South Asia recorded a decade lowest growth in 2019. Specifically, he noted that India's macroeconomic fundamentals remained strong as ever, and recovery in growth was imminent in the next fiscal year. Economic growth in South Asia is forecast to recover to 5.1 percent in 2020, after falling to a decade-low 3.3 percent in 2019. Yet, the global headwinds that are compounded by the credit crunch and other domestic issues may further cause setbacks to South Asia countries due to prolonged weakness in global economic activity,

which causes significant drawbacks in achieving sustainable development targets. At the same time, the pervasive inequalities and the deepening of the climate crisis continue to fuel discontent in many countries of the world, South Asian countries included. The report also highlighted the urgent need to change the energy mix to address the climate challenge.

Read more [here](#)



## 9. Seminar on Investing in SDGs highlights Investment Gaps in People, Planet, and Prosperity

**NEW DELHI, INDIA, 20 JANUARY**

**2020** ESCAP-SSWA convened a seminar by Dr Hamza Malik of the Microeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division of ESCAP on "Investing in SDGs: Thinking beyond GDP Growth" which highlighted that strong economic performance has not been people and planet-friendly and, therefore, thinking beyond GDP is needed to change policies and the mindset for SDGs effective implementation. According to ESCAP estimates, in South and South-West Asia, investment gaps in people, planet, and prosperity have risen to 10 percent of GDP. The seminar emphasized that estimating investment needs, along with a range of policy interventions, is the first step for countries to devise appropriate economic policies and financing strategies. Furthermore, the implementation of the SDG framework requires additional investments and policy actions such as comprehensive financing strategies and integrated policy frameworks and the need to revisit conventional approaches. Experts from a number of think-tanks participated in the discussion.



Read more [here](#)



## 10. Bangladesh holds the Development Forum to harness Partnerships to Address the Implementation Challenges



**DHAKA, BANGLADESH, 29-30 JANUARY 2020** Dr. Nagesh Kumar represented UNESCAP at the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) hosted by the Government of Bangladesh and delivered a statement. With over 700 delegates representing the Bangladesh government and various development partners engaged in dialogues and forged partnerships to address identified implementation challenges and to discuss issues related to financing for sustainable development goals to help Bangladesh graduate from the least developed countries' group. The meeting found that Bangladesh would require \$2-3 trillion by 2030 to meet the SDGs. Prime minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the Forum.

Read more [here](#) See also [here](#)



## 11. RIMES Council discusses Cooperation on Climate and Disaster Resilience in South Asian Countries

**PATHUMTHANI, THAILAND, 20-22 JANUARY 2020** RIMES Council held its 11<sup>th</sup> Session at its base in the Asian Institute of Technology in Thailand. Dr Nagesh Kumar was invited to participate in the meeting and to discuss a partnership in enhancing climate and disaster resilience in South Asian countries. He made a presentation and briefed the Meeting on the discussion that took place on climate and disaster resilience at the Third South Asia SDG Forum organized by UNESCAP-SSWA in Dhaka in December 2019 and discussed the opportunities of leveraging the synergies with the South Asia Hydromet Forum.



## 12. COVID-19 and Future of Work

**NEW DELHI, 20 APRIL 2020** UNESCAP joined a virtual dialogue on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the future of work. In his remarks Dr Nagesh Kumar highlighted the impact of the pandemic on poverty, inequality and other SDGs. He also mentioned that COVID was likely to accelerate the digital revolution and large-scale automation using AI etc. which would lead to massive job losses that a youthful country such as India can ill-afford. For disincentivising the industry from going for automation, the government could impose a robot tax, revenues from which could fund social security programmes.



## South Asian Priorities on Sustainable Development: Country Statements at the 7th APFSD:



### Afghanistan:

A high-level policy level executive committee has been established to lead and provide oversight for the implementation of SDGs in Afghanistan. Several other technical and secretariat committees were formed to work on the SDGs, including setting the national targets and indicators as well as developing specific development programmes and projects in different sectors. Furthermore, a national document/normative framework is established for SDGs and approved by the Cabinet as a national development framework in the country with programmes and budgets that are aligned with the SDGs. Currently, the government is in the process of developing a macroeconomic and integrated modeling framework to guide the development activities in line with the SDGs. However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak and related lockdown measures, localization of SDGs at the provincial and local levels has been difficult. For the country to achieve the SDGs, international assistance is needed to assist Afghanistan to deal with the implementation of SDGs other than succumbing to political tensions and conflicts.



### Bangladesh:

Being a densely populated country with the population of 160 million Bangladesh is trying hard to manage the COVID-19 pandemic like other countries of the world. Tackling COVID-19 requires countries to work together and help with each other on how to deal with the outbreak. The first flagship document of the government to address COVID-19 pandemic is the second five-year plan which started in 2016 and will be end in 2020 and is now finalizing the plan spanning from 2021 to 2025. Also, Bangladesh is sharing good practices with other Asia-Pacific countries identified in the GSDR 2019 report which pointed out six transformative areas Bangladesh has developed some good practices.

Likewise, Bangladesh has adopted people centered development approach and achieved the highest cumulative GDP growth globally in the last decade, increasing per capita income and reducing poverty. Bangladesh fulfilled all the three criteria for GNI, HDI and economic vulnerability index in March 2018. After 2017, the government has been preparing SDG's action plan with new projects and programs; launched platforms to monitor implementation in terms of indicators while updating them; finalizing SDG financing strategy, including updating of the financing needs; holds national conferences on SDG implementation review; formed national data coordination committee; developed collaboration between UN and the government; and has approved 40 indicators for localizing SDGs.

Social participation has improved as shown in the budget allocation. The annual real GDP per capita and the manufacturing of value-added as a proportion of GDP has crossed the target set for 2020. Access to electricity is at 96% and the country is eyeing at 100% by 2021. Challenges include income inequality; need for public health care reinforcement; ensuring quality education in different states; climate vulnerability, etc. Bangladesh has an innovative practice that other countries can learn from and is also happy to learn from other countries to address their challenges. International cooperation is needed in finance and technology to facilitate smooth implementation of national security strategy, introduction of national voluntary pension schemes, integrated water resources management, innovative domestic resources mobilization and introduction of modern, commercial agriculture. Bangladesh aims to become an upper middle-income country by 2030, and a developed country by 2040.



### Bhutan:

COVID-19 has killed many, causing economic drift and discrimination based on gender, age, race, digital divides and other human relations. Sources of income are shut down, hunger, poverty and food security issues are likely to be more prevalent due to COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the crisis resulting from the spread of COVID-19, has had a major effect on sustainable development targets, with health systems overwhelmed, businesses shut down, and students kept out of school. The poor and vulnerable have borne the brunt of the pandemic, and tens of millions are expected to experience extreme hunger and poverty.



To deal with the crisis, Bhutan recommends countries to engage the youth in implementing the 2030 agenda, strengthen youth organizations by supporting capacity development, networking to enhance collaboration, and promote gender equality and empower girls and young women. Bhutan echoes the voices of constituencies; and recognize the systemic barriers that impact the enforcement and acceleration of transformations in the SDGs. It notes that while some governments have been more welcoming, militarism, environmental degradation, widening inequality and vulnerabilities are challenges that need to be addressed urgently as there is no development if there is no justice. Bhutan urged the government and the UN to be a part of the policy decision in changing the courses of 2030 agenda for sustainable development.



#### India:

India is home to one-sixth of the humanity and recognize the critical role and responsibility towards the success of the 2030 Agenda. With a view to making the Decade of Action very productive and decisive India has taken several initiatives to meet the Goals and targets. India supports joint global action to address the COVID-19 pandemic and has extended medical assistance to several countries and operationalized the SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund with an initial contribution of USD 10 million. India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has also included USD 276 billion relief and economic stimulus package to provide comprehensive health coverage for front-line workers as well as direct cash transfers for the most vulnerable. The economic stimulus also embraces major reforms in agriculture and industry with long term consequences. India has used the response to the pandemic to forge and strengthen partnerships among the states, civil society and the private sector. In the fight against poverty, India has lifted 271 million poverty and reduced extreme income poverty from 21.2 percent in 2011 to 13.4 percent in 2015. 3. Considerable success have also been achieved in access, affordability and quality of sanitation, nutrition and health services; child and maternal mortality, and stunting.

With respect to 'leave no one behind' India has enshrined it in its Constitution and made social inclusion a cornerstone of the national development agenda which entails both the legislative and executive actions to ensure universal access to basic services and address the challenges faced by the vulnerable communities in nutrition, health, education, employment and social security. To improve gender equality India has embarked on several schemes to ensure employability and economic participation of women. Such schemes include 'Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child' which protects the girl child and support her welfare. Maternity benefits have been enhanced with greater health and nutrition care, maternity leave and conditional cash transfers. Over the last five years, women's enrolment in long-term skill development courses as well as access to entrepreneurship credit has increased manifold.

India addresses the climate action and environmental sustainability agenda by developing clean and efficient energy systems and resilient urban infrastructure. It is also embarking on bio-diversity conservation and eco-restoration measures recording progress in full rural electrification, access to clean cooking fuel, energy-saving appliances that have reduced CO2 emission annually by 38 million tonnes, etc. India has also launched the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the International Solar Alliance to leverage global partnerships.

