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Emissions Gap Report 2020: UNEP

Why in News

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)'s Emissions Gap Report 2020 has been published recently.

The annual report from UNEP measures the gap between anticipated emissions and levels consistent with the **Paris Agreement** goals of limiting global warming this century to well below 2°C and pursuing 1.5°C.

Key Points

- **Analysis for the year 2019:**

- **Record high GreenHouse Gas (GHG) emissions:**

- Global GHG emissions continued to grow for the third consecutive year in 2019, reaching a record high of **52.4 Gigatonne carbon equivalent (GtCO₂e) without including land use changes (LUC).**
- There is some indication that the **growth in global GHG emissions is slowing.**

However, GHG emissions are **declining in Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) economies and increasing in non-OECD economies.**

- **Record carbon emission:**

- **Fossil carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions (from fossil fuels and carbonates) dominate total GHG emissions.**
- Fossil CO₂ emissions reached a record **38.0 GtCO₂ in 2019.**

- **Forest fires increasing GHG emissions:**

Since 2010, global GHG emissions have grown **1.4% per year on average**, with a more rapid increase of **2.6% in 2019** due to a large **increase in vegetation forest fires.**

- **G20 countries account for bulk of emissions:**

- Over the last decade, the **top four emitters (China, the United States of America, EU27+UK and India)** have contributed to **55% of the total GHG emissions without LUC.**
- The **top seven emitters** (including the Russian Federation, Japan and international transport) have contributed to 65%, with G20 members accounting for 78%.

The ranking of countries changes when considering **per capita emissions.**

- **On consumption-based emissions:**

There is a general tendency that **rich countries have higher consumption-based emissions** (emissions allocated to the country where goods are purchased and consumed, rather than where they are produced) than **territorial-based emissions**, as they typically have cleaner production, relatively more services and more imports of primary and secondary products.

Both emission types have **declined at similar rates.**

- **Impact of the Pandemic:**
 - **Emissions Level: CO₂ emissions could decrease by about 7% in 2020** compared with **2019 emission levels**, with a **smaller drop expected in GHG emissions** as **non-CO₂** is likely to be less affected.

The resulting atmospheric concentrations of GHGs such as **methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) continued to increase in both 2019 and 2020.**
 - **Sector reporting the lowest dip in emission due to pandemic:**

The biggest changes have occurred in **transport**, as restrictions were targeted to **limit mobility**, though reductions have also occurred in other sectors.
- **Issues and Possible Solutions:**
 - The world is still heading for a temperature rise in excess of **3°C this century**. The levels of ambition in the Paris Agreement still must be roughly **tripled for the 2°C pathway and increased at least fivefold for the 1.5°C Pathway**.
 - Rise of 3°C in global temperatures **could cause catastrophic weather-related events** around the world.
 - UN Experts believe the way to avoid it is encourage **green recovery** for countries facing Covid-induced economic slumps.
 - A green recovery involves **investment in zero emissions tech and infrastructure**, reducing **fossil fuel subsidies**, **stopping new coal plants**, and **promoting nature-based solutions**, according to the UN.
 - Such actions could cut 25% of predicted emissions by 2030, and gives the planet a 66% chance of keeping warming below the 2°mark that the Paris pact had set as a long term goal.

