

US' current stance on climate change

What the rest of the world can do

POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



SALEEMUL HUQ

ALTHOUGH President Trump has only been in office for less than a month, it is already becoming clear how he intends to carry out implementing his campaign pledges and who he is appointing in his cabinet. It is therefore possible to assess some likely actions and policies on climate change based on his campaign statements and also some of his advisers' statements and most importantly from his own Twitter statements.

Firstly to remind ourselves that during his campaign he had tweeted that human induced climate change was a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese. After that he met with former Vice President Al Gore and actor and activist Leonardo de Caprio to discuss the reality of climate change, but it is clear from his numerous executive orders so far, most importantly the ban on travel from seven Muslim majority countries, that he is likely to actually implement the most extreme points of his campaign statements. Thus, the hope by some that coming into the office of the president would stem his rashness have proven to be wrong.

The second point that is becoming clear is that his key advisers in the White House are very strong right wing ideologists, who have an agenda that they want to pursue, an agenda which is extremely anti environment and anti climate change. As long as they call the shots, there is unlikely to be any compromise despite meetings with Al Gore and de Caprio.

Thirdly, there seems to be an interesting tension developing between these key advisers in the White House and the cabinet members; even though they have the same objectives they do not necessarily share the same extreme views on how to implement those objectives.

All the above factors will play themselves out as the Trump administration develops and implements its policies and actions on climate change. Let us now examine them one by one.

Paris Agreement

It is still not clear what the US under Trump will do regarding the Paris Agreement. He is on record as

having said he would withdraw but then his Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, during his confirmation hearings, said that he would prefer that the US stayed in the Paris Agreement. We will see soon which strategy prevails. In any case, the rest of the world has to be prepared to deal with a US administration that is going to be actively hostile to taking any action. So in a way it is better that the US withdraws from the Paris Agreement, thus making it a rogue state as far as climate change is concerned, and allowing the rest of the world to continue to implement the agreement. If the US decides to stay, then it will try to drag everyone backwards and make progress very difficult.

Funding climate change

In the last hours of the Obama administration, the US gave a USD 500 million contribution to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) as its contribution towards the USD 100 billion dollars a year from 2020 onwards promised by the developed countries. It is almost certain that will be the last contribution that the US will make for another four years while Trump is the president. His officials have already started to look at completely de-funding the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as well as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). For the rest of the developed and developing countries, they will need to step up and fill the funding gap left by the US withdrawal. It would be interesting to see if countries like China and India, who are already developing their own climate change funding streams bilaterally, also join the GCF as donors.

Domestic actions

The appointment of Scott Pruitt as head of the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and the actions already taken to take down climate information from US government websites and the witch hunt of climate change scientists has already put a chill on the scientific community within the Federal Government. This will certainly result in a roll back and reversal of even the modest executive actions that the Obama administration had taken to curb coal pollution.

However, the support for renewable energy that the Obama administration has put in place has already generated so much investment and jobs that reversing it

