

A case for a differential global carbon tax

All nations must climb down the emissions ladder without giving up on their standard of living



ROHIT AZAD
& SHOUVIK CHAKRABORTY

Climate change is a global problem, and a global problem needs a global solution. The most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report suggests that we, as humankind, might have just over a decade left to limit global warming. The IPCC says total global emissions will need to fall by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050. If these targets are not met, tropical regions of the world, which are densely populated and happen to be mainly concentrated in the global South, are likely to be most negatively affected because of their low altitudes and pre-existing high temperatures. Some impact of this was already felt during the Tamil Nadu water crisis this year.

Sharing the burden

The global South, which has historically contributed less to the problem (and even at present its per capita carbon emissions are much smaller in comparison to the countries in the global North), happens to be at the receiving end of the lifestyle choices made by the global North. Although time is running out, a genuine global consensus on the mitigation of this problem is unfortunately missing. In the absence of a collective agreement, the environment is becoming the casualty. The bottom line is that both the worlds need to contribute to avert this danger in their self-interest. At the same time, the burden of adjustment cannot be equal when the underlying relationship between the two worlds has been historically unequal (Climate Injustice Funnel in graph). But what is the correct balance in terms of sharing this burden, something which can be politically and juridically just?

A just approach would involve a global sharing of the responsibility among countries according to their respective shares in global emissions. Currently, the most accepted model of mitigating strategy has been the carbon trading process. Ho-

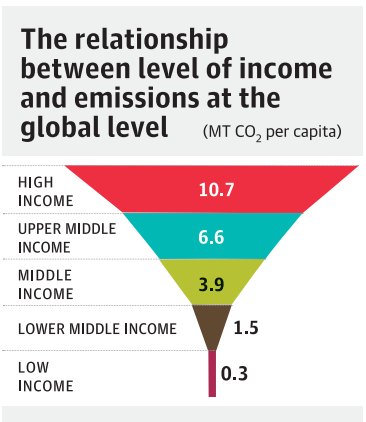


"The emissions of the U.S. and China are higher than the global average." A steel factory in the industrial province of Hebei, China, in 2015. ■ GETTY IMAGES

wever, it has its own limitations. Our proposal, a Just Energy Transition (JET), on the contrary, is premised on a sense of global justice in terms of climatic fallouts and the respective contributions of the countries. It will also help the resource-poor developing countries to make the energy transition without having to worry about the finances unduly. Instead, the current experiences of the developing countries point to the contrary.

Correcting injustice

How can this injustice be corrected while making the planet a better place to live in for future generations? The first priority is to fundamentally change the energy infrastructure, which requires massive investments for the green energy programme across the world. What we propose here in some sense is a new global green deal. But how can it be financed? We suggest that those on the top of the funnel, apart from funding their own energy transition, partially support the transition for the countries at the bottom and this sharing of the burden of development be done in a way which inverts this injustice funnel. For a successful energy transition to a greener energy programme, countries have to spend around 1.5% of their GDP. We propose that the global energy transition be financed through a system of the global carbon tax. Since the total glo-



bal carbon emissions are 36.1 billion metric tonnes of CO₂, this amounts to a global carbon tax of \$46.1 per metric tonne.

Who subsidises whom and by how much? Those countries which emit more than the global per capita average pay for their own transition plus fund a part of the energy transition of those who are below this average. So, those at the receiving end of climate injustice are duly compensated for even as the entire world transitions to greener earth as a result of this process of carbon tax sharing. Currently, the global average of carbon emissions is 4.97 metric tonne per capita. All the countries with emissions above this level (68 in all) are "payers" to finance energy transition for "beneficiary" countries (135 in number), which are emitting be-

low this level.

The total amount of "carbon compensation" made by the payer nations comes to around \$570 billion. The distribution of this amount across the payer countries is based on their distance from the global average (controlled for their population size). The other side of the same coin is the compensated countries, and the distribution of this fund across them is also based on how lower their emissions are in comparison to the global average. Once you add (subtract) the carbon compensation amount to (from) each of the countries, you get the *effective* carbon tax for them.

