

COP26 COULD BE A POSITIVE START FOR EARTH

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Any issue in life can be viewed positively or negatively. For me, the COP26 summit for climate change is a very encouraging development wherein more than 190 countries came together with a determination to save the planet and ensure that global warming does not exceed 1.5 degree Celsius. Any increase above this can endanger the Earth and put us in an irreversible situation where millions could lose their lives. These deaths will not abide by the boundaries set by religion, class or jurisdiction.

We cannot stop global warming for sure. However, we can definitely restrain it by reducing fossil fuel consumption, bringing down carbon dioxide emission, decreasing methane production and preventing deforestation. Most importantly, the rich nations need to stop overindulgence, reduce their tendency towards over-consum-

erism and stop producing goods and services that endanger the Earth. The good news is that the US and China have pledged closer cooperation to prevent further changes in the climate. The encouraging signs are that more than 100 nations have agreed to end deforestation, cut methane emissions by 30% and over 40 countries have agreed to shift away from the use of coal, all by 2030. These are huge developments and it will be really beneficial for the planet if they are implemented in letter and spirit. Some pessimists may argue that such pledges were made by all the rich nations in the Paris Agreement and those never took off.

However, it appears to me that this time there is greater seriousness than the Paris Accord. Financial institutions have pledged to back clean energy and the rich nations have decided to

collectively double their provision of finance to the poorer nations. However, a very clear conclusion has not been reached as to how much money will be given, its recipients or the time frame. It makes no sense if the rich nations finance a loan instead of a grant for the poor countries. Similar to the amount that would be financed, no significant commitment has been made on this front either. Another area that has acquired great importance is how to prevent natural resources from being stripped thrice as fast when the world is growing at twice the speed. The rampant deforestation, mining and endangering marine lives has come to the attention of the global community. The Pacific island nations, Bang-

ladesh, Africa and parts of India are among the worst sufferers of the fallouts of climate change despite a minimal contribution by them to the same. The reduction of fossil fuels is yet another area that appears to lack ambition.

At the COP26, the endangered nations have demanded a penalty for harming them and this has been included in the text. The rich nations have agreed that they have endangered the Earth but it looks highly improbable that any penalty will be paid. Another interesting area that had come up in the COP26 was to find better ways of supply chain management for faster movement of goods and services. Though pious things have been said by the rich nations, in reality, we all know that they have surplus doses of Covid vaccines while the poor nations have huge shortages. Covid-19 cannot be controlled unless 70% of the world population is vaccinated. Despite being well aware of this fact, there has been a huge resistance from the rich to part with these surplus doses, even when they are close to expiry. Therefore, based on historical data, it is dif-

ficult to believe what the rich nations say.

However, all in all, the COP26 has been a positive development for the planet. It is great that 100 nations have found consensus on major issues like reduction of methane emissions in the larger interest of the planet. It is commendable that NGOs like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth International have put sustained pressure on companies and nations all over the world to come together and commit themselves to save the Earth. One has to recognise the impact of the NGO movement on climate change, which has led to visible changes when compared with the past. People all over the world have witnessed unprecedented events recently and understood that global warming is real. Cases in point are forest fires raging in Australia, Siberia, Greece, California and Canada, the Arctic ice melting at an unprecedented rate, and huge floods and earthquakes across the globe.

It's good that 100 nations have pledged to improve things for creating a better future for our children and grandchildren.

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