The question of Palestine

Palestine was among former Ottoman territories placed under UK administration by the League of Nations in 1922. All of these territories eventually became fully independent States, except Palestine, where in addition to "the rendering of administrative assistance and advice" the British Mandate incorporated the "Balfour Declaration" of 1917, expressing support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people". During the Mandate, from 1922 to 1947, large-scale Jewish immigration, mainly from Eastern Europe took place, the numbers swelling in the 1930s with the Nazi persecution. Arab demands for independence and resistance to immigration led to a rebellion in 1937, followed by continuing terrorism and violence from both sides. UK considered various formulas to bring independence to a land ravaged by violence. In 1947, the UK turned the Palestine problem over to the UN.

After looking at alternatives, the UN proposed terminating the Mandate and partitioning Palestine into two independent States, one Palestinian Arab and the other Jewish, with Jerusalem internationalized (Resolution 181 (II) of 1947). One of the two envisaged States proclaimed its independence as Israel and in the 1948 war involving neighbouring Arab States expanded to 77 percent of the territory of mandate Palestine, including the larger part of Jerusalem. Over half of the Palestinian Arab population fled or were expelled. Jordan and Egypt controlled the rest of the territory assigned by resolution 181 to the Arab State. In the 1967 war, Israel occupied these territories (Gaza Strip and the West Bank) including East Jerusalem, which was subsequently annexed by Israel. The war brought about a second exodus of Palestinians, estimated at half a million. Security Council Resolution 242 (1967)

formulated the principles of a just and lasting peace, including an Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the conflict, a just settlement of the refugee problem, and the termination of all claims or states of belligerency. The 1973 hostilities were followed by Security Council Resolution 338, which inter alia called for peace negotiations between the parties concerned. In 1974 the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence, sovereignty, and to return. The following year, the General Assembly established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and conferred on the PLO the status of observer in the Assembly and in UN conferences.

n June 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon with the declared intention to eliminate the PLO. A cease-fire was arranged. PLO troops withdrew from Beirut and were transferred to neighboring countries. Despite the guarantees of safety for Palestine refugees left behind, a large-scale massacre took place in the Sabra and Shatila camps. In September 1983, the International Conference on the Question of Palestine (ICQP) adopted the following principles: the need to oppose Israeli settlements and Israeli actions to change the status of Jerusalem, the right of all States in the region to existence within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, and the attainment of the legitimate, inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. In 1987, a mass uprising against the Israeli occupation began in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (the intifada). Methods used by the Israeli forces resulted in mass injuries and heavy loss of life among the civilian Palestinian population. In 1988 the Palestine National Council meeting in Algiers proclaimed the establishment of the State of Palestine.

A Peace Conference was convened in Madrid in 1991, with the aim of achieving a peaceful settlement through direct negotiations along 2 tracks: between Israel and the Arab States, and between Israel and the Palestinians, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The multilateral track negotiations were to focus on region-wide issues such as the environment, arms control, refugees, water, and the economy. A series of subsequent negotiations culminated in the mutual recognition between the Government of Israel and the PLO, the representative of the Palestinian people, and the signing in 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (DOP or "Oslo Accord"), as well as the subsequent implementation agreements, which led to the partial withdrawal of Israeli forces, the elections to the Palestinian Council and the Presidency of the Palestinian Authority, the partial release of prisoners and the establishment of a functioning

administration in the areas under Palestinian self-rule. The involvement of the UN has been essential both as the guardian of international legitimacy and in the mobilization and provision of international assistance. The 1993 DOP deferred certain issues to subsequent permanent status negotiations, which were held in 2000 at Camp David and in 2001 in Taba, but proved inconclusive.