The two top 'payer' countries in terms of absolute amounts of transfers are the U.S. and China since their emissions are higher than the global average. What's interesting is that despite being a payer country, the effective tax rate for the Chinese is lower than the possible universal tax rate of \$46.1 per metric tonne and that's because their *own* energy transition (1.5% of China's GDP) plus the global compensation they make requires a tax rate only of \$34.4 per metric tonne. So, in that sense, the burden of adjustment is only partially falling on their shoulder and only because they emit more than the global average.

Robin Hood tax

In terms of 'compensated' countries, India comes at the top due to its population size and its distance from the global emissions' average (India has per capita emissions of 1.73 metric tonne). The other suspects are all countries from the global South, but this list springs a few surprises like France, Sweden, and Switzerland. What this tells us is that even high-income countries which have currently kept their per capita emissions low are beneficiaries of this globally-just policy. With China in the first list and some of the first world countries in the second, it's obvious what this policy wants to achieve. It wants all nations to climb down the emissions ladder without necessarily having to give up on their standard of living. It's a global green Robin Hood tax!

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A narrow nationalism again

The positions held by some intellectuals on the NRC only further legitimise a rapid descension into regional exclusivism



SURAJ GOGOI & ANGSHUMAN CHOUDHURY

With the release of the final draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, which has pushed over 19 lakh people closer to statelessness, a coterie of Assamese ethno-nationalist intellectuals and their external allies have taken upon themselves the unenviable task of defending the exercise.

For instance, literary critic Hiren Gohain argued that "the process was impersonal and its strict machine-like operation pre-empted the targeting of any particular community". Senior advocate at the Supreme Court, Upamanyu Hazarika, wrote that the NRC's necessity has been overlooked amidst concerns of "human rights" (put in double quotes by Mr. Hazarika) of the excluded. Professor Walter Fernandes wrote that those speaking up for the human rights of the excluded fail to "understand why the people of Assam are concerned about migrants". And academic Nandita Saikia wrote, "If not addressed now, hundreds of ethnic indigenous communities [in Assam] with distinct cultures will be wiped out in the advent of aggression by people of Bangladeshi origin." Notably, even though these writers admit that the NRC was flawed, they staunchly defend the exercise and justify it by different means. None of them seems to be concerned about the serious follies in the process that has had real consequences on the lives, bodies and fate of millions of human beings.

Impact on the vulnerable

The NRC is not just an isolated administrative exercise, but a process that is embedded in a history and the larger politics of Assamese nationalism, which is principally characterised by hatred towards the outsider, 'the Bangladeshi'. In many ways, Assamese nationalism and its agents are directly responsible for the impoverishment and anxiety that the people of Assam are experiencing on account of this exercise.

The process is designed such that the law itself and various attendant institutions – Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs), the Border Police, detention camps, Doubtful-Voter – have come to haunt the people. In the aftermath of the final NRC's release, the spectre of these institutions looms larger. Even with 521 FTs, registering and disposing of more than 19 lakh cases within a reasonable period of time is nearly impossible. The opacity of the procedures of the FTs alongside the con-

strained appeal period make the NRC's institutional basis even more precarious.

The accumulated impact of the NRC on the psyche of the vulnerable will be severe. The NRC is creating a public life where people experience extreme loneliness, which, for Hannah Arendt, is the most radical experience of man where everything becomes hopeless and bleak. For those excluded, the appeal period only brings the mere possibility, not certainty, of inclusion.

Gamut of exclusionary politics

Moreover, the post-NRC period, if there is anything as such at all, has spurred a whole gamut of exclusionary political persuasions. One set of politics is that of the Hindutva cabal, including the BJP, that is aiming to undertake a communal distillation of the excluded mass, even if that means discrediting the final NRC. The other set is that of 'erasure' wherein an attempt, mostly by the mainstream Assamese middle class intelligentsia, is being made to brush aside all contradictions and psychological ramifications of the process. There will also be a politics which foregrounds Assamese sociocultural supremacy by means of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord. This will not only convert the excluded into second-class citizens, but isolate even the included who were able to prove their Indian citizenship by legal means but won't be considered 'ethnic Assamese' by means of the ethno-nationalist consensus. As an outcome, many will find themselves in a suffocating social milieu marked by Assamese supremacy. This will have a detrimental effect on the organic identities of minorities who feel intimidated by the mainstream 'Assamese consensus'. One is reminded of the brave reporting of Assamese journalist Nirupama Borgohain decades ago when she showed how many Bengali families had to change names to hide their 'Bengaliness' in order to shield themselves from the brunt of Assamese nationalists.