India aspires to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025 with an inclusive and sustainable growth trajectory. To meet this goal, India has introduced reforms such as single Goods and Services Tax regime, FDI liberalization, Insolvency and Bankruptcy legislation etc., to stimulate manufacturing, investment and infrastructure, innovation and entrepreneurship. Regarding regional connectivity, India has made this an integral part of its international economic initiatives. India embraces global partnerships and has always strived to build regional and international networks and will step up its efforts to increase cooperation and partnership.



#### Islamic Republic of Iran:

Iran's response to COVID is interconnected with degradation of biodiversity and manifests of how human health is associated with plant health. Iran calls for a global recovery strategy, including creation of green jobs, fiscal and financial packages to achieve the SDGs. Financial and technological gaps can minimize the effect of harnessing the synergies on transformative change needed for implementing SDGs.

Iran is also using lessons from voluntary national reports to enhance its effort to leave no one behind and continue building national capacities for further evaluation. Iran believes that voluntary national reports need to be adopted at regional level. In recent years, Iran has invested above the regional average the provision of well-being for the public and improved the HDI, maternal and child mortality rates, agricultural index and adolescent literacy rates.

In the environmental front, Iran is facing land degradation, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, waste management, and climate change. The continuous conflicts in the region has also impurified decision-making, exacerbating the impact on environment, especially transboundary river and water management and pest's invasion across the borders, threatening biosecurity.



#### Nepal:

Nepal has an SDG roadmap from 2016-2030 that includes SDG assessment, financing, and localization guidelines. The roadmap spells out the baseline target of SDG implementation and the financial needs. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, various high-level implementing committees have been set up, including the PM, the Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission and other implementation and monitoring committees at subnational and local levels. During the four years of SDG implementation in Nepal, 2019 was the first assessment of SDG implementation in the country. Progress has been made in, for example, reducing extreme poverty, healthy sector, parity status, and reducing infant/maternal/child mortality. Challenges include multi-dimensional poverty, geographical features, and fragile environmental situation. COVID-19 has affected a lot of sectors, and it is a difficult time to cope with all the problems, including the financial constraint which will make it even harder to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The most significant challenges for implementing SDGs is localizing them at the province and local level, inadequate database, and weak coordination and monitoring mechanism. Nepal is looking to graduate from LDCs to a developing country in a few years, but COVID will affect the progress in this direction. To achieve SDGs in 2030, the Nepalese government has initiated a high-level committee to find out what impact COVID-19 have had on Nepal's economic sectors. The result will be used by the government develop some specific guidelines for the recovery and in achieving SDGs by 2030.



#### Pakistan:

Pakistan believes that progress towards SDGs has been unstable. The Asia-Pacific region has limited success in reducing inequalities, promoting decent work and in ensuring inclusive economic growth and the building of strong institutions. While year 2020 marks the commencement of the Decade of Action, COVID-19 pandemic has created some setbacks in the socio-economic aspects and the achievement of SDGs. Its impact is most severe in the developing countries where precious resources have been diverted to mitigate and defeat the pandemic, squeezing further the fiscal space for progress towards the achievement of the SDGs. The complex and multifaceted challenges would require multipronged solutions where regional cooperation remains the key to achieving the 2030 agenda in region.

Pakistan has included the 2030 agenda into its national development policies and action plans. The national priorities are fully aligned with the aspirations of the 2030 agenda. Top priority areas include fostering social and financial inclusion, ensuring equal opportunities for the marginalized and disempowered, provision of educational opportunities and access to livelihood and social safety nets. The government has also taken deliberate actions to address gender inequality and ensure youth employment.

Pakistan fully supports the regional response to the global Decade of Actions and believe that it is imperative to address the financial challenges countries face in implementing the SDGs. With the COVID-19 outbreak, the fiscal space for nations is shrinking, making it harder for poor nations to set aside the necessary resources to address the outbreak. While countries take actions at national level, global cooperation and solidarity is key to achieve the SDGs.



#### Sri Lanka:

With COVID-19 pandemic continuing, most countries in the region will have to face an unprecedented level of socio-economic downturns. Multiple uncertainties and challenges in the social and economic spheres have rolled back progress in many countries. Developing countries are facing a collapse due to lockdowns and reductions in global demand and supply. Key economic factors that generate jobs are severely affected. Innovative and collaborative measures need to be taken by the region to boost socio-economic situations. It is imperative for the region to create new jobs to compensate the massive job losses and continue to support building of entrepreneurship skills, access to quality education and universal health care.

Sri Lanka has successfully prevented the spread of COVID-19 by imposing regulations, quarantine procedures, testing and treatments. The continuous investment on universal access to free healthcare has helped Sri Lanka to maintain a very low deaths and high recovery rates. A fund has been set aside to strengthen mitigation activities to control the spread of COVID-19 as well as social welfare programs. An Economic Revival Strategy is developed to identify new opportunities posed by the pandemic, including encouraging more digital communication system and online education. To address the environment, the resumption of human activities after the lockdown need to account for a reduction in carbon print. The post COVID-19 situation is an opportunity to gear for green and sustainable growth through more investment in research and innovations.

In the medium and long run, Sri Lanka will respond to socio-economic problems, including income generation, illiteracy with the aim to get back to sustainable growth and development. To achieve the 2030 agenda, Sri Lanka aims to improve its socio- economic resilience. Regional and global cooperation is essential to develop digital connectivity and electronic platforms in the education sector to face any pandemics of similar nature.

In strengthening institutional structures for realizing SDGs, Sri Lanka has enacted the legislative framework for SDGs (Sustainable Development Act No. 19 of 2017) and passed by the Parliament. The framework established a central focal agency (the Sustainable Development Council) to coordinate, facilitate, monitor and report on SDGs implementation. Also, the government established a 'Parliamentary Select Committee for Sustainable Development' to provide parliamentary supervision. Likewise, the government of Sri Lanka and UN signed the UN Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) 2018-2022, which provides the overarching framework for the work of the UN in Sri Lanka in line with the national priorities. It is now in the process of finalizing the policy and strategic framework for implementation of SDGs, through an inclusive mechanism of stakeholder consultations. Sri Lanka has also adopted the VNR and is willing to share its experiences and challenges to support the collective efforts in the region.



## 76<sup>th</sup> Commission Session: Country Statements



#### Bangladesh:

In her speech through a video message at the 76th Commission Session, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina highlighted that although Covid-19 Pandemic has severely affected the economy along with public health, it has a silver lining in the form of changes in global efforts to deal with climate change and growing competition for natural resources. Ocean and sea are the last natural resources frontier contributing to the sustenance of humankind. However, environmental pollution has affected the food chain, and it requires an integrated response to solve the issue in a



sustainable, inclusive, and resources efficient way. Bangladesh has included a blue economy as part of the long-term national development strategy. Yet, Bangladesh has been implementing conservation programmes, using sustainable and eco-friendly technologies to protect freshwater and marine resources. She further emphasized that ESCAP could work with member States to address ocean issues by assisting in improving the capacity of policymakers through sharing knowledge, expertise, and transfer of technology from advanced countries; undertaking joint research on fisheries development to increase regional fish production and establishing networks/platforms to combat and eliminate illegal and unregulated fishing; and initiate mapping and management of resources, critical habitat, and other biodiversity protection.

The statement by Bangladesh highlighted the fact that oceans and the sea in APAC are the engines for global economic growth and development as they act as major conduits of maritime transport and global trade and commerce. With the climate change, economic and financial uncertainty, and growing competition of natural resources, transition into a sustainable, inclusive, and resources efficient paths to ease the pressure on the oceans and coastal waters and marine resources is urgently needed. Ocean's health and productivity must be at the center of global efforts to eradicate poverty, strengthen food security, and build resistance to climate change. The marine food web is facing marine pollutants like marine litter/debris, wastewater, and excessive agricultural inputs. In order to use the ocean sustainably, maritime trade, container traffic, tourism, and renewable energy need to be put high on the agenda. In this direction, Bangladesh has banned the manufacturing and the use of single-use plastic since 2002.

In response to the presentation of the theme study, Bangladesh affirmed its commitment to implement 2011-2020 plan to achieve the SDGs owing to the challenges posed by COVID-19 that could weaken Bangladesh's graduation from the LDC status. A meter rise in the sea level may drown 1/3 of the fertile land, requiring displacement of 20m habitats that might cause a significant blow to the GDP. The respondent highlighted the importance of defining a new economic doctrine that is balanced, considers technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship. To strengthen the institutions and human resources development, Bangladesh will need technical and financial assistance from advanced countries and international organizations.

Concerning the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, Bangladesh affirmed that it had taken some short and medium-term measures to deal with the effects. Additional funds have been used in emergency healthcare, services, social protection programmes, the stimulus package for workers, and those most vulnerable. It is high time for all countries to intensify regional cooperation to overcome the impact of COVID through partnership and coordination. Sharing of expertise and knowledge is needed to manage the outbreak and the long-term benefit for the people in the region. Also, countries need to mobilize regional resources to facilitate economic and social development. In this connection, Bangladesh has contributed USD1.5 million to SAARC COVID emergency plan. Bangladesh proposes establishing a SAARC research institute in Bangladesh to conduct studies and research on infectious diseases to prevent future public outbreaks in the region. SAARC also agreed to form a group of trade officials to facilitate the trade of emergency and essential items and to link medical universities, academia, and research institutions for better coordination among parties.

