

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)[View this email in your browser](#)

SOUTH ASIA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE



APRIL 2019



1. SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES PARTICIPATE IN THE 6TH ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



The 6th Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD) was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 27 to 29 March 2019 on the theme “**Empowering People for a more inclusive and equal Asia-Pacific**”. A regional preparatory of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), the Forum reviewed **SDG4** (Quality Education), **SDG8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth), **SDG10** (Reduced Inequalities), **SDG13** (Climate Action), **SDG16** (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and **SDG17** (Partnership for the Goals).

The Forum was opened by H.E. Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice-Chairman of India's NITI Aayog in his capacity as the Chair of the 5th APFSD who highlighted vibrant, collective opportunities to steer the future direction of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. 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.

Senior dignitaries from the South Asian countries chaired and addressed different high-level panels included H.E. Dr Dipu Moni, Education Minister of Bangladesh, H.E. Dr Puspa Raj Kadel, Vice-Chairman of the National Planning Commission of Nepal, H.E. Dr Ahmad Jawad Osmani, Deputy Minister of Economy of Afghanistan.

The highlights of the country statements made at the APFSD by South Asian countries are reported later.

[Read More](#)

[Read Country Statements](#)

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

Focus on South Asian challenges

Achieving SDGs in South Asia: Opportunities and Challenges, A side-event was organized by UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office (UNESCAP-SSWA) at APFSD in collaboration with planning agencies of South Asian countries on 29 March. The session featured a keynote address by H.E. Dr Puspa Raj Kadel, Vice-Chairman of Nepal's Planning Commission. NITI Aayog of India and the Bangladesh Planning Commission presented their recent initiatives including the SDG Index and the National SDG Assessment Report respectively. It was followed by a round table discussion involving interventions by South Asian countries on SDG implementation, moderated by H.E. Dr Ahmad Jawad Osmani, Deputy Minister of Economy of Afghanistan. The UN Resident Coordinators of South Asian countries and representatives of civil society also addressed the meeting.

[Read More](#)

Brainstorming workshop on “SDGs in South Asia: in search of a cooperation framework”

The UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office (UNESCAP-SSWA) also organized a brainstorming session with heads and senior researchers of South Asian think tanks on “SDGs in South Asia: in search of a cooperation framework” at the 6th Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development. The workshop discussed the drafts of country studies prepared within the framework of the project by researchers. The workshop also discussed the relevance, potential and challenges for harnessing South Asian cooperation for achieving SDGs in South Asia.



2. UNESCAP EXECUTIVE SECRETARY VISITS INDIA

Dr. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP undertook an official visit to India during 17-22 January 2019. Dr. Armida Alisjahbana represented the Secretary General of United Nations at the “Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2019” held in Gandhinagar, India, which was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India. She delivered an address at the High-Level Plenary on Solar Energy organized by the International Solar Alliance (ISA), at the Summit.

[Read More](#)

[Subscribe](#)
[Past Issues](#)
[Translate ▼](#)


Dr Armida Alisjahbana also held bilateral meetings with H.E. Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice-Chairperson, NITI Aayog (first row on the left); and H.E. Mr. Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Commerce and Industry, and Civil Aviation (first row on the right).

Dr Alisjahbana also called on H.E. Mr. Rajkumar Singh, Minister of Power and New and Renewable Energy (second row on the left) and met with H.E. Mr. A. Gitesh Sharma, Secretary (In-Charge of United Nations), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (second row on the right), among other dignitaries.



Dr Alisjahbana also held a meeting with representatives of Indian think tanks organized by the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) in New Delhi (upper picture).

Dr. Alisjahbana addressed a meeting of United Nations Country Team India in New Delhi.

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼



Asia Office (UNESCAP-SSWA) and the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) and addressed staff.



3. UNESCAP PARTICIPATES IN THE 14TH ROUNDTABLE MEETING ON BHUTAN'S DEVELOPEMENT



THIMPHU, BHUTAN – 12-14 March 2019

UNESCAP was invited to participate in the 14th Roundtable Meeting held in Thimphu on 12-14 February 2019 at which the Royal Government of Bhutan and its partners deepened their understanding and partnerships through sharing of development experiences around the theme "Enhancing Happiness and Sustainable Development through Partnerships". The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. the Prime Minister of Bhutan and was co-chaired by H.E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr Achim Steiner, the UNDP Administrator. Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of the UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office represented UNESCAP at the meeting. Through his interventions, Dr Kumar briefed participants about ESCAP's work in Bhutan, including on assisting the country in its least developed country (LDC) graduation process. Dr Kumar also participated in the special meeting of the UN Country Team address by the UNDP Administrator. He also held bilateral meetings with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Economic Affairs; the UN Resident Coordinator, representatives of the International Trade Centre; UN Capital Development Fund; the Delegation of the European Union and the SAARC Development Fund, among others.

[Read More](#)



4. UNESCAP CALLS UPON GOVERNMENTS TO INCREASE TAX-GDP RATIO TO REDUCE INEQUALITY AND ACHIEVE SDGS

DHAKA, BANGLADESH – 16-17 February 2019

At the SANEM 4th Annual Economists' Conference (SAEC), Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of the South and South-West Asia Office of ESCAP, delivered a keynote address on achieving SDGs in South Asia amidst new global challenges. The Conference was inaugurated by H.E. Mr M.A. Mannan, Minister of Planning, Government of Bangladesh. To reduce the infrastructure gap and to meet the SDGs, additional resources of about \$5 trillion would be needed in South Asia. He argued that the Governments may focus on expanding the tax base and increasing efficiency in tax collection and public expenditure to provide for these resources. Substantial resources to finance SDGs could also be generated through an international financial transaction tax and by curbing illicit financial flows and transfer pricing



[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)[Read more](#)

5. SOUTH ASIAN LAUNCH OF WORLD ECONOMIC SITUATION AND PROSPECTS 2019



NEW DELHI, INDIA - 23 January 2019

The *World Economic Situation and Prospects* (WESP) 2019 was presented to the press by Dr Nagesh Kumar on 23 January 2019 at the UN House, New Delhi. WESP is produced annually by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in collaboration with the five regional commissions including UNESCAP. Dr Kumar shared the key messages of the report and underlined that while the global economic indicators remain largely favorable, concerns remain over the sustainability of global economic growth in the face of rising financial, social and environmental challenges. The report also highlighted the challenges arising from widening inequalities, trade wars and environmental issues calling for global action. Boosting private investments, diversifying and adding value to manufactured goods should be the focus for South Asia subregion.

[Read More](#)

6. UNESCAP HIGHLIGHTS THE BENEFITS OF SOUTH ASIAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AT THE BUSINESS JOURNALISM SUMMIT

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - 25 February

In his keynote address delivered at the South Asia Business Journalism Summit held in Dubai during 25-27 February, Dr Nagesh Kumar of UNESCAP underscored the relevance of regional economic integration in South Asia for inclusive and sustainable development and highlighted the missed opportunities. Drawing upon the experiences of other regions of the world, he showed how regional cooperation could lead to a balanced and equitable pattern of development. South Asia presents immense opportunities for subregional cooperation covering different areas or sectors that could foster poverty reduction and sustainable development. Organized by the Reynold's National Centre for Business Journalism at Arizona State University, the Summit brought together a large group of business journalists from all South Asian countries.



