COP31 talks fail as members differ on fossil fuel omission

Over 130 parties refuse to accept cover text, allege attempt to 'greenwash' fossil fuels; India, China, Saudi Arabia support the text; climate ambition must match means of implementation, says India

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

A stand-off on a fossil fuel phase-out on Sunday prevented countries at COP31 from achieving any consensus agreement on future climate action, despite the 12-day climate summit held in Antalya, Turkiye, running a record 48 hours into overtime.

The European Union led objections to COP31 President Murat Kurum's consensus cover text that failed to mention explicitly about moving away from fossil fuels. The European Union's stance was reportedly supported by 130 countries.

"There is nothing to do. We did all that we could," Mr. Kurum told the closing plenary, saying he would not advance any new text.

The COP31 was the first since the UN confirmed the rise in global temperatures was set to overshoot the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit, a scenario in which scientists say extreme weather impacts intensify.

Panama formally objected to the text, saying that as a country battling perilous impacts of climate change, the lack of any commitment to keep the rise in temperatures below 1.5 degrees Celsius with firm action on phasing out fossil fuels was "a setback".

On the other side of the divide, India was among the nations who supported the proposed cover text as they wanted to keep using fossil fuels for the foreseeable future, with Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav stressing that "climate ambition must go hand in hand with means of implementation." China and oil-rich Saudi Arabia also supported the proposed text.

On behalf of the European Union, Ireland's Climate Minister Darragh O'Brien said attempts to "greenwash" fossil fuel cannot be accepted and expressed "profound disappointment" over the outcome of the summit. "At a point where the world urgently needs action to avert disastrous levels of global warming, the draft cover decision falls well short," he said.

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Talking point: COP31 President Murat Kurum amid discussions as the climate summit in Antalya, Turkiye, concluded on Sunday. AP

SAURYA RG-(9538104529)

COP31 talks fail over fossil fuel omission

"We will not endorse a decision that does not respond to the science, that disregards the implementation gap, and that actually risks deepening the chasm between global commitments and the action required to correct the overshoot and bring 1.5 degrees cback to within reach... We will not accept a COP that greenwashes fossil fuel," the Irish Minister added.

"Panama cannot support this decision. One, because it repeats previously agreed commitments without closing the gap between reality and what science demands. Two, because it weighs too much upon technologies such as CCUS [carbon capture utilisation and storage] instead of calling for deep changes, and three, because it weakens language agreed in previous decisions. This is a setback, a rollback," said Ana Aguilar, Panama's chief climate negotiator.

SHAURYA SSB TPG (8368104529)

'Equitable energy transitions needed'

The countries that were against the explicit mention on fossil fuel expressed comfort in the way the cover text language was framed, while also expressing misgivings on the lack of clarity on adaptation finance. The countries, including India, China, and Saudi Arabia, were part of the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) coalition, who insist on the use of fossil fuel in the foreseeable future to further their economies, but have also significantly deployed renewable energy.

India's Environment Minister said that the country's voice had shaped the draft COP 31 outcome, especially on food security, livelihoods, and cultural practices recognised in action on methane. However, in a post on X, Mr. Yadav emphasised that "climate ambition must go hand in hand with means of implementation. Energy transitions must be nationally determined, just and equitable, backed by finance, technology and capacity-building for developing countries."

Amandeep Garg, who was leading India's delegation but speaking in his capacity as a spokesperson on behalf of the LMDC, said on the floor: "Everyone has worked tirelessly, and despite our discomfort with some elements of the text, are willing to move forward, and continue to engage." The LMDC expressed "concern" about the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility not being adequately reflected, adding that there was a "dilution" of the principle of developed countries taking historical responsibility and meeting their obligations.

"At the threshold of crossing 1.5 degrees Celsius, we have raised a fundamental point - we need to reflect why we are here. Whose emissions, both past and continuing, have exhausted the global carbon budget? The cover decision does not reflect this, and only repeats agreed paragraphs from previous decisions to reflect responsibility and does not connect this with the imminent prospect of exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius," he said.

The inability of a COP presidency to pass a consensus text is perceived as a sign of failure but the consensus driven nature of the agreement is such that no country or bloc has veto power and every clause must be unanimously agreed to by all 190+ country representatives.