The visit by Ariel Sharon of the Likud to Al-Haram Al-Sharif (Temple Mount) in Jerusalem in 2000 was followed by the second intifada. Israel began the construction of a West Bank separation wall, located mostly within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice. In 2002, the Security Council affirmed a vision of two States, Israel and Palestine. In 2002 the Arab League adopted the Arab Peace Initiative. In 2003, the Quartet (US, EU, Russia, and the UN) released a Road Map to a two-State solution. An unofficial Geneva peace accord was promulgated by prominent Israelis and Palestinians in 2003. In 2005, Israel withdrew its settlers and troops from Gaza while retaining control over its borders, seashore and airspace. Following Palestinian legislative elections of 2006, the Quartet conditioned assistance to the PA on its commitment to nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements. After an armed takeover of Gaza by Hamas in 2007, Israel imposed a blockade. The Annapolis process of 2007-2008 failed to yield a permanent status agreement. Escalating rocket fire and air strikes in late 2008 culminated in Israeli ground operation "Cast Lead" in Gaza. The UN Security Council adopted resolution 1860. Violations of international law during the Gaza conflict were investigated by the UN ("Goldstone report"). The 2009 PA programme to build State institutions received wide international support. A new round of negotiations in 2010 broke down following the expiration of the Israeli settlement moratorium. In 2011 President Mahmoud Abbas submitted the application of Palestine for membership in the UN. UNESCO admitted Palestine as a Member. Exploratory Israeli-Palestinian talks were held in early 2012 in Amman. In November another cycle of violence between Israel and Gaza concluded with an Egyptian-brokered cease-fire. On 29 November 2012 Palestine was granted non-member observer State status in the UN. The General Assembly proclaimed 2014 an International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. A new round of negotiations begun in 2013 was suspended by Israel in April 2014 following the announcement of a Palestinian national consensus Government. Another round of fighting between Israel and Gaza took place in July-August 2014. In 2016 the Security Council adopted resolution 2334 on settlements. In 2017, the US Administration announced recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and subsequently,

the US and certain other embassies were moved to Jerusalem. In 2020, the US mediated agreements to normalize relations between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco ("Abraham Accords"). In 2022, the UN General Assembly requested the ICJ to render an Advisory Opinion on the legality of the prolonged Israeli occupation that started in 1967, and the implications for Member States. 2023 saw another round of fighting between Israel and Hamas. On 15 May 2023, following a request by the General Assembly, the UN commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Nakba for the first time. In October of 2023, another escalation between Gaza and Israel began.

Relevance of UN

Facts

- The UN's most important institutional flaw is the outdated composition of the Security Council, which poses an existential threat to the long-term credibility and legitimacy of the world's premier organ for international peace and security. Global challenges require global solutions, and there is no body or entity more representative or emblematic of global cooperation and multilateralism than the United Nations.
- It is past time for the UNSC to expand its permanent membership to include Japan, Germany, and India, as well as influential countries from Africa and Latin America.
- Overall evidence suggests that in recent years, the United Nations has declined remarkably in its relevance in a wider global context. While some of its humanitarian

missions have been met with adequate success, the UN's ability to live up to its other stated aims has been disappointingly insufficient.

- Simply put, while there is still an irrefutable need for an international forum for arbitration and discussion today, the UN needs to adapt – as has the world around it – to provide the sort of invariable assistance to the international community that its founders envisioned 75 years ago.

The reality

- As the world's only truly universal global organization, the United Nations has become the foremost forum to address issues that transcend national boundaries and cannot be resolved by any one country acting alone.
- To its initial goals of safeguarding peace, protecting human rights, establishing the framework for international justice and promoting economic and social progress, in the seven decades since its creation the United Nations has added on new challenges, such as AIDS, big data and climate change.
- While conflict resolution and peacekeeping continue to be among its most visible efforts, the UN, along with its specialized agencies, is also engaged in a wide array of activities to improve people's lives around the world – from disaster relief, through education and advancement of women, to peaceful uses of atomic energy.
- Against a backdrop of geopolitical tensions unprecedented in decades, harmonisation among countries seems to be the UN's priority.

Currently, the UN by itself has little political leverage, is disproportionately dominated by a few states, and lacks any real political authority; all of which are critical prerequisites for a supranational mediator. Further, its inability to pursue a dynamic, unanimous mediation strategy is a manifestation of the vested interests of different states in various interstate conflicts.

The geopolitical rivalries between permanent members influence their exercise of the veto. This nullifies the effectiveness of any resolution aimed at achieving security and peacebuilding objectives since states use their veto power to preserve their interests and those of their allies or to antagonise rival states. These issues coupled with the interference of external bureaucratic actors, and underfunding undermine the relevance of the UN to a certain extent.

Despite the challenges facing the UN, it enjoys the privilege of being the only forum that brings together all the states to work towards collective goals. Transforming the UN to make it more relevant to contemporary society would thus, require a litany of reforms starting with the organisation's structure and the Security Council.

Efforts insufficient to attain goals: UN Report

A latest UN report flagged that global efforts to lower emissions are insufficient to meet Paris Agreement goals but has also found that peaking of global emissions are likely to happen during this decade by 2030.

If the latest NDCs are implemented, emissions will increase by about 8.8% by 2030, compared to 2010 levels. This is a marginal improvement over last year's assessment, which found countries were on a path to increase emissions 10.6% by 2030, compared to 2010 levels.

