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News Analysis (18 Dec, 2018)

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Conference of the Parties (COP 24)

Recently, 24th meeting of the **Conference of the Parties (COP24)** to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) concluded in **Katowice, Poland**.

- The aim of the conference was to **finalize a rulebook for Paris agreement 2015**. Paris climate pact will come into effect in 2020 and replace the existing Kyoto Protocol.
- Paris Climate Pact has voluntary emission reduction targets called as “Nationally Determined Contributions” (NDCs) — of individual nations, who have different definitions and timetables for their greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction pledges. The rulebook will ensure that the signatories of the pact are held to standards.

Outcome of Summit

- The Katowice conference has **finalized a rulebook for implementation of the Paris Agreement**, which was unanimously adopted by all member countries.
- The guidelines set out **how countries will provide information about their Nationally Determined Contributions** describing their domestic climate actions, mitigation and adaptation measures how countries will report and monitor their national pledges to curb greenhouse gas emissions and update their emissions plans.
- States are required to provide detailed information on the type of actions they have taken. If they have absolute economy-wide targets, they need to provide quantifiable information on their reference points for measurements, the gases covered, their planning processes, how countries consider their contribution fair and ambitious, and how it contributes to the objective of the NDC's.
- The conference also saw some progress on the major issue of climate finance. **The rulebook has addressed some concerns about the opaqueness of climate financing**. Now, Developed Nations had to provide hard data on the sources of future financial flows.

- The rulebook says what kinds of financial flows — loans, concessions, grants — can be classified as climate finance, how they should be accounted for, and the kind of information about them needed to be submitted.
- The rulebook is a dynamic document, meaning new rules can be added, or existing rules amended.

Issues in Conference

- **Disagreement on IPCC Report:** The 1.5°C Report, which was produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in October 2018 was not acknowledged as an evidence-based cause for alarm by the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Russia.
- **Issue of Equity: Provisions did not reflect the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities.** Poorer nations vulnerable to climate change also wanted more clarity on how an already agreed \$100 billion a year of climate finance by 2020 will be provided.
- **Market Mechanism: The conference could not reach a consensus on voluntary market mechanisms.** Article 6 of the Paris Agreement talks about setting up a market mechanism for trading of carbon emissions.
 - A carbon market allows countries, or industries, to earn carbon credits for the emission reductions they make in excess of what is required of them. These carbon credits can be traded to the highest bidder in exchange for money. The buyers of carbon credits can show the emission reductions as their own and use them to meet their own reduction targets.
 - Developing countries like China, India, and Brazil have accumulated huge amounts of unused carbon credits. These countries argued that their unused carbon credits should be considered valid in the new market mechanism that was being created, which was opposed by the developed countries.
 - Developed countries questioned the authenticity of the unused carbon credits, pointing to weak verification mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol that allowed dubious projects to claim carbon credits.
 - **The discussion over carbon markets is deferred to the next year.**

India's Stand at the conference

- India **reaffirmed its commitment to meeting the goals under the 2015 Paris Agreement** while protecting its key interest including climate justice ("Climate Justice" means solutions to the climate change problem that promote human rights, equity, labor rights, and environmental justice globally and locally).
- India **expressed strong reservation over the lack of equity in the global stock-take** (taking stock of collective progress toward achieving the purpose of the Paris Agreement and its long-term goals) in the rule book of the agreement.
- It sought a **robust transparency regime for countries to disclose their emissions.**

India's INDC

- **Sustainable Lifestyles** - To put forward and further propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation.
 - **Cleaner Economic Development** - To adopt a climate-friendly and a cleaner path than the one followed hitherto by others at the corresponding level of economic development.
 - **Reducing Emission intensity of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** - To **reduce the emissions** intensity of its GDP by **33 to 35 percent by 2030 from 2005 level**.
 - **Increasing the Share of Non-Fossil Fuel Based Electricity** - To achieve about 40 percent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel based energy resources by 2030 with the help of transfer of technology and low-cost international finance including from Green Climate Fund (GCF). India has a target to install 227 GW target of renewable energy by 2022.
 - **Enhancing Carbon Sink (Forests)** - To create an **additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2** equivalent through additional forest and **tree cover by 2030**.
 - **Adaptation** - To better adapt to climate change by enhancing investments in development programmes in sectors vulnerable to climate change, particularly agriculture, water resources, Himalayan region, coastal regions, health, and disaster management.
 - **Mobilizing Finance** - To mobilize domestic and new & additional funds from developed countries to implement the above mitigation and adaptation actions in view of the resource required and the resource gap.
 - **Technology Transfer and Capacity Building** - To build capacities, create a domestic framework and international architecture for quick diffusion of cutting-edge climate technology in India and for joint collaborative R&D for such future technologies.
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Eklavya Model Residential Schools

The Central Government has approved the proposal of setting up of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) under **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.

- As per the **budget 2018-19**, every block with more than **50% Schedule Tribe (ST) population and at least 20,000 tribal persons**, will have an **Eklavya Model Residential School by the year 2022**.
- These are being set up by **grants provided under Article 275(1)** of the Constitution.
- There will be an **autonomous society** under the ministry of tribal affairs — similar to Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti — to run the EMRSs.

- The objective of EMRS is to provide **quality middle and high level education to Scheduled Tribe (ST)** students in remote areas, not only to enable them to avail of reservation in high and professional educational courses and as jobs in government and public and private sectors but also to have access to the best opportunities in education at par with the non ST population.