The NRC process will also change the terms of Indian citizenship forever. Apart from laying grounds for a nationwide NRC, it has already influenced similar calls for exclusionary regimes in Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. The positions held by intellectuals on Assam only further legitimise a rapid descension into regional exclusivism. Their assertions reveal a narrow vision of a society which cannot embrace differences and erases its own complicity in segregationist processes like the NRC.

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An indefensible transfer that needs to be reversed

The collegium's move dents the judiciary's image

N.G.R. PRASAD
& K.K. RAM SIDDHARTHA

It would be a classic case of an exercise of absolute power if the totally indefensible transfer of Madras High Court Chief Justice V.K. Tahiramani to the Meghalaya High Court is not reversed. Many questions arise in the wake of this decision by the collegium for which there are absolutely no answers. Justice Tahiramani is the senior-most High Court Judge in the country and, after having served three stints in the Bombay High Court as Acting Chief Justice, she was elevated and transferred as Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, another prestigious chartered High Court.

The transfer comes at a time when the Supreme Court has been expressing concern about increasing corruption in the higher judiciary. Justice Tahiramani stands out as a judge with an impeccable record of honesty and without even the slightest needle of suspicion. There has been no complaint from any quarter against her. Keeping with her high dignity, the judge even refused to go to the press on this issue.

A person normally of that seniority and holding the post of the Chief Justice of a chartered High Court will legitimately expect to go to the Supreme Court. In the interests of better administration, judges are normally transferred to equally big courts but there has never been an instance of the senior-most judge, and that too the Chief Justice of a chartered High Court consisting of 75 judges, getting transferred to a Court consisting of only three judges, including the Chief Justice.

A case of humiliation

This is not only a case of humiliation but amounts to disgracing a person in public life. Justice Tahiramani has rightly reacted by putting in her resignation. Such transfers undermine the dignity of the judiciary and demoralise the judge. Judges of the High Court are as

much constitutional functionaries as judges of the Supreme Court. Under these circumstances, the most appropriate course of action for the Supreme Court would be to reconsider its decision and restore Justice Tahiramani back to the Madras High Court, or any other High Court of equal standing.

It is not as if in the past such decisions were not reconsidered. It is a well-known fact that Justice Rajiv Shakdher of the Delhi High Court was in 2016 transferred to the Madras High Court because he granted relief to a Greenpeace activist. It was a former Chief Justice of the Madras High Court who took it up with the collegium and saw to it that Justice Shakdher was transferred back.

In the interest of fairness

Fairness is the hallmark of justice and to deny fairness to a person who is administering justice with impeccable honesty would be denying justice to that very person. Hence, the Supreme Court collegium should not have any misgivings about reversing this decision.

In the *Derek Bentley* case, the English Court of Appeal had held, following more than three decades of relentless pursuit by the convict's sister after the former had been awarded capital punishment and executed in 1953, that the conviction and sentencing were wrong. The Court of Appeal, after awarding the deceased a posthumous pardon, reflected and realised that only if such a mistake is 'corrected' would the image of the judiciary go up so that similar wrongs are not committed in the future.

The collegium needs to avoid committing a similar grave wrong and allow Justice Tahiramani, who has about a year of service left, to retire with dignity. The need of the hour calls not only for statesmanship but also courage.

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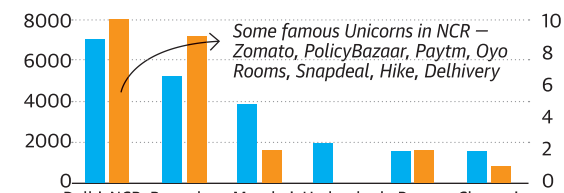
DATA POINT

Starting troubles

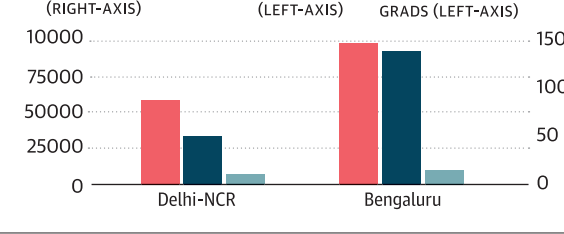
More active start-up companies are located in the National Capital Region than in Bengaluru despite the southern city having better local talent and cheaper office rent. However, in the last five years, start-ups in general and those in Delhi in particular have run into trouble as funding has substantially decreased. This has led to a significant decrease in new start-ups.

