

AAKAR TODAY

1. Provisional State of Global Climate Report, 2022

Why in News?

Recently, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released the provisional State of the Global Climate report, 2022.

The full and final report is expected to be published in April, 2023.

Key Details

What are the Highlights of the Report?

- **Increase in Concentration of Greenhouse Gases:**
 - The concentrations of three main greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and Nitrous oxide (NO₂), were all at record highs in 2021.
 - The emissions of methane, which is 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide in causing global warming, in fact, increased at the fastest pace ever.
 - At the climate change conference in Glasgow, countries had pledged to cut global methane emissions by at least 30% by the year 2030.
- **Temperature:**
 - The global average temperature in 2022 is estimated to be about 1.15 °C above the 1850-1900 average.
 - 2015 to 2022 are likely to be the eight warmest years on record.
 - La Niña (a cooling of sea-surface waters in the equatorial Pacific Ocean) conditions have dominated since late 2020 and are expected to continue until the end of 2022.
 - Continuing La Niña has kept global temperatures relatively low for the past two years - albeit higher than the last significant La Niña in 2011.
- **Glaciers and Ice:**
 - In the European Alps, glacier melt records were shattered in 2022. Average thickness losses of between 3 and over 4 metres were measured throughout the Alps, substantially more than in the previous record year 2003.
 - In Switzerland, 6% of the glacier ice volume was lost between 2021 and 2022, according to initial measurements.
 - For the first time in history, no snow outlasted the summer season even at the very highest measurement sites and thus no accumulation of fresh ice occurred.
- **Sea Level Rise:**
 - Global mean sea level has risen by an estimated 3.4 ± 0.3 mm per year over the 30 years (1993-2022) of the satellite altimeter record.
 - The rate has doubled between 1993-2002 and 2013-2022 and sea level increased by about 5 mm between January 2021 and August 2022.
- **Ocean Heat:**
 - The ocean stores around 90% of the accumulated heat from human emissions of greenhouse gases.
 - The upper 2000m of the ocean continued to warm to record levels in 2021.

- Overall, 55% of the ocean surface experienced at least one marine heatwave in 2022.
- In contrast only 22% of the ocean surface experienced a marine cold spell. Marine heatwaves are becoming more frequent, in contrast to cold waves.
- **Extreme Weather:**
 - In East Africa, rainfall has been below average in four consecutive wet seasons, the longest in 40 years, with indications that the current season could also be dry.
 - Record breaking rain in July and August, 2022 led to extensive flooding in Pakistan.
 - The flooding came hard on the heels of an extreme heatwave in March and April in both India and Pakistan.
 - Large parts of the northern hemisphere were exceptionally hot and dry.
 - China had the most extensive and long-lasting heatwave since national records began and the second-driest summer on record.
 - Large parts of Europe sweltered in repeated episodes of extreme heat.
 - The United Kingdom saw a new national record on 19th July, 2022 when the temperature topped more than 40°C for the first time.

What are the Steps taken to tackle Climate change?

- **National:**
- **NAPCC:**
 - To counter the emerging threats from climate change, India released its National Action Plan to Combat Climate Change (NAPCC). It has 8 sub missions including National Solar Mission, National Water Mission etc.
 - **India Cooling Action Plan:** It provides an integrated approach towards cooling and related areas including reduction in the cooling demand. This would help reduce emissions thereby combating global warming.
- **Global:**
- **Paris Agreement:** It seeks to keep the rise in global temperatures “well below” 2°C from pre-industrial times, while “pursuing efforts” to limit it to 1.5°C.
- **UN SDGs:** These are 17 broad goals for achieving sustainable development in the society. Amongst them Goal 13 exclusively focuses on tackling climate change.
- **Glasgow Pact:**
 - It was finally adopted by 197 parties in 2021 during the COP26 negotiations.
 - It has emphasized that stronger action in the current decade was most critical for achieving the 1.5-degree target.

2. Verdict of Supreme Court of EWS Reservation

Why in News?