(With Reuters inputs)

SHAURYASBTRG (6368104529)

Nepal PM begins maiden official visit to India; key agreements on agenda

Balendra Shah to hold talks with Modi today; they are expected to inaugurate several projects, including the Dharchula Bridge and a train connection between Janakpur and Gorakhpur

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

The Prime Minister of Nepal, Balendra Shah, arrived here on Sunday afternoon for his first official visit to India. Sources said that Mr. Shah is scheduled to hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which will give a "political direction" to bilateral relations for the coming years.

The Hindu was told that the major agreements between the two sides are expected to be in the areas of development partnership, energy, hydropower, railways, connectivity, climate change, disaster resilience, infrastructure, and technology.

The two leaders are also expected to inaugurate several projects, including the Dharchula Bridge, the land port of Banbasa on the India-Nepal border in Uttarakhand, and a train connection between Janakpur and Gorakhpur.

On Sunday, Mr. Shah, who arrived with a 35-member team for engagements in New Delhi, was received at the airport by Jitin Prasada, Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Electronics and Information Technology. His first formal meeting took place in the evening when External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar called on him.



Opening meet: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with visiting Nepali Prime Minister Balendra Shah in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

"Privileged to call on PM Balen Shah of Nepal on his visit to New Delhi this evening. India cherishes the special friendship with Nepal. Look forward to his engagements with PM Narendra Modi tomorrow," Mr. Jaishankar said.

Mr. Shah, a rapper and former mayor of Kathmandu, took office as Nepal's Prime Minister in March after his Rastriya Swatantra Party's (RSP's) landslide victory in the elections to replace the interim government that was in place following the GenZ uprising of September 2025.

Mr. Modi had invited Mr. Shah to India soon after the latter was sworn in as Prime Minister. The two leaders have interacted over the telephone as well as through diplomatic channels, but Monday will be the first time they meet in person.

Earlier on Sunday, Mr. Shah left Kathmandu on a Nepal Airlines flight. Having introduced a no-frills administration, Mr. Shah did not have a ceremonial farewell at the Tribhuvan International Airport. Moving away from past tradition, the Nepal Embassy is also not likely to host Mr. Shah for a civic reception, as had been done during similar visits in the past.

The business delegation from Nepal was hosted at an event organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry on Sunday, which was attended by the Nepal's Finance Minister, Swarnim Wagley. Nepal's Foreign Minister, Shisir Khanal, is also accompanying Mr. Shah.

Nepal's Prime Minister will be given a ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday , following which he will proceed to the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat. After this, he will take part in talks with Mr. Modi at Hyderabad House. Subsequently, Mr. Shah will call on President Droupadi Murmu in the afternoon before emplaning for Kathmandu.

India, China hold 10-day military talks to ease LAC tensions in Arunachal

Lieutenant-General Girish Kalia led the Indian delegation; the two sides discussed measures to prevent face-off between troops deployed along the frontier and maintain communication

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India and China have concluded a second round of Corps Commander-level talks aimed at easing tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh and putting in place measures to prevent friction between troops deployed along the frontier ahead of the onset of harsh winter conditions.

Sources in the Defence Ministry have confirmed to *The Hindu* that the closely guarded discussions, which began on November 8, continued for nearly 10 days, with a short break in between. The talks were described as cordial, though it remains unclear whether the measures discussed will be implemented on the ground before winter sets in fully.

Lieutenant-General Girish Kalia, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Army's III Corps, also known as the Spear Corps, led the Indian delegation. The formation is headquartered at Rangapahar, near Dimapur, in Nagaland. His Chinese counterpart and other military officers participated in the discussions. An official from the Ministry of External Affairs was also present.



The military-level talks come amid renewed diplomatic efforts by New Delhi and Beijing to stabilise bilateral relations. FILE PHOTO

Engagement protocols

The latest round of talks primarily focused on establishing engagement protocols between the two sides, preventing face-offs and misunderstandings between troops deployed along the frontier, maintaining open communication channels and reducing tensions in the eastern sector. Both countries have deployed substantial numbers of troops in the region. The discussions assume significance as winter conditions along the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh can become extremely severe, posing considerable challenges to troop sustenance, movement and logistical support. Any delay in implementing the measures discussed could complicate the situation on the ground as temperatures fall and access to forward areas becomes increasingly difficult.