Regarding the implementation of SDGs, Bangladesh is committed to implementing SDGs. A high-level implementation committee has been established under the PM's office, and SDGs were included in the 5-year plan in 2016, and the current 5-year plan that nears its completion. Bangladesh welcomes the progress report, which identified six transformative areas where Bangladesh has done well in the areas of sustainable and just economy and global environmental governance. Bangladesh believes that coordination, partnership, and the sharing experience and good practices among APAC countries should be the key to progress to the SDGs. The country is committed to implementing dedicated broadband internet connectivity via the implementation of the APAC information superhighway through the support of all member States.



#### India:

India highlighted that (1) data and statistics are crucial, and a standard methodology needs to be adopted across APAC for marine data collection; (2) sustainable utilization of fish resources would require ecosystem-based management instead of a species based approach; and (3) marine pollution is much more than plastics pollution and the problem of agriculture and pesticides runoff from land, significantly affect coastal waters, which would also need to be addressed. About 95% of India's trade is made via oceans. India places a strong commitment to the protection of the coastal and marine environment and economic development by using ocean-friendly technologies. The Envoy programme of India assesses the health of the ocean, ecosystem-based management of ocean resources and coastal vulnerability to climate change. Marine spatial planning and an ecosystem-based approach are applied for policy formulation. Also, India has held several meetings that provided training to delegates from the region in operational oceanography.

The ocean observation network deployed in the Indian Ocean has helped the gathering of essential data on different parameters and accurately predict cyclones activities, thereby saving thousands of lives. The ecosystem in the region is under stress, such as coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass meadows and under threat from over-exploitation and climate change. The blue economy should include sustainable harnessing of marine resources and must become a priority. India has collaborated with Malaysia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka in a "Large Marine Ecosystem Project." India believes that global action is needed to prevent marine debris and litter by 2025 and committed to eliminating single-use plastic by 2022. The Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiatives aims at strengthening the marine ecological conservation, capacity-building, resource sharing, scientific and research cooperation, disaster resilience, sustainable use of marine resources, trade, and maritime connectivity. India will continue its role for closer coordinated and community-building efforts for healthy and productive ocean and coastal areas.

India has come up with three pre-emptive and proactive response to COVID-19. It has allocated USD276 billion for the economic stimulus package, provided comprehensive health coverage for frontline workers, and directed cash transfer to the vulnerable. India is ramping up the public health infrastructure and energize various economic sectors. India supports the joint global actions to address the COVID crisis as it has been at the forefront of global cooperation and involved in establishing the SAARC COVID emergency fund with an initial contribution of USD 10 million. It has shared best practices with other countries and transported essential medicines to 123 countries as an expression of global solidarity. In the virtual G20 summit, India underscored the need to put human beings at the center of global prosperity and cooperation. It also emphasized the need to freely and openly share medical research and development to strengthen and reform inter-governmental organizations and institutions.



#### Islamic Republic of Iran:

Iran has contributed to the implementation of SDGs on disaster risk reduction and standardized a framework on disaster prevention, reduction, resilience, and recovery in the context of South-South cooperation under the terms

of the Commission resolution 71/11, which establishes a regional center for disaster information management. Iran has granted a building in Tehran for APDIM and provides financial support to allow the center to deliver on the Commission resolution 71/11.



#### Pakistan:

In 2017, Pakistan launched a marine ecosystem action plan to reduce marine pollution and to sustainably use marine resources, including sustainable fisheries/aquaculture and promotion of tourism. COVID-19 Pandemic has caused a considerable impact on developing countries, creating a downturn in economic activities and social setbacks. Noting that LDCs are suffering from debt burdens, Pakistan calls for the global initiative to debt relief on LDCs from the international community. About 1.2 trillion PKR is earmarked to provide a fiscal package is to help the vulnerable as a tool to mitigate the impact of COVID and economic downturn. International solidarity is needed to ensure no one, nowhere is left behind.



#### Sri Lanka:

As an island nation in the Indian ocean, the issue of the ocean/sea has been of paramount importance for Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has made commitments in (1) ensuring sustainable fisheries; (2) preserving livelihood; (3) prevention of marine pollution; (4) sustainable blue economy; (5) feasible navigation in the Indian Ocean; and (6) Maritime connectivity. Also, in 2018, Sri Lanka acted as the coordinator of the Indian Ocean Bream Association, Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security. The country has participated in initiating and hosting of multilateral engagements for the Indian Ocean. In its economic and development agenda Sri Lanka has included a blue-green economy as a focus and has a national policy that bans selected categories of PE since 2017 with the aim to reducing marine debris and litter.

Addressing the impact of COVID in the region, Sri Lanka fully supports closer cooperation within the region to minimize the impact of COVID. The country has contributed to the SAARC Emergency COVID Fund to alleviate the impact of COVID in the region. Networks were also established to share information, knowledge and expertise of health services to battle the pandemic. Sri Lanka believes sharing best practices, experiences and technology, and allowing medical supply access at affordable price would be an integral part of a regional collective response on the COVID-19 crisis.



#### Turkey:

Turkey recognizes the need to strengthen global cooperation to address global issues and will continue to contribute to the global responses, particularly during the time of a pandemic. It believes that with or without the pandemic, the global system is already facing a lot of challenges. The nation has taken strong measures in the healthcare system, including providing free universal health care and investment in healthcare infrastructures.

The Turkish government has provided free universal healthcare and made early investments in its healthcare infrastructures that have paid off during the pandemic by making it more accessible to people. In particular, the investment in health workforce and new hospitals prior to the pandemic helped the country to cope with the pressure of COVID-19 outbreak. The country has further witnessed new cases of COVID-19 slowing and discharged cases exceeding new cases. The healthcare system is still able to cope with the increasing pressure of COVID-19 pandemic. Turkey has responded to economic downturn by helping the households and businesses who are in need and paid special attention to most vulnerable and high-risk groups, including migrants, refugees, displaced person and elderly. As a part of their UN global humanitarian response, Turkey will continue to provide medical supplies to other countries.



## SDGs IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

### a. SGD: priorities, actions and means of implementation

**Only seven Indian states manage to address the UN's zero hunger goal;** (Financial Express) 5 January 2020 India has performed dismally on UN's Sustainable Development Goals with only seven Indian states successfully addressing "hunger and malnutrition." Read more [here](#)

**SDGs 2030 comprehensive agenda to ensure development:** Zafar (Radio Pakistan) 6 January 2020 Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Services Dr. Zafar Mirza says Sustainable Development Goals of 2030 is the most

**Bangladesh: 5,400 schools to stay open for harvesters** (Daily Star) 22 April 2020 The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) has kept open over 5,400 primary schools in haor areas to accommodate labourers harvesting paddy. Farmers grow paddy on the low-lying wetlands in those districts only once a year. Read more [here](#)

**Plans underway to revive tourism industry** (Colombo Gazette) 22 April 2020 The Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority has drafted plans for an early revival post-COVID-19, as the

comprehensive and ambitious agenda to ensure the development of this planet. Read more [here](#)

**Poverty and income inequality up in 25 states and UTs": NITI Aayog** (e-pao.net) 13 January 2020 Nearly 25 states and Union Territories in the country have been facing poverty, hunger, income inequality, and every fifth Indian is below the poverty line, and hence the country needs to take huge strides to alleviate poverty says Sustainable Development Goals Index 2019-20 released by NITI Aayog. Read more [here](#)

**Bangladesh on the right track to attain SDGs: PM** (e-pao.net) 15 January 2020 Prime minister Sheikh Hasina has said Bangladesh is now on the right track to attain the SDGs due to her government's time-befitting initiatives. Read more [here](#)

**India ranks 76<sup>th</sup> on WEF's global Social Mobility Index (SMI), Denmark tops the list** (The Financial Express) 20 January 2020 India has been ranked very low at 76<sup>th</sup> place out of 82 countries on a new Social Mobility Index compiled by the World Economic Forum, while Denmark has topped the charts. Read more [here](#)

**Afghanistan improves its growth despite uncertainty** (The World Bank) 22 January 2020 Afghanistan's economy grew by an estimated 2.9 percent in 2019, driven mainly by strong agricultural growth following recovery from drought, but lingering political uncertainty dampens private confidence and investment, the World Bank says. Read more [here](#)

**India needs \$2.64 trillion investment to meet SDGs by 2030: Report** (The Economic Times) 21 January 2020 India needs a whopping USD 2.64 trillion investment to meet the UN's sustainable development goals, offering the private sector an investment opportunity of over USD 1.12 trillion by 2030, according to a report. Read more [here](#)

**Make Dhaka livable again** (Daily Star) 28 January 2020: Dhaka is one of the fastest-growing megacities in the world. It is predicted to be one of the world's largest metropolises by 2025, along with Tokyo, Mexico City, Shanghai, Beijing, and New York City. But Dhaka is not precisely what you'd call a "pretty" city by any means. Read more [here](#)

