

Headline: Climate calamity is here, deadlier than COVID-19

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"Nothing to fear but fear itself," said Franklin D. Roosevelt in his 1933 inaugural address, and he was right. Yet today the world has never been so scared of a virus they know so little of.

It has been over 150 days since the government-mandated lockdowns began, and we are prisoners of fear. All this time, I thought that the COVID-19 lockdown would be good for the planet. No pollution, no traffic, and a complete halt in production and movement. Finally, the Earth was happy. She could breathe again. Her lungs had been suffocated by toxic pollution.

Aviation and transport pollution, coupled with oil and coal plants, spewed harmful toxins into the atmosphere until climate change began engulfing the planet. For now, the Earth could take a breather and the animals were free to emerge from their forests and jungles into the emptiness of the world's largest cities, left quiet and ghostly by the pandemic. I was happy for Mother Earth. For a while, she could breathe as we reduced the carbon dioxide emissions that polluted our air and warmed our atmosphere. As the people of the world's cities and towns retreated to the safety of their homes, the planet could rest. For a moment, the Earth slept in silence.

Months later, however, the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic hit. Global economies have collapsed, and unemployment, poverty, hunger, and civil unrest are overwhelming us. We are dying and suffering. The search for a vaccine is slow as geopolitics plays an invisible hand. Yet more die from other causes daily.

The world has never watched this episode and experienced such unprecedented times. Sure, we had the Spanish flu that killed 50 million or more, and also the Black Death, H5N1, SARS, MERS, Ebola, and more. We have yet to discover a cure for cancer, or even the common flu.

In the novel "The Plague," Albert Camus argues that viruses will always be a part of our lives. In "Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies," Jared Diamond asserts that man is the sole perpetrator in the destruction of civilization and the environment.

Many will fail and more will die, but governments will fall and change. The right, the left, and the rise of the Green Party will unfold. Survival is key today.

Now our forests are being felled at exponential rates, our biodiversity ravaged, our oceans and marine resources destroyed and dissipated, our coral colonies bleaching as the planet continues to warm.

As dire as the current coronavirus crisis appears, even deadlier climate calamities will surely come and wreak havoc on our world, just as Super typhoon "Yolanda" devastated Tacloban and wiped thousands of lives in a single day. This pandemic, like many others, will pass, but the climate catastrophes are finally here, and they pose a more severe threat.

Fear hyped by social media and inaccurate news is embedded in our brains. People are scared. People will die as the flowers wither. They are desperate, and I do not blame them. We will go hungry and delirious. The destitute will revolt. People are terrified of an infection they know little of. But if you really think about it, we are the virus. It is we who kill senselessly, who wage wars, and

who destroy our Mother Earth.

Let us learn from the simple lessons the lockdown taught us. Let us not waste food and water, let us plant trees, and let us conserve our dying planet. Manage the fear and anxiety so that we can fight to conserve our only home. Sustainability is the key to our future.

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