

COMMENT

Beyond Dublin

ALL ARE EQUAL WHEN IT IS THE question of Greenhouse Gas emissions. That was precisely the message of the Durban Platform. The Durban Round removes differentiation between developed and developing countries. That US and EU will gain from the proposed 2015 accord which will take effect in 2020 is a fact of life as all pollutors, big or small, are now on par. Talks on the new legal framework binding all countries, will begin next year when Kyoto Protocol ends, albeit the US never signed the Protocol.

But the impact of climate change vis-a-vis global warming is already being felt badly in most third world countries. For the most affected and vulnerable countries the issue is burning and 2020 looks a distant reality. They are concerned about the lack of urgency in the developed countries. Not that US and Europe are not feeling the pinch. The sea level rise along with warming is necessitating the transfer of Alaskan villages away from the coast. The melting of the Andean glaciers has already resulted in water shortages during the dry season.

What is happening in Vietnam will soon happen in India. Sea water intrusion in Mekong Delta region is causing salinity to develop in some of the nice soils, reducing their productivity. Ingress of sea water in the coastal plains of India stretching from east to south is already a serious matter which the authorities can ignore only at their own peril.

This year the floods in Thailand have devastated industries, rice crops, disrupted the daily life of people and serve as a reminder that global warning is visibly knocking at the doors. Ironically enough Dublin, the December 2011 venue of climate talks, was affected by flash floods earlier this year. An Irish newspaper, linking to climate change, cited a flood risks management report of the office of Public Works in 2009 which claimed that “the frequency, pattern and severity of flooding are expected to increase as a result of climate change”.

Thailand is by no means the only third world country affected. Pakistan is experiencing floods for the second year running with five million people in need of food, shelter and clean water. A scientist at the World Meteorological Organisation last year explained how the warming of the oceans increased cloud formation and contributed to the devastating Pakistan floods.

What is more agonising is nobody is talking about how climate change is likely to create hundreds of millions of refugees around the world as they try to escape from areas affected by global warming. They are ‘climate refugees’. Maybe UN will soon open an office to tackle the problem.

The Durban conference of the UN climate change convention last month was an occasion to act globally but big polluters and, who are in the main responsible for the dooms day scenario, solidified and hardened their positions while giving up on new climate treaty until 2020. It remains to be seen whether the Durban ‘consensus’, if it can be so called as the 2020 pact would be accepted by all countries, can be the matching piece with the Kyoto Protocol. □□□