The second round follows the first Corps Commander-level meeting held on September 6-7 at the Wacha-Damai Border Personnel Meeting (BPM) point in the Kibithoo sector. Wacha is India's easternmost border personnel meeting point.

The first meeting was convened following reports of tensions in the Taksing area of Upper Subansiri district in Arunachal Pradesh, where troops from the two sides had reportedly come face to face.

The military-level engagement comes amid renewed diplomatic efforts by New Delhi and Beijing to stabilise bilateral relations.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)

SHENZHEN PLEDGE: WHAT IT MEANS FOR ENERGY SECURITY

US, Russia & China pledge to shore up global fuel supplies

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, November 22



Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, US President Donald Trump at a trilateral meeting on sidelines of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders' Summit in Shenzhen, China. REUTERS

THE "US-RUSSIA-CHINA Heads of State Declaration toward Peace" — issued after US President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Chinese President Xi Jinping held an unprecedented trilateral summit in Shenzhen — said that the three countries plan to increase production and supply of refined petroleum products "for the benefit of all nations".

It also said the three leaders "reaffirmed the importance of stable energy flows".

While the statement is short on specifics, it can be seen as a statement of intent from three of the world's most influential energy market players at a time when global fuel supplies are severely strained. Ongoing geopolitical conflicts — US-Iran and Russia-Ukraine — have disrupted oil and fuel supply chains, pushed up fuel prices, and highlighted energy security-related concerns.

While the pledge could provide some psychological relief to fuel markets, particularly regarding diesel, translating the commitment into actual additional supplies will be a major challenge, as per energy experts and analysts. The commitment also raises important questions about sanctions, refining capacity, trade restrictions, and the ability of the three countries to coordinate energy policies.

The timing of pledge is crucial, given the geopolitical conflicts and their impact on fuel flows. The West Asia conflict has been damaging due to the disruption in energy flows via the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of the world's oil supplies passed before the crisis.

Although there has been a notable recovery in oil flows, shipments of refined petroleum fuels from the Gulf stand significantly below pre-war levels.

At the same time, Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries have reduced Moscow's ability to process crude and export diesel. This has compounded fuel shortage, particularly diesel, in overseas markets. Paris-based International Energy Agency's latest Oil Market Report highlighted that diesel prices in Europe were 77% above pre-war levels. High diesel prices have been a key concern for the Donald Trump administration in US, with retail prices touching record highs. Diesel is seen as one of the most important petroleum fuels as it is not just a transportation fuel, but also powers long-haul trucks, agricultural machinery, construction equipment, and other heavy industrial equipment.

So severe has been the crisis that in a surprise move last month, Trump announced that US would be buying thousands of tonnes of Russian diesel, and was relaxing its sanctions regime to facilitate Russian diesel exports to other countries as well.

The announcement came as a shock to many, considering the US has taken measures, including sanctions, to restrict Moscow's earnings from energy exports. Diesel supplies are tight, inventories low, and importers are scrambling to secure the fuel from geographies not impacted by conflict or chokepoint closures. Diesel is among the most crucial petroleum fuels due to its use across sectors, which also makes it the most politically sensitive fuel amid ongoing crises.

The US, Russia, and China are among the world's largest oil producers and refining powers. Their influence on crude supplies, refining capacity, and international petroleum trade makes their commitment notable. However, there is a major question mark over the actual impact the declaration will have in terms of actual fuel flows and energy market stability.

"I don't see the declaration bringing much extra fuel onto the market in the near term. All three countries have pledged to increase the production and supply of refined products, but each faces a different constraint," Abu Dhabi-based energy analyst Natalia Katona told *The Indian Express*.

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CHAUDHARY SSB-TRG (8368104529)

Bahrain says two wounded as Iran targets U.S. Patriot defence systems

Iran strikes hit civilian industrial facility, says Bahrain as its defences intercept attacks; Iran's state media say Revolutionary Guards led missile-and-drone assault on U.S. defence systems at Al-Riffa and Awali bases; two ships struck in Strait of Hormuz

Agence France-Presse
MANAMA

Bahrain on Sunday said two people were wounded in an Iranian attack on Saturday against "a civilian industrial site" in the kingdom, while Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had launched a missile-and-drone assault on U.S. military positions in the kingdom, home to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet.

Separately, two tankers were also hit in the Strait of Hormuz.

