

Not Dead Yet

One 'cannot solve a problem with the same mindset that caused it'. That is precisely the message of the recently held 12-day Copenhagen conclave. Climate crisis is haunting the planet earth and yet the architects of Washington Consensus were in no mood to make a 'Copenhagen Consensus'. But Uncle Sam finally had his way—a 'climate consensus'—without a UN seal. It is really difficult to figure out what was agreed. True, they agreed not to disagree on the urgency of the problem next time. Everybody recognised the need to limit temperature rise by 2 degrees centigrade. That was all. But scientific facts speak differently. And again they speak 'correctly' only when America calls on them. As the much eulogised 2009 Copenhagen accord was not legally binding, so nobody was serious enough in respect of carbon emissions and fund transfers. It doesn't matter whether it is Bush or Obama. What matters is America—American business interest. Those who brokered a non-binding 'take it or leave it' deal heaved an audible sigh of relief by claiming a quasi-consensus which it was not.

Not quite unexpectedly prime minister Manmohan Singh and his team got flak from the right and left opposition parties in Indian parliament for surrendering sovereignty by agreeing to "international consultation and analysis" for implementation of its domestic, unsupported counter emission mitigation action to be reported to UN Frame work Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In reality Opposition's criticism is too clever by half. What they mean by sovereignty is simply intriguing. Climate or for that matter immediate danger posed by global warming to India's eastern coastal region is not on their agenda. They don't bother about anything that doesn't sell in vote market. Nor does their 'anti-developed world' stance make sense if it is judged against their relentless efforts to woo global capital to destroy India's fragile ecological balance and make it impossible to reverse the adverse impact of climate change on Indian life.

Optimism is a nice ploy in diplomacy and dysfunctional political culture. So India's environment minister Jairam Ramesh while making a statement in the upper house apparently to silence the critics at home was optimistic enough to see positive approach in the non-binding accord which would, in his view, help to complete the Bali Action Plan by 2010. Mr Ramesh also hoped somewhat against hope that negotiations would continue under the Kyoto Protocol (KP). But there is one problem. America pulled out of the KP some years ago and it never ratified the protocol. It is unlikely that after the 7-18 December extravaganza in Copenhagen where the aggrieved poor at best played the role of a mute passenger, it would behave rationally.

That 'Copenhagen' won't make a breakthrough was clear enough when the Bangkok Climate talks in October, 2009 ended by taking steps backwards. In Bangkok America and its western allies and Japan—the destroyers and polluters of climate—signalled without much acrobatics that they were quite unwilling to do a second commitment period under the KP, albeit the first commitment period of the KP would end by 2012 without changing the unprincipled position taken by the big. Talks on emission cuts continued for three years with no light at

the end of the tunnel. It is easy to make a pledge but it is rather easier to abandon it.

But Singh and his colleagues after returning from Copenhagen, virtually empty-handed, were delighted for altogether a different reason. Obama elevated the so-called Basic countries of Brazil, South Africa, India and China, even ignoring EU and Japan to the status of major global players while hammering out the non-binding accord.

1012 is not far away and people are yet to determine what Kyoto means. For America, EU and Japan it continues to be business as usual and developing nations seem to have no option but to want money that is what they can get through offsets [sold through the carbon markets].

But this carbon market scheme is a dangerous phenomenon. Maybe it is a new goldmine for EU and America—because in this “unique” device permits to pollute are bought and sold. James Hansen, the world’s pre-eminent climate scientist who convinced the world to take notice of the looming danger of global warming and catastrophe associated with it, in an interview on the eve of the Copenhagen summit said any agreement from the high-profile meet would be so deeply flawed that it would be better to start afresh from scratch. After every high level negotiation in Geneva or elsewhere it is more or less the same situation—back to square one. Government leaders have so far failed to evolve a pro-people climate policy and in truth they cannot see much beyond Copenhagen. □□□