**Pakistan needs \$234.5bn to achieve key SDGs** (The Dawn) 28 January 2020 Pakistan needs at least \$234.5 billion investment by 2030 to deliver on three sustainable development goals (SDGs) — power, digital access, transport, and clean water and sanitation. Read more [here](#)

**Sri Lanka presents USD16Bn opportunity for the private sector to invest in sustainable development** (LBO Lanka Business Online) 30 January 2020 The Standard Chartered SDG Investment Map reveals an almost USD 9.668 trillion opportunity for private-sector investors across all emerging markets, with Sri Lanka representing USD16.2 billion of that total. Read more [here](#)

**We need a lot of resources, but without a lot of conditions** (Daily Star) 31 January 2020 Bangladesh wants more assistance from the development partners for implementing its eighth five-year plan. "We need a lot of resources, but without a lot of conditions," said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen. Read more [here](#)

**Bhutan makes Indians pay 'sustainable development fee'** (Live Mint) 04 February 2020 Bhutan is introducing a "sustainable development fee" for regional tourists following a spike in Indian visitors that has sparked worries for the unique Himalayan kingdom's cherished ecology. Read more [here](#)

**Over 45% drop in Indian companies' foreign borrowings in December 2019 compared to the year-ago period** (Financial Express) 09 February 2020: Foreign borrowings of Indian companies fell over 45 percent to USD 2.09 billion in December 2019 as compared to the year-ago period, according to the Reserve Bank data. Indian firms had raised USD 3.81 billion in December 2018, which included USD 37 million through the issuance of masala bonds. Read more [here](#)

**Partnership crucial to achieving SDGs, national goals: FM** (United News of Bangladesh) 20 February 2020 Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen sought a stronger private sector role in helping Bangladesh reach its goals, including implementation of SDGs by

country starts opening up gradually from this week. Read more [here](#)

**Guideline on the way for garment factory reopening** (Daily Star) 23 April 2020 The Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) has been making a guideline for reopening the garment factories, most of which have been asked to shut down by the sector's apex trade body on April 11. Read more [here](#)

**Locked-down Indian economy in its worst quarter since mid-1990s: Reuters poll** (Reuters) 23 April 2020 The Indian economy is likely to suffer its worst quarter since the mid-1990s, hit by the ongoing lockdown imposed to stem the spread of coronavirus, according to a Reuters poll, which predicted a mild and gradual recovery. Read more [here](#)

**SBP prepared for more measures to safeguard Pakistan economy against COVID-19** (Business Recorder) 23 April 2020 The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is willing to introduce more measures in order to protect the country's economy engulfed by uncertainty arise due to the coronavirus pandemic, informed SBP Governor, Reza Baqir. Read more [here](#)

**Bangladesh garment factories reopen, while India looks to ease its lockdown** (Reuters) 27 April 2020 Bangladesh allowed garment manufacturers in the capital Dhaka and the port city of Chittagong to resume work from the start of this week. Workers are required to wear masks, wash hands at the entrance, undergo temperature checks and maintain physical distancing. Read more [here](#)

**Waking up 'sleeping giant': PM Modi urges India's states to woo global cos leaving China** (Financial Express) 28 April 2020 Prime Minister Narendra Modi has asked Chief Ministers to prepare well to attract investments from the global companies as they might want to exit China after a long trade war with the US and the uncertainty caused by the origination of pandemic from the country. Read more [here](#)

**Cabinet approves relief package worth Rs75 billion to facilitate small businesses** (Business Recorder) 28 April 2020 The cabinet has approved package worth Rs75 billion rupees to resolve issues of working capital of those small businesses which have been massively affected due to lockdown. The initiative also aims to provide relief to laborers and daily wagers, who got unemployed due to coronavirus pandemic. Read more [here](#)

**Govt, development partners weigh economic impact of COVID-19** (Business Recorder) 29 April 2020 A high-level meeting, chaired by the Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, underlined several challenges the country was likely to face on the economic front due to the impact of Covid-19 on the national, regional and global economy. Fiscal deficit could rise to 9.6% of GDP and we can expect a higher poverty figures. Read more [here](#)

**Iran says reopened for business as no end in sight to virus crisis** (AFP) 29 April 2020 President Hassan Rouhani said Iran will reopen for business despite its persistent coronavirus outbreak as there was no end in sight to the crisis. The country has to follow all the medical instructions, but work and productions are as essential as these precautions, the president said. Read more [here](#)

**Bangladesh to face one of the highest decline in working hours: ILO** (Daily Star) 30 April 2020 Bangladesh is among the countries that are forecast to face the highest decline in working hours in the first half of 2019 as the raging novel coronavirus continues to put economies on lockdown and factories closed, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Read more [here](#)

**ADB now forecasts economic losses of \$13.3 billion** (Daily Star) 03 May 2020 The Bangladesh economy now stands to lose a staggering \$13.3 billion for the coronavirus outbreak, according to the Asian Development Bank, which is more than four times the amount of damage the Manila-based multilateral lender had predicted back in March. Read more [here](#)

**PM Modi tells ministries: Ensure farm credit is easy, review Essential Commodities Act** (Financial Express) 3 May 2020 Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 2 May 2020 asked the ministries of finance and agriculture and other stakeholders to ensure that



2030 saying the partnership is crucial. Read more [here](#)

**Private sector keen to join mobilization of domestic investment for SDGs** (Lanka Business Online) 20 February 2020 For mobilizing domestic investment for the Sustainable Development Goals, the Government needs to develop different schemes of blended finance, non-state budget investment financing, and collaborative financing schemes. For such a mix of investment to be attracted, 'the ease of doing business' in Sri Lanka needs to be improved significantly, and policy consistency is imperative. Read more [here](#)

**Promotion of tourism to strengthen the economy, create jobs to local people: PM** (Business Recorder) 25 February 2020 Prime Minister Imran Khan said there was a lot of tourism potential in Pakistan and promotion of that sector would not only strengthen the economy but also create business and job opportunities to numerous local people. Read more [here](#)

**Quality education for all, PTI govt's top priority** (Business Recorder) 2 March 2020 Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan on Sunday said that it was top priority of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government to ensure the provision of quality education in the country. Read more [here](#)

**Bangladeshi start-ups are homing in on billion-dollar valuation: ICT state minister** (Daily Star) 4 March 2020 Bangladesh's technology start-ups are catching the attention of venture capital (VC) firms, which have put in about \$200 million in funding over the last four years, said ICT State Minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak on 3 March 2020. Read more [here](#)

**Pakistan moving on the road to development: PM** (Business Recorder) 5 March 2020 "Pakistan is moving on the road to development with accelerated development spending; rupee stable; current account deficit down by 73 percent; exports growing; cement sales up," Imran Khan said in a tweet posted on his social media account. Read more [here](#)

**Socio-economic Progress: Bangladesh example for other** (Daily Star) 10 March 2020 Emphasising that Bangladesh's recent socioeconomic progress is an example for other countries, Nobel prize-winning Indian economist Prof Amartya Sen yesterday said it was essential to understand the mechanism that helped Bangladesh achieve this success. Read more [here](#)

**LDC graduation, SDGs to dominate economy's course next decade** (The Daily Star) 12 March 2020 Bangladesh's graduation from a least developed country in 2024 and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will be among the major aspects that will govern the economy's course next decade, said the International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh (ICCB) on 11 March 2020. Read more [here](#)

**Government scrambles for resources to meet virus-related expenses** (The DAWN) 17 March 2020 As the government started looking out for grants and aid to fight threat caused by Coronavirus (Covid-19), the International Monetary Fund on 16 March 2020 agreed not to consider expenditures to be made on deadly virus in deficit targets. Read more [here](#)

**'How I will buy food for my family': Daily wage earners counting losses during coronavirus outbreak** (Daily Star) 23 March 2020 As some people with more regularized jobs and businesses gradually begin to work from home or enter stay-home modes across the country, livelihoods of low-income people are being hit hard. Read more [here](#)

**PM Imran announces financial stimulus package to mitigate economic fallout from COVID-19 outbreak** (The DAWN) 24 March 2020 Prime Minister Imran Khan announced on 24 March 2020 a financial stimulus package to deal with the adverse impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the country's economy. Read more [here](#)

**Jobless after virus lockdown, India's poor struggle to eat** (Associated Press) 26 March 2020 India's finance ministry announced a 1.7 trillion (\$22 billion) economic stimulus package that will include delivering grains and lentil rations for three months to 800 million people, some 60% of the world's second-most populous country. Read more [here](#)

farmers indeed have easy access to institutional credit at this juncture and other forms of governmental support, including marketing assistance. Read more [here](#)

**Pakistan faced revenue loss of Rs 119 billion in April due to coronavirus crisis: Umar** (Business Recorder) 3 May 2020 Planning Minister Asad Umar has said Pakistan's revenue loss was estimated at Rs 119 billion in April due to lockdown and restrictions in wake of coronavirus. Read more [here](#)