In a statement on Sunday, Bahrain's Interior Ministry said two people were injured in the Iranian attacks - a Pakistani resident, who was in a critical condition, and a Bahraini citizen.



Gulf tensions: Iran Guards said they targeted American facilities in Bahrain in response to continued violations of airspace. AFP

Civil Defence teams were working to contain a fire at the industrial facility, the Ministry said on X.

Bahrain's Defence Force said its air defences had intercepted a number of Iranian aerial attacks. Shrapnel from the interceptions caused material damage but no casualties, it said, adding that Tehran was continuing its "systematic hostile approach" towards the kingdom.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards have repeatedly said they targeted U.S. facilities in Bahrain, where Iranian strikes resumed on November 13 after a lull since early September.

In a statement carried by Iranian state media on Saturday, the Revolutionary Guards said they had attacked with missiles and drones U.S. Patriot air defence systems at the Al-Riffa and Awali bases in Bahrain, in response to the "continued violations of the airspace" of the Islamic Republic.

The attacks came as two tankers were struck in the Strait of Hormuz, which has become the focus of the stalemated conflict, with Iran continuing in its efforts to blockade the strategic shipping line.

Tankers hit

British maritime agency UKMTO said on Saturday one tanker was struck by an "unknown projectile" while transiting Hormuz. "There are no reported casualties," it said, adding another tanker was hit in its engine room.

Iran's Army later reported a ship was on fire after entering a "restricted zone" and hitting a mine in the strait.

(With inputs from Reuters)

SHAURYA TRG (8308104529)

Netanyahu, Eisenkot resume talks on forming Israeli govt.

Agence France-Presse
HERZLIYA

The parties of caretaker Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his rival Gadi Eisenkot launched a new round of talks on Sunday over whether to form a coalition government, with Mr. Netanyahu's party insisting on keeping his main policies.



Caretaker PM Benjamin Netanyahu and his poll rival Gadi Eisenkot pose for a group photo at the Knesset in Jerusalem. AP

Delegations from Mr. Eisenkot's Yashar party and Mr. Netanyahu's Likud began discussions on Sunday, following a first round of talks last week.

On Saturday, Yashar presented the resumption of talks as "a genuine commitment to forming the broadest possible government", saying that Mr. Eisenkot had asked his representatives to explore all options.

But Likud laid down several conditions for its participation in a unity government, a formula backed by Mr. Netanyahu. It also called for bringing together "all the parties that support the existence of the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people", without the participation of Arab parties.

Mr. Eisenkot has until December 6 to form a government, with the possibility of a 14-day extension, after October elections failed to give either camp an absolute majority.

His 48-member bloc, which needs 61 lawmakers to reach a majority, remains divided over whether to build a coalition through an alliance with ultra-Orthodox parties, a rapprochement with Arab parties, or a national unity government with Likud.

SHAURYA SSB (PBC 68104539)

NVIDIA AFTERSHOCKS

China's spies eyed AI chips long before scandal: Report

Chris Buckley & Julian E Barnes
November 22

WHEN CHINA'S top espionage agency updated its priorities this year, it added a revealing goal: overcoming Western barriers to technologies that Xi Jinping sees as crucial to China's rise.

At the heart of that quest are the advanced semiconductors needed to power artificial intelligence, including chips that the United States has barred US companies like Nvidia from exporting to China.

China must "adopt extraordinary measures to intensify the drive for core technologies in priority sectors," Xi told the Politburo, a council of senior officials, in January, according to an official text of his speech. "As swiftly as possible, solve 'chokehold' problems holding back development of future industries."

The spy agency, the Ministry of State Security, has long been dedicated to eliminating threats to Communist Party rule in China. Now, it has made it a priority to acquire advanced semiconductor chips and gather intelligence about them, according to several serving and former security and intelligence officials from governments outside China in Asia, the United States and Europe.

How China's spy agency is seeking to obtain advanced chips and intelligence about them has become a central question in the case of Alice Huang. She is a Chinese businesswoman who US officials say the Chinese agency was working with to spy on Jensen Huang, the chief executive of the American chip giant Nvidia, allegations that were first reported by *The New York Times*. Alice Huang has not responded to requests for comment, and China has rejected the claims of espionage as "pure fabrication."