United Nations Environment Programme

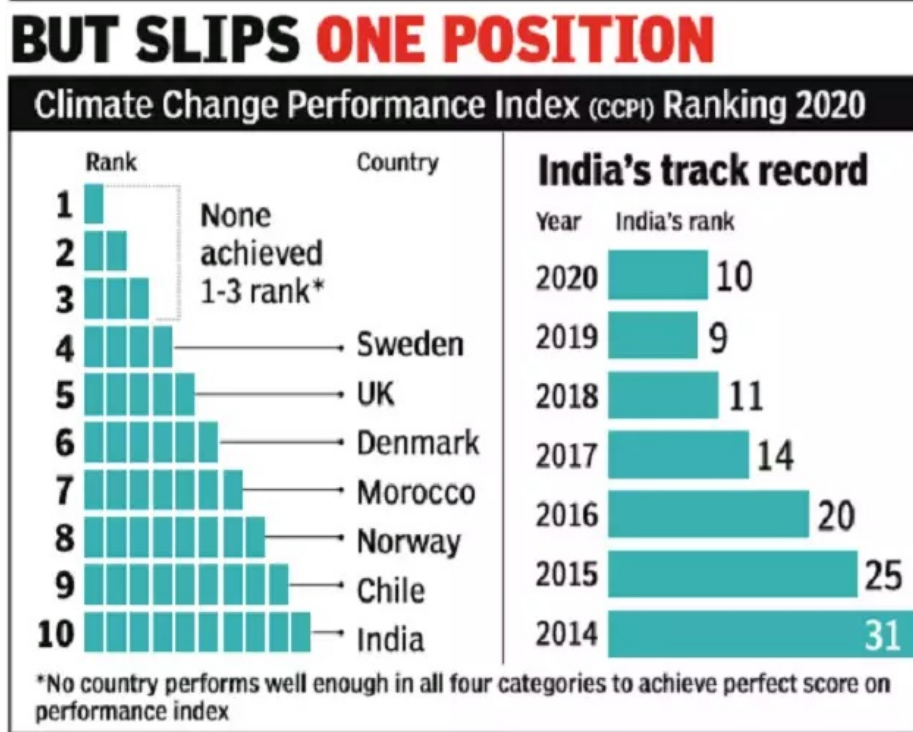
- The UNEP is a leading global environmental authority established on **5th june 1972**.
- **Functions:** It sets the **global environmental agenda**, promotes the sustainable development within the **United Nations system**, and serves as an authoritative advocate for global environment protection.
- **Major Reports:** Emission Gap Report, Global Environment Outlook, Frontiers, Invest into Healthy Planet.
- **Major Campaigns:** Beat Pollution, UN75, World Environment Day, Wild for Life.
- **Headquarters:** Nairobi, Kenya.

Source:DTE

Why in News

India ranked 10th in Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2021.

- India, for the **second time in a row**, continued to remain in the **top 10**.
- Last year, India had been ranked at the **ninth position**.



Key Points

- **About Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI):**
 - **Published by:** Germanwatch, the New Climate Institute and the Climate Action Network annually since 2005.
 - **Scope:** It is an independent monitoring tool for tracking the climate protection performance of **57 countries and the European Union**.
These countries together **generate 90%+ of global greenhouse gas emissions**.
 - **Aim:** It aims to **enhance transparency** in international climate politics and enables comparison of climate protection efforts and progress made by individual countries.
 - **Criteria:** The CCPI looks at **four categories**, with 14 indicators: **Greenhouse Gas Emissions** (40% of the overall score), **Renewable Energy** (20%), **Energy Use** (20%), and **Climate Policy** (20%).

- **CCPI 2021:**

- **Top three ranks were empty** as **no country had met the criteria** to get placed high enough on the index.
- Only two **G20 nations**, the **United Kingdom and India** are among the high rankers in **CCPI 2021, which covers the year 2020**.
- Six other **G20 nations** including the **USA, Canada, South Korea, Russia, Australia and Saudi Arabia** are **ranked at the bottom** of the index.

This is the **second time in a row** that the USA (ranked last), which is the **largest historical polluter**, is ranked at the bottom.
- **China**, which is the biggest current emitter of greenhouse gases, is ranked at the **33rd position** on the **CCPI 2021 report**.

- **India's Performance:**

- **Overall Performance:** India ranked **10th** and scored **63.98 points** out of 100.
- **Renewable Energy:** India has been ranked at **27th** out of 57 countries under the category this time. **Last year**, the country was ranked at **26th**.
 - In September 2019, at the United Nations Climate Action Summit, India announced **increasing the renewable energy target to 450 GW** by 2030 from 175 GW by 2022.
 - In its **Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC)**, India has pledged to increase the **share of non-fossil fuels-based electricity to 40% by 2030**.
- **Emissions:** Per capita emissions stayed at a comparatively **low level**. India was **ranked 12th**.

