[**Climate catastrophe looms large**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1743500/climate-catastrophe-looms-large)

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THERE is a date for what is the end of the world as we know it, and it is only about 10 years away. This week the United Nations released a [report](https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6syr/pdf/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf) that revealed how the world’s inability to reach its climate goals means that by the early 2030s, climate events would have become so extreme that humanity will not be able to adapt.

Essentially, we are looking at a future where millions of people in all parts of the world would be unable to weather extreme climatic events that they have never witnessed before. As per the report, the world’s climate budget, by which is meant the temperature rise the world can afford without a threat being posed to all human life, will be breached. What will follow sounds almost like the end of the world.

The future of the world lies in the hands of two emerging economies. India and China are currently on track to reach their climate goals by 2060 and 2070 respectively.

Unfortunately, that rate of change may not be fast enough. As UN Secretary General António Guterres has said, the world is not going to be able to save itself through incremental change. The changes that are needed are far-reaching and drastic and without such changes the fallout will also be drastic and far-reaching.

The report’s forecast has been put together by a very large number of climate experts who looked at a lot of data in order to figure out how the current rate of climate change compares to pre-industrial levels. The takeaway is that human beings have been deadly for the Earth, and the Earth as well as the people that live in it will be unable to cope as ecosystems crash and extreme weather events dominate. Our actions will have consequences for thousands of years to come.

The UN report is said to also provide ‘hope’ in that it sets out what has to be done. Perhaps that does not appear too hopeful to the people who live in South Asia.

One reason for this is that the two countries that experts are calling on to accelerate change and to drastically reduce their rate of carbon consumption are China and India. Residents of South Asia know only too well that both countries have long been in a race to outdo each other economically. This is the reason why they have never shown much interest in cutting emissions to the extent needed to slow down global warming and avert a climate catastrophe.

A new report warns of a world where it will be impossible to cope with the effects of climate change.

The mentality is that since the industrialised West was able to proceed on its race towards economic prosperity and growth, they too have the right to do the same without worrying about the limits placed by carbon consumption in an overheating world.

Pakistan is a witness to this, since its close proximity to India and to cities like New Delhi, means that smog and pollution from industrial and agricultural practices regularly impact people living in the areas adjoining the border.

This does not mean that Pakistan does not produce its own pollution, but as data collected following the floods that hit Pakistan last year shows, on the whole Pakistan suffers from the actions of other economies. This includes the world’s most egregious polluters including its own neighbours who are engaged in a reckless race towards economic growth at the expense of the planet’s future.

According to the report, the world (China and India included) needs to cut emissions by at least 60 per cent by 2035 in order for the planet to be saved. In the report’s words “rapid and far-reaching transitions across all sectors and systems” are necessary to halt the march to a climate Armageddon.

The increasing affordability of renewable energy resources is apparently one way to accomplish these ambitious goals but what is also pointed out is that the world’s financial institutions need to invest more money into these renewable energy resources to change the course that the planet is on.

India submitted its long-term plan to reduce emissions at COP27. Not only was the submitted plan low on information and data, it openly acknowledged that India expected to continue using coal as a source of fuel (high carbon emissions) and develop the fuel for future use. The UN Climate Action Committee has rated India’s efforts as ‘poor’. Its progress towards reaching emission reduction levels is clearly too little to avert a climate catastrophe.

India has pursued this course despite the fact that the average temperatures there have risen by 0.7°C (almost a whole degree) since 1901. The heatwave that spanned India and Pakistan last year saw some of the highest temperatures ever recorded. Temperatures could perhaps be higher this year as summer sets in and the lives of both people and livestock will be endangered as the plains heat up.

As a country with low emissions but conversely one having to bear the emission burden of bigger polluters, Pakistan has a role to play in advocating for the world’s emitters, such as India and China, to do their part.

What use will a fast-growing economy be in a world where swathes of the population are turned into climate refugees because the habitats they have been used to have become hinterlands that are unlivable? While the UN has cautioned not to treat the report as a reason to panic, it is panic that appears to be the need of the moment.

As the world’s worst polluters do little to reduce their carbon footprint, bodies like the UN must consider measures that are more coercive, rather than just coming up with research reports, to make the errant countries comply. After all, the fate of the entire world is at stake.

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