Chen Yixin

The Chinese spy agency's campaign to acquire chips, details of which have not been previously reported, has been underway for at least two years, according to the current and former officials. They spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence.

Among the campaign's main elements:

- The head of the spy agency, Chen Yixin, who holds the title of minister of state security, created a working team that is leading the effort and reports directly to him, multiple foreign officials said. Chen has worked under Xi since they were officials in Zhejiang Province in eastern China, a cradle of China's high-tech boom.
- The group was assigned to help China's "counter-blockade" work — efforts to overcome export controls imposed by the US and its allies.
- The campaign includes helping Chinese companies acquire and smuggle advanced chips into China.
- The group also collects intelligence about the semiconductor sector and its supply chains, according to several officials briefed on the campaign.

In April, Chen unveiled the new mission. "Deepen the struggle against blockades, and comprehensively advance artificial intelligence innovation, industry development, and applications," he wrote in a Communist Party journal.

"Focus on tackling the 'chokeholds' of critical technologies," he wrote, and solve the problem of technologies that "cannot be obtained by asking, buying or pleading."

"Chen is signaling to the party leadership and his own ranks that his agency is elevating AI competition with the US as a long-term, top priority," said Alex Joske, the managing director of security practice at Garnaut Global, a consultancy firm, who studies the Chinese security apparatus. "He is telling his officers to find more ways to wage this struggle." **NYT**

SHAURYA ASSB-TRC-(9368104529)

Quad membership must translate into influence



SANJAY BHATTACHARYYA

THE QUAD Summit in Manila, the first in two years, was significant not merely for the revival of leadership meetings but also for its wider signalling. To partners, it signalled a transition from strategic intent to operational cooperation. It provided assurances to a democratic ASEAN. And the juxtaposition of the Quad and the Shenzhen trilateral meetings captured a defining feature of contemporary geopolitics: Accommodation by a global power in its simultaneous pursuit of coalitions and great-power consultations. The Quad joint statement identified items of operational cooperation in maritime security, economic resilience, AI technologies, connectivity extending to the Indian Ocean, cybersecurity and a business leaders' forum. The leaders reaffirmed opposition to unilateral attempts to alter the status quo through force or coercion, without explicitly naming China. Counterterrorism and support for ASEAN centrality were also reiterated.

The US provided reassurance to Indo-Pacific partners before Trump engaged Xi and Putin. The Manila and Shenzhen summits recognised the US as the pre-eminent power, sought by both friends and adversaries, but implementation capacity has yet to be tested. The US also conveyed its ability to pursue consultations with competitors without entirely relinquishing its regional security architecture. For Japan, the summit was important for its objective to be a principal security pillar in the Indo-Pacific with increased defence outlay. Australia strengthened recognition as the southern anchor of the Quad. India's geography, naval capabilities, economic potential and independent diplomatic relationships made it an essential partner. These factors reflect that India has strategic relevance, but not yet strategic primacy.

India's Quad agenda is to emerge as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean, protect sea lanes and monitor China's expanding maritime footprint. Building economic and technological resilience in critical minerals, supply chains, AI and cybersecurity is the key to reducing strategic dependency, attracting investment and developing manufacturing capability. India also seeks to pursue strategic autonomy to engage with the US, Russia, China and the Global South. The Manila summit delivered on most issues.

There was, nevertheless, a diplomatic irony. India was expected to host the 2025 Quad summit, but it was postponed by the Trump administration, indicating that US priorities were elsewhere. Eventually, the US convened it on the margins of ASEAN to balance the trilateral. India must ensure that its membership of the Quad translates into influence in global affairs. China has discomfort with the Quad, but maintained restraint on the Manila outcomes that addressed vulnerabilities arising from its dominant position in certain areas. Beijing pushed for a Shenzhen trilateral of "major powers", but it may be a one-off event in a world of geopolitical fragmentation. Emerging, middle and regional powers are unlikely to accept new structures of hegemony.

For India, the summits pose a more fundamental question: Will the emerging global order be shaped by a small group of great powers or a wider constellation of consequential powers? Only the accumulation of hard power can leverage India's position as it navigates the two competing but interconnected dimensions of coalition-building and great-power bargaining. India's diplomacy must not become captive to either.

India's Quad agenda is to emerge as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean, protect sea lanes and monitor China's expanding maritime footprint

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