The latest science from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates that greenhouse gas emissions need to be cut 43% by 2030, compared to 2019 levels. This is critical to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels and avoid the worst impacts of climate change, including more frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves, and rainfall.

The NDC Synthesis report also reveals that global emissions will peak this decade; by 2030 emissions are projected to be 2% below 2019 levels, highlighting that peaking of global emissions will occur.

The report synthesizes information from the 168 latest available NDCs, representing 195 Parties to the Paris Agreement, including 153 new or updated NDCs communicated by 180 Parties, recorded in the NDC registry as on 25 September.

A second UN report on long-term low-emission development strategies looked at countries' plans to transition to net-zero emissions by or around mid-century. The report indicated that these countries' greenhouse gas emissions could be roughly 63% lower in 2050 than in 2019, if all the long-term strategies are fully implemented on time. Current long-term strategies (only 75 Parties to the Paris Agreement have submitted these) account for 87% of the world's GDP, 68% of global population in 2019, and around 77% of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2019. The report notes, however, that many net-zero targets remain uncertain and postpone into the future critical action that needs to take place now.

India formally updated its NDC last year, confirming to the United Nations apex body that it will reduce the emissions intensity of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 45% from 2005 levels by the year 2030, and to have installed capacity for non-fossil fuel-based power sources equivalent to the country's 50% requirement by 2030.

The country's Long-Term Low-Carbon Development Strategy mainly articulates India's vision and action plan for achieving its NDC goals and the target of net zero emissions by 2070 and key elements of India's transition to a low-carbon development pathway.

Myanmar conflict- Operation 1027

The plan is to assert and defend territory against Myanmar military incursions, eradicate "oppressive military dictatorship", and combat online fraud along the border.

The combined forces of the Brotherhood Alliance, People's Defense Force, People's Liberation Army, Kachin Independent Army, and Burma People's Liberation Army are creating offensives in different bordering regions of Myanmar, adopting a strategy to seize control of towns and strategic junta bases, overwhelming the junta's air and ground capabilities.

A particular target of the operation is the cyber-scamming industry that has boomed in autonomous militarised zones on Myanmar's eastern border since the February 2021 military coup, generating billions of dollars for Chinese gangs working in collaboration with the Myanmar military, its proxies and other armed groups.

The industry has ensnared Chinese nationals as victims of both trafficking and scamming, and over the past year, the Chinese government has exerted increasing pressure on the Myanmar military to crack down.

While Operation 1027 offers the potential to help advance China's objectives in relation to the cyber-scamming industry, analysts say it could also give new energy to Myanmar's anti-coup movement, also known as the Spring Revolution, which aims to remove the military regime and establish a federal democratic union.

The offensive marks the full-fledged entry of the Three Brotherhood Alliance into the war. The alliance has so far seized more than 80 military bases and taken over the border post of Chin Shwe Haw, while more than 100 military soldiers have surrendered to resistance forces.

History of Ethics Committees

A Presiding Officers' Conference held in Delhi in 1996 first mooted the idea of ethics panels for the two Houses.

Then Vice President (and Rajya Sabha Chairman) K R Narayanan constituted the Ethics Committee of the Upper House on March 4, 1997, and it was inaugurated that May to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of members and examine cases of misconduct referred to it. The Rules applicable to the Committee of Privileges also apply to the ethics panel.

In the case of Lok Sabha, a study group of the House Committee of Privileges, after visiting Australia, the UK, and the US in 1997 to investigate practices pertaining to the conduct and ethics of legislators, recommended the constitution of an Ethics Committee, but it could not be taken up by Lok Sabha.

The Committee of Privileges finally recommended the constitution of an Ethics Committee during the 13th Lok Sabha. The late Speaker, G M C Balayogi, constituted an ad hoc Ethics Committee in 2000, which became a permanent part of the House only in 2015.

2005 cash-for-query case

In 2005, the two Houses adopted motions to expel 10 Lok Sabha MPs and one Rajya Sabha MP who were accused of agreeing to ask questions in Parliament for money. The motion in Lok Sabha was based on the report of a special committee set up by the Speaker under Chandigarh MP P K Bansal to examine the issue. In Rajya Sabha, the complaint was examined by the House Ethics Committee.

Any person can complain against a Member through another Lok Sabha MP, along with evidence of the alleged misconduct, and an affidavit stating that the complaint is not "false, frivolous, or vexatious". If the Member himself complains, the affidavit is not needed. The Speaker can refer to the Committee any complaint against an MP.

The Committee does not entertain complaints based only on media reports or on matters that are sub judice. The Committee makes a prima facie inquiry before deciding to examine a complaint. It makes its recommendations after evaluating the complaint.

