

Climate Crisis and an Isle Lost

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Climate crisis has resolved, as a news report said, competing claims by two countries over an isle in a bay near an ocean. Climate crisis creators deserve thanks! They should claim it! They should claim a laurel for strengthening a regional peace!

There awaits a may be or may not be story. A leading Dhaka daily assured a few weeks ago : *Bangladesh doobchhe naa*, (Bangladesh is not submerging!) It was not a story of building castles in the air, but of sand dunes stretching hands towards sea, of denying dangerous sea level rise. It was a lead story, an assuring news for a country counting days in the face of fuming sea. It was a story with far-reaching implications, implications mainly for a nation that is striving to face a changing coast line, implications in the areas of agriculture and assistance, in the domains of demography and development, in the spheres of society and survival strategy, and many more. And, it is not an exceptional story. Similar stories and analyses are sold, distorted conclusions are sold on the basis of an incident of irregular scientific data, an exaggeration is capitalised to deny a coming catastrophe. But, truth is true. Fact is factual. Facts are seldom distorted also. But a fine facade of fallacy cannot hide a planetary catastrophe looming over billions.

The already mentioned news-story despatched in the later part of March, 2010 said: For about three decades two countries have argued over control of a tiny rock island. But now rising sea levels have resolved the dispute for them: the island is gone. It has been completely submerged. Its disappearance has been confirmed by satellite imagery and sea patrols. "What these two countries could not achieve from years of talking, has been resolved by global warming," said an oceanographer. Another nearby island submerged in 1996, forcing its inhabitants to move to the mainland, while almost half of another island is underwater. At least 10 other islands in the area are at risk as well.

The paragraphs above are neither to discuss the disputed island nor the claims and counter-claims nor the relation between two countries nor the not-submerging-analysis. There are authorities to check and recheck, to confirm or to deny. The isle story is just a reference point to climate crisis. Some other news-story could have cited some other similar incident from some other region. These lines are for referring to climate crisis not even being now denied by a section of powerful capital, with deeper vested interests, with shrewd brains to lobby, with stronger arms to manipulate.

Whatever happens, whether an isle gets lost or not, whether part of a country submerges or not, climate crisis is there, the mean sea level will rise, a Great Migration is in the offing, economies are going to take brunt of a planetary crisis to the level never experienced by this earth system, life on this now-not-so-green-planet is in peril, the mother earth is facing a future unknown. The coming climate conflicts and incidents have no parallel in the

annals of this earth. The unfolding scenario also carries threats to and opportunities for capital. With a stagnant world economy for decades a section of capital finds rays of hope for investment in emerging climate crisis market.

Chief executive officers of 83 leading US companies including some of the US largest electric power, renewable oil, bioproducts, airline, manufacturing, and clean tech like Exelon, Virgin America, NRG Energy, eBay and PG&E, in a letter to President Obama and members of Congress urged to quickly enact comprehensive climate and energy legislation that would increase US competitiveness. They said: the US was falling behind in the clean energy race. The letter called for legislation that would unleash innovation and drive economic growth. It said: “[T]oday’s uncertainty surrounding energy and climate regulation is hindering the large-scale actions that American businesses are poised to make. We need strong policies and clear market signals that ... reward companies that innovate. It is time ...to embrace this policy as the promising economic opportunity that will empower ... American entrepreneurship to lead the way.” The CEOs “need the certainty of clear rules and strong policies that” helps invest. They hoped that through “strong climate and energy policies” they would “emerge stronger.” As the US is searching ways to promote economic growth, and improve energy and national security, a section of capital considers that “smart, sensible energy and climate policies can and should be part of the solution,” and “this opportunity” should be recognized and made a reality. In October 2009, business leaders from 150 companies from 30 states across the US met government officials and Congress members to plead passage of comprehensive energy and climate legislation. They joined ‘We Can Lead’, a coalition that advocates, among others, strong energy and climate legislation to unleash US investment, restore US competitiveness and provide for economic and national security.

Capital’s other drives are there also for accumulation from climate crisis market. But it is not free from competitions from within. Rather, competition is characteristic of it. Competitions are resolved through conflicts and compromises. The Copenhagen climate conference conceived a compromise, a compromise among the warring climate forces in a world undemocratic, a compromise exposing political wills and non-wills of the most powerful countries, and the victim was, as Chavez referred in Copenhagen, “the crushed countries, as if a train ran over us in history.” The powerful countries’ political will was not to compromise self interest in exchange of peoples’ interest, the part related to political non-will. Peoples’ interest states, as Chavez quoted in Copenhagen the French author Hervé Kempf: “We cannot reduce global material consumption if we don’t make the powerful go down several levels, and if we don’t combat inequality. [And, we say :] ‘Consume less and share better’.”

