

<https://www.ibtimes.com/un-chief-urges-world-stop-madness-climate-change-3716939>: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged the world Monday to "stop the madness" of climate change as he visited Himalayan regions struggling from rapidly melting glaciers to witness the devastating impact of the phenomenon. "The rooftops of the world are caving in," Guterres said on a visit to the Everest region in mountainous Nepal, adding that the country had lost nearly a third of its ice in just over three decades. "Glaciers are icy reservoirs -- the ones here in the Himalayas supply fresh water to well over a billion people," he said. "When they shrink, so do river flows." Nepal's glaciers melted 65 percent faster in the last decade than in the previous one, said Guterres, who is on a four-day visit to Nepal. Glaciers in the wider Himalayan and Hindu Kush ranges are a crucial water source for around 240 million people in the mountainous regions, as well as for another 1.65 billion people in the South Asian and Southeast Asian river valleys below. The glaciers feed 10 of the world's most important river systems, including the Ganges, Indus, Yellow, Mekong and Irrawaddy, and directly or indirectly supply billions of people with food, energy, clean air and income. Scientists say they are melting faster than ever before due to climate change, exposing communities to unpredictable and costly disasters. "I am here today to cry out from the rooftop of the world: stop the madness", Guterres said, speaking from Syangboche village, with the icy peak of the world's highest mountain Everest towering behind him. "The glaciers are retreating, but we cannot. We must end the fossil fuel age," he said. The world has warmed an average of nearly 1.2 degrees Celsius since the mid-1800s, unleashing a cascade of extreme weather, including more intense heatwaves, more severe droughts and storms made more ferocious by rising seas. Hardest hit are the most vulnerable people and the world's poorest countries, which have done little to contribute to the fossil fuel emissions that drive up temperatures. "We must act now to protect people on the frontline, and to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, to avert the worst of climate chaos," Guterres said. "The world can't wait." In the first phase of climate change's effects, melting glaciers can trigger destructive floods. "Melting glaciers mean swollen lakes and rivers flooding, sweeping away entire communities", he added. But all too soon, glaciers will dry up if change is not made, he warned. "In the future, major Himalayan rivers like the Indus, the Ganges and Brahmaputra could have massively reduced flows, he said. "That spells catastrophe".

<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/sikkim-warning-hydroelectricity-push-must-be-accompanied-by-safety-measures-8970365/> : At least 14 persons lost their lives and more than 100 others, including 23 army personnel, are reportedly missing in Sikkim after the Teesta river went into spate on Wednesday. The flash floods seem to have been triggered by a combination of factors. A cloud burst ripped apart the South Shonak Lake -- a glacial body in the state's northwest. According to Sikkim's Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), the Teesta has inundated at least four districts in the state. The calamity was aggravated by the release of water from the Chungthang dam -- initial reports suggest that the breach was caused by water rushing from the mountains. Disaster management authorities are also investigating the possibility of the event being triggered by an earthquake in Nepal on Tuesday. The probe is likely to throw more light on the immediate causes of the flash flood but one thing has long been clear -- states in the Himalayan region must respect the fragile ecology of the mountains and put in adequate safeguards to mitigate the damage caused by increasingly frequent extreme rainfall events. For years, studies have red-flagged the South Shonak Lake's expansion due to glacial melting and warned that the water body is susceptible to breaches. In 2021, for instance, a study by scientists from IIT Roorkee, Indian Institute of Science Bangalore, University of Dayton, USA, University of Graz, Austria, and the Universities of Zurich and Geneva in Switzerland recommended

regular monitoring of the lake's growth and continuous assessment of the region's slope stability. The National Disaster Management Authority guidelines also say that risk reduction has to begin with mapping such water bodies, taking structural measures to prevent their breach and establishing mechanisms that can alert people about glacial lake outbursts. The IMD has collaborated with the US National Weather Service to warn people about six to 24 hours before a flash flood. But the system doesn't seem to have come to terms with the Himalayan region's idiosyncrasies. The Northeast has a key place in the hydel power push of successive governments at the Centre. The Chungthang Dam is a part of the 1,200 MW Teesta Stage 3 Hydroelectric Project. The government claims that such projects are climate-friendly because of their low emissions intensity. Hydroelectric power is also a major source of revenue for Sikkim. Ecologists, however, caution against the adverse effects of dam construction – it increases the volatility of rocks in the Himalayan region. Wednesday's disaster is a warning to take such caveats seriously and install robust safety mechanisms.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/25/pro-israel-rallies-allowed-in-india-but-palestine-solidarity-sees-crackdown> : India, the first non-Arab country to recognise the PLO in the 1970s, is now

seen closer to Israel and its biggest benefactor, the United States. New Delhi, India's

