

AFRICA BEING LEFT OUT OF CLIMATE AID

LIMA: The head of the African Development Bank says the continent is not getting enough of the billions of dollars in climate change funding, despite being the region that suffers most. With clutch climate talks approaching in December, world leaders are scrambling to come up with pledges toward the target of \$100 billion a year by 2020 to fight global warming—a make-or-break promise in the arduous negotiations to reach a comprehensive deal on cutting carbon emissions.

But the development bank's president, Akinwumi Adesina, said the world needs to rethink how it spends that money. "Africa today contributes just two percent of all

greenhouse gas emissions, but Africa is the one that suffers most from the impact of climate change," Adesina told AFP on the sidelines of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank annual meetings in Lima, Peru.

The talks marked the 55-year-old Nigerian's first major world event since taking up his post in September. "We need to look at how we're dividing up (climate funding) to make sure the financing levels are high enough," said Adesina, a former agriculture minister who was named Forbes magazine's "African of the Year" in 2013.

Africa, he said, is not getting its fair share of climate funds—which last year stood around

\$62 billion from governments, multilateral institutions and the private sector, according to a recent study. The problem, he said, is the way climate funding is allocated. The money, both loans and grants, goes to fund two kinds of projects: mitigation and adaptation.

Mitigation means cutting carbon emissions. Adaptation means preparing for the extreme weather events and natural disasters that will be caused by rising global temperatures. "What Africa needs is funds for adapting. We have hundreds of millions of people who have no way of adapting to climate change," said Adesina. "But unfortunately, on climate finance, today in the world... 76 per-

cent of financing is dedicated to mitigation. "This is an imbalance that needs to be addressed."

Smallest polluter, biggest victim

The world's poorest continent is also its lowest polluter, because it has relatively few of the industries, power plants and vehicles that contribute most to carbon emissions. But most climate funding "tends to favor Asian countries like India and China," said Adesina.

His own institution plans to triple investment in climate-related projects to more than \$5 billion a year by 2020, which will represent 40 percent of its total portfolio. That will put it

on par with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for the title of greenest bank in the world.

French Finance Minister Michel Sapin, whose country will host the upcoming climate talks known as COP21, has called Adesina "very determined" on climate change. Adesina in turn had a message for Sapin as he races to reach the magic number of \$100 billion in climate funds. "COP21 needs to be a great success, but in order for it to be a great success it's very important to be able to access the needed financing for both adaptation and mitigation—but first of all adaptation," he said. — AFP



LIMA: Attendees are silhouetted against windows of the Lima Convention Center, the venue for the World Bank and International Monetary Fund annual meetings. — AP

DEVELOPMENT BANKS BOOST FUNDS TO FIGHT GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

CERTAIN TO REACH \$100 BILLION COMMITMENT

LIMA: The world's top development banks pledged Friday to boost their funding to lessen climate change's impact, aiming for the goal of \$100 billion a year that rich countries have pledged to transfer to developing countries by 2020. The pledges were made as finance ministers met in Lima less than two months ahead of a climate conference in Paris considered pivotal if the brakes are to be put on global warming.

"This is a positive outcome and I think we can say with some certainty that we will reach the \$100 billion commitment" made at 2009 climate talks in Copenhagen, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told reporters. "It is the beginning of what you need, because if the international community doesn't roll up its sleeves and get to work this thing is just too big for us," said Rachel Kyte, the World Bank vice president for climate change.

For the World Bank alone, that will mean boosting climate financing by a third, potentially making \$29 billion a year in additional funding available by 2020. Pledging to essentially double their lending were the smaller Asian, European, African and European multilateral development banks, French finance officials said. The African Development Bank said it would triple its climate financing to nearly \$5 billion a year by 2020. Countries including Germany, France, Netherlands, United States, Sweden and Britain have recently announced increase climate finance.

A report issued this week by the 29-country Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development estimated \$62 billion was spent last year, up from \$52 billion the previous year. Multilateral development banks account for about 40 percent of the total. The charity Oxfam estimates that only about 16 percent of the total - or \$2 billion - is directly invested in helping poor countries hit hardest by global warming cope with extreme weather it is already causing.

'Short-changed'

"The poorest countries are still being short-changed," said Oxfam climate policy expert Isabel Kreiser. Most of the money is going to green energy investments for reducing the burning of fossil fuels that cause global warming. The finance ministers of 20 countries most vulnerable to climate change's impact held their inaugural meeting in Lima and called on developed countries to boost by 50 percent the financing for adaptation, which includes everything from building sea walls to more heat-resistant highways to relocating low-lying communities where sea levels are rising.

The countries include the Philippines, Bangladesh, Costa Rica and island nations and are home to nearly 700 million people. The V-20 ministers also proposed an international financial transaction tax to raise more money for fighting climate

change and said they would create a climate risk pooling mechanism to "improve recovery from climate-induced extreme weather events and disasters" through insurance.