By The Hindu Data Team

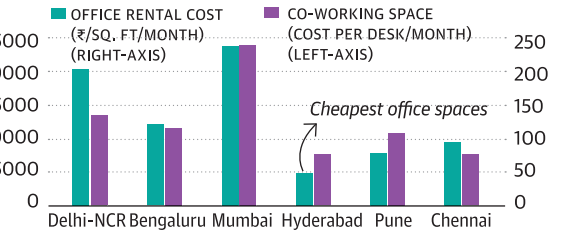
Capital gains | Delhi-NCR has the highest number of start-ups in India. It also has the most Unicorns (a start-up valued at over \$1 bn). Five of the top 10 most valued start-ups are in this region



Tech talent | However, Bengaluru beats the NCR in availability of local talent. The numbers below have a direct impact on the quality of available talent too



At all costs | While office spaces in Mumbai and Delhi are expensive, they are cheaper in Bengaluru

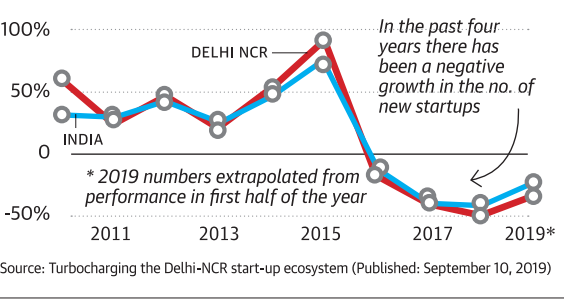


Money trouble | Analysis of seed-funded start-ups in NCR, founded between three distinct time periods, shows that funds have started to dry-up in recent years at later stages

Table shows % of start-ups that graduate to the next funding stage

Funding stage	2009-11	2012-14	2015-17
Seed	100%	100%	100%
Series A	51%	30%	17.50%
Series B	23%	13%	7%
Series C	16%	6.2%	2.40%
Series D+	7%	3%	0.90%

Failing incubators? | The pace at which new start-ups are set up has dipped over the past four years. The graph shows the year-on-year % change in new start-ups founded



The Hindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 12, 1969

Moon's origin remains a puzzle

The moon went through violent and torrid pains of birth and early infancy about the same time as the earth, but then it died and became "a very quiet, peaceful place", scientists at the Lunar Receiving Laboratory believe. This conclusion was revealed in interviews as the scientists prepared to release some of the lunar material on Friday [September 12] to other scientists for further study. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration will officially announce its findings on the moon rocks at a Washington news conference on Monday. Here are the key things scientists at the Manned Space Centre say they have learned from Apollo-11. There is no evidence that there is life on the moon. Exhaustive tests exposing the lunar material to earthly life forms - plants, fish, mice, birds and accidentally, man himself - produced no evidence of moon pathogens or germs existing in the soil. Nor has the soil been shown to have a toxic effect on earth creatures. Examination of the rocks and dust show the moon to have been molten about the same time as the earth - about three billion years ago. The moon heated up after its formation, as did the earth, and was a globe of molten rock. But while the earth continued to evolve and bring forth life, the moon - after 500 years - in effect died.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO SEPT. 12, 1919.

The Punjab Affair.

(From an Editorial)

If anything were wanted to intensify the absorption of the public conscience over the Punjab episodes, there is ample material in the proceedings of the Imperial Council on Wednesday. The bureaucratic mentality shone forth in all its pristine purity in the official replies to questions and speeches. These showed that the officials like the Bourbons have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. In the circumstances the appeal the Viceroy made to let bygones be bygones and to fix one's thoughts on the glorious future takes on a grimly ironical significance. The puerile insistence on the letter of the rules which the Home Member asked for and the Viceroy endorsed by refusing permission to Pandit Malaviya to amend his resolution in view of the altered circumstances, casts an illuminating light on the kind of mental atmosphere in which officialdom has its being. The occasion was a serious one, the proceedings were being watched by India with a painfully intense absorption.