7. UNESCAP-SSWA JOINS THE UN TECHNICAL MISSION TO THE INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE (ISA)

GURUGRAM, INDIA - 18-28 March 2019

A two-week UN inter-agency mission to ISA reviewed the need for it to establish cooperation with the UN and developed concrete

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

wrap up session in early May at ISA. The mission comprised of UNDP, UNIDO, ILO, ESCAP-SSWA, UNEP and FAO. UNESCAP was represented at the Mission by Mr Chrispin Kapinga.

[Read More](#)

8. UNESCAP HIGHLIGHTS THE SOUTH ASIAN POLICY PRIORITIES FOR SDG ACHIEVEMENT

NEW DELHI, INDIA - 4-5 February 2019

Delivering a special address at the International Conference on Sustainable Development and the World Economy, organized by Janaki Devi Memorial College of the University of Delhi in New Delhi on 4-5 February 2019, Dr Nagesh Kumar highlighted the high stakes of South Asia in global achievement of SDGs given its disproportionate share of poverty and other deprivations. Based on UNESCAP's work on SDGs in South Asia, he outlined seven key policy priorities for the subregion for accelerating the achievement of SDGs by leveraging the interrelationships between different SDG targets.



9. SOUTH ASIAN PRIORITIES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: HIGHLIGHTS OF COUNTRY STATEMENTS AT APFSD



Bangladesh:

To achieve sustainable development goals by 2030, all the participating countries need to mobilize and effectively utilize necessary means of implementation, including mobilization of financial and non-financial, public and private, domestic and international resources. Enhancing global partnership through sharing knowledge, expertise, and technology is also critical.

The Government has already prepared the National Policy on Development Cooperation (NPDC) to ensure active development cooperation and organized the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) conference in January 2018 to mobilize external resources to implement the SDGs. Achieving SDGs will very much depend on the availability of resources, including external resources. International community alike will have to provide adequate and timely support to Bangladesh to help it implement its comprehensive and all-encompassing development agenda 2030. (Agenda Item 2: "Regional perspectives on progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development")

The country is an 'early starter' in the implementation process of the SDGs as the goals and targets of the SDGs are well integrated into its national plan (2016-2020). Considering the UN's theme 'Leaving No One Behind,' the government of Bangladesh has adopted "Whole of Society" approach in SDGs implementation to ensure wider participation of NGOs, development partners, private sector, media and CSOs in the process of formulation of the Action Plan and implementation of the SDGs. To spearhead the process, SDGs Implementation and Monitoring Committee has been formed at the Prime Minister's Office to facilitate the implementation of SDGs Action Plan.

For effective monitoring of the progress of SDGs implementation Bangladesh has already prepared a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (2018). Based on that framework, the first SDG progress report was prepared in 2018. Also, Bangladesh participated in the Voluntary National Review of SDGs in 2017 with a high-level team headed by Honorable Planning Minister, at HLPF along with other 43 countries. The VNR 2017 covered 7 goals (Goal-1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17).

The Government has conducted a Data Gap analysis which identified that out of 232 indicators only 70 indicators are readily available from existing data generating system. The rest of the indicators are partially or completely

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼

Bangladesh places high importance in the quest for regional cooperation and engages in different forums to increase regional and subregional cooperation and partnership for the full implementation of SDGs. Likewise, financing the implementation of SDGs is a critical issue for Bangladesh. Giving the importance of sharing of best practices Bangladesh has given its all supports to share its best practices with other member States to enhance regional cooperation and partnership. Under the South-South Cooperation umbrella Bangladesh shares its success in girl's education, women empowerment and success in ICT and tapes experiences and best practices from others. Finally, Bangladesh is fully supportive of ESCAP's initiative as regional Commission. (Agenda Item 3: "Linking national, regional and global dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" - Session 5: Where are we on the road map?)



India:

"Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" and the principle of "Leaving No One Behind" finds resonance with the Government of India under the motto of "*Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas* (Collective Efforts Inclusive Growth)", which guides all development interventions in India. India has a National Food Security Act in place which ensures food grain entitlements to nearly two-thirds of the population at highly subsidized prices. A multi-ministerial national mission (*POSHAN Abhiyaan*) has been launched in March 2018 with objectives of making substantial improvements in stunting, under-nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) by 2022. Through the "*Indradhanush Programme*", the Government is reaching out to each child up to two years and all pregnant women who have been left uncovered under the routine immunization programme. Rural sanitation coverage has increased from 38 per cent five years back to over 98 per cent and India is well on its way of becoming open-defecation-free by October 2019. NITI Aayog through its thrust on competitive federalism has put in place different indices (health, water, SDG, education, etc.) which ranks States (subnational Governments) on different parameters stimulating motivation in improving performance.

The Government gives a lot of importance to the global partnerships and has made consistent efforts to build networks within the region and around the world. India has also avidly and continuously worked with UN agencies and programmes on issues relevant to the country, region and the world at large.

(Agenda Item 2: "Regional perspectives on progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development")

While working towards revitalizing the global partnerships, India reaffirms the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) and highlighted its initiatives, experience and perspectives in pursuit of stronger partnerships. India has strengthened South-South Cooperation through its membership and leadership in institutions like the BRICS and its New Development Bank, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, as well as collaboration with UN agencies. States have also set up separate frameworks for implementation of SDGs within their domains.

In financing the implementation of SDGs, India has implemented ambitious tax reforms, including the Goods and Services Tax (GST). An innovative tax (e.g. Swachh Bharat Cess) has been levied for mobilizing resources for the Clean India Mission. There is a substantial expansion of the tax base and tax compliance which has augmented domestic resource mobilization. Given the substantial financing requirement for SDGs, India promotes strong partnerships with the private (PPP).

(Agenda Item 2: "Regional perspectives on progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development")



Nepal:

Nepal's focus has been on its timely, effective and full implementation of agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Some progress has been achieved, although this falls short of our expectations. Nepal presented its Voluntary National Review in 2017 which highlighted the status of the implementation of 2030 Agenda and its unique and special challenges the country faces.

Nepal is currently preparing a 25-year long term vision which will lay out a transformational development pathway and bring about structural changes in the economy. In addition, it has prepared the needs assessment, costing and the financing strategy for SDGs. The document identifies the financing gap for SDGs, patterns of available resource allocation against investment requirement in major SDG areas, and the interventions and strategies needed for achieving the goals.

Nepal has mainstreamed and localized SDGs into its national programmes and plans. On goal 4, for example, various programs have been implemented to enhance access, retention and quality education, particularly for the poor and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. With regards to global partnership, Nepal feels that there is a great scope to improve. An enhanced global partnership tailored to the needs of the countries in special situations is required to ensure timely and effective implementation of the Agenda. A genuine global solidarity which supports and complements efforts taken by the poorest and most vulnerable can ensure the "one is left behind" agenda.