The Committee presents its report to the Speaker, who asks the House if the report should be taken up for consideration. There is also a provision for a half-hour discussion on the repor

Privileges Committee

The work of the Ethics Committee and the Privileges Committee often overlap. An allegation of corruption against an MP can be sent to either body, but usually more serious accusations go to the Privileges Committee.

The mandate of the Privileges Committee is to safeguard the "freedom, authority, and dignity of Parliament". These privileges are enjoyed by individual Members as well as the House as a whole. An MP can be examined for breach of privilege; a non-MP too can be accused of breach of privilege for actions that attack the authority and dignity of the House. The Ethics Committee can take up only cases of misconduct that involve MPs.

Iceland tremors

Iceland is located on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, technically the longest mountain range in the world, but on the floor of the Atlantic Ocean. The ridge separates the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates — making it a hotbed of seismic activity.

The IMO reported over 24,000 tremors on the peninsula since late October, with almost 800 earthquakes recorded on a single day alone. Magma accumulation at a depth of around five kilometers raises concerns about a potential volcanic eruption.

Iceland, with 33 active volcanic systems, experiences frequent seismic activity due to its location on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Three eruptions since 2021 underscore the region's increased volcanic activity. The Reykjanes volcanic system, dormant for eight centuries before 2021, exhibits a new cycle of heightened activity that may persist for decades or centuries.

In April 2010, the Eyjafjallajokull eruption disrupted air travel, canceling around 100,000 flights and leaving over 10 million travelers stranded. Iceland's current situation prompts vigilance and preparedness in the face of potential natural event

Iceland is home to some of the most active volcanoes in the world, with volcanos being an integral part of the island's landscape and culture. Currently, it boasts of 33 active volcanoes which have erupted over 180 times in the past 1,000 years. According to United States Geological Service, active volcanos are those which have "erupted within the Holocene (the current geologic epoch, which began at the end of the most recent ice age about 11,650 years ago)," or which have "the potential to erupt again in the future."

Pollution – a health threat
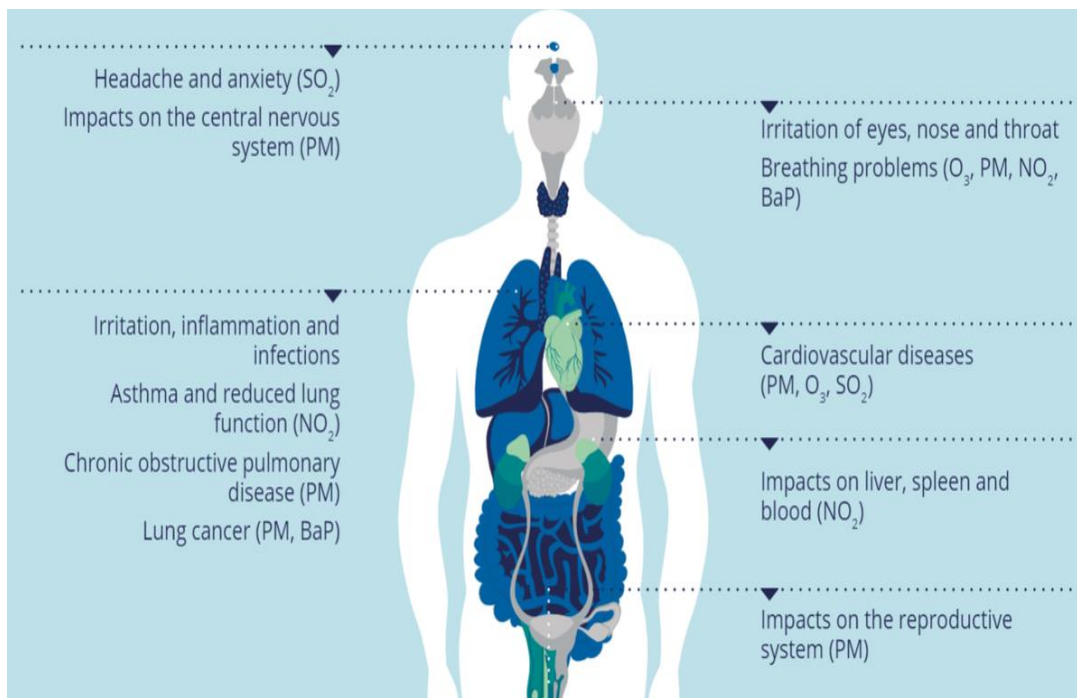
Air pollution is a major environmental threat and one of the main cases of death among all risk factors, ranking just below hypertension, tobacco smoking and high glucose. WHO estimates that, globally, air pollution is responsible for about 7 million premature deaths per year from ischemic heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer, but also from acute respiratory infections such as pneumonia which mainly affects children in low- and middle-income countries. Being recognized as one of the main risk factors for Non-Communicable Diseases, a growing and consistent body of evidence shows that air pollution health effects also include preterm and low-birthweight, asthma as well as cognitive and neurological impairment basically having the potential to impact our whole body, way beyond our lungs.

Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable because their bodies, organs and immune systems are still developing. Air pollution damages health during childhood and increases the risk of diseases later in life, yet children can do little to protect themselves or influence air quality policies.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified air pollution, in particular PM2.5, as a leading cause of cancer. A recent global review found that chronic exposure can affect every organ in the body, complicating and exacerbating existing health conditions.

There is strong evidence linking lower socio-economic status to increased exposure to air pollution. In large parts of the world especially in Europe, poorer people are more likely to live next to busy roads or industrial areas and thus, face higher levels of exposure to air pollution. At the same time, exposure patterns vary across European cities. In some cities, wealthier people live in central, polluted areas, while in other European cities central areas are inhabited by poorer communities.

The trend is visible in other parts of the world too where poor suffer most out of the conditions emerging from the ill effects of ambient pollution.

LUPEX mission -JAXA

The LUPEX project is an initiative aimed at exploring the Moon for water and other resources and gaining expertise in exploring the surface of the Moon. The LUPEX project is an international cooperative project, with JAXA in charge of the lunar rover and ISRO responsible for the lander that will carry the rover; observation instruments from NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) will also be mounted on the rover.

The rover being developed by JAXA will drive on its own to search for areas where water is likely to be present and sample the soil by digging into the ground with a drill. The plan is to acquire data by analyzing the collected samples in detail with observation equipment mounted on the rover. LUPEX is JAXA's first mission to send a rover of this size to the moon, and the mission is designed to explore the lunar surface and search for subsurface water.

There will be an advanced lunar imaging spectrometer developed by JAXA on the left side, which has mirrors that move both horizontally and vertically. There will be an exospheric

mass spectrometer developed by the European Space Agency near the centre and a mid-infrared imaging spectrometer developed by Isro on the right.

The rover will also house a resource investigation water analyser (REIWA), also developed by JAXA. REIWA also has Isro's sample analysis package, which is equipped to identify the mineral composition of samples collected from the surface of rocks.

While the final date of the LUPEX launch has not decided, JAXA said the mission is expected to take flight by 2026.

AI and its implications
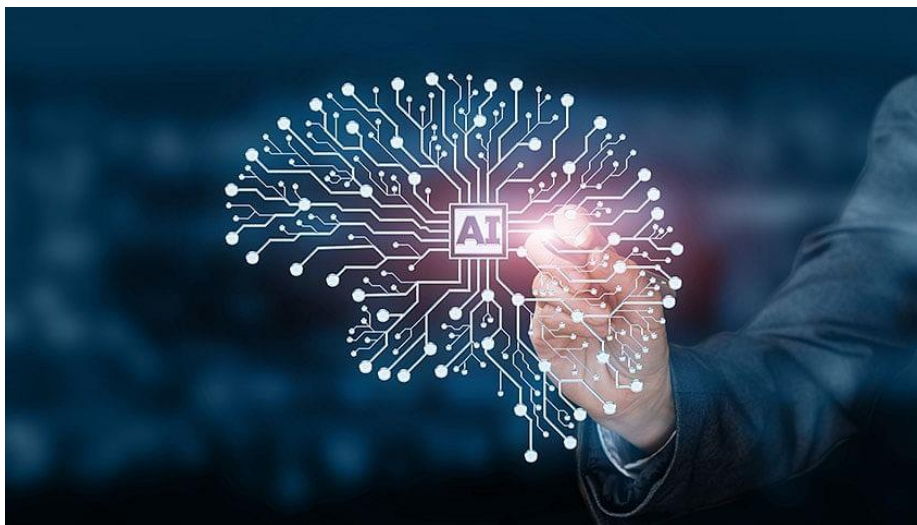
Facts

AI is not a futuristic vision, but rather something that is here today and being integrated with and deployed into a variety of sectors. This includes fields such as finance, national security, health care, criminal justice, transportation, and smart cities. There are numerous examples where AI already is making an impact on the world and augmenting human capabilities in significant ways.