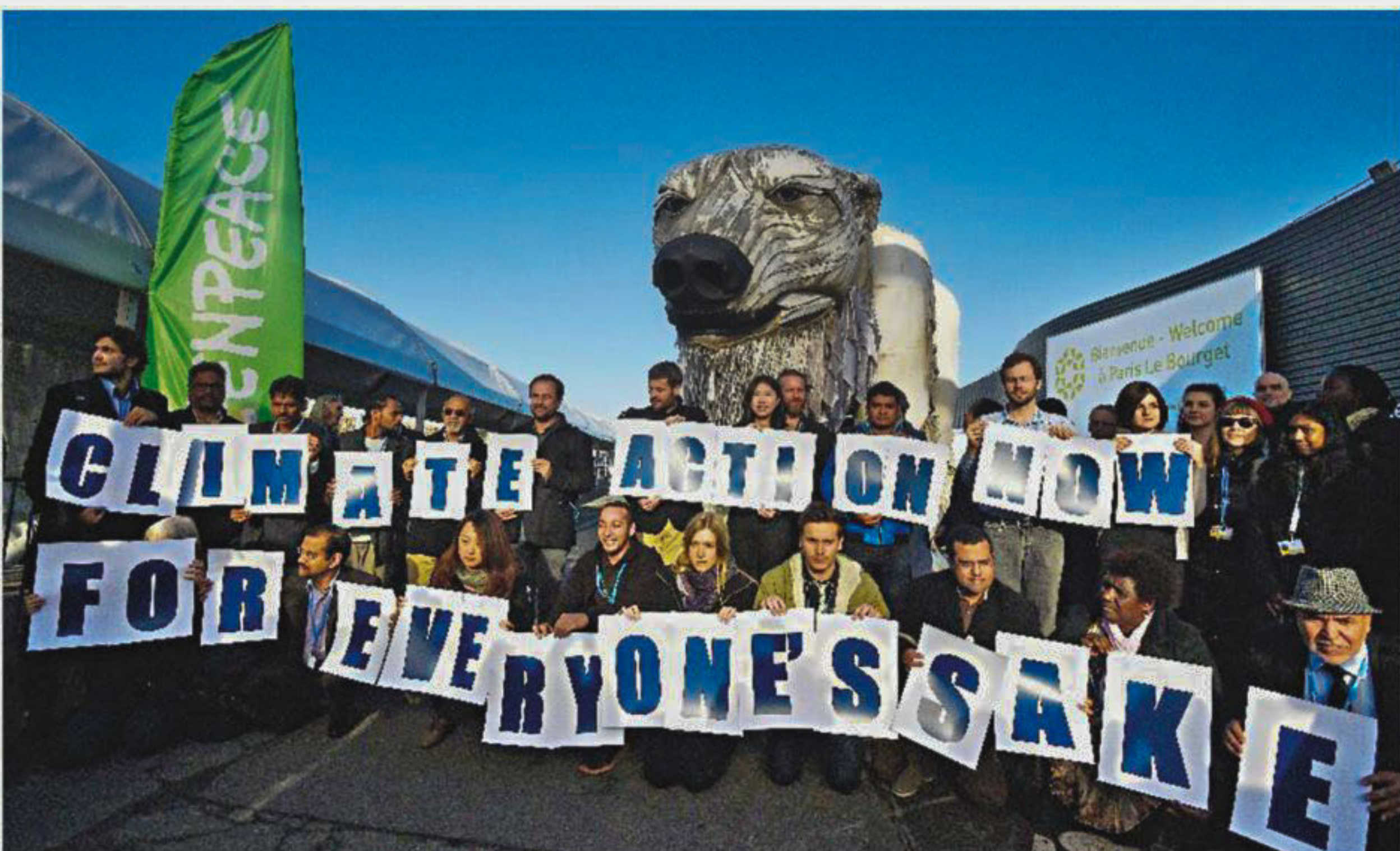


PHOTO: AFP

may prove to be quite unpopular, even in states governed by Republican governors. So it will be interesting to see how much the Trump ideologists try to reverse the investments in renewable energy.

Divestment from Fossil fuels

One of the strongest winds that is currently blowing in the global investment community is a divestment from fossil fuel energy companies to renewable energy companies. This is for two reasons. First, because renewable energy is becoming cheaper and more efficient day by day and can now out-compete most fossil fuels. The second is that investors are seeing added risks in fossil fuel companies, especially coal as their reserves will be worthless if they are not allowed to mine it. This risk factor has already made divestment out of coal inevitable and if Trump wants to give the

coal miners their jobs back, he will have to invest in the coal mines himself as no other investors is likely to do so.

Thus, Trump is actually going against a strong market driven trend, away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy which will get stronger every year and will be difficult to reverse, even for the US.

Finally, for Bangladesh and other vulnerable countries, the loss of US leadership will be a setback but it does not need to be a debilitating one. We will need to redouble our efforts both at home as well as internationally to implement the Paris Agreement both on its mitigation as well as adaptation goals.

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Beating the traffic jam

CHINTITO SINCE 1995



NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

IT'S not easy, unless you are at liberty to set up office in the same building or locality as that of your residence. That is, however, only possible if you are the boss of a private enterprise, and



CARTOON: SHARIF KHAN

that again of a moderate-sized clean paperwork business, no spill or smoke or extensive public transactions allowed. That is exactly how it was in the early days until industrialisation took over and communication improved (?). Whiling away the hours in a traffic jam, we can indeed debate whether mechanisation has given us more comfort versus chaos, rapidly as opposed to delay. Helpful hint: a pedestrian is never in a jam.