Israel's relentless bombing of the besieged Gaza Strip and killing of nearly 6,000 people – a third of them children – in two weeks has outraged people across the world, triggering mass protests and a

call for an immediate ceasefire. However, in India – the first non-Arab country to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), but now seen closer to Israel and its biggest benefactor, the United States – some pro-Palestine protesters reported being targeted by the government. Less than

a week after the Gaza assault began, police in Hamirpur district of India's most populous Uttar Pradesh state were looking for Muslim scholars Atif Chaudhary and Suhail Ansari. Their alleged crime:

putting a WhatsApp display photo that said: "I stand with Palestine." The two men were charged with promoting enmity between social groups. Ansari is under arrest, while Chaudhary is on the run,

according to the police. In the same state, governed by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP), four students of the Aligarh Muslim University were booked by the police after they took out a pro-Palestine march on the campus a day after the Gaza assault began on October 7. However, when

the Hindu far-right group Bajrang Dal took out a pro-Israel march in the same Aligarh city, raising slogans such as "Down with Palestine, Down with Hamas", no action was taken against them by the

authorities. In the national capital, New Delhi, there have been several examples of people being detained during rallies organised by student groups, activists and citizens for solidarity with the

Palestinians since October 7. In the western state of Maharashtra, also governed by the BJP in

alliance with a regional party, two protesters, Ruchir Lad and Supreeth Ravish, were arrested on October 13 for holding a march against the war on Gaza and charged with unlawful assembly. Pooja Chinchole,

member of the Revolutionary Workers Party of India and one of the organisers of the protest held in state capital Mumbai, told Al Jazeera the police "created many hurdles before us when they got to

know that we are organising a pro-Palestine protest". "They detained one of the organisers a day before the protest and three organisers on the morning of the protest. When we still gathered to

protest, they snatched our microphone, placards, and after a while, started using force on some of us," she said. The crackdown, however, was not limited to the BJP-ruled states only. In the southern

Karnataka state, governed by the main opposition Congress party, police charged 10 activists with

creating a public nuisance after they organised a silent march in support of the Palestinians on October 16 in Bengaluru, the capital of the state. The Karnataka police also arrested a 58-year-old Muslim man

for allegedly posting a video in support of Hamas on WhatsApp. Police also briefly detained Alam Nawaz, a Muslim government employee, for updating his WhatsApp status with a Palestinian flag and "Long Live Palestine" message. "People started seeing me with suspicion as if I have committed some crime by expressing my solidarity with Palestinian people," Nawaz, 20, told Al Jazeera. All this despite the Congress expressing its support for the "rights of the Palestinian people to land, self-government and to live with dignity" as the party called for an immediate ceasefire in a resolution passed by its working committee on October 9. Meanwhile, pro-Israel rallies, organised mainly by Hindu right-wing groups, were seen across India, while many on social media offered their services to the Israeli forces. On Saturday, dozens of supporters of a retired Indian army soldier travelled 182km (113 miles) to reach the Israeli embassy in New Delhi where they offered to go to Israel to fight against the Palestinians in Gaza. Last week, one of India's most influential Hindu nationalists, Yati Narsinghanand, released a video in which he said Hindus and Jews "have the same enemy: Muhammad and his satanic book" as he urged the Israeli government to allow 1,000 Hindus to settle in Israel in order to "take on those Muslims". Israel's ambassador to India, Naor Gilon, on October 8 said he had received several requests from Indians wanting to voluntarily fight for Israel. Apoorvanand, professor of Hindi language at Delhi University, told Al Jazeera he was not surprised that the Hindu far right, which openly admires Adolf Hitler for his action against the Jews, is now supporting the Zionists in Israel. "Hindu far-right organisations in India have always supported those who dominate by violence. Hitler did once, so they supported him. Now Israel is doing this, so they are supporting it," he said. Apoorvanand said the Hindu right in India thinks there are ideological linkages between them and the Zionists in Israel. "It looks like Israel is fighting a proxy war on behalf of the Hindu far right. They think Israel is fighting and decimating Muslims on their behalf. The way they want to establish Akhand Bharat [Unified India] by joining Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal together with India, they think Israel is following the same expansionist ideology," he said. This was not always the case. India's foreign policy has historically supported the Palestinian cause, which began with India voting against the United Nations resolution to create the state of Israel in 1947 and then recognising the PLO as a representative of the Palestinian people in 1974. India's pro-Palestine stand was guided by the shared history of colonisation by the British, Zikrur Rahman, former Indian ambassador to Palestine, told Al Jazeera. "In the postcolonial era, we identified that this is a colonial attempt to divide the country and to create another country. We were not in favour of the creation of a country on the basis of religion," he said. Rahman, however, added that while India's position on Palestine has not changed, it is not as strong as it used to be. India recognised the creation of Israel in 1950, but did not establish diplomatic relations until 1992, when the details of the first Oslo Accord were being finalised. Since then, India has tried to strike a balance between its strategic relations with Israel and sympathising with the Palestinian struggle. Today, India is the largest buyer of Israeli-made weapons, while strategic and security cooperation between them has grown manifold. Comparisons have also been made between Israel demolishing homes of Palestinians in the occupied territories and a similar policy adopted by some BJP state governments mainly against Muslims as forms of "collective punishment" of the community. Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, he has made public statements, calling his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu a "good friend" on several occasions. Modi was one of the first global leaders to post his solidarity with Israel after Hamas's unprecedented incursion on October 7. "Deeply shocked by the news of terrorist attacks in Israel," said his post on X, which came four hours before US President Joe Biden reacted to the event. Modi also condemned the Israeli attack on al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza on October 18, in which nearly 500 Palestinians were killed, though his