One of the biggest benefits of Artificial Intelligence is that it can significantly reduce errors and increase accuracy and precision. The decisions taken by AI in every step is decided by information previously gathered and a certain set of algorithms. When programmed properly, these errors can be reduced to null.

Another big benefit of AI is that humans can overcome many risks by letting AI robots do them for us.

AI can work endlessly without breaks. They think much faster than humans and perform multiple tasks at a time with accurate results. They can even handle tedious repetitive jobs easily with the help of AI algorithms.

In practically every field, AI is the driving force behind numerous innovations that will aid humans in resolving most challenging issues. Health care innovations is one of the areas to be benefitted most.

A huge advantage of Artificial Intelligence is that it doesn't have any biased views, which ensures more accurate decision-making.

Challenges

As AI robots become smarter and more dexterous, the same tasks will require fewer humans. And while AI is estimated to create 97 million new jobs by 2025, many employees won't have the skills needed for these technical roles and could get left behind if companies don't upskill their workforces.

Social manipulation also stands as a danger of artificial intelligence. This fear has become a reality as politicians rely on platforms to promote their viewpoints.

Social surveillance using Ai technology has become a concern worldwide.

Data may not even be considered secure from other users when given to an AI system, as one bug incident that occurred with ChatGPT in 2023 "allowed some users to see titles from another active user's chat history."

An overreliance on AI technology could result in the loss of human influence — and a lack in human functioning — in some parts of society. Using AI in healthcare could result in reduced human empathy and reasoning, for instance.

There also comes a worry that AI will progress in intelligence so rapidly that it will become sentient, and act beyond humans' control — possibly in a malicious manner.

AI regulation has been a main focus for dozens of countries, and now the U.S. and European Union are creating more clear-cut measures to manage the rising sophistication of artificial intelligence.

2023 on track to be the hottest year in history

Scientists at European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service have said that climate change, combined with this year's El Nino weather pattern that warms surface waters in the eastern and central Pacific Ocean, have fuelled recent record-breaking temperatures, which is on track to become the hottest since at least 1940.

The Copernicus finding, based on its records that began in 1940, showed that the global average temperature for January-September was 0.52 degrees Celsius (0.94 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than the average of the climate change service's 1991-2020 reference period, based on its records dating back to 1940. That temperature is 1.4 C higher than the pre-industrial period from 1850 to 1900, the institute added.

However, such an increase does not mean the world is on the verge of crossing the long-term warming threshold of 1.5 C set by world leaders in the 2015 Paris accord since that is measured as a multi-decadal average.

Antarctic sea ice extent remained at a record low level for the time of year, while the Arctic Sea ice extent is 18% below average.

In August and September during the southern hemisphere's winter and spring, South American countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay struggled to cope with boiling temperatures of more than 40C (104F), in a heatwave that scientists said was made 100 times more likely by climate change.

Conditions created by climate change have also contributed to a record wildfire season in Canada in 2023, which displaced thousands of people and burned more than 18.4 million hectares (45,467,390 acres) of land.

A key issue at COP28 will be whether governments agree for the first time to phase out the burning of carbon dioxide-emitting fossil fuels.
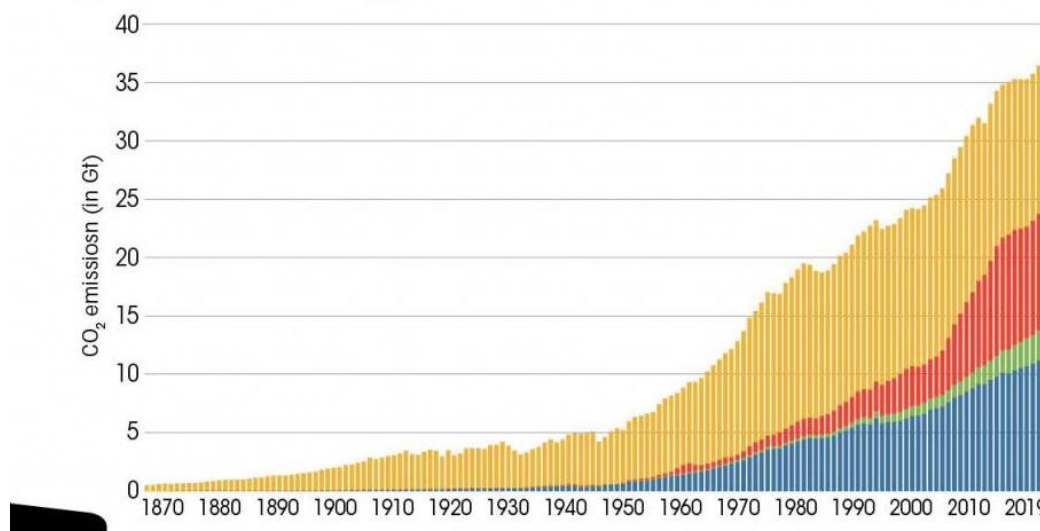
The status of Loss and Damage Fund

HISTORICAL DEFAULTERS
Developed countries (in orange) were responsible for almost entire CO2 emissions till the 1990s...