Despite the apparent advantages, residential-cum-occupation premises are often not a preferred option for most, mainly because not all of them can have their own businesses and many establishments have giant operations employing hundreds to thousands residing far from work. But, more pertinently, a huge majority wants to work away from home, meet new people away from home, have meals away from . . . you get the point. Helpful hint: be aware of strangers.

Women entrepreneurs, because of their gifted superiority to multitask, would perhaps prefer such a homely arrangement but since it involves having to welcome all and sundry (mostly men, ugh) to one's abode, the option has remained largely unutilised. Brazenly, the vainglorious version of the male species would have boasted to his friends, "I visited Madam in her house". Excuse me, that's her office too! Helpful hint: never establish a business house along a perennial jam.

Till such time we stop considering cars as a status symbol, till schools come within walking distance of homes, till we have more adequate roads, till we have additional modern public transport, till we learn to drive sensibly, till the pavements are left to pedestrians, and till every building has dedicated parking, there will indeed be many rising of our moon, and we will be stuck in all sorts of vehicles counting the stars after dark. Helpful hint: practice before preaching.

Stuck on a road, your statuette status within a vehicle will eventually lead you to boredom, but 'when' will depend to a great extent on who you are giving

company. A busload of passengers should be fun, particularly if some of them can engage in a vociferous argument over the recent threat to North Korea's Kim Jong Un's long standing as the most eccentric national leader. The more meaningless the logic, the greater the entertainment. Helpful hint: there are idiots on both sides of the political divide.

On the other hand, if you are made to sit in a car only with the person with whom you have had a nasty disagreement, you could be better off sweating in hell. On the rosy side, if your companion is someone you crave, better still if the vibes are mutual, then

you may not want the journey to end, and the city fathers could be reassured of your vote. Of course, the car has to be air-conditioned and the driver deaf. Helpful hint: never speak to a driver when he is driving.

Some of us love to study people on the road. It is a captivating involvement, watching fellow humans from afar. Their posture, hand movement, the occasional changing location of their fingers, the jerk of the head, cursing under their breath as they pass someone etc. may all be amusing to the onlooker. It may profit you to know that others do watch you too; worse still, watch you two. Helpful hint: never

pick your nose in public. You can sit back and witness a silent movie unfolding, starring a street vendor and a buyer. Some people ask the price to pass time, and the disgusted seller knows it. Some passers-by, if you are lucky to catch them, will slow down at a peanuts basket, pick up one, and carry on walking, giving the impression they were just tasting the merchandise. By that measure, from Farmgate to Bangla Motor, they should be collecting quite a tummy full. Helpful hint: never make eye contact with the cheena-badamwala.

Encouraged by such risk-free turnover, you may wish to get off the car and take a walk forward towards your destination. Always choose busy areas because that's where the peanuts are. Bus passengers for obvious reasons may be reluctant to disembark, but an understanding with the helper may facilitate re-embarkation at a suitable point up the route. The little finger signal always helps, needed or otherwise. Helpful hint: always do it before starting your journey.

Yet another positive element is that choc-a-block road condition allows you the best time to think, if you stop fretting, that is. You should stop worrying about the delay because you cannot help it. Start thinking by humming a tune, even if in silence. Take courage from no one noticing and start singing. In a non-AC bus, a window seat is ideal. After a couple of traffic lights, you can start composing songs. You will discover the writer in you, poet for sure. Jot down the lines on your phone's memo pad, and save them to give you pleasure at the next gridlock. In fact, mobile telephones are a lifesaver. Helpful hint: always charge the battery before starting your journey.

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Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority

Vacancy Announcement

For Deputy Managing Director (Operation and Maintenance)

Dhaka WASA is seeking applications from Bangladeshi Nationals to fill the post of "Deputy Managing Director (Operation and Maintenance)". The appointment is for a period of 03 (Three) years on a contractual basis. Interested persons having B.Sc Engg. or equivalent (Civil/Water or Sewerage/ Water Resources/Environmental Engineering and Sanitation) with total 25 Years of experience including 12 years in public/private water/Sanitation utility Operations or Water Resource Management in country or abroad may apply for the position. **Application should be submitted online.**

For detailed guidelines, job description and Full Notice, please visit our website: www.dwasa.org.bd

Last date of receiving application: 23 February, 2017.

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