message on X appeared nearly eight hours after Biden's post. Meanwhile, India's Ministry of External Affairs issued a statement on October 12, reiterating New Delhi's position of establishing a "sovereign, independent, and viable state of Palestine, living within secure and recognised borders, side by side at peace with Israel". Last week, Modi posted on X about his phone call with the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, in which he repeated India's "longstanding principled position on the Israel-Palestine issue". He said his government is sending humanitarian assistance for the besieged residents of Gaza. Journalist Anand K Sahay, however, thinks India's response to the unfolding humanitarian disaster in Gaza has not been adequate. "What India didn't say is important. India didn't demand a ceasefire. Historically, India has always demanded a ceasefire in case of a [foreign] war. In this case also we should have strongly said: stop the war," he told Al Jazeera. Sahay said Modi's flaunting of closeness with Israel is also aimed at appeasing his core vote bank: the Hindus. "Suppose there was another religion in majority in Palestine. Then our stand may have been different. During the Russia-Ukraine war, we said 'this is not an age of war'. Why couldn't we say this in case of Israel-Palestine war?" asked Sahay. "By not asking for a ceasefire, India was also indirectly signalling the US that the Indian position was very close to the US line." Follow Al Jazeera English:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/business/aviation/no-nation-world-buying-more-planes-than-india-here-why-9010202/> : Written by Alex Travelli and Hari Kumar No nation in the world is buying as many airplanes as India. Its largest airlines have ordered nearly 1,000 jets this year, committing tens of billions of dollars to a spending spree that is unparalleled in aviation. In New Delhi, Indira Gandhi International Airport will be ready for 109 million passengers next year, as it prepares to become the world's second busiest, behind Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport in the United States. And this is happening in a vast country still heavily reliant on trains "with 20 journeys by rail for every one by air. The enormous aviation build-out, with a surge of investment behind it, has pride of place in India's case for a greater standing on the world stage. As it moves up the ranks of the world's biggest economies, India is scrambling to meet the expanding ambitions of its ascendant middle class. Its airports present highly visible achievements. Air travel remains out of the financial reach of most Indians. An estimated 3% of the country's population flies on a regular basis. But in a nation of 1.4 billion people, that percentage represents 42 million "executives, students and engineers who yearn to get quickly from here to there inside India's borders, and to gain easier access to destinations beyond, for both business and vacation. Kapil Kaul, CEO of CAPA India, an advisory firm focused on aviation, calls "the next two to three years critical for achieving the quality of growth that India desires and deserves." Growth has so far been profitless. Now Indian aviation must prove it can make money. The effects of the spending spree should redound across India's economy. Cargo comes with passenger traffic, and foreign investment tends to follow closely behind, Kaul said. Arrivals to the international terminal at Indira Gandhi Airport are greeted by a wall of giant sculptural hands, their fingers and palms folded into the signifying shapes of the Buddha's gestures, looking both ancient and futuristic. In 2012, when they were installed, 30 million passengers passed through the airport. By the time the airport has expanded to its new capacity, another one will have been built from scratch on the other side of the city. Indira Gandhi Airport is racing to get bigger. In July it added a fourth runway and opened an elevated taxiway. The company that operates it, GMR Airports, took over in 2006, a time when all arrivals walked past cows lazing in the dust to reach a taxi stand. By 2018 the facility was rated as India's most valuable infrastructural asset. To spare the use of jet fuel, a battery-powered TaxiBot