BS-VI Emission Norms: India moved to **BS-VI Emission Norms** to control the emissions from the automobiles.
- **Climate Policy:** India's performance was rated as **medium (13th)**.

The **National Action Plan on Climate Change** (NAPCC) was launched in 2008 which aims at creating awareness among the representatives of the public, different agencies of the government, scientists, and the industry on the threat posed by climate change and the steps to counter it.
- **Energy Use:** India was ranked **High (10th)** under this category.

The country has not only established a comprehensive policy for energy efficiency – **National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE)**, but has also executed successful demand side management programmes for consumers and municipal corporations to achieve overall energy savings while gradually mitigating the impact of climate change.

NMEEE is a **part of NAPCC**.

- **Suggestion for India:**

India's climate change mitigation strategy should include post-**Covid-19** recovery plans, according to the report. These include **reducing fossil fuel subsidies, phasing out coal, better coordination** between the central and state governments and **raising self-sufficiency** by domestic manufacturing in the **renewable sector**.

Source:TOI

Partners in Population and Development Initiative

Why in News

Recently, the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare has digitally addressed the **Inter-Ministerial Conference by Partners in Population and Development (PPD)**.

Key Points

- **Partners in Population and Development:**

- **Aim:** It is an **intergovernmental initiative** created specifically for the purpose of **expanding and improving South-South Cooperation** in the fields of reproductive health, population, and development.
- **Launch:** PPD was **launched at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development** (ICPD), when **ten developing countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America** formed an intergovernmental alliance to help implement the **Cairo Program of Action (POA)**.

The POA, **endorsed by 179 nations**, stresses the need to **establish mechanisms to promote development** through the sharing of experiences in reproductive health (RH) and family planning (FP) within and among countries.
- **Members:** An alliance of **27 developing countries. India is a member country.**
- **Secretariat:** Dhaka, Bangladesh

- **Inter-Ministerial Conference by PPD:**
 - It was **jointly organised by PPD, National Health Commission of China (NHC)** and the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**.
 - **Objective:**
 - Advocate and ensure political support and investment to address the effects of **Covid-19 pandemic** in the achievement of the **Three Zeros by 2030**, finalised under the **Nairobi Summit 2019**.
 - **India appreciated the efforts of PPD** in promoting cooperation in key areas of reproductive health, population and development.

Nairobi Summit

- In **November 2019**, the Nairobi Summit, also known as **ICPD+25**, was held in Nairobi, Kenya, to celebrate the **25th anniversary of the ICPD** (held in Cairo in 1994).
- The **UNFPA and the Government of Kenya hosted** the Nairobi Summit, which brought together governments, UN agencies, private sector organizations, women's groups and youth networks to discuss and agree on initiatives to **further advance the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action**.
- **Three Zeros by 2030:** Pledges were announced to achieve **zero preventable maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices by 2030**.

Steps Taken by India:

- Steadfast in its reaffirmation of the **commitments made at the Nairobi Summit**.
- Committed to ensuring **universal health coverage** through its flagship programme **Ayushman Bharat**.
- The Government has **pledged USD 3 billion by 2020 for improving reproductive health services**.
- With aspirations of achieving **universal health care**, India's **National Health Policy 2017** aims at raising public health expenditure to 2.5% of the **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**.
- Continuous efforts to **substantially reduce the unmet need for contraception** by increasing the range of contraceptives and improving accessibility and quality of family planning services.
- Implementation of **Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN)** initiative for achieving the **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)** target for reducing Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) to less than 70 by 2030.
- It is **enacting stringent legislation to address gender-based violence** and eliminate all forms of atrocities against women and girls.
- Dedicated to providing quality, timely and disaggregated data, **investing in digital health innovations, and improvement of data systems** by 2030 to achieve sustainable development.
 - The **National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)** aims to develop the backbone necessary to support the integrated digital health infrastructure of the country.
- India's **Covid-19 response** started even before it was declared as a pandemic by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**.
- **Community-based interventions** including **family planning** are also a part of various services provided.
- **Promotion of alternate service delivery mechanisms** along with **telemedicine** services, digital platforms for training, improving finances and streamlining supply chain systems.