(Agenda Item 3: "Linking national, regional and global dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" - Session 4: Voluntary National Reviews)



Pakistan:

Prime Minister Imran Khan and his Government place a great importance on development, social justice and inclusion. In early February 2016, the National Assembly of Pakistan adopted the SDGs as the National Development Agenda followed the approval of the National Framework on SDGs by the National Economic Council

delegates emphasized that to achieve the SDGs, countries in Asia and the Pacific must prioritize and pay attention to regional cooperation and integration and connectivity.
(Agenda Item 2: "Regional perspectives on progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development")

Inclusion of the SDGs perspective in national economic and development plans has been an overarching aspect of Pakistan's National Development Strategy. The National Economic Council of Pakistan approved the National Framework on Sustainable Development Goals in March 2018, and an SDG Center established in the Planning Commission. Likewise, focal points (persons) have been nominated in all ministries to work closely with the Planning Commission of Pakistan towards achievement of SDGs. The government of Pakistan has given partnership with corporates, private sector and other stakeholders a top priority to localize, implement and accelerate the SDGs at grass root level. The Government is also actively engaging with all UN agencies to forge cooperation and in the mobilization of resources for implementation of SDGs.
(Agenda Item 2: "Regional perspectives on progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" -)



Sri Lanka:

Mainstreaming SDGs in the national and provincial plans. Legal framework and institutional mechanism have been strengthened to implement the SDGs through the formulation of Sustainable Development Act and establishing the Sustainable Development Council. At present, it is developing a digital platform to monitor the implementation of SDGs and identifying the accelerators for prioritized implementation such as in education, entrepreneurship, population, climate change etc.

The Government has introduced systems, policies and mechanisms to fight corruption and financial frauds. Steps have been taken to ensure that Sri Lanka's anti-corruption framework complies with the provisions of the UN Convention against Corruption. The introduction of the Right to Information Act and adoption of the National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights are some of the significant measures taken by the country so far.

The government is actively engaging with member countries and the UN to facilitate south-south knowledge sharing, networking, capacity building and best practice sharing. Finally, the country is in the process of negotiating with bilateral and multilateral agencies for the implementation of development projects and programme.

(Agenda Item 3: "Linking national, regional and global dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" - Session 4: Voluntary National Reviews)

SAARC:

The SAARC representative presented the SAARC Framework for Action (SFFA) on Education including the process of development of SFFA. The SFFA was endorsed by the Technical Meeting of Senior Officials and is awaiting final endorsement by the Ministers of Education. Also, SAARC presented key areas covered by the framework, including 13 key areas of mutual collaboration; regional collaboration and partnership; regional monitoring of SDG4; and modalities of coordination and implementation of SFFA.

Furthermore, dissemination and advocacy work where its SFFA were shared, including in various side-lines of international and regional events e.g. the 3rd Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum, 5-7 June 2018, Kathmandu, Nepal. In terms of follow up with member States by the Secretariat, the representative reported that focal points have been identified for SFFA and ToR circulated.

(Agenda Item 3: "Linking national, regional and global dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" - Session 4: Voluntary National Reviews)



10. SDGs IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

a. SGD's: priorities, actions and means of implementation

World Bank provides new financial package to Afghanistan (Source: *Times of Central Asia*) 8 February 2019: The World Bank and Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan signed a new financial package totaling \$325 million in grants to strengthen economic and job opportunities in cities with a high influx of displaced people. Also the grant will support selected provincial capital cities to enhance service delivery, and strengthen the capacity of selected line ministries, the World Bank said. Read more: [Here](#)

Afghanistan's exports reach \$1 billion in 2018 (Source: *Times of Central Asia*) 4 January 2019: The Afghan Ministry of Industry and Commerce on January 2 said that Afghanistan's exports reached about \$1 billion in the first nine months of 2018 and the figure shows a 19 percent increase compared to the same period in 2017. Read more: [Here](#)

Mobile Financial Services market to heat up as

Centre proposes to hike monthly pensions for the elderly poor, disabled and widows (Source: *The Hindu*) 23 January 2019: Ahead of the 2019 election, the Rural Development Ministry has proposed that the monthly pensions of the elderly poor, disabled and widows be increased from the current 200 to 800 INR. For those above the age of 80, the proposal is to increase the pension from 500 INR to 1,200 INR a month. Read more: [Here](#)

Indian Railways to replace slow-moving passenger trains on Golden Quadrilateral with Mainline Electric Multiple Units (Source: *Financial Express*) 22 January 2019: Indian Railways to go for game-changing faster trains! By March 2020, your experience of travelling on Indian Railways trains is set to undergo a major upgrade with plans to replace slow-moving passenger trains with self-propelled train sets. Read more: [Here](#)

private company in a bid to deepen financial inclusion in the most rural corners of the country. "Currently, 66 percent of the population are unbanked and our target is to bring them under the cashless net," said Mohammad Solaiman, head of corporate and regulatory affairs of Nagad. Read more: [Here](#)

Government aims to take benefits of independence to villagers (Source: *Daily Star*) 26 March 2019: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Monday said the prime aim of her government is to reach the benefits of independence to each house in villages. "Everyone will get a prosperous life... no one will be left hungry and homeless, and no one will suffer without treatment... everybody's life will be meaningful, beautiful and developed one. 'This is our aim ...we're running the state to this end,' she said. Read more: [Here](#)

Youth engagement in local governance sought for SDGs (Source: *Dhaka Tribune*) 22 March 2019: Speakers at a program have called for greater youth participation in Bangladesh's local governance for attaining Sustainable Development Goals. They said this at the two-day event on "Local Governance Issues" began at the National Institute of Local Governance office. Read more: [Here](#)

GDP growth may cross record of 8% (Source: *Daily Star*) 21 March 2019: Bangladesh economy is going to cross a record 8 percent growth mark in the current fiscal year, powered by high performance in manufacturing and service sectors, the finance minister has claimed. Despite a dip in the farm sector performance, the GDP growth in 2018-19 is likely to be 8.13 percent, up from 7.86 percent the previous year, according to the provisional figure from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Read more: [Here](#)

Government mulls \$2 billion in power bonds (Source: *Daily Star*) 12 March 2019: The government plans to raise \$2 billion through issuing bonds to bankroll investment in the power and energy sector, Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, said. Read more: [Here](#)

Asian Development Bank to raise fund to promote innovative entrepreneurs (Source: *Daily Sun*) 8 March 2019: ADB will increase funding in development of innovation-based entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, chief economist of the finance institution said. Read more: [Here](#)

Liquefied Petroleum Gas becoming vital source of energy (Source: *Daily Star*) 6 March 2019: The use of energy at both households and industries will undergo a major shift in the next decade as Bangladesh is increasingly making liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) widely available, LPG facility providers said. The demand for LPG is growing exponentially in the country. It needs about 600,000 tonnes of LPG to meet the current demand, which is projected to be more than 1,400,000 tonnes by 2022. Read more: [Here](#)