Recently, the Supreme Court has upheld the validity of the 103rd Constitutional Amendment which provides 10% reservation for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) among forward castes in government jobs and colleges across India.

Key Details**What is the Verdict?**

- **Majority View:**

- The 103rd constitutional amendment cannot be said to breach the basic structure of the Constitution.
- The EWS quota does not violate equality and the basic structure of the constitution. Reservation in addition to existing reservation does not violate provisions of the Constitution.
- The reservation is an instrument of affirmative action by the state for the inclusion of backward classes.
- Basic structure can't be breached by enabling the state to make provisions for education.
- Reservation is instrumental not just for inclusion of socially and economically backward classes into the society but also to class so disadvantaged.
- Reservations for EWS does not violate basic structure on account of 50% ceiling limit fixed by Mandal Commission because ceiling limit is not inflexible.
- 50% rule formed by the Supreme Court in the Indira Sawhney judgment in 1992 was "not inflexible". Further, it had applied only to SC/ST/SEBC/OBC communities and not the general category.
- The Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the backward class for whom the special provisions have already been provided in Article 15(4), 15(5) and 16(4) form a separate category as distinguished from the general or unreserved category.

- **Minority View:**

- Reservations were designed as a powerful tool to enable equal access. Introduction of economic criteria and excluding SC (Scheduled Castes), ST (Scheduled Tribe), OBC (Other Backward Classes), saying they had these pre-existing benefits is injustice.
- The EWS quota may have a reparative mechanism to have a level playing field and the exclusion of SC, ST, OBC discriminates against equality code and violates basic structure.
- Permitting the breach of 50% ceiling limit would become "a gateway for further infractions and result in compartmentalization (division into sections).

What is the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) Quota?

- **About:**

- The 10% EWS quota was introduced under the 103rd Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2019 by amending Articles 15 and 16.
- It inserted Article 15 (6) and Article 16 (6).
- It is for economic reservation in jobs and admissions in educational institutes for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS).
- It was enacted to promote the welfare of the poor not covered by the 50% reservation policy for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC).

- It enables both the Centre and the States to provide reservations to the EWS of society.

- **Significance:**

- **Addresses Inequality:**

- The 10% quota is progressive and could address the issues of educational and income inequality in India since the economically weaker sections of citizens have remained excluded from attending higher educational institutions and public employment due to their financial incapacity.

- **Recognition of the Economic Backwards:**

- There are many people or classes other than backward classes who are living under hunger and poverty-stricken conditions.
- The proposed reservation through a constitutional amendment would give constitutional recognition to the poor from the upper castes.

- **Reduction of Caste-Based Discrimination:**

- Moreover, it will gradually remove the stigma associated with reservation because reservation has historically been related to caste and most often the upper caste looks down upon those who come through the reservation.

- **Concerns:**

- **Unavailability of Data:**

- The Union or state governments have no such data to prove that 'upper' caste individuals, who have less than Rs 8 lakh annual income, are not adequately represented in government jobs and higher educational institutions. There is a strong possibility that they are actually over-represented in these places.

- **Arbitrary Criteria:**

- The criteria used by the government to decide the eligibility for this reservation is vague and is not based on any data or study.
- Even the SC questioned the government whether they have checked the GDP per capita for every State while deciding the monetary limit for giving the EWS reservation.
- Statistics show that the per capita income in states differs widely - Goa is the state having the highest per capita income of almost Rs. 4 lakhs whereas Bihar is at the bottom with Rs.40,000.

PRACTICE QUESTION**Prelims**

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The Constitution of India defines its 'basic structure' in terms of federalism, secularism, fundamental rights and democracy.
2. The Constitution of India provides for 'judicial review' to safeguard the citizens' liberties and to preserve the ideals on which the Constitution is based.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Mains

Q. Discuss global warming and mention its effects on the global climate. Explain the control measures to bring down the level of greenhouse gases which cause global warming, in the light of the Kyoto Protocol, 1997.

(200 words)