Today’s climate crisis is related to inequality: seven percent richest persons are responsible for 50 percent of emissions, and the poorest 50 percent accounts for only seven percent of emissions. The richest are not concerned with the poor and hungry. The richest don’t compromise their high carbon emitting lifestyle. Their dream, as Chavez quoted the great liberation theologian Leonardo Boff, is “seeking happiness through material

accumulation and of endless progress, using for this science and technology with which they can exploit without limits all the resources of the earth.” Their all out thrust is to materialize this dream at the cost of this planet, and the private road to that dream world has drawn the class line of the climate crisis, a class line with opposing forces in hostile positions.

Economy and environment, economy and ecology, and economy and climate space are inseparable, and these are inseparable from politics, a sphere always pregnant with class difference. These links are inviolable. The development, and as a whole the economic model that dominates today’s world and fattens the climate crisis moves along the class line: unequal distribution, high carbon emission by the absolute minority, harder life for the energy-poor, absence of the majority’s participation, in real sense instead of a showcase, in economic, that in turn takes political character, decision making impossible. One fuels the others, one is essential for the rest. This aggravates the climate crisis reality, a reality in essence the same from the metropolis of the world system to the emerging economies with their rising nouveau rich to the poor economies dominated by plundering lumpen capital: burn non-renewable energy as much as needed for luxurious lifestyle, deforest and encroach public property under the guise of economic upward journey, precisely, encroach, burn, destroy. This influences, at core, people’s endeavor for a democracy, the democratic movement as people loose control and right over public property, as people’s voices are muzzled down by the plundering masters, as people are dispersed from their domain, as they loose survival space. The global climate crisis reality is not less cruel: a global system ever-thirsty for non-renewable resources leading to subversions, wars, and invasions, and ultimately crippling people’s effort to build a peaceful and prosperous life. Climate crisis not only deeply and gravely, but also irreversibly impacts lives of common people, especially those primarily depending on nature and environment including farmers, fishers, and persons relying on forest and marine resources. Ordinary persons’ spaces for livelihood get narrowed down as plunderers and encroachers intrude and skim the public property including forests and rivers. This act of trespass and plundering increases pressures on climate already under crisis. Geopolitics, and ruling elites’ relationship with the world system impacts on, and makes difficult, sometimes impossible people’s capacity to cope with climate crisis. Appeasements are made and bargaining positions are compromised in exchange of ruling elites’ interests. Recent incidents in climate diplomacy bear evidences to the appeasements with and sale offs to climate imperialism. Elitist approach to climate crisis and people’s approach are fundamentally different. These aspects have made the climate crisis issue an integral part of program for democratic struggle. The pressing climate situation thus makes it an imperative to include climate related demands in the program for democratic struggle.

This reality provides a backdrop to the World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, to be held in the Bolivian city of Cochabamba from April 19 to 22, the UN Mother Earth Day. The historic conference to be hosted by the Plurinational State of Bolivia is expected to be attended by of more than 10,000 people along with government representatives from more than 50 countries. Considered as alternative

“people’s conference on the climate issue it will seek to advance an international referendum on climate crisis as *The Guardian* considers that Bolivia is not prepared to “betray its people.” Democracy makes betraying people impossible. Democracy, direct participation of people in an atmosphere free from vested interest influence, is one of the tools for facing climate catastrophe. The crisis cannot be faced without mobilizing people and their participation, a task of democratic struggle. No sphere, from local to global, should be devoid of democracy. “The only thing that can save mankind from a [climate] tragedy is the exercise of global democracy,” said Bolivia’s United Nations Ambassador Pablo Solon, a key organizer of the summit. Bill McKibben, author of the first book about global warming *The End of Nature*, and founder of 350.org wrote (carried by Huffington Post) of the Bolivia conference: “[I]t’s ... a People’s Summit, free from the kind of corporate interference that helped sink the Copenhagen conference....Thank heaven, then, for the nations like Bolivia willing to work ... (instead of lock normal people out of the hall, as the UN did in Copenhagen).” “This is a fight between”, he continued, “human beings on the one hand, and physics and chemistry on the other—and physics and chemistry don’t really bargain. ...We don’t have all the time in the world—we don’t, in fact, have a moment to spare....Our message is...: if we can get to work, so can our lawmakers.... That process begins in April in Bolivia. The world’s leaders haven’t led, so we’re going to have to lead for them. It’s going to be a fight, and it’s on now.” All democratic struggles, struggles opposed to climate imperialism, share this fight as peoples’ fight for a better life cannot be betrayed, and isles, humanity’s survival space, cannot be lost. It is the urgent task, the foremost task.

The urgency for saving humanity, a task democratic struggle cannot forsake, was pronounced by Chavez in the climate conference hall in Copenhagen: “It’s up to us, raising the banners of Christ, Mohammed, equality, love, justice, humanity, the true and most profound humanism. If we don’t do it, the most wonderful creation of the universe, the human being, will disappear, it will disappear.... We are capable of not making this Earth the tomb of humanity. Let us make this earth a heaven, a heaven of life, of peace, peace and brotherhood for all humanity, for the human species.” □□□