Employing the youth, key to achieving SDGs (Source: *Daily Star*) 26 February 2019: At a discussion on SDG implementation, speakers said it will be difficult for Bangladesh to achieve the set goals without creating jobs for the unemployed youth, and we agree with this assessment. Growing unemployment among the young has become a major cause for concern in recent years, as according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' Labour Force Survey 2016-2017, youth unemployment was more than double the overall unemployment rate, recording a double-digit figure of 10.6 percent. Read more: [Here](#)

Government plans to give allowance to all disabled people (Source: *Daily Star*) 18 February 2019: The government has a plan to give allowance to all the disabled people across the country, Social Welfare Minister Nuruzzaman Ahmed told parliament today. Read more: [Here](#)

and Norway expressed desire to work together for realizing Sustainable Development Goals including poverty, health, education, women's empowerment, clean energy and sustainable use of ocean resources. Read more: [Here](#)

Upper caste reservation: Why the Constitutional amendment and what is the road ahead (Source: *Financial Express*) 10 January 2019: Modi government's decision to amend the constitution to provide 10% reservation to economically weaker sections of the upper caste candidates in admission in educational institutions and government jobs has raised a lot of hopes among the intended beneficiaries. It may not be proportionate to their population in the country, however, it will completely change the options available to them in matters of public employment. Read more: [Here](#)

Indian economy is expected to grow at 7.2% in 2018 (Source: *The Hindu*) 8 January 2019: Indian economy is expected to grow at 7.2% in 2018-19, a tad higher from 6.7% in the previous fiscal, mainly due to improvement in the performance of agriculture and manufacturing sectors, the Central Statistics Office said on Monday. Read more: [Here](#)

Iranian medical scientists write to United Nations on United States sanctions against Iran (Source: *Iran Times*) 11 March 2019: Scientific Societies for Medical Sciences in Iran have written a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres condemning the U.S. sanctions against Iran, urging the international community to resist sanctions targeting "medical needs" and "humanitarian aid", Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif revealed. Read more: [Here](#)

Iran health minister quits over budget cuts as U.S. sanctions bite (Source: *Reuters*) 4 January 2019: Iran's health minister has resigned over proposed budget cuts, the official news agency IRNA reported, amid an economic crisis wrought by the reimposition of US sanctions on Tehran. Read more: [Here](#)

Prime Minister Imran Khan launches Rs80 billion poverty alleviation plan (Source: *The News International*) 29 March 2019: Prime Minister Imran Khan launched a Rs 80 billion comprehensive poverty alleviation programme 'Ehsas' aimed at helping the downtrodden and vulnerable segments of the society, including the poor, orphans, widows, homeless, disabled, undernourished, jobless etc. Read more: [Here](#)

64% Pakistanis deprived of safe drinking water, says World Bank report (Source: *Pakistan Today*) 26 March 2019: As the water day is being observed across the world, as many as 64 per cent of Pakistanis are still deprived of their access to the safe and clean drinking water in the country, World Bank in its recent report revealed. Read more: [Here](#)

Investment in human capital must for development in Pakistan (Source: *Dawn*) 21 March 2019: Finance Minister Asad Umar said investment in human capital was very imperative and central to development of the country. Read more: [Here](#)

United Nations urged to mediate peaceful settlement of Kashmir dispute (Source: *Kashmir Observer*) 21 March 2019: Kashmir Scholars Consultative and Action Network, an interdisciplinary group of scholars from various countries and regions engaged in research on the region of Kashmir has urged UN to live up to its responsibility to mediate a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir conflict. Read more: [Here](#)

World Bank declines funding for infrastructure (Source: *Dawn*) 7 March 2019: The World Bank declined to extend financing to infrastructure projects in Pakistan during the current fiscal year saying it would continue working on its priority areas of agriculture, health and education sectors under its existing country partnership framework. Read more:

said that local government and microfinance institutions are major players capable in significantly contributing to achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). They made the comment while speaking at a conference titled "NGO-MFIs in Bangladesh: Local Level Partners of SDGs Implementation." Read more: [Here](#)

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina opens 6 power plants, 9 grid stations (Source: *Daily Star*) 7 February 2019: As much as 1062 megawatts of electricity have been added to the country's national grid as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wednesday inaugurated six power plants and nine grid substations. Read more: [Here](#)

Bangladesh on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (Source: *Dhaka Tribune*) 5 February 2019: Despite challenges, Bangladesh is on the right track to achieve the UN' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. According to the government's "SDG Bangladesh Progress Report 2018," the country is performing well in various aspects including poverty reduction, gender equality, electricity, sanitation and annual GDP growth. Read more: [Here](#)

Job creation lags behind target (Source: *Daily Star*) 4 February 2019: Less than half the target of creating 39 lakh jobs could be achieved in the first two years of the government's Seventh Five- Year Plan, despite the country registering robust economic growth during the period. (Daily Star) Appreciating Bangladesh's very impressive economic performance over the last one decade, the European Union on Saturday said sustaining and accelerating this growth is the real challenge for the new government. Read more: [Here](#)

The Commonwealth Secretary General praises Hasina's development innovation (Source: *The Daily Star*) 30 January 2019: The Commonwealth Secretary General has praised Sheikh Hasina's development innovation- 'the SDG-Tracker' - and said they view this as a "best practice" for realising the Agenda 2030. Read more: [Here](#)

The Increasing gap between rich and poor to hamper sustainable development (Source: *The New Nation*) 25 January 2019: The gap between rich and poor people continues to widen in Bangladesh, which also ranks among those countries with the fastest-growing number of very wealthy people. Bangladesh, according to the Poverty and Shared Prosperity-2018 report by the World Bank, has been ranked fifth behind India, Nigeria, Congo and Ethiopia for extreme poverty. Read more: [Here](#)

The poverty we choose to ignore (Source: *Daily Star*) 23 January 2019: All the focus of late has been on Bangladesh's upcoming graduation from the group of the Least Developed Countries to the lower middle-income group. Indeed, we have much to be proud of. As pointed out by a group of independent experts who form the Committee for Development Policy, which reports to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, Bangladesh has achieved this qualification by fulfilling the main criteria, i.e. per capita income, human assets and economic vulnerability. Read more: [Here](#)

Making markets work for SDGs (Source: *Daily Star*) 11 January 2019: As Bangladesh is growing at an exponential speed, its markets are expanding in such ways where intervention is necessary, thereby giving rise to the potential of creating a new transformative economy. Read more: [Here](#)

\$120.9 million committed for United Nations Sustainable Development Programme Framework targets (Source: *Kuensel*) 1 February 2019: Improving data accessibility and reliability, improving social services for the vulnerable groups, an inclusive governance, and climate change and disaster risk reduction are the four outcomes the United Nations Sustainable Development Programme Framework

2019: One of the worst droughts in Pakistan's history has triggered "alarmingly high" levels of malnutrition and disease in the hardest hit areas where people have been forced to drink salty or contaminated water, the Red Cross said. Read more: [Here](#)

Finance Minister Asad calls for early finalisation of Public Private Partnership Authority rules (Source: *Dawn*) 27 February 2019: Finance Minister Asad Umar chaired a high-level meeting to discuss matters pertaining to operationalisation of Pakistan Infrastructure Bank and Public Private Partnership Authority. The minister said the two institutions aim to play a vital role in enhancing investment-to-GDP ratio and spur overall economic growth. Read more: [Here](#)