lugs idling planes around the tarmac. An automated luggage-handling system can sort 6,000 bags an hour. Two beneficiaries of India's expanding aviation market are the world's largest airplane makers: Boeing in America and Airbus in Europe. In February, Air India, which Tata Group took private last year, agreed to buy 250 planes from Airbus and 220 from Boeing, worth a combined \$70 billion. In June, IndiGo, the country's biggest carrier by passengers and flights, ordered 500 new Airbus A230s. The bulk of the growth of Indian aviation has been among homegrown airlines, which have clocked a 36% increase in passengers since 2022. Foreign tourist arrivals are rebounding since the pandemic, but are still relatively scarce, barely topping 10 million in a good year (about the same as Romania). So low-cost carriers are adding new countries to their destinations in order to accommodate India's demand for foreign tourism. Azerbaijan, Kenya and Vietnam are all a direct flight from Delhi or Mumbai, India's financial capital, for less than 21,000 rupees (\$250) one way. The air corridor between Delhi and Mumbai was already one of the world's 10 busiest. Like Delhi, Mumbai has new airport terminals that would be the envy of any city in America, not to mention the glorious new all-bamboo Terminal 2 at Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru, a city in southern India. But the expansion in infrastructure is not limited to the country's premier metropolitan areas. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government likes to point out that the number of airports has doubled in the nine years since he took office, to 148 from 74. Jyotiraditya Scindia, Modi's aviation minister, said there would be at least 230 by 2030. The government has invested more than \$11 billion in airports over the past decade, and Scindia has promised another \$15 billion. That means that sleepy towns such as Darbhanga, a former principality in the impoverished state of Bihar in eastern India, now have nonstop access to Delhi, Bengaluru and beyond. For many of the 900 travelers a day who fill its flights, including plenty from nearby Nepal, the new airport has transformed the journey. Prasanna Kumar Jha, 52, was born in Darbhanga but works in Delhi as a tax consultant. "Who ever expected that Darbhanga would be on the air map?" he asked. Flying to his hometown on short notice to see his ailing mother cost him 10,500 rupees (\$126), which pinched. "But if you calculate the alternative" by train from Delhi and then taxi to Darbhanga "it will take at least 30 hours," he said. "The plane journey is no longer a luxury but a necessity." Darbhanga's airport is a far cry from New Delhi's. There is no parking lot. Passengers walk from the edge of a highway past a checkpoint to wait on benches outside the terminal. Then they wait on another set of outdoor benches after clearing the security check. But it works. Another passenger on the same flight at Darbhanga, Ajay Jha, was cradling his 1-year-old daughter, Saranya, as he stood near the rudimentary baggage claim. His family was on the last leg of a trip that started in Bellevue, Washington, where he works as an engineer for Amazon, to a family reunion in the Bihari countryside. Traveling halfway around the world took less time than Jha used to spend getting home from his school in Bengaluru. Yet a vast majority of Indians cannot afford such conveniences. The annual mean income is still less than a single economy-class fare from the United States, and, in this top-heavy economy, most Indians earn much less than that. Middle class, in Indian parlance, indicates somewhere close to the top of the pyramid. A report by CAPA India counted just 0.13 passenger seats per capita in 2019 for Indians, compared with 0.52 for Chinese and 3.03 for Americans. But aviation companies and India's elected officials look at the low penetration and see opportunity. A scarcity of competition, in the face of an emerging duopoly between IndiGo and the Tata-led airlines, is one of the new landscape's most striking features. Smaller competitors keep going bust, most recently Go First, which declared bankruptcy in May. A shortage of pilots, after dozens were poached by bigger companies, forced Akasa Air, a promising upstart, to cancel flights in August. But supply shortages are not the worst kind of problem to have in today's global economy. With

aviation's growth in the decade before the pandemic steady at about 15% a year, the Indian boom seems all but guaranteed to change the future of aviation worldwide. If the benefits accruing to the winners in India's economy can be coaxed into trickling outward and downward, the same could go for many other sectors.