**How much economy will lose from coronavirus and what to expect from economic relief package 2.0** (Financial Express) 4 May 2020 As the nationwide lockdown imposed by the Indian government completes 1 month, Indian businesses are starting to feel the bite. The economic impact of the pandemic on India is likely to be around Rs 7-8 trillion with sectors such as trade, textiles, aviation, transport, and MSMMEs facing the brunt of the impact. Read more [here](#)

**Afghanistan distributes free bread as prices soar amid coronavirus** (Reuters) 5 May 2020 Afghanistan's government began distributing free bread to hundreds of thousands of people across the country this week as supplies have been disrupted during the coronavirus shutdown and prices have soared, officials and experts said. Read more [here](#)

**8.5% GDP growth set for fiscal 2020-21 on hopes of V-shaped recovery** (Daily Star) 6 May 2020 The Bangladesh government is gunning for an 8.5% GDP growth next fiscal year in the hope the economy would be springing back to a higher expansion trajectory once the coronavirus outbreak has been quelled. Read more [here](#)

**India seeks to replace China as global companies' first choice; looks to lure 1,000 US firms** (Financial Express) 7 May 2020 India is seeking to lure US businesses, including medical devices giant Abbott Laboratories, to relocate from China. The government in April reached out to more than 1,000 companies in the U.S. and through overseas missions to offer incentives for manufacturers seeking to move out of China. Read more [here](#)

**Turkey bans three banks from lira transactions as currency hits record low** (Reuters) 7 May 2020 Turkey blocked BNP Paribas, Citibank and UBS from making lira transactions after the currency hit a record low against the dollar on 7 May 2020, as investors fretted about a lack of reserves to protect the economy from the coronavirus impact. Read more [here](#)

**Bangladeshi garments suppliers held hostage by international clothing brands, retailers** (Daily Star) 10 May 2020 As the coronavirus sweeps across the globe, one of its aftermaths is being felt in Bangladesh's readymade garments sector, the largest foreign currency earner in the country. Read more [here](#)

**India moves to draw foreign investment in post-COVID-19 world** (Straits Times) 10 May 2020 Making land more easily available, fast-tracking clearances, relaxing labour norms and offering tax incentives are some of the promises India has made as it attempts to draw foreign investment, in a post-Covid-19 world. Read more [here](#)

**Indian govt loses GST revenue as coronavirus eats up retail trade worth lakhs of crores of rupees** (Financial Express) 12 May 2020 With India being under a lockdown for over a month now, the retail sector has reported massive losses, impacting the GST revenues of the central and state governments. Read more [here](#)

**PM Modi's Rs 20 lakh cr economic package: How much of it is already done, and how much is new spend** (Financial Express) 13 May 2020 Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced a mega economic relief package worth Rs 20 lakh crore to make India a self-reliant nation amid the coronavirus-led crisis. Read more [here](#)

**PM launches disbursement of cash aid for 50 lakh poor households** (Daily Star) 14 May 2020 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina launched the disbursement of over Tk 1,200 crore cash aid for 50 lakh poor families hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. Each family will get Tk 2,500 cash through mobile financial services

**Govt to provide Rs12,000 cash grant to deserving families from next month: Nishtar** (Business Recorder) 26 March 2020 Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar has said that the Pakistan government will provide cash assistance of Rs12,000 each to the deserving families affected by the negative impact of coronavirus next month. Read more [here](#)

**Low-income people to get food support countrywide: ministry** (Daily Star) 30 March 2020 Bangladesh Government has taken an initiative to provide food assistance to those who have lost their means of daily income, due to the ongoing 10-day shutdown. Read more [here](#)

**Coronavirus Fallout: Bangladesh govt to help affected SMEs** (Daily Star) 1 April 2020 The Bangladesh government is set to bear a portion of the interest payments on working capital of small and medium enterprises that have been hit hard by the ongoing shutdown amid coronavirus scare. Read more [here](#)

**India: Migrant workers' plight prompts UN call for 'domestic solidarity' in coronavirus battle** (UN News) 2 April 2020 Pervasive challenges remain for hundreds-of-thousands of migrant workers in India whose lives were upended by the sudden lockdown across the country, in response to the threat of the coronavirus pandemic, said the UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet on 2 April 2020. Read more [here](#)

**Demand shocks likely to dominate supply over Covid-19** (Pakistan Observer) 2 April 2020 Countries having better social protection systems are in a better position to deal with COVID -19 pandemic, therefore, flexible budgeting should be introduced in Pakistan on a war footing by diverting funds from other areas for creating strong social protection systems. Read more [here](#)

**Sri Lanka President urges WHO to press IMF/WB for debt relief in view of health calamity** (The Island) 2 April 2020 President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has urged the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) to pursue with the international financial organizations, including IMF, WB and ADB, and lending nations to help developing countries adversely affected by the COVID- 19 calamity. Read more [here](#)

**Bangladesh PM unveils Tk 72,750cr package to address the impact of coronavirus** (Daily Star) 5 April 2020 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina unveiled on 5 April 2020 the government's plan to address the possible impact of coronavirus on the country's economy, declaring an allocation of Tk 72,750 crore under a set of stimulus packages, which is nearly 2.52 percent of GDP. The four programmes are: increasing public expenditure, formulating a stimulus package, widening social safety net coverage and increasing monetary supply. Read more [here](#)

**Afghanistan's economic growth in 2020 to remain sluggish amid challenges, ADB says** (The Times of Central Asia) 6 April 2020 Political uncertainty and the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic are expected to weigh on Afghanistan's economy in 2020, according to a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) report. Read more [here](#)

**Countries dealing with COVID-19 ask Bangladesh to take back its undocumented workers** (Daily Star) 9 April 2020 On top of the coronavirus crisis and the feared economic aftershock, Bangladesh is now facing pressure from different countries to take back undocumented Bangladeshis working there. Read more [here](#)

**PM unveils Tk 5,000cr stimulus package for agriculture sector** (Daily Star) 12 April 2020 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced on 12 April 2020 a new stimulus package of Tk 5,000 crore to provide financial assistance to farmers in rural areas for boosting agricultural production facing the fallout of Covid-19. Read more [here](#)

**Banks see govt guarantee for lending to some sectors** (Financial Express) 12 April 2020 Banks have asked the government to offer guarantees for lending to certain sectors amid the COVID-19 lockdown so that they have greater comfort while sanctioning loans, State Bank of India chairman Rajnish Kumar said on 11 April 2020. Read more [here](#)

(MFSs) so that they get the money directly, she said. Read more [here](#)

**Pay half of bonus now, the rest later** (Daily Star) 17 May 2020 The government asked garment factory owners to pay the workers 50 percent of their basic salary as Eid bonus before the festival and another 50 percent after the festival. Read more [here](#)

**India announces health reform measures, public expenditure to be increased** (Financial Express) 17 May 2020 Financial Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her 5th address this week regarding the Rs 20 lakh crore economic package announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said that the government will be introducing a slew of reforms in the country's health sector. Read more [here](#)

**Cash-strapped India's economic plan unlikely to soften coronavirus blow** (Reuters) 18 May 2020 India's \$266 billion economic rescue package rests mostly on boosting company credit but contains scant new public spending, tax breaks or cash support to revive demand and prevent firms from collapsing, business leaders and economists say. Read more [here](#)

**Task force suggests ways to create 2.5 million jobs amid job losses at home and abroad due to COVID-19** (Kathmandu Post) 19 May 2020 A government formed task force has suggested creating over 2.5 million jobs in the next four-five years by restructuring and expanding various government programmes that are ongoing and by activating new proposed programmes. Read more [here](#)

**With debt crunch looming, Sri Lanka needs help from its friends** (Reuters) 27 May 2020 Sri Lanka's finances were fragile long before the coronavirus delivered its blow, but unless the country can secure aid from allies like China, economists say it may have to make a fresh appeal to the IMF or default on its debt. Read more [here](#)

**India's lockdown, the biggest in the world, will push over 1.2 crore people into extreme poverty** (Financial Express) 28 May 2020 As a direct result of the pandemic's economic destruction and India leads that projection, with the World Bank estimating some 12 million of its citizens will be pushed to the very margins this year. Read more [here](#)

**India is set to report a sharp slowdown as the pandemic hits its economy – and things could get even worse** (CNBC) 27 May 2020 India is set to report growth numbers for the first three months of this year, and analysts expect Asia's third largest economy to have expanded at a slower pace. Read more [here](#)

**Online job postings fell 87 percent in April on coronavirus impact: ADB** (BDNews24) 30 May 2020 The number of new job advertisements in the largest online job matching site in Bangladesh has declined by 87 percent in April due to the impact of COVID-19 outbreak. Read more [here](#)

**Budget focuses on infrastructure to generate extra jobs** (Himalayan Times) 29 May 2020 The government has allocated a balanced budget to accelerate the overall development activities with focus on roads, energy, hydropower, rail, urban development and drinking water, among others. Read more [here](#)

**Modi's economic package is spot on; here directly compared with other nations** (Financial Express) 1 June 2020 India's fiscal package announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is appropriate and the country is a positive fiscal outlier as the stimulus is nearly the largest among major emerging market economies. Read more [here](#)