United Nations Development Programme opens Pakistan's first ever tech lab on Sustainable Development Goals (Source: *The Nation, Pakistan*) 22 February 2019: UNDP inaugurated Pakistan's first ever tech lab to achieve its Sustainable Development Goals. Vice Chancellor of Information Technology University Dr Niaz Ahmad Akhtar said at the launching ceremony that the main objective for establishment of lab is to develop and implement scalable tools for an overall improvement in state-citizen interaction and governance to positively influence policymaking. Read more: [Here](#)

Prime Minister Khan launches countrywide Sehat Insaf Card scheme (Source: *Dawn*) 5 February 2019: Prime Minister Imran Khan at a ceremony in Islamabad on Monday launched the first phase of the countrywide Sehat Insaf Card scheme to provide free medical treatment to approximately 80 million people. Read more: [Here](#)

Government likely to miss fiscal deficit target (Source: *Dawn*) 4 February 2019: State Minister for Revenue Hammad Azhar on Saturday admitted that the government was facing serious fiscal challenges in spite of several corrective measures taken in the last six months, saying he could not say if the revised fiscal deficit target of 5.1 per cent of GDP would be met. Read more: [Here](#)

Pakistan needs to take tough decisions (Source: *Dawn*) 31 January 2019: The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has asked the government to take 'tough decisions' to reform various sectors of the economy. The DFID is working with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank to support Pakistan's economic reform programmes. Read more: [Here](#)

World Bank gives \$58 million for low-cost housing (Source: *Dawn*) 28 January 2019: The Pakistan Mortgage Refinance Company has received \$58 million from the World Bank for low-cost housing while another \$70m is in the pipeline. Read more: [Here](#)

Government announces incentive package for Small and Medium Enterprises, manufacturing, housing, agriculture sectors (Source: *Business Recorder*) 25 January 2019: The government announced an incentive package to boost manufacturing and exports, encourage low-cost housing and facilitate agricultural financing to boost economic activities, besides promoting ease of doing business, simplifying procedures for setting up businesses, and cutting taxes and duties in diverse sectors. Read more: [Here](#)

Pakistani Finance Minister to announce investment, trade promotion package (Source: *Business Recorder*) 24 January 2019: Minister for Finance Asad Umer would announce Investment, trade, industrial and business promotion packages in the National Assembly on Wednesday. Main focus of the package is to boost manufacturing and exports, encourage low-cost housing and facilitate agricultural financing to promote economic activities, said a statement issued by Ministry of Finance. Read more: [Here](#)

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼

Andhra Pradesh stands fourth in achieving sustainable development target (Source: *The Hindu*) 22 February 2019: Andhra Pradesh stands fourth behind Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu in achieving national targets set for 13 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The report tracks the progress of the States and the Union Territories across 62 indicators, identified for the goals, and ranks them based on the average of normalized scores achieved by them in reaching the targets set for each indicator. Read more: [Here](#)

Indian economy's fundamentals are sound, set to reach \$5 trillion (Source: *The Hindu*) 22 February 2019: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday said the fundamentals of the Indian economy were sound and it is on the way to becoming a \$5 trillion economy soon. Addressing the India-Korea Business Symposium in Seoul, he said India was now a more open economy and had attracted \$250 billion foreign direct investment in the last four years. Read more: [Here](#)

India needs to spur growth amid low inflation outlook: Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy committee (Source: *Reuters*) 22 February 2019: India needs to take steps to boost economic growth as the inflation outlook remains low, the Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy committee said in minutes released on Thursday. Read more: [Here](#)

More India Rate Cuts on the Cards as Core Inflation Eases (Source: *Bloomberg*) 15 February 2019: India's headline and core inflation rates are set to converge in the coming months as the economy slows, increasing the chance of more interest rate cuts. The core measure -- which strips out volatile fuel and food costs -- has remained sticky at around 6 percent and is a key reason economist cautioned against more rate cuts after last week's surprise easing. It softened to 5.4 percent in January, and Pranjul Bhandari, chief India economist at HSBC Holdings Plc, sees it slowing to as low as 4 percent this year. Read more: [Here](#)

Inclusive development central to sustainable development: Vice President (Source: *Business Standard*) 13 February 2019: Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu said that inclusive development is central to sustainable development for which he stressed the need for "unparalleled collaboration among all nations." Expressing his concern over the unprecedented scale of environmental degradation and its drastic consequences, Naidu called upon all nations to "collaborate and cooperate in an equally unparalleled manner to ensure sustainable development." Read more: [Here](#)

Jobless youth march to protest Indian unemployment crisis (Source: *Associated Press*) 8 February 2019: Hundreds of jobless young people marched Thursday through the streets of the Indian capital demanding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government tackle what they called a rising unemployment crisis. Read more: [Here](#)

Rupee slumps 55 paise to 71.80 on strong dollar, firm crude (Source: *The Hindu*) 5 February 2019: The rupee on dropped by 55 paise to close at 71.80 to the US dollar, the lowest level since December 17, ahead of the Reserve Bank of India's policy review meet. Read more: [Here](#)

Committed to make state open defecation free by October 2 (Source: *United News of India*) 31 January 2019: Goa Governor Mridula Sinha said that the state government would lay greater emphasis on achieving sustainable development goals in a time bound manner, facilitating ease of doing business and rendering quality time bound services in all spheres. Read more: [Here](#)

the year in efforts to eradicate the crippling disease by the end of 2019. Read more: [Here](#)

Incoming Pakistan Chief Justice opens new era for powerful court (Source: *Reuters*) 18 January 2019: Pakistan swears in a new chief justice on Friday, opening the next chapter for the Supreme Court which has pursued an expansive agenda that has ranged from ousting a prime minister to pressing authorities to improve the public water supply. Read more: [Here](#)

Current SDGs unrealistic, says Kanwal (Source: *The Nation, Pakistan*) 17 January 2019: Terming the current Sustainable Development Goals target unrealistic, Ministry of Planning's Parliamentary Secretary Kanwal Shauzab said that the same should be reframed keeping in view the local ground realities. The imported agenda of SDGs cannot resolve the issue of poverty and it is required to be reframed as per the local conditions, Kanwal Shauzab said. Read more: [Here](#)

World Health Organisation to help Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in devising uniform plan for free healthcare (Source: *Dawn*) 15 January 2019: The World Health Organisation, which is providing technical assistance to the authorities to streamline healthcare financing in all provinces and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, will help them to put in place a uniform programme of free healthcare across the country. Read more: [Here](#)

Government to introduce uniform education system (Source: *Dawn*) 4 January 2019: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is working on introducing a uniform education system in the province, says Adviser to Chief Minister on Education Ziaullah Khan Bangash. Talking to journalists, he said that Prime Minister Imran Khan had promised to introduce uniform curriculum in all the educational institutions of the country including government and private schools, colleges, universities and religious seminaries. Read more: [Here](#)

