



COP 15: Hope against hope

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UNITED Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) widely known as COP-15 started from December 7 in Copenhagen "with a high expectation of signing a fruitful deal by the high emitters to bring down carbon emission to a level to keep the planet livable." Heads of state of 198 countries are participating in the conference including US President Barack Obama, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The COP runs its two week long session in "conjunction with the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, the thirty-first session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, the tenth session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol and the eighth session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention".

One of the contentious issues in Copenhagen is the commitment of developed countries of 'financial and technological assistance to the developing countries for climate change mitigation and adaptation.' The thing to be done on urgent basis is financing 'mitigation projects in both the developed and developing countries.' Besides there are a volley of prescriptive measures such as 'cap and-trade, clean development mechanism, and harmonized domestic carbon taxes'. 'A proportion of the proceeds from their fossil fuel trade should be used to pay for the damage caused by global warming. Carbon emissions generated by fossil fuels contribute to 76 per cent of global warming. Such a tax would be an incentive for the suppliers to invest more and be more innovative in clean energy.'

It is high time to rethink global strategy based on expected Copenhagen consensus investing much time on research funded by carbon pricing. The research will look at 'how much we could help the planet by setting different levels of carbon taxes, planting more trees, reducing emissions, adapting to global warming or focusing on a technological solution to climate change.'

There is a glimmer of hope so far as combating climate change is concerned. For Copenhagen agreement is not far away. But the big question is whether the world leaders 'will be able to do something great if they do not have the right political will. They must have it here and now. The world cannot wait any more.'

The success of Copenhagen conference hinges much on 'wider participation of developing countries.' It is no less worrying that the developing countries will account for more than half of global emissions by the year 2020. China turned out to be the world's largest CO2 emitter in 2006 surpassing the United States. The United States and other developed countries should take the lead and bring the key emerging economies -- China, India, Brazil and Mexico -- under their

wings'.

It would not be rather difficult for the developing countries to reduce emission as 'their economic development depends on it' The developed countries have to share the burden of 'historical guilt for the majority of the current stock of anthropogenic greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that have caused global warming. Some fair mechanisms for climate mitigation and adaptation have to be urgently invented to give us a better and safer planet to live in.'

In the Copenhagen climate meet agreement has to be based on 'the principles of fairness and justice for the success of the global deal. Of course it calls for a broadway participation putting the vulnerable countries first. The politicians in both developed and developing countries ought to minimize polarization for the sake global co-operation. Only 'lofty rhetoric and big promise will not do. They need to shun blame game.' The UN Secretary General commented: "It may be difficult for President Obama to come with strong authority to reach a agreement in Copenhagen." Many blame USA as it 'will not have cap-and trade legislation in place before Copenhagen.' Others blame developing countries like Brazil, China and India for their 'reluctance to sign up to binding carbon cuts.'

There must be trade off between mitigation and adaptation so far as management of climate change is concerned. Developed countries' reluctance to climate change adaptation may stand as a stumbling block to global consensus in the Copenhagen conference. They are interested in climate change mitigation. In case of climate change adaptation the developed countries will have to undergo 'huge financial and other practical commitments towards the developing countries'. More mistrust between the developed and the developing countries ought to be dispelled with the engaging leadership of the former. However, it is not only US leadership that is required for common understanding. China and India should also lead the developing world as a whole for the interest of the Asian countries.

What is needed to ring down curtain on lingering suspicion and phobia of the developing countries is the leadership of the USA President who won Nobel peace prize, and the people all over the world expect much from him. He will be able to pursue world leaders to change course and agree in the Copenhagen meet to invest much on research and development for using those technologies that are cheaper and easier than 'carbon cuts.' Only then there would be a greater chance of reaching 'a genuine, broad-based and successful international agreement'. He cannot afford to fail in his role as the man of the moment. We do not expect that the conference is overshadowed by blame game, then the possibility of successful negotiation would slim.

Our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Sheikh Hasina at the UNGA session (climate change) rightly argued that 'for no fault of its own Bangladesh has to bear the brunt of global warming. The emission of CO2 from Bangladesh is very low.

Unfortunately the country has been worst affected by the global menace. If sea level is raised by one meter in the Bay of Bengal 18 per cent of the total inhabitable land will be submerged. It is morally obligatory on those countries to help Bangladesh to combat the onslaught of global warming. The UN should immediately look into it.

Addressing the European Development Day, 2009 events held in Sweden on 24th October, 2009 Sheikh Hasina called for establishing 'a realistic fund' for LDCs and developing countries to meet the requirement of combating climate change. Of the fund to be raised 'every year a substantial amount should earmarked for adaptation needs of the



developing countries with maximum share going to low-lying coastal countries, LDCs and the small

island developing countries. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on December 14 is likely to

address the presentation of four documentaries on climatic catastrophe in Bangladesh

According to the findings of 'a poll of 15 nations', most of them in the developing world including Bangladesh, "majorities of the people want their governments to take steps to fight climate change, even if that entails cost. The poll was carried out by the World Bank. It questioned 13,518 respondents in 15 nations -- Bangladesh, China, Egypt, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Russia, Senegal, Turkey, the United States, and Vietnam". "The poll's findings shed light on global attitudes at a particularly important moment: the run-up to the conference on climate change ... December 7-18 in Copenhagen."

There happens to be public concern about climate all over the world. The concern is stated to be higher in developing countries. The poll also advocated for helping poor countries to enable them to "adapt to the effects of climate change." Most poor countries feel that they should "contribute to international efforts to help

poor countries deal with these climate-induced changes." The developing countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Kenya, and Senegal committed "more than 90% support for acting in solidarity with other countries facing problems like their own."

Of late the International Monetary Fund has stated that "negotiations toward a successor to the Kyoto Protocol are intensifying, and domestic climate policies being formed, ahead of a critical United Nations conference on climate change." The policymakers are very much in favour of sustainable growth to "recover from the deepest economic crisis for decades and, in many cases, also the means to cope with severe fiscal pressures exacerbated by the crisis. The crisis has had major effects on the global economy, but these detract little from the urgent need to combat global warming."

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