The 7 historical polluters
- United Kingdom - United States - European Union-27 - Russia - Japan - Australia - Canada
- The 7 historical polluters ■ China ■ India ■ Rest of the world

At the 27th Conference of Parties (COP27) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change a historic agreement was reached to establish a Loss and Damage Fund. It was designed as a multilateral entity that will disburse money to recover from damage that poor countries have suffered due to climate change-induced weather disasters and other impacts.

One of the provisions of the agreement was to set up a 24-member committee (the TC) representing developed and developing country Parties, co-chaired by Sherman of South Africa and Outi Honkatukia of Finland. The TC was to meet four times (TC 1-4) before producing its recommendations for the LDF at COP28 this year.

What started at TC1 as a cooperative and optimistic process earlier this year, has rapidly morphed into a battleground for the rich and the poor, the polluters and the victims. At the TC4 held last week in Egypt — what was to be the "absolutely final" meeting of the TC — disagreements soared.

Developed country parties including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Australia are staunch advocates for the World Bank to host the LDF. According to them, as an established institution, it has what it takes to quickly operationalise the Fund. This is concerning developing country blocs such as the G77 and China, African Group of Negotiators and Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

Given the World Bank's track record, they believe an LDF under it will stall finance, increase debt and undermine country needs. Instead, they want the LDF to have new, independent hosting under UNFCCC, where it will mandatorily uphold the principles of common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) and equity.

The next most contentious debate was on eligibility. Developed countries have long advocated for the LDF to be accessible only to Least Developed Countries (LDC), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and "particularly vulnerable" countries.

Developing countries have said that "all developing countries" should have access to the fund. At TC4, developed countries referred to specific allocations for LDCs, SIDS and the particularly vulnerable under eligibility.

Loss and damage is one of the purest refinements of the climate justice issue — the fact that the polluters are being asked to pay for damages that have reversed decades of development in the poorest parts of the world; damages that are themselves caused by carbon-intensive development which has enriched the polluters.

In fact, loss and damage is the true manifestation of the principle of CBDR and equity. It shows how developed countries' climate posturing is no more than, well, posturing. They appear to be climate leaders but are in fact dodgers of responsibility.

Yearly deaths due to heat may rise fivefold'

A global report by the popular international medical journal Lancet reveals an alarming projection regarding the impact of climate change on global health as Heat-related deaths could increase nearly fivefold by 2050.

The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change Report emphasises the profound connection between human well-being and fossil fuels, highlighting the detrimental effects of delayed measures to curb carbon emissions.

In 2022, individuals faced an average of 86 days of health-threatening high temperatures, with 60% of these occurrences attributed to human-caused climate change. The report highlights the "negligence" of governments as well as the companies to combat climate change and the continuing investments in oil and gas amid escalating challenges and adaptation costs.

The new global projections are part of the 8th annual report of the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change.

There is catastrophic threat to the health and survival of billions of people all over the world, and to successful adaptation efforts, from any further delays in action to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, the analysis stressed.

The analysis, led by researchers at University College London represents the work of 114 leading experts from 52 research institutions and UN agencies around the world including the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), providing the most up-to-date assessment of the links between health and climate change.

More frequent heatwaves and droughts were responsible for 127 million more people experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity in 122 countries in 2021, than annually between 1981 and 2010, the analysis claimed.

Similarly, changing weather patterns are accelerating the spread of life-threatening infectious diseases, it added. For example, warmer seas have increased the area of the world's coastline suitable for the spread of Vibrio bacteria that can cause illness and death in humans by 329km every year since 1982, putting a record 1.4 billion people at risk of diarrhoeal disease, severe wound infections, and sepsis. The threat is particularly high in Europe, where Vibrio-suitable coastal waters have increased by 142km every year, said the scientists.

The total value of economic losses resulting from extreme weather events was estimated at $264 billion in 2022, 23% higher than in 2010-2014. Heat exposure also led to 490 billion potential labour hours lost globally in 2022 (a nearly 42% increase from 1991-2000), with income losses accounting for a much higher proportion of GDP in low- (6.1%) and middle-income countries (3.8%). These losses increasingly harm livelihoods, restricting the capacity to cope and recover from the impacts of climate change.

Healthcare systems are the first line of defence for protecting people from the growing health harms from the changing climate. But even the current 1.14°C of heating is putting serious pressure on health services, with 27% (141/525) of surveyed cities reporting concerns over their health systems being overwhelmed by the impacts of climate change.

US India 2+2 dialogue

The 2+2 meetings signify the participation of two high-level representatives, Ministers holding Foreign and Defence portfolios, from each of the two countries who aim to enhance the scope of dialogue between them. The 2+2 meetings have been held annually with the US leaders since 2018.

Central to the November meeting's agenda was the effort to maintain a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. India and the United States not only reaffirmed this commitment, but also finalized the Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA) to strengthen both countries' supply chain independence, as well as the 2023 Roadmap for U.S.-India Defense Industrial Cooperation, setting a baseline for defense cooperation and coproduction. Additionally, the two sides agreed to start joint production of armored infantry vehicles.

the two sides discussed strengthening the partnership between India and the United States on semiconductors. Blinken emphasized collaboration in the semiconductor production sector, calling for closer educational cooperation between the two countries. As Blinken stated, this cooperation could be achieved in part through lowering visa wait times for Indian immigrants—an issue important to the Indian government.

The 2+2 meetings signify the participation of two high-level representatives, Ministers holding Foreign and Defence portfolios, from each of the two countries who aim to enhance the scope of dialogue between them.

Having such a mechanism enables the partners to better understand and appreciate each other's strategic concerns and sensitivities considering political factors on both sides, in order to build a stronger, more integrated strategic relationship in a rapidly changing global environment.

The US is India's oldest and most important 2+2 talks partner. The first 2+2 dialogue between the two countries was held during the Trump Administration, when then Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and then Secretary of Defence James Mattis met the late Sushma Swaraj and then Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi in September 2018.

It was also seen as a replacement for the Strategic and Commercial Dialogue, held between the foreign and commerce ministers of the two countries during the previous Obama administration.

The launch of the dialogue was seen as a "reflection of the shared commitment" by India and the US to provide "a positive, forward-looking vision for the India-US strategic partnership and to promote synergy in their diplomatic and security efforts".

Additionally, India has held 2+2 meetings with ministers from Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Russia.

Over the years, the strategic bilateral relationship with its partners, including the dialogues held in the 2+2 format, has produced tangible and far-reaching results for India.

India and the US have signed a troika of "foundational pacts" for deep military cooperation, beginning with the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016, followed by the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) after the first 2+2 dialogue in 2018, and then the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) in 202

The strengthening of the mechanisms of cooperation between the two militaries is of significance in the context of an increasingly aggressive China, which threatens many countries in its neighbourhood and beyond, and which has been challenging several established norms and aspects of international relations. The establishment of the mechanism with Japan, which is also wary of China's role, is another example of this.

Australia signs historic climate refuge agreement with Tuvalu

Australia has struck the "most significant" Pacific agreement in its history with the tiny island nation of Tuvalu after signing a treaty to provide climate, economic and security assistance.

The accord will create a pathway for Tuvalu's citizens to come to Australia as the threat of climate change worsens, It will also provide security for the Pacific nation in the event of a humanitarian disaster or a conflict.

Under the Falepili agreement, as the treaty is known, Canberra will provide a special pathway for 280 of Tuvalu's citizens a year to come to Australia. Under the visa, they will have permission to study, work or live in Australia.

A NASA study released in August found that much of Tuvalu's land area, along with pieces of the Pacific nation's critical infrastructure, will be below the average high tide by 2050 if climate change proceeds as expected.

The treaty is the biggest victory yet for Australia's revamped diplomatic efforts in the Pacific over the past 18 months, as well as the first time Canberra has struck such an agreement in the region. Both the U.S. and New Zealand have previously made similar treaties with Pacific nations.

Australia and the U.S. were shocked when the Solomon Islands announced in early 2022 that it had signed a security agreement with China. In response, Washington and Canberra have dramatically ramped up their outreach in the Pacific.

Tuvalu is one of just 13 nations to maintain an official diplomatic relationship with Taiwan, as Beijing has made increasing inroads into the Pacific.

Tuvalu, a collection of nine low-lying islands mid-way between Australia and Hawaii, is one of the world's most at-risk countries from climate change and has long drawn international attention to the issue.

Tuvalu told the COP27 climate summit last year Tuvalu plans to build a digital version of itself, replicating islands and landmarks and preserving its history and culture.