Background

- STs, **constitute 8.6%** of the country's total population and **11.3% of the total rural population.**
- Despite the **increase in literacy rates** among STs from **8.53% in 1961 to 58.96% in 2011**, and the fact that the **Right to Education Act, 2009** makes it mandatory that all children between the **ages of 6 and 14** be provided **free and compulsory education**, significant disparities exist in enrolment rates, drop-outs, across states, districts and blocks.
- In the case of tribals, **dropout rates are still very high** – 35.6% in Classes I to V; 55% in Classes I to VIII; and 70.9% in Classes I to X in 2010-11, according to the Statistics Of School Education 2010-2011.
- According to a **2014 UNICEF-sponsored South Asia regional study All Children in School by 2015**, economic and socio-cultural factors are reasons behind the education deprivation for certain groups in India, especially SCs, STs and Muslims.
- The **India Human Development Survey** shows the incidence of poverty is **highest among the STs (49.6%), followed by the SCs (32.3%), and then the Muslims (30.6%).**

Conclusion

- EMRS can impact quality education to Scheduled Tribes (ST) children. Apart from school building, including hostels and staff quarters, playgrounds, computer labs and teacher resource rooms are also included in the scheme. This initiative will benefit ST students immensely.
- By focusing on specific intervention to cater to the educational needs of STs, their quality of life is expected to improve to the level of the rest of the social groups and a visible impact by the 2021 Census.

Important Facts for Prelims (18th December 2018)

Ujjwala Yojana Extended to all Poor Households

- The government has extended Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) of providing free cooking gas (LPG) **connections to all poor households not having LPG connections.**
- The scheme, **launched in 2016**, originally targeted giving LPG connections to mostly rural women members of below the poverty line (BPL) households. The list was later expanded to include all SC/ST households and forest dwellers among others.
- PMUY, initiated by **Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas** aims to **safeguard the health of women & children** by providing them with a clean cooking fuel so that they don't have to compromise their health in smoky kitchens or wander in unsafe areas collecting firewood.
- Under the scheme, the government provides a subsidy of Rs 1,600 to state-owned fuel retailers for every free LPG gas connection that they give to poor households. This subsidy is intended to cover the security fee for the cylinder and the fitting charges.
- The **World Health Organisation** hailed PMUY as decisive intervention by the government to facilitate the switch to clean household energy use, thereby addressing the problems associated with indoor household pollution.

'Under the Sal Tree' Theatre Festival

- 'Under the Sal Tree' theatre festival is held every December inside the sal forest of **Rampur village in Goalpara district of Assam.**
- It is a three day theatre festival organised in the middle of a jungle with an **aim to connect human beings with nature.**
- The festival was initiated by noted Assamese theatre personality **Sukracharya Rabha.**

Brightest Object in the Universe

- Astronomers using the Very Long Baseline Array (VLBA) system of 10 radio telescopes discovered the brightest object in the Universe named as **Quasar P352-15.**
- A Quasar is the brightest object in the Universe. It exists at the center of galaxies and draw energy from supermassive black holes.
- P352-15 is approximately 13 billion light years away which means that the Quasar being witnessed belongs to the time when the universe was less than a billion years old, or only about 7% of its current age.
- This finding could help experts studying the early stages of the universe to understand what happened during the transition from the Big Bang.

Kanchenjunga Landscape

- The governments of **India, Nepal, and Bhutan** are considering having a joint task force **for allowing free movement of wildlife across political boundaries** and checking smuggling of wildlife across the Kanchenjunga Landscape, a trans-boundary region spread across Nepal, India, and Bhutan
- **The landscape stretches along the southern side of Mount Kanchenjunga covers an area of 25,080 sq km spread across parts of eastern Nepal (21%), Sikkim and West Bengal (56%) and western and southwestern parts of Bhutan (23%).**
- According to the **International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)** 1,118 sq km of riverine grassland and tree cover were lost to agriculture and rangeland in the landscape between 2000 and 2010.
- **Other than seven million people, the Kanchenjunga Landscape is home to 169 species of mammals and 713 species of birds.**

Cyclone Phethai

- The cyclonic storm Phethai has made landfall in **Andhra Pradesh**.
- Phethai, name of the cyclone is suggested by **Thailand**. It is pronounced as `Pay-ti', means a **vegetarian bean in Thailand**.
- This comes barely months after Cyclone Gaja wreaked havoc in Nagapattinam, Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, and Pudukottai districts of **Tamil Nadu**.

India's First Military Flight using Blended Bio-Jet Fuel

- For the first time, an **An-32 transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF)** flew with 10% bio-jet blended ATF (aviation turbine fuel) made from Jatropha oil.
 - This has the **dual benefit** of **reducing the carbon footprint** as well as **usage of fossil fuels**.
 - With this, India joins a league of select nations to have developed, tested and certified the single step **Hydroprocessed Renewable Jet (HRJ) process to convert non-edible oil into biofuel for use on military aircraft**.
 - A biofuel is a fuel **produced from living matter** that includes plant waste and animal fat, rather than a fuel produced through the geological process, such as coal, diesel and petroleum.
 - The project is a combined effort of **Indian Air Force (IAF), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Directorate General Aeronautical Quality Assurance (DGAQA) and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum)**.
 - The IAF will gradually start using this **fuel blend for even fighter jets like Su-30MKIs and MiG-29s**.
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