India must act quickly on the IPCC report 2018

What is the issue?

- **The IPCC Special Report 2018** on Global warming - Human activities has caused about 0.87°C rise in global average temperature over pre-industrial times.
- This IPCC report is named as, 'Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse gas fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems'.

Why the report cannot be overlooked?

- This report states that the **land surface air temperature has risen** by nearly twice the global average temperature, at about **1.3°C**.
- It cannot be overlooked especially not by acutely vulnerable India, given the direct impact of world's land systems on human well-being, livelihood, food security and water security.

What are the issues and its remedial measures?

- **Desertification of land** under agricultural use will still worsen the already worsening dangers of declining crop yields and crop failures.
- The **report proposed some measures** which should be implemented urgently for combating desertification, including
    1. Reduced tillage
    2. Planting cover crops
    3. Improvements in grazing management
    4. Greater use of Agro-forestry.
- Another key component is **maintaining and extending forest cover**, as forests act as enormous natural carbon sinks.
- In this context, the dilution of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) in India seems regressive.

How industrial development should be planned?

- Industrial development and environmental protection can be planned wisely to be compatible.
- Land sparing industrialisation, appropriate zoning and environmental

safeguards are possible without being in conflict with ecological services provided by the natural growth-forest ecosystem.

- Every developing nation needs industrial growth, but given the severity of the threat we face in climate change, not factoring in the importance of preserving chosen and managed forest cover would be ill-advised.
- Consulting indigenous people is an important way of integrating local knowledge with scientific knowledge.

Why water management is critical?

- Agriculture accounts for more an estimated 86% of the country's freshwater use.
- **HIMAP report 2019** - With receding glaciers, there is need to manage water better both in the short and in the long run especially in India to address the challenge of food security.
- The Indian government has admirably taken up the goal of irrigation water productivity.
- **Measures to be taken for conserving water** include,
    1. Promoting compatible irrigation practices like drip irrigation,
    2. Shifting away from water-intensive cash crops,
    3. Alternate wetting and drying (AWR) practices in paddy cultivation,
    4. Extension services for providing access and sensitising farmers to the efficient water use technologies and practices
    5. Use of water efficient agricultural practices needs to be taken up on a war footing.
    6. Scaling up of traditional rainwater harvesting practices like building tanks and artificial ponds in low-lying catchment areas.

How food sector impacts climate?

- Consumption and waste management in the food sector is considered to have climate implications as well.
- As per IPCC report, the shift towards a more plant-based based diet is considered a healthy sustainable dietary option.
- The UN estimates that the world's population could breach 9.7 billion by 2050, so the need to augment food supplies per unit availability of land and water is a necessary target.
- The shift is more significant for India as its yet largely poor population will be one of the first to be affected by constrained food supplies.
- Livestock sector management with crop management is necessary for multiple benefits.
- Many countries which have crossed the health safety limits of meat consumption with rising incomes, but India needn't follow this path.

How there is still hope for India?

- Like for many other countries, there is a very small window left for India's policymakers to respond to the severity of the threat.
- However, there are some cultural advantages for India and multiple options for adopting sustainable practices to avoid a carbon-intensive