**India launches \$6.7 billion plan to boost electronics manufacturing** (Reuters) 2 June 2020 India launched a \$6.65 billion plan on 2 June to boost electronic manufacturing, saying it would start by offering five global smartphone makers incentives to establish or expand domestic production. Read more [here](#)

**Protect the migrant** (Daily Star) 4 June 2020 Bangladesh has written to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, urging for measures to protect the rights of migrants being affected by the global coronavirus pandemic. Read more [here](#)

**Bangladesh urges trading partners for**

**World Bank forecasts serious impact to Sri Lanka** (Colombo Gazette) 12 April 2020 The World Bank has forecast that Sri Lanka and other South Asian countries are likely to record their worst growth performance in four decades this year due to the coronavirus outbreak. Read more [here](#)

**Outlook is grim for Bangladesh** (Daily Star) 12 April 2020 Bangladesh's tremendous growth momentum in recent years is set to come to a crashing halt for the coronavirus outbreak in the country, with the poor and informal sector bearing the most brunt, said the World Bank 11 April 2020. Read more [here](#)

**India plans to resume some manufacturing amid lockdown** (BD News24) 13 April 2020 India is planning to restart some manufacturing after April 15 to help offset the economic damage of a nationwide coronavirus lockdown, two government sources said, even as it weighs extending the lockdown. Read more [here](#)

**Modi's economic package just a relief, not stimulus; RBI monetary policy panel sounds red alert** (Financial Express) 13 April 2020 Even as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a mega economic package of nearly Rs 1.7 lakh crore to provide cushion to the sagging economy, monetary policy discussions at the RBI have noted that this package is merely a relief than a stimulus. Read more [here](#)

**Government plans partial lockdown exit to kick-start stalled economy** (Times of India) 15 April 2020 India will allow makes of information technology hardware, farmers and industries in rural areas to resume operations after April 20 as Prime Minister Narendra Modi crafts a plan to exit the world's biggest lockdown and revive stalled economic activity. Read more [here](#)

**Govt to issue 50 lakh more ration cards for vulnerable families: PM** (Daily Star) 16 April 2020 The Bangladesh government will provide 50 lakh more ration cards to vulnerable families hit hard by the countrywide shutdown due to coronavirus outbreak, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said 16 April. Read more [here](#)

**Government to procure 21 lakh MT food grains this season: PM** (Daily Star) 20 April 2020 Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the government will procure 21 lakh metric tons (MT) of food grains in the current season to ensure food security in the country and fair prices of farmers' produces. Read more [here](#)

**Life under lockdown in India's massive Dharavi slum** (Reuters) 20 April 2020 In homes that are cramped, stuffy and increasingly low on food, residents of Mumbai's huge Dharavi slum are struggling under India's nationwide lockdown. Read more [here](#)

## **b. Regional cooperation and other means of implementation**

**Turkey, Russia launch TurkStream pipeline carrying gas to Europe** (Reuters) 7 January 2020 The presidents of Turkey and Russia formally launched the TurkStream pipeline which will carry Russian natural gas to southern Europe through Turkey, part of Moscow's efforts to reduce shipments via Ukraine. Read more [here](#)

**Sri Lankan PM Mahinda Rajapaksa to visit India** (Business Line) 12 January 2020 Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa will visit India in January and held talks with his Indian counterpart PM Narendra Modi, a media report said. Read more [here](#)

**With its global footprint, Amazon to export \$10 billion of 'Make In India' goods by 2025: Jeff Bezos** (Times of India) 15 January 2020 Amazon founder and chief executive Jeff Bezos, who was on a three-day visit to India, said that the e-commerce giant will use its global footprint to export \$10 billion worth of 'Make In India' goods by 2025. Read more [here](#)

**Imran, Trump meeting useful as both sides agree to enhance trade relations: Qureshi** (The Business Recorder) 22 January 2020 Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said that Prime Minister Imran Khan's meeting with US President Donald Trump has

**responsible business conduct** (Daily Star) 4 June 2020 Bangladesh has urged its trading partners to practice responsible business conduct during the coronavirus pandemic that is rattling the global economy, mostly the developing countries. Read more [here](#)

**India 9<sup>th</sup> largest recipient of FDI in 2019, will continue to attract investments: UN** (PTI) 16 June 2020 India received USD 51 billion in foreign investment in 2019 and was the world's 9th largest recipient of foreign direct investments (FDI) in 2019, according to a report by the UN's trade body. Read more [here](#)

**Pandemic nudging Bangladesh's debt-to-GDP ratio out of comfort zone** (Daily Star) 17 June 2020 The coronavirus pandemic is turning out to be a quite a costly affair for Bangladesh, due to which its public debt-to-GDP ratio, which has thus far been in a healthy position, is set to exceed the responsible threshold of 40 per cent. Read more [here](#)

**India returning to normal business activity; consumption, demand rising: PM Modi** (Press Trust of India) 18 June 2020 Prime Minister Narendra Modi said business activity in India is returning to normal levels with consumption and demand fast approaching pre-COVID levels. Read more [here](#)

**Duty-free benefit may bring in Chinese Investments** (The Business Standard) 23 June 2020 The rising wages and living costs in China and an ongoing trade war with the USA have opened up a window of opportunity for Bangladesh. Granting duty-free access to 5,161 additional Bangladeshi products to the Chinese market from July 1 is encouraging news for the country at this time of the coronavirus pandemic. Read more [here](#)

**UN high-ups for postponing LDF graduation of Bangladesh** (Daily Star) 23 June 2020 Bangladesh needs to reconsider the time it planned to take to graduate from a least developed country (LDC) to a developing one as the coronavirus pandemic has severely affected the economy, said United Nations (UN) high-ups and economists. Read more [here](#)

**PM Modi looks inward to save Indian economy as crisis bites** (Times of India) 25 June 2020 Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to make India more self-reliant, but if the experience over the past few years is anything to go by, it's not going to be easy. Read more [here](#)

**Nepal families face hunger, skip meals as pandemic hits remittances** (Reuters) 30 June 2020 Nepali housewife Shiba Kala Limbu grimaced as she recalled how she went hungry in order to feed her five-year-old daughter after the coronavirus pandemic cost her husband his job as a mason in the Gulf state of Qatar. Read more [here](#)

**India to purchase over \$3 billion defense equipment from U.S. – Trump** (Reuters) 25 February 2020 India will buy defense equipment worth more than \$3 billion from the US, President Donald Trump said on Monday, the second day of his two-day visit to the South Asian nation. Read more [here](#)

**Donald Trump India visit highlights: US President, First Lady Melania conclude 2-day tour** (Financial Express) 25 February 2020 The meeting between US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Hyderabad House has got over. Both the leaders made initial statement even as a mega announcement are expected around \$3 billion (approx. Rs 21,000 crore) defence deals. Read more [here](#)

**Sri Lanka to host UN Asia-Pacific tourism crisis management confab** (Economynext) 3 March 2020: Sri Lanka will host a conference of Asia Pacific tourism ministers, state and industry officials in June 2020 focusing on developing crisis management process and responses and sharing information in the Asia Pacific region, the island's, tourism development office said. Read more [here](#)

**India plans to airlift components from China to**



been useful as both sides agreed to enhance trade relations, Radio Pakistan reported. Read more [here](#)

**There's enthusiasm for investing in India, says Piyush Goyal** (The Business Recorder) 23 January 2020 Asserting that the Indian economy is well-poised to take off, Union minister Piyush Goyal said there is a lot of enthusiasm for making investments in the country. Read more [here](#)

**Sri Lanka to work with India for peace and security in the region** (Colombo Gazette) 27 January 2020 The Sri Lankan Government says it will work with India to ensure peace and security in the region. Read more [here](#)

**PM Khan orders speedy completion of CPEC projects** (Dawn) 29 January 2020 Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday said the ongoing development projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) should be completed on a fast-track basis and directed to give final shape to the consultation process of the future plans on priority. Read more [here](#)

**US President Donald Trump's India visit, Indo-US trade deal likely** (Financial Express) 05 February 2020 India and the US are set to seal a trade deal during President Donald Trump's planned visit to India in the last week of this month, multiple sources said. Read more [here](#)

**UN secretary general likely to visit Pakistan later this month** (Dawn) 10 February 2020 United Nations Secretary General António Guterres is likely to visit Pakistan later this month to attend a refugee conference, UN and diplomatic sources told Dawn. Read more [here](#)

**ADB provides \$170m more for capital market reforms in Bangladesh** (Daily Star) 11 February 2020 ADB has approved a second portion loan of \$170 million to conclude the Third Capital Market Development Program in Bangladesh. Read more [here](#)

**Trump says working on a very big trade deal with India, but will take time** (Reuters) 19 February 2020 President Donald Trump said the US and India were working on a major trade deal, but he was not sure if it would be completed before the US presidential election in November. Read more [here](#)

**help local tech industry: sources** (Reuters) 5 March 2020 India is planning to backstop its growing electronics sector by arranging to airlift components from China, three government officials said, as it tries to contain the fallout from the coronavirus crisis in China. Read more [here](#)

**India, Pakistan plan to restart some economic activity during coronavirus lockdown** (Reuters) 13 April 2020 India and Pakistan are planning to partially reopen their economies to minimize the cost of restrictive measures imposed to halt the spread of the novel coronavirus, officials in the two countries said on 13 April 2020. Read more [here](#)