Way Forward

Current times require integrated and coordinated efforts from all health institutions, academia and other partners directly or indirectly associated with the health care services to make these services accessible, affordable and acceptable to all. PPD plays an important role in fostering such dialogue at the highest levels to take forward the common agenda of 'Health for All'.

Source: PIB

Rise in AI Adoption in India Amidst Pandemic

Why in News

As per a **report by PwC** (a global network of firms), India reported a **45% increase** in the use of **Artificial Intelligence**, the highest among all countries, following the outbreak of the virus.

Key Points

- **Findings:**

- The rise of AI adoption (45%) recorded in the country is the highest, when compared to major economies like the USA, Japan and the UK.

The **USA recorded a 35% rise, the UK 23% and Japan 28%** following the outbreak of the virus.

- The report **attributes** the growing AI adoption to the **shift in buying behaviour and new business challenges** (owing to **Covid-19 pandemic**).

For instance, AI-enabled use cases like contactless sales and delivery have gained traction. AI solutions are also being used to make the workplace safer and enforce best practices.

- The **sectors with highest Covid-19 led disruption adopted AI solutions** in a more definitive manner. In the **travel and hospitality sector**, 89% firms have implemented AI in some form.

- **Artificial Intelligence:**

- It describes the **action of machines accomplishing tasks** that have historically required human intelligence.
- It includes technologies like **machine learning, pattern recognition, big data, neural networks, self algorithms etc.**
- AI involves complex things such as **feeding a particular data into the machine and making it react as per the different situations**. It is basically about creating **self-learning patterns** where the machine can give answers to the never answered questions like a human would ever do.
- AI technology helps in analyzing data and thus can improve the **efficiency of the systems** like power management in cars, mobile devices, weather predictions, video and image analysis.
- **Example (Use):** Self driving cars.

- **Recent Government Initiatives:**

- India has launched **National AI Strategy** and National AI Portal and has also started leveraging AI across various sectors such as education, agriculture, healthcare, e-commerce, finance, telecommunications, etc.
- Recently, India joined the '**Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI)**' as a founding member to support the responsible and human-centric development and use of AI.

Use of AI in India

- **To Tackle the Pandemic:**

- **At the National Level:**

- For the Covid-19 response, an **AI-enabled Chatbot** was used by **MyGov** for ensuring communications.
- Similarly, the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** deployed the **Watson Assistant** on its portal to respond to specific queries of frontline staff and data entry operators from various testing and diagnostic facilities across the country on Covid-19.

- **In Kerala:** Use of **Srishti Robotics' 'Nightingale-19 Robot'** is a good example.

It **delivers food and medicines** in bulk and also allows doctors and other healthcare practitioners to use video interactive technologies to interact with patients.

- **In Maharashtra:** **FebriEye** is an **AI based thermal screening system** for real-time and automated, non-intrusive monitoring to ensure that a person entering does not **have a high fever**.

It has been **installed in** Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus and Lokmanya Tilak Terminus in Mumbai.

- **In Other Sectors:**

- AI-based solutions on **water management, crop insurance and pest control** are also being developed.
 - ICRISAT has developed an **AI-power sowing app**, which utilises weather models and data on local crop yield and rainfall to more accurately predict and advise local farmers on when they should plant their seeds.
- An **AI-based flood forecasting model** that has been **implemented in Bihar** is now being expanded to cover the whole of India to ensure that around 200 million people get alerts and warnings 48 hours earlier about impending floods.
- The **Central Board of Secondary Education** has integrated AI in the school curriculum to ensure that students passing out have the basic knowledge and skills of data science, machine learning and artificial intelligence.
- The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** had launched a **“Responsible AI for Youth”** programme this year in April, wherein more than 11,000 students from government schools completed the basic course in AI.