"Climate finance is going to be a dealmaker or deal-breaker in Paris, so unless there is a credible roadmap on the table on how these imbalances are going to be addressed, we do see developing countries putting a Paris agreement potentially at risk," Kreiser said. "The \$100 billion is a very important political commitment that developed countries made in Copenhagen but it's really the tip of the iceberg," said Jennifer Morgan of the World Resources Institute. "The real question is about the shifting of the trillions."

The International Energy Agency has estimated an additional \$1.1 trillion will be needed annually through mid-century to keep the global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius, the goal of international climate negotiations of which Paris will be the 21st round. "The \$100 billion is a political number," Christiana Figueres, the executive secretary of the UN-run talks. "It was pulled out of a hat. But it must be respected." During the annual gathering of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund at which the finance ministers met, the heads of both lenders called for an end to subsidies on fossil fuels, which the IMF says amount to more than \$5 trillion a year. — AP

CANADIAN FIRM OPENS FACILITY TO CAPTURE CARBON FROM AIR

SQUAMISH: A company with global plans to pull carbon from thin air to make fuel, while tackling climate change, opened a pilot plant Friday in this remote western Canadian community. Carbon Engineering, backed by Bill Gates and other investors, unveiled a test facility able to extract carbon dioxide from the atmosphere using giant fans.

That carbon goes through a series of chemical processes and emerges as pellets, which can be used to make fuel-or simply be stored underground. The

company was founded in Calgary in 2009 by David Keith, a Harvard University climate scientist, with funding from private investors. Unlike existing machines that capture carbon from smokestacks like those of coal-fired power plants, the direct air capture plant deals "with emissions from sources you just can't otherwise capture," said company chief executive Adrian Corless.

"It's now possible to take CO2 out of the atmosphere, and use it as a feed stock, with hydrogen, to

produce net zero emission fuels." The benefit of those synthesized fuels, Corless told AFP, is they can be tailor-made for use in existing systems, from petrol pumps to automobiles and airplanes. "You don't have to re-tool the \$30 trillion in (global) infrastructure now used to deliver fossil fuels," Corless said.

While alternative energies, from wind to solar, are being developed, "there's not a lot of options to power airplanes and vehicles," said Corless. "For me, this is most exciting." "The economics are attractive," said scientist Hadi Dowlatabadi, of the University of British Columbia. This small town north of Vancouver welcomed the company moving into an unused industrial site, and the opening was blessed by members of the aboriginal Squamish Nation as a working example of traditional teachings to take care of the world.

'Have to adapt'

"We have to adapt to the modern world," said councillor Chris Lewis. Mark Jaccard, professor of sustainable energy at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, said the technology holds promise to reduce greenhouse gases and climate change. "What humans really should be doing is really either not using fossil fuels or using fossil fuels and capturing the carbon so it doesn't go into the atmosphere," Jaccard said.

Other companies around the world are experimenting with air capture, but Corless said Carbon Engineering's design is unique because it can be quickly and affordably scaled up to industrial size. Corless said the pilot plant began operations in June and has already captured 10 tons of CO2.

The company says it plans to use the data from the pilot plant in Squamish to design its first commercial plant by 2017, which it says will cost no more than \$200 million. "We should be in a position to be selling synthetic fuels in 2018," said Corless. He said synthetic fuels, like fossil fuels, provide an energy source concentrated enough to power airplanes and long-haul ground transportation. — AFP



SQUAMISH: Jane Ritchie explains the carbon capture system at opening of a Canadian Carbon Engineering pilot plant. — AFP

INDIA RISKS BACKSLIDING ON SUCCESS AGAINST HIV

DELHI: New HIV infections in India could rise for the first time in more than a decade because states are mismanaging a prevention program by delaying payments to health workers, the United Nations envoy for AIDS in Asia and the Pacific said. India's efforts to fight HIV have for years centered around community-based programs run for people at high risk of contracting the virus, such as sex workers and injecting drug users. The results won praise globally - annual new infections fell consistently and, overall, were reduced by more than half between 2000 and 2011.

But Prime Minister Narendra Modi in February cut the federal AIDS budget by a fifth and asked states to fill the gap, even though their poorly-run bureaucracies were already slow in releasing funds to their AIDS prevention units. As a result, staff salaries have been delayed for months and prevention activities have slowed down.

The decision was part of a wider strategy to decentralize social spending and focus central government resources on building roads and railways to boost economic growth. In an interview with Reuters, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for AIDS in Asia-Pacific, JVR Prasada Rao, warned "primitive" management by states would "ruin the program." "When the new infections start rising, all the good work that has been done will be washed away," said Rao, who said he based his view on interactions with several federal and state AIDS officials in the last six months.

Health workers left unpaid

Reuters reported in March that government data and letters obtained under right to information legislation showed state treasuries were delaying payments and thousands of health workers had gone unpaid for months.