**South Asia least integrated region for trade – ADB** (The Island) 17 March 2020 South Asia has an abysmal performance in intra-regional trade as bilateral movement of goods is throttled between India and Pakistan, says the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Read more [here](#)

**Pakistan, India ease restrictions for some small businesses amid lockdown** (Business Recorder) 25 April 2020 The Indian government allowed a limited reopening of shops in neighborhoods and residential areas from Saturday, more than a month after the nation went into a lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Read more [here](#)

**SAARC nations unveil emergency stimulus packages to tackle COVID-19 economic fallout** (Financial Express) 26 April 2020 The World Bank recently warned that South Asia faces its worst economic performance in 40 years due to the deadly coronavirus pandemic which has been wreaking havoc worldwide. Read more [here](#)

**Pakistan Approves \$8.2b Railway Line Upgradation Project Under CPEC; Experts Ask, 'Who Is Paying'?** (Eurasian Times) 8 June 2020 Advancing further on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan has agreed to upgrade the railway line between Peshawar and Karachi at an estimated price of about \$7.2 billion. Read more [here](#)

**Exclusive: India allots import licenses for 1.1 million tonnes of refined palmolein from Indonesia – sources** (Reuters) 20 February 2020 India has issued import licenses for 1.1 million tonnes of refined palmolein from Indonesia, government and trade sources told Reuters. Read more [here](#)

**Pakistan mulling direct flight operations for Kyrgyzstan** (Business Recorder) 20 February 2020 Direct flight operations will be launched between Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan, said Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan. Read more [here](#)

## c. Gender equality and empowerment

**Dhaka University (DU) rape victim can recognize rapist if she sees him: NHRC chief** (The Daily Star) 7 January 2020 Bangladesh should strive to become a role model in eradicating violence against women and children, Chief of National Human Rights Commission Nasima Begum today. Read more [here](#)

**Budget 2020: Government must focus on job creation, resolving farmer distress, women safety** (Financial Express) 27 January 2020 With a rising unemployment and concerns around women safety, people want the government to focus most on these two issues and resolve them in the upcoming budget. Read more [here](#)

**Sexual Abuse at workplace: Victims don't file complaints** (Daily Star) 29 January 2020 Women facing sexual harassment at work often do not lodge complaints due to fear of losing jobs and being stigmatized, speakers told a roundtable. Read more [here](#)

**First Bangladeshi female envoy to Mideast vows to promote women's cause** (Daily Star) 20 February 2020 The first Bangladeshi woman to become a top envoy in the Middle East, Nahida Sobhan, has vowed to promote gender equality and play an active role to protect Bangladeshi female workers abroad, reports Arab News. Read more [here](#)

**Supreme Court order on commissioning of women enabling will give clarity moving forward: Army chief** (Times of India) 20 February 2020 Army Chief General M M Naravane on Thursday said the

**Vow made to ensure women's rights** (Daily Star) 8 March 2020 People from different walks of life yesterday took an oath to ensure women's rights and work to end violence against women. Non-profit We Can Bangladesh and Dhaka University organised the programme at midnight with the slogan, "vowing to dispel the darkness", marking International Women's Day today. Read more [here](#)

**PM is biggest supporter of women empowerment: Zartaj** (Business Recorder) 9 March 2020 Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul said on 8 March 2020 the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was committed to provide all basic rights to women, while Prime Minister Imran Khan is the biggest supporter of women empowerment. Read more [here](#)

**Educated, healthy, financially independent women to transform society: President** (Business Recorder) 12 March 2020 President Dr Arif Alvi on 11 March 2020 stressed the need for economic empowerment of women and said that educated, healthy and financially independent women would transform society. Read more [here](#)

**4,249 women faced domestic violence in April, 1,672 for the first time: MJF** (Daily Star) 6 May 2020 Some 4,249 women faced different forms of domestic violence in April this year during the nationwide shutdown induced by the coronavirus pandemic, according to a survey conducted by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF). Read more [here](#)

**Maldives to achieve gender parity at its heads of**

force has been championing gender equality and the Supreme Court order granting permanent commission to women officers will give it a lot of clarity moving forward. Read more [here](#)

**missions globally** (DNA India) 26 June 2020 The Maldives will soon achieve gender parity at the heads of its foreign missions, with 9 missions being headed by women and 9 by men. Read more [here](#)

#### d. Environmental sustainability and disaster resilience

**Govt shuts down illegal brick kilns in 5 districts: DoE** (Financial Express) 6 January 2020 The government has shut down all illegal brick kilns in five districts -- Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur, Munshiganj, and Manikganj in line with a High Court directive. Read more [here](#)

**Extreme weather in Pakistan kills 70** (Outlook) 14 January 2020 The death toll from snowfall and rain-related incidents in Pakistan rose to 70 while the number of injured is estimated to be 29, the National Disaster Management Authority said in an official statement on Tuesday. Read more [here](#)

**Earthquake in Iran: 4.5 magnitude quake hits Bushehr nuclear plant** (Business Standard) 8 January 2020 A magnitude 4.5 earthquake on Wednesday rattled an area less than 50 kilometres (30 miles) from Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant near the country's Gulf coast, a US monitor said. Read more [here](#)

**Iran floods kill at least three: reports** (France 24) 14 January 2020 Flooding in southern Iran has killed at least three people and left hundreds of villages cut off following days of heavy rainfall, official media reported on Tuesday. Read more [here](#)

**Zero Discharge Policy' to check industrial pollution: PM** (Rising BD) 15 January 2020 Prime Minister and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina said the government has been implementing the "Zero Discharge Policy" in the industrial sector to check industrial pollution and protect the country's environment. Read more [here](#)

**Turkish teams hunt for quake survivors as death toll hits 38** (ABC News) 27 January 2020 Working against the clock in freezing temperatures, Turkish rescue teams pulled more survivors from collapsed buildings Sunday, days after a powerful magnitude 6.8 earthquake hit the country's east. Read more [here](#)

**Magnitude 5.4 quake hits southern Iran: state TV** (Reuters) 27 January 2020 A magnitude 5.4 earthquake struck Fars province in southern Iran on Monday, Iranian state TV reported. Read more [here](#)

**PM urges dev partners to limit conditions when providing support** (Daily Star) 27 January 2020 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked the developed countries and development partners to come forward further to help the climate change vulnerable countries. Read more [here](#)

**India: Climate emergency message resonates at world's largest literature festival – UN News special report from Jaipur** (UN News) 29 January 2020 Against the backdrop of India's famed "pink city" of Jaipur, the world's largest literature festival hosted the UN's top representative in the country, who told audience members attending a special session on the climate emergency, that the Organization is working flat out to slow the pace of damaging climate change. Read more [here](#)

**Do more to tackle climate change** (Daily Star) 30 January 2020 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked the developed countries and development partners to come forward further to help countries that are vulnerable to climate change. She also urged them to take effective measures instead of just making pledges. Read more [here](#)

**Guterres for colossal global efforts to reverse climate impacts** (Business Recorder) 16 February 2020 UN SG Antonio Guterres on Sunday while linking the need to merge the local initiatives with the global efforts to ward off the climate degradation, appreciated Pakistan and its people for taking some of the vital steps to reverse back global warming affects. Read more [here](#)

**Earthquake in Iran kills nine in neighbouring Turkey** (CNA) 24 February 2020 A magnitude 5.7 earthquake in northwestern Iran on Sunday killed nine people, including children, in neighbouring Turkey and

**Five years after Nepal's quake, lockdown stops reconstruction** (Reuters) 25 April 2020 The coronavirus epidemic has not only put Nepal's people and economy in lockdown for a month, but also stopped the slow and desperately needed reconstruction of homes and other buildings devastated by two huge earthquakes in 2015. A magnitude 7.8 quake hit Nepal on 25 April 2015 and was followed by another of magnitude 7.3 less than three weeks later. Read more [here](#)

**Protection now polluting** (Daily Star) 11 May 2020 Around 14,500 tonnes of hazardous plastic waste have been produced from the single use surgical face masks, gloves, hand sanitisers bottles, and polythene bags in the first month of the shutdown, says a study report. Read more [here](#)

**Cyclone Amphan in Bay: Big challenge is to manage evacuation** (Daily Star) 18 May 2020 Amphan, the cyclone formed in the Bay of Bengal on Saturday, may lash the coastal districts in three days, upending social distancing and hygiene practices needed to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Read more [here](#)

**Cyclone kills 14 in India, Bangladesh leaving trail of destruction** (Reuters) 20 May 2020 A powerful cyclone pounded eastern India and Bangladesh on 20 May, killing at least 14 people and destroying thousands of homes, officials said, leaving authorities struggling to mount relief efforts amid a surging coronavirus outbreak. Read more [here](#)

**Cyclone toll hits 95 as Bangladesh and India start mopping up** (AFP) 22 May 2020 India and Bangladesh began a massive clean-up after the fiercest cyclone since 1999 killed at least 95 people, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. Read more [here](#)