Way Forward

- As AI works for **digital inclusion** in India, it will have a **ripple effect on economic growth and prosperity**. The opportunity for AI in India is colossal, as is the scope for its implementation. By 2025, data and AI can add over USD 500 billion and almost 20 million jobs to the Indian economy.
- India **wants to build a data-rich and a data-driven society as data, through AI**, which offers limitless opportunities to improve society, empower individuals and increase the ease of doing business. India can leverage AI for inclusive development, representing the country's '**AI for All**' strategy.

Source:IE

Demand for Interest Waiver

Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court (SC)** has heard a batch of **petitions seeking interest waiver** during the **loan moratorium period**.

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** granted a **six-month loan moratorium** earlier this year, letting **borrowers defer payments on loans** and EMIs. The move was intended **to provide borrowers relief** during the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

Key Points

- **Central Government's Stand:**

- **Huge Cost:** It revealed that **a blanket waiver of interests on debts** incurred by all borrowers for the moratorium period will mean forgoing an estimated **over Rs. 6 lakh crore**.
- **Possible Impact on Banks:** If the **banks were to bear this burden**, then it would **necessarily wipe out a substantial and a major part of their net worth**, rendering most of the lenders unviable and raising a very serious question mark over their very survival.
- **Deposits vs. Loans: Continued payment of interest to depositors** is not only one of the most essential banking activities but is a huge responsibility that can never be compromised as most of the depositors are bound to be **small depositors, pensioners etc. surviving on the interest from their deposits**.

In the Indian banking system, **for every loan account, there are about 8.5 deposit accounts**.

- **Use of Financial Resources:** There is **a need to conserve and rationally use financial resources** to deal with the economic effects of pandemic over an uncertain and indeterminate time frame.

It also **pointed out the sector-specific relief measures** taken by the Centre for the small and mid-sized business/MSMEs including from sectors such as restaurants and hotels.

- **Relief Measures Taken by the Centre:**

- **For Power Sector:**

The government had sanctioned over **Rs. 90,800** crore liquidity injection for the power distribution companies. This would **enable them to pay their outstanding dues** to power producers and transmission companies.

- **For Real Estate Sector:**

An advisory was issued allowing the extension of registration and completion dates of projects under Real Estate Regulatory Authorities by treating **Covid-19** as an event of **force-majeure**.

From a contractual perspective, a force majeure clause provides **temporary reprieve** to a party from performing its obligations under a contract upon occurrence of a **force majeure event**.

- **For Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Sector:**

An **emergency credit line (ECLGS) of up to Rs. 3 lakh crore**, backed by 100% government guarantee to enable the MSMEs to get back to regular operations.

- **For Small Borrowers:**

The Centre has decided that the **relief on waiver of compound interest** during the six-month moratorium period shall be limited to the most vulnerable category of borrowers who availed loan up to **Rs. 2 crore**.

The RBI has classified “**big borrowers**” having the loan account of **Rs. 1500 crores and above** and rest as “not big borrowers”.

- **For Big Borrowers:**

The **Kamath Committee set up by the RBI** has recommended financial parameters for **debt restructuring of 26 sectors** affected by Covid-19.

- **Other Measures:**

- The **Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC)** was **suspended** for a period of **six months** in order to protect companies in distress due to the pandemic being dragged into bankruptcy tribunals.
- The **Security and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has issued circulars to relax the “**recognition**” of defaults committed during moratorium.

Source:TH

Steps to Counter Maoist Threat

Why in News

To speed up the implementation of the **Road Requirement Plan for extremism-affected areas**, Chhattisgarh has suggested the Center to divide the remaining contracts into small packets so that local contractors can take up the jobs.

