

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION

# CITIES DRIVING CLIMATE CHANGE

Taking action there will solve large chunk of problem, says UN researcher

BEIJING

**C**ITIES are driving the human-caused climate change that threatens the global environment, but also offer hope.

That is the overriding message of a chapter devoted to cities in a major United Nations report on climate change released on Monday, providing city planners around the world guideposts aimed at avoiding climate catastrophe.

"The fact that cities are responsible for more than two-thirds of global greenhouse gas emissions means that if cities do something, they can solve two-thirds of the problem. So that's pretty exciting," said Karen Seto, a professor at Yale University's School

of the Environment and one of two coordinating lead authors of the report's chapter on cities.

Many cities around the globe had taken action. Mexico City had banned plastic bags. Minneapolis, Minnesota, eliminated zoning for single-family homes to promote density. Paris had outlawed diesel cars.

"Every city can do something, and not every city's going to do the exact same thing," Seto said.

"Not every city needs to look the same. Not every building needs to be a high rise."

Cities, particularly the small- and medium-sized ones in Asia and Africa that will see the most growth this century, offered the opportunity reduce reliance on automobiles, employ environment-friendly building materials, and capture stormwater runoff, according to the report's experts.

Cities could become havens of urban forests, street trees and green roofs, which would not only sequester and store carbon, but also induce a cooling effect that reduces energy demand and energy use for water treatment, said



An aerial view of downtown Los Angeles, California, on Monday. United Nations report on climate change says with aggressive and immediate mitigation policies, urban greenhouse gas emissions may approach net zero by 2050. AFP PIC

the report, the latest from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Urban density also avoided rural and suburban sprawl, which was less energy efficient and destroying natural habitats.

"The 21st century will be the urban century, defined by a massive increase in global urban populations," the report said, noting that 55 per cent of the world's population lived in urban areas up to 2018, a figure expected to jump to 68 per cent by 2050.

The report focused on mitigation, noting that alleviating climate change in cities would have an outsized effect on surrounding areas and help improve the mental and physical health of urban dwellers.

As with the global thrust of the overall report, the authors called on governments and industry to act with extreme urgency and make significant new commitments toward financing.

Urban areas generated 67 to 72

per cent of carbon dioxide and methane emissions in 2020, up from 62 per cent in 2015. Without any mitigation efforts, the raw amount of urban emissions could double from 2020 to 2050, the report said.

But with aggressive and immediate mitigation policies, urban greenhouse gas emissions could approach net zero by 2050.

Of the additional 2.5 billion people expected to live in cities by mid-century, 90 per cent of the increase would take place in Africa and Asia, requiring more advanced economies and multinational companies to finance green development.

Seto said she was optimistic because consumers and investors in the "global north" were demanding sustainability, and the cost of new technologies, such as photovoltaics and batteries for electric vehicles, was going down.

"The cost of the status quo is worse than doing nothing," Seto said. **Reuters**

CARRIAGE DERAILED

## 5 killed as truck crashes into train in Hungary

**BUDAPEST:** Five people were killed and more than 10 injured when a pick-up truck crashed into a train in southern Hungary yesterday, derailing a carriage, police said.

The accident happened at a crossing in Mindszent near the Hungarian-Serbian border.

Five people in the truck were killed and there were injuries both among those in the truck and on the train, a police spokesman said. The truck was registered in Hungary and was carrying workers, she added.

Local news site delmagyar.hu showed a photograph with the train carriage on its side, and a helicopter ambulance and several ambulance cars at the scene.

The state railway company said a train on its way from Kiskunfelegyhaza to Hodmezovasarhely had crashed with a truck, derailing a carriage with 22 passengers, two of whom were severely injured and a further eight lightly injured. The truck drove onto the tracks, ignoring the red lights, it said. **Reuters**