**Amphan: Kolkata devastated as cyclone kills scores in India and Bangladesh** (BBC) 22 May 2020 The eastern Indian city of Kolkata has been devastated by a powerful cyclone which has killed at least 84 people across India and Bangladesh. Amphan made landfall on 21 May, lashing coastal areas with ferocious wind and rain. Read more [here](#)

**Pakistan says India wants to team up to fight locusts** (VOA) 25 May 2020 Pakistan has confirmed that arch-rival India is proposing a trilateral response in partnership with Iran to fight a crop-killing desert locust invasion, which threatens food security for millions of people across the region. Read more [here](#)

**EU announces 1.1m Euro to minimize Bangladesh's Amphan damages** (Daily Star) 26 May 2020 European Union has decided to provide 1.1 million euro to Bangladesh for helping recover damages triggered by cyclone Amphan last week. Read more [here](#)

**100,000 evacuated from Mumbai as cyclone lashes India's business capital** (NBC News) 3 June 2020 A cyclone made landfall Wednesday south of India's financial capital of Mumbai, with storm surge threatening to flood beaches and low-lying slums as city authorities struggled to contain the coronavirus pandemic. Read more [here](#)

**PM Modi tells West Bengal to use plastic ban as opportunity to sell more jute** (Financial Express) 11 June 2020 West Bengal must seize the opportunity arising out of single-use plastic ban and must focus on increasing jute production and jute items, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said. Read more [here](#)

**Don't pollute, don't cause emissions: UN chief says no reason for any country to include coal in COVID-19 recovery plans** (Financial Express) 26 June 2020 A week after India launched the auction process for coal blocks for commercial mining, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has said there is no reason for any country to include coal in their COVID-19 recovery plans and investments should

injured dozens on both sides of the border, authorities said. Read more [here](#)

**Public awareness key in the fight against climate change: UNDP** (Hurriyet Daily News) 24 February 2020 The fight against climate change has dominated global attention for many years, but public awareness is lacking in terms of action in Turkey, according to an official from UNDP. Read more [here](#)

**Bangladesh air worst in world** (Daily Star) 26 February 2020 Air quality in Bangladesh was the worst in the world last year and Dhaka was the 21st most polluted city, according to 2019 World Air Quality Report. Read more [here](#)

**\$200 million AIIB loan for improving electricity access in Bangladesh** (Daily Star) 3 March 2020 The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has approved a \$200 million loan to Bangladesh to increase access to electricity and improve service efficiency in Dhaka and the country's western zone. Read more [here](#)

**Climate change could put 4.5% of India's GDP at risk: Study** (Times of India) 9 March 2020 Climate change and global warming may hit India's GDP within a decade, a report published by the McKinsey Global Institute has said. Read more [here](#)

**Sleepwalking to disaster** (The DAWN) 23 March 2020 As the coronavirus drifts the global economy towards recession, the pandemic has already dealt a mighty blow to Pakistan's economy. The partial shutdown has hit the livelihoods of millions. Read more [here](#)

instead be made in non-polluting energy sources. Read more [here](#)

**Flood hits Sirajganj; 50,000 families marooned in 5 upazilas** (Daily Star) 28 June 2020 The flood situation has aggravated in Sirajganj, as Jamuna River is flowing above danger level this morning, leaving over 50,000 families in five upazilas of the district marooned. Read more [here](#)

**Floods in India's Assam force a million from their homes** (Reuters) 29 June 2020 Heavy flooding triggered by monsoon rains has forced more than a million people to flee their homes in the northeast Indian state of Assam, authorities said, warning that the crisis was becoming more critical by the hour. Read more [here](#)

**As Himalayas Warm, Nepal's Climate Migrants Struggle to Survive** (The New York Times) 5 April 2020 Pushed out of their village by a drought and lack of food, a group of Nepalis are fighting to amplify the voices of those forced to relocate by the planet's warming. In the village of Dhye, crops are stubby dead stalks. Read more [here](#)

**Monsoon forecast: Good news for Indian economy; rain god may smile, IMD predicts 100% rainfall** (Financial Express) 15 April 2020 The Indian Meteorological Department has predicted the current year's monsoon rainfall at 100 per cent of long-period average, with a deviation of 5 per cent. Read more [here](#)

**India's virus lockdown gives world's most polluted capital clear skies, clean air** (Reuters) 21 April 2020 Residents of New Delhi are experiencing the longest spell of clean air on record, according to government data, as a stringent lockdown to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus drastically cuts pollution in the world's most polluted capital. Read more [here](#)

## e. Regional connectivity

**Indian PM Modi bats for neighbours first policy** (The Daily Star) 22 January 2020 Neighbourhood first" is the main policy of Modi government and improving cross-border connectivity is an important aspect of it, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said. Read more [here](#)

**Bangladesh's first expressway opens on 12 March 2020** (Dhaka Tribune) 11 March 2020 The first ever expressway in Bangladesh, the 54.7km four-lane Dhaka-Bhanga Expressway, is designed for fast traffic. It is expected that the opening of the highway will reduce travel time between Dhaka and Faridpur by several hours, improving connectivity between the capital and the southern districts. Read more [here](#)

**AIIB approves \$404mn loan to improve Bangladesh cross-border connectivity** (Daily Star) 6 April 2020 The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has approved a \$404 million loan to improve Bangladesh's intercity travel and cross-border connectivity. Read more [here](#)

**President directs authorities to improve internet connectivity for students** (DAWN) 7 April 2020 President Dr Arif Alvi has directed the concerned authorities to take measures to improve internet connectivity for students while discussing online university classes held in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Read more [here](#)

**Mobile internet slowest in Bangladesh among 42 countries** (Daily Star) 14 April 2020 Mobile internet speed is slowing down in Bangladesh amid the coronavirus pandemic, according to an international study, which has found download speed in the country is the lowest among 42 markets it has covered. Read more [here](#)

**Indian govt nudges West Bengal to smoothen goods export to Bangladesh** (Daily Star) 28 April 2020 Central Government of India has urged the West Bengal government to facilitate smooth movement of goods to Bangladesh during Covid-19-induced lockdown period. Read more [here](#)

**Digital divide too wide for online classes to succeed in Nepal** (The Kathmandu Post) 28 May 2020 A feasibility survey on online teaching-learning conducted by a Indrawati Rural Municipality in Sindhupalchok has found that the area does not have the kind of internet access and coverage to start remote classes. Read more [here](#)

**ADB grants \$100m loan for rural road network expansion in Bangladesh** (Daily Star) 15 June 2020 The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$100m loan to expand the coverage of an ongoing rural road network improvement project in Bangladesh, connecting the rural population to agricultural development zones. Read more [here](#)

**Fundamental reforms needed to support next wave of digital development: WB** (Daily Star) 21 June 2020 The World Bank has urged Bangladesh to bring in fundamental reforms in order to digitalise the economy and support the next wave of digital development. Read more [here](#)

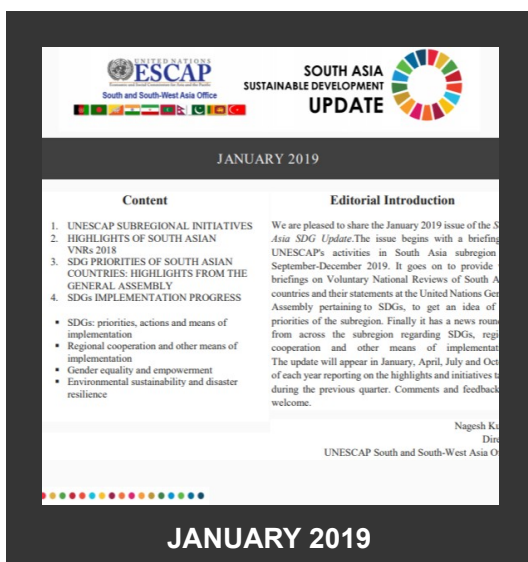
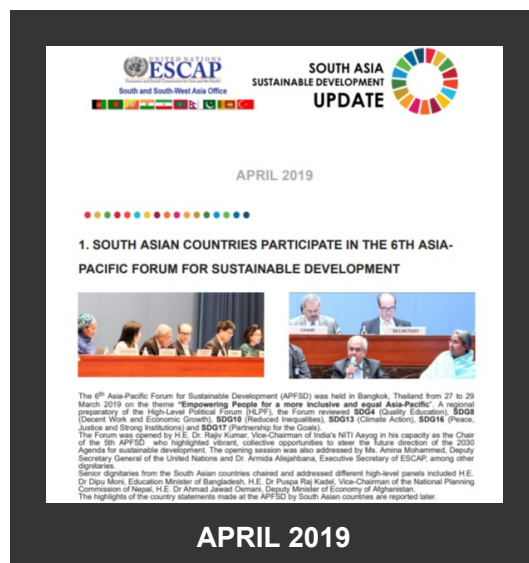
**Afghanistan may face power cut if it fails to pay for Uzbekistan electricity** (The Times of Central Asia) 25 April 2020 Uzbekistan may stop exporting electricity to Afghanistan next month if Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), the national power distribution company, fails to pay its bill to the Uzbek government, Afghan broadcaster TOLONews reported on April 24 citing its sources. Read more [here](#)



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