Key Points

- **Road Requirement Plan for Left Wing Extremism (LWE) Affected Areas:**
 - This Scheme is being **implemented by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways for improving road connectivity** in 34 LWE affected districts of 8 States.
 - **8 States** are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh.
 - This scheme **envisaged construction of 5,422 km roads lengths** in LWE affected States.
- **Present Issue:**
 - **90%** of the 5422 km Road Requirement Plan stands completed, but progress remains a **problem in Chhattisgarh**.
 - Of the **419 km** of roads remaining across four states, **Chhattisgarh accounts for 360 km**.
 - **Proposed Solution:**
 - **Chhattisgarh** proposed to the Centre to **break up the contracts into small portions** so that local contractors can take up the jobs.
 - When local people take up the contracts, they are in a better position to get the work done.
- **Left Wing Extremism (LWE):**
 - **LWE** organizations are the **groups that try to bring change through violent revolution**. They are **against democratic institutions and use violence** to subvert the democratic processes at ground level.
 - These groups **prevent the developmental processes in the least developed regions of the country and try to misguide the people** by keeping them ignorant of current happenings.
 - Left Wing Extremists are popularly known as **Maoists** worldwide and as **Naxalites** in India.

- **Other Government Initiatives to fight LWE:**
 - **Greyhounds:** It was raised in 1989 as an elite anti-naxal force.
 - **Operation Green Hunt:** It was started in 2009-10 and massive deployment of security forces was done in the naxal-affected areas.
 - **LWE Mobile Tower Project:** To improve mobile connectivity in the LWE areas, the Government in 2014, approved installation of mobile towers in LWE affected States.
 - **Aspirational Districts Programme:** Launched in 2018, it **aims to rapidly transform the districts** that have shown relatively lesser progress in key social areas.
 - **SAMADHAN:**
 - It stands for
 - S- Smart Leadership,
 - A- Aggressive Strategy,
 - M- Motivation and Training,
 - A- Actionable Intelligence,
 - D- Dashboard Based KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and KRAs (Key Result Areas),
 - H- Harnessing Technology,
 - A- Action plan for each Theatre, and
 - N- No access to Financing.
 - This doctrine is the **one-stop solution for the LWE problem**. It encompasses the **entire strategy of government from short-term policy to long-term policy** formulated at different levels.

Way Forward

- Though the number of incidents of LWE violence has come down in the recent past, continued efforts and focus are needed in eliminating such groups.
- Government needs to ensure two things; **security of the peace-loving people** and the **development of the naxalism-affected regions**.
- Centre and states should continue with their **coordinated efforts** in **development and security** both where Centre should play a supportive role with state police forces taking the lead.
- Government needs to undertake **technological solutions** such as the use of **drones** to minimize loss of lives of security personnel.

Source: IE

Beresheet 2: Israel

Why in News

Recently, Israel launched the **Beresheet 2 project** aimed at landing an **unmanned craft** on the moon in **2024**.

Earlier, Israel's **Beresheet probe crash landed** on the Moon.



Key Points

- **Background:**
 - The **Beresheet probe was a private mission** to the Moon by Israeli non-profit SpaceIL organisation.
Beresheet in hebrew (spoken in Israel) **means Genesis**.
 - It was successfully launched in **February 2019**, on board a **Falcon 9 rocket** from **Cape Canaveral (USA)** and arrived in lunar orbit in **April 2019**.
 - It suffered an **engine failure** as it prepared to land and **crashed abruptly** on the surface of the **moon**.
- **Beresheet 2:**
 - **Objective:** Conducting **experiments and collecting data** on behalf of school students.
 - **Structure:** It will involve launching **two landing craft and an orbiter** that would circle the moon for years.
 - **Cost:** It will cost around **100 million dollars** raised from **international partnerships and donors**.
 - **Significance:** **Israel could become the fourth nation** to land a spacecraft on the moon after the **USA, the former Soviet Union and China**.

- **Other Missions to Moon:**

- **India** has planned a new moon mission named **Chandrayaan-3**. It is likely to be launched in early **2021**.
 - It will be a mission repeat of **Chandrayaan-2** and will include a Lander and Rover similar to that of **Chandrayaan-2**, but will not have an orbiter.
 - **Chandrayaan-2** failed which crushed **India's dream to become the first nation** to successfully touch down on the lunar surface in its maiden attempt.
 - The **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** has decided to send an **unmanned spacecraft to the moon in 2024**.
 - **Artemis** is a crewed spaceflight program of the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** (NASA) that has the goal of landing "**the first woman and the next man**" on the Moon, specifically at the lunar south pole region **by 2024**.
-