In letters seen by Reuters, some states have cited a lack of clarity about how much they need to contribute to the program under the new arrangement as a reason for delayed payments, and overall shortage of funds. Experts and state health officials also blame delays on

slow bureaucratic processes. An official at the federal AIDS control department, part of the health ministry that oversees the program, said delays in states disbursing funds were still widespread, with payments in some cases three months late. The AIDS control department official said there was a risk of a rise in new infections if the delays continue, but added such a scenario was at least a year away.

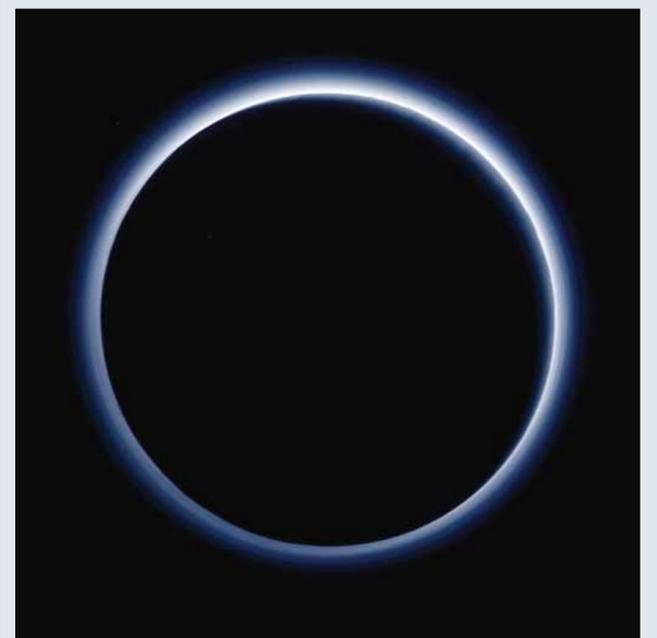
The health ministry did not respond to Reuters' requests for comment on Rao's remarks. Top officials in the ministry were concerned about the slowdown in releasing funds, according to letters seen in March and May.

Infections averted

India's free HIV/AIDS drugs program, launched more than two decades ago, has been highly successful. The World Bank estimates India's policy of targeting sex workers averted 3 million infections with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, between 1995 and 2015. Still, UNAIDS estimates India accounted for most of the 340,000 new infections in the Asia-Pacific region last year.

India's last nationwide AIDS estimates were released in 2012. Data for the next assessment is still being collected. Under the new funding arrangement, states are given a larger share of federal taxes but are no longer obliged to earmark funds for social schemes. Rao said the flow of funds has improved marginally in recent months after complaints from AIDS workers, but he urged states and politicians to do more.

"We are getting complacent to the success," he said. "If we have to achieve the new goal of ending AIDS by 2030, you have to commit more resources." In the western city of Mumbai, Manoj Jani, project director of an organization working with sex workers under the AIDS program, said his 23 staff were demoralized because they have not been paid for four months. AIDS tests have been curtailed. "Workers are not able to travel for testing activities due to funding issues," Jani said. "We never thought we would see such a day." — Reuters



This image released by NASA on Thursday, Oct 8, 2015, shows the blue color of Pluto's haze layer in this picture taken by the New Horizons spacecraft's Ralph/Multispectral Visible Imaging Camera (MVIC). The high-altitude haze is thought to be similar in nature to that seen at Saturn's moon Titan. This image was generated by software that combines information from blue, red and near-infrared images to replicate the color a human eye would perceive as closely as possible. — AP

BLUE SKY AND RED ICE DISCOVERED ON PLUTO

CAPE CANAVERAL: The sky over Pluto may not be sunny but it's undoubtedly blue. NASA's New Horizons spacecraft discovered Pluto's blue sky during the historic flyby of the icy dwarf planet in July. The images of Pluto's atmospheric haze were beamed down last week and released by NASA on Thursday.

The particles in the atmospheric haze are actually red and gray, according to scientists. But the way the particles scatter blue light is what has everyone excited about the dwarf planet orbiting on the far fringes of our solar system, a twilight zone known more formally as the Kuiper Belt. "Who would have expected a blue sky in the Kuiper Belt? It's gorgeous," Alan Stern, the principal scientist for New Horizons, said in a NASA release about the latest images.

The blue tint can help scientists understand the size and makeup of the haze particles surrounding Pluto, where twilight constantly reigns given the 3.6 billion-mile distance between it and the sun. Pluto's high-altitude haze seems to be comparable to that of Saturn's moon, Titan, according to NASA, and the result of interaction between molecules.

In another finding Thursday, scientists have uncovered numerous ice patches on Pluto's surface. The exposed water ice appears to be, mysteriously, red. Scientists said they are uncertain why the ice appears in certain places at Pluto and not others. Launched in 2006, New Horizons is now 63 million miles beyond Pluto. Johns Hopkins University in Maryland is operating the spacecraft for NASA. — AP