Asian Development Bank facilitating wider access to credit by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to strengthen growth (Source: *The Island*) 8 March 2019: ADB approved a US\$ 100 million loan in late 2016 followed by an additional finance loan of US\$ 75 million in early 2018 to strengthen micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, considered vital for economic growth and job creation in Sri Lanka. Read more: [Here](#)

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights officials discuss Sri Lanka's progress on commitments (Source: *Colombo Gazette*) 15 February 2019: Officials from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had talks with the Prime Minister's office on the progress made by Sri Lanka in meeting its commitments made in the UN Human Rights Council resolution. At the meeting, the two parties focused on UN Human Rights Commissioner Michelle Bachelet's report on Sri Lanka which will be presented to the March session of the UN Human Rights Council, where Sri Lanka's progress on the UNHRC resolutions would be discussed by its member-nations. Read more: [Here](#)

Central Bank chief calls for collective effort to uplift social enterprises in Sri Lanka (Source: *Daily FT*) 29 January 2019: Central Bank Governor Dr. Indrajit Coomaraswamy called for a concerted effort by all stakeholders to establish policies and systems to support the growth of emerging social enterprises in Sri Lanka, insisting that the country had great untapped potential to develop the sector. Read more: [Here](#)

Opening of Afghanistan-Iran-India trade corridor marked (Source: *Azer News*) 27 February 2019: Trilateral transit cooperation between Afghanistan, Iran and India leads to the prosperity of the region as a whole. The Afghanistan-Iran-India trade corridor was opened. Afghanistan will export goods to India through the southeastern port of Chabahar in Iran. Read more: [Here](#)

City to have digital traffic system (Source: *Daily Star*) 18 March 2019: The government is going to introduce a digital system to improve the capital's traffic management. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told parliament. Read more: [Here](#) World Bank agrees on a \$185 million to expand renewable energy generation in Bangladesh (Source: *Daily Star*) 4 March 2019: The World Bank has approved \$185million to add up to 310 Megawatt in renewable energy generation capacity in Bangladesh and mobilize private sector participation to meet the growing demand for electricity in the country. Read more: [Here](#)

Bangladeshi expats doubled in four years (Source: *Daily Star*) 21 February 2019: The number Bangladeshis going for overseas employment has been doubled in the past four years; although it has not positively reflected in remittances to the country, Prime Minister Shaikh Hasina said. Read more: [Here](#)

New Chinese firm set to bag Dhaka-Sylhet highway project (Source: *Daily Star*) 12 February 2019: China Communications Construction looks set to bag the Tk 14,000 crore-contract to construct the Dhaka-Sylhet four-lane highway after the project's original contractor, China Harbour, was dumped for offering bribes. The project -- which is expected to expand the regional transport network, including the Asian Highway Network, BIMSTEC and SAARC corridors -- is supposed to be completed by December 2022, as per the original plan. Read more: [Here](#)

Bangladesh to seek more Indian support to resolve Rohingya crisis (Source: *Daily Star*) 7 February 2019: Bangladesh will seek more Indian support to resolve the Rohingya crisis as foreign minister AK Abdul Momen is set to reach New Delhi tonight in his maiden overseas tour since the Awami League government was formed for the third consecutive term. Read more: [Here](#)

Minister: Bangladesh to increase rail connectivity with neighbours (Source: *Dhaka Tribune*) 22 January 2019: Railways Minister Md Nurul Islam Sujan has said the rail connectivity with the neighbouring countries will be established. The government will increase internal railway tracks as well, said the minister while speaking at the "Meet the Press" program at Railway Bhaban in Dhaka. Read more: [Here](#)

Dozens of Rohingyas flee India for Bangladesh (Source: *Agence France Presse*) 9 January 2019: Dozens of Rohingyas have crossed the border into Bangladesh from India in recent days, officials said, as New Delhi faces censure for deporting the persecuted minority to Myanmar. Read more: [Here](#)

Bangladesh, Bhutan have a strategic development partnership (Source: *South Asia Monitor*) 25 February 2019: Bangladesh and Bhutan are leveraging their opportunities and elaborating methods to handle their competitive advantages. These are primarily factor advantages, among which raw material sources and production potential appear as interchangeable priorities for both countries with transitional economies. Read more: [Here](#)

India Raises Import Taxes on Pakistan Goods After Terror Attack (Source: *Bloomberg*) 18 February 2019: India raised duties on all goods imported from Pakistan following the withdrawal of most-favored nation status to its neighbor after a terror attack last

Ties with China priority for Iran (Source: *Iran Daily*) 21 March 2019: Iran's leadership attach much significance to political and economic cooperation with China, Iran's Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Farhad Dejpasand said at the 17th Iran-China joint economic commission. Holding the commission regularly is an indication that the two countries are resolved to implicate their two economic plans, he added. Read more: [Here](#)

Skirting United States sanctions, Europeans open new trade channel to Iran (Source: *Reuters*) 1 February 2019: France, Germany and Britain have set up a mechanism for non-dollar trade with Iran to avert U.S. sanctions, although diplomats acknowledge it is unlikely to free up the big transactions that Tehran says it needs to keep a nuclear deal afloat. Read more: [Here](#)

Iran to hold conference on electronic banking amid U.S. sanctions (Source: *Xinhua*) 24 January 2019: Iran plans to hold an electronic banking conference later this month seeking means to possibly dodge the existing U.S. sanctions on its monetary and banking system. Read more: [Here](#) Iran now allows foreigners to open bank accounts (Source: *Trend*) 11 January 2019: The Central Bank of Iran has announced that foreigners with special residence certificate can use banking services in Iran, including opening bank accounts and other services. Read more: [Here](#)

Iran now allows foreigners to open bank accounts (Source: *Trend*) 11 January 2019: The Central Bank of Iran has announced that foreigners with special residence certificate can use banking services in Iran, including opening bank accounts and other services. Read more: [Here](#)

Iran and Turkey offer cooperation for Pakistan railway (Source: *Iran Daily*) 11 March 2019: Pakistani Minister for Railways Sheikh Rashid Ahmad said that Iran and Turkey have offered cooperation for upgrading Pakistan Railways. Ahmad announced the above during a meeting with Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Mehdi Honardoust in Islamabad. Read more: [Here](#)

Prime Minister Khan tells investors in Dubai: 'This is the time to come to Pakistan' (Source: *Radio Pakistan*) 12 February 2019: Prime Minister Imran Khan says this is the right time to invest in Pakistan, urging the international investors not to miss the chance. The Prime Minister said potential of Pakistan and its people has been the driving factor of his political journey. Read more: [Here](#)

United Nations General Assembly president hopes to strengthen UN-Pakistan ties (Source: *The Nation, Pakistan*) 18 January 2019: The UN General Assembly President, Maria Fernanda Espinosa, is looking forward to her 5-day visit to Pakistan, which begins on Friday, during which she will talk with Prime Minister Imran Khan and other Pakistani leaders on global and regional issues. Read more: [Here](#)

Government puts major China-Pakistan Economic Corridor power project on hold (Source: *Dawn*) 15 January 2019: The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government has decided to shelve a major power project pushed by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz regime under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and will axe hundreds of other schemes under the Public Sector Development Programme later this month. Read more: [Here](#)

Sri Lanka wants South Asia trade integration as soft-peg trigger import controls (Source: *The Island*) 30 January 2019: Sri Lanka wants greater trade liberalization and trust among South Asian economies to accelerate development and reduce poverty, a top central banker said, after slapping trade restrictions which has hit Indian vehicle exports and gold trading. Read more: [Here](#)

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼

strategically important Central Asian region (Source: *Financial Express*) 23 January 2019: Central Asian elites consider China and India to be the two crucial future players in the region. But they lament the fact that India is lagging far behind China in terms of investment, trade and diplomacy, says Dr Rajan Kumar India and Central Asia are moving gradually towards the institutionalisation of their relationships in order to achieve their developmental and security objectives. Read more: [Here](#)

Japan to lend 34,200 million Rs to India for development (Source: *NDTV*) 21 January 2019: Japan will be giving a loan of Rs. 3,420 crore to India to assist in constructing the Chennai Peripheral Ring Road and for joint efforts towards meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Read more: [Here](#)

India seeks better flight connectivity with Central Asia (Source: *Live Mint*) 15 January 2019: India proposed a dialogue on air corridors with the countries of landlocked Central Asia in an attempt to boost trade languishing below \$2 billion for years, as foreign minister Sushma Swaraj stressed on the need for connectivity initiatives to follow the principles of financial responsibility. Read more: [Here](#)

India-Central Asian states to hold 1st ever joint meeting on January 12-13 to discuss roadmap for strategic engagement (Source: *Economic Times*) 10 January 2019: India and five Central Asian states plan to host their first joint foreign ministerial meeting in the historic city of Samarkand in Uzbekistan on January 12 and 13 to explore new areas of strategic partnership as China makes inroads into the resource-rich region. Read more: [Here](#)

c. Gender equality and empowerment

Nepal Attends the High-Level Event on Women in Power (Source: *The Himalayan*) 12 March 2019: President Bidhya Devi Bhandari is leaving for New York, leading a delegation to the High-Level Event on Women in Power being hosted by the President of the UN General Assembly Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garces. Speaking at the Round Table I on "How Women Leaders Change the World", Ms. Bidya Devi Bhandari, the President of Nepal highlighted from experience that the reality is that the world runs on a social discrimination premise. Women are undermined for their capabilities, reflecting a problem in perceptions. Ms. Bhandari said, "We need to change this," pointing at constitutional measures that can rectify the current situation. In Nepal, about 40 percent of positions at all levels of Government are women, reflecting a push for equal representation. Read more: [Here](#)

Muniba Mazari: A picture of fortitude (Source: *Dawn*) 20 March 2019: The opening session of this year's United Nations women's summit in New York featured Muniba Mazari, a wheelchair-bound Pakistani who advocates accessible infrastructure for women worldwide. She showed exemplary courage in rebuilding her shattered life after a deadly car accident left her paralysed waist down. She said many changes had been brought about by legislation in her country. Women have a right to equal participation, and in a leadership role, they can make a difference that benefits all of society. However, yet many women are unaware of their rights and are taken advantage of because of a lack of awareness. As a leader, she highlighted the responsibility of empowering others and breaking barriers. She emphasized the importance for all women to raise strong sons who are aware of women's rights. Read more: [Here](#)

Women empowerment key to Sustainable Development Goals (Source: *Daily Star*) 12 March 2019: Women business leaders and entrepreneurs called for full inclusion of womenfolk in the country's

far-reaching consequences for the trade relations of other countries. Even South Asia — one of the world's least economically integrated regions with relatively less presence in global value chains compared to East and Southeast Asia — will be affected. While the bilateral dispute may create some economic opportunities for South Asia, they will be outweighed by its long-term adverse impacts. Read more: [Here](#)

Bank of China offers Sri Lanka \$300 million loan, option to raise to \$1 billion (Source: *Reuters*) 16 January 2019: Sri Lanka is considering an offer from Bank of China for a loan of \$300 million, which could be raised to \$1 billion, to help it meet repayments in coming months, junior finance minister Eran Wickramaratne told Reuters on Tuesday. Read more: [Here](#)

Government team arrives in Washington for International Monetary Fund talks (Source: *Daily FT*) 15 January 2019: The Sri Lankan delegation, headed by Finance Minister Mangala Samaraweera, arrived in Washington to begin talks with the International Monetary Fund to put the \$ 1.5 billion Extended Fund Facility program back on track, Non-Cabinet Minister of Economic Reforms and Public Distribution Dr. Harsha de Silva said. Read more: [Here](#)

Lanka struggles to repay record foreign debt: Sri Lanka's prime minister (Source: *Agence France Presse*) 11 January 2019: Sri Lanka's prime minister said Thursday the country was struggling to pay back its ballooning foreign debt, blaming a recent political crisis for dealing a "death blow" to the economy. Read more: [Here](#)

Violence against children rose by 18.75% last year (Source: *Daily Star*) 24 January 2019: Incidents of violence against children in the Bangladesh rose by 18.75 per cent in 2018 compared to the previous year, as 4,566 children became victims of different types of violence and torture last year, said Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum. Read more: [Here](#)

145,000 Rohingya children going to Unicef's learning centres (Source: *Daily Star*) 24 January 2019: More than 145,000 Rohingya refugee children living in camps in south-east Bangladesh are now attending Unicef-supported learning centres, as a new school year begins. Read more: [Here](#)

Reserved women's seat term challenged at court (Source: *Daily Star*) 23 January 2019: The extended term of reserved women's seat at the parliament has been challenged at court. Supreme Court lawyer Advocate Eunus Ali Akond filed a petition with the High Court Tuesday against the constitutional amendment that extended their term to 25 years. Read more: [Here](#)

Land Ownership: Men possess 6 times that of women (Source: *Daily Star*) 22 January 2019: The proportion of men in terms of land ownership is six times higher than women in Bangladesh, latest Oxfam report said. Read more: [Here](#)

Sabarimala Hindu temple board reverses opposition to women worshippers (Source: *Reuters*) 7 February 2019: A board that oversees an ancient Hindu hill temple in southern India said on Wednesday it now favored allowing women of menstruating age to enter the temple, reversing its previous support for a centuries-old ban. Read more: [Here](#)

Islamabad meets UN Peacekeeping benchmark of 15% female deployment (Source: *Dawn*) 15 February 2019: Islamabad has increased the deployment of female staff officers in its United

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼

achieving women empowerment in the last couple of decades though more government support is needed to establish a gender-equal society. Read more: [Here](#)

Protect identity of children involved in criminal cases (Source: *Daily Star*) 13. February 2019: The High Court (HC) Tuesday observed that the media cannot publish names, addresses and photos of children involved in criminal cases. The name, address and photo of a person aged under 18 cannot be published before, during and after the trial of a criminal case as per the Children Act 2013, the HC said while delivering judgement on a writ petition filed by a Supreme Court lawyer, Barrister Sayedul Haque Sumon. Read more: [Here](#)

d. Environmental sustainability and disaster resilience

After drought and floods, Afghanistan confronts critical harvest (Source: *Reuters*) 29 March 2019: Afghanistan's summer harvest will be one of the most critical in years, especially of wheat, its biggest cereal crop, as the country recovers from floods and the worst drought in decades, government and aid organization officials say. Read more: [Here](#)

Solar energy reduces rural poverty (Source: *Daily Star*) 12 March 2019: Solar home system is helping reduce poverty in remote areas of Bangladesh through income-generating activities, industry people said. Read more: [Here](#)

Grab greater international market with Bangladeshi jute products (Source: *Daily Star*) 8 March 2019: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid emphasis on branding jute products as environment-friendly ones throughout the world to expand global reach and earn more foreign currencies. Read more: [Here](#)

Clean energy helps to save on bills (Source: *Daily Star*) 5 March 2019: Bangladesh consumers are initially put off from using energy-efficient products because of high prices but they do not think about the savings in bills, said an official of Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (Idcol). The high investment requirement for starting up a renewable energy project pushes up the prices of the products. But energy savings will reimburse the cost," said SM Monirul Islam, deputy chief executive officer of Idcol. Read more: [Here](#)

World Bank agrees on a \$185 million to expand renewable energy generation in Bangladesh (Source: *Daily Star*) 4 March 2019: The World Bank has approved \$185million to add up to 310 Megawatt in renewable energy generation capacity in Bangladesh and mobilize private sector participation to meet the growing demand for electricity in the country. Read more: [Here](#)

Climate Change: Bangladesh seeks finance, tech transfer to vulnerable countries (Source: *Daily Star*) 28 January 2019: Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Masud Bin Momen has called for providing financial resources and ensuring technology transfer to the vulnerable countries, including Bangladesh, to face the threats posed by climate change and related disasters. Read more: [Here](#)

Cooperation is crucial, Hasina for regional collaboration in tackling disasters (Source: *Daily Star*) 25 January 2019: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Thursday stressed the need for collaboration and cooperation among neighbouring countries to minimise damages caused by natural disasters. "Collaboration and cooperation among nations, especially the neighbours, is very crucial in facing damages caused by natural disasters of greater magnitude," she said. Read more: [Here](#)

Read more: [Here](#)

Ministry drafts enforced bill through amendments in Pakistan Penal Code (Source: *Business Recorder*) 30 January 2019: Federal Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari said the Ministry of Human Rights drafted a bill through amendments in Pakistan Penal Code to declare 'enforced disappearances' a criminal offense. Read more: [Here](#)

India's bid to power Papua New Guinea using solar (Source: *Post-Courier*) 25 March 2019: India is now the fifth largest producer of renewable energy in the world. They are the fourth largest in Wind Energy and fifth largest producer of Solar Energy. And India is now offering feasibility studies, at the government of India's cost, to prepare complete project proposals for solar electrification in Papua New Guinea. Read more: [Here](#)

Report expresses concern over rate of groundwater depletion (Source: *Times of India*) 20 March 2019: India accounts for almost one-fourth of the total groundwater extracted globally, more than that of China and the US combined thus using the largest amount of groundwater 24 per cent of the global total, according to a new report. Read more: [Here](#)

New Delhi is world's most polluted capital, Beijing eighth (Source: *Reuters*) 6 March 2019: New Delhi was the world's most polluted capital city in 2018, two groups monitoring air pollution said on Tuesday in a study of the amount of fine particulate matter known as PM2.5 in 61 capital cities around the world. Read more: [Here](#)

Railways may ban plastics in 36 stations (Source: *The Hindu*) 21 February 2019: The Indian Railways may ban plastics and enforce the 'polluter pays' rule at 36 major railway stations across the country, including Chennai Central, Tiruchi and Thiruvananthapuram in Southern Railway. Read more: [Here](#)

Green electricity challenges to become a stronger country (Source: *Times of India*) 21 January 2019: Energy security and climate change are two of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. India can hope to become a developed country only if the per capita electricity consumption in the country goes up by at least six times, said Padma Vibushan Rajagopala Chidabaram. He was speaking on the topic 'India's Nuclear Programme - A model for developing world' in Panaji, on Saturday. Read more: [Here](#)

Iran president visits flood-hit zones as death toll hits 43 (Source: *Agence France Presse*) 27 March 2019: President Hassan Rouhani travelled to flood-hit zones of Iran for the first time Wednesday after nine days of heavy rains that have inundated most of the country and killed 43 people. Read more: [Here](#)

Pakistan can face 'super flood' this year (Source: *Dawn*) 21 March 2019: Pakistan could face a 'major' to 'super flood' during the monsoon season owing to higher than normal snowfall and other climatic changes in the country this year, two senior government officials informed the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Water Resources. Read more: [Here](#)

Five-year plan must include clean energy

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)


are substantial on Bangladesh. Salinity mainly affects land and water in the coastal areas. With the consequence of climate change, it gradually extends towards inland water and soil. Read more: [Here](#)

Prepare country to face adverse effects of climate change (Source: *Dhaka Tribune*) 14 January 2019: Listing Bangladesh as the most vulnerable country to tolerate the adverse effects of climate change, the speakers at an international conference on Disaster Risk management called for preparing the country to exercise disaster risk management at every level. Read more: [Here](#)

towards cleaner, greener and affordable energy solutions and incorporating them into the 12th five-year plan, which is at the finalisation stage. Read more: [Here](#)

How Pakistan should meet clean energy challenges (Source: *Dawn*) 29 January 2019: Minister for Power Omar Ayub Khan recently stated that 20 per cent of the electricity output will be based on renewable energy by 2025. It will increase up to 30pc by 2030, he added. Read more: [Here](#)

If you have missed them, here are the links to previous newsletters editions!





**SOUTH ASIA
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
UPDATE**

JANUARY 2019

| Content | Editorial Introduction |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UNESCAP SUBREGIONAL INITIATIVES 2. HIGHLIGHTS OF SOUTH ASIAN VNRS 2018 3. SDG PRIORITIES OF SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 4. SDGs IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDGs: priorities, actions and means of implementation • Regional cooperation and other means of implementation • Gender equality and empowerment • Environmental sustainability and disaster resilience | <p>We are pleased to share the January 2019 issue of the <i>South Asia SDG Update</i>. The issue begins with a briefing on UNESCAP's activities in South Asia subregion for September-December 2019. It goes on to provide with briefings on Voluntary National Reviews of South Asian countries and their statements at the United Nations General Assembly pertaining to SDGs, to get an idea of key priorities of the subregion. Finally it has a news round up from across the subregion regarding SDGs, regional cooperation and other means of implementation.</p> <p>The update will appear in January, April, July and October of each year reporting on the highlights and initiatives taken during the previous quarter. Comments and feedback are welcome.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Nagesh Kumar Director UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office</p> |

JANUARY 2019

CONTACT US

UNESCAP- South and South-West Asia Office,
C-2, Qutab Institutional Area, Post Box No. 4575, 110016 New Delhi, India
Telephone: +91 11 3097 3700 / Fax: + 91 11 2685 6274
Website: <https://www.unescap.org/subregional-office/south-south-west-asia>
E-mail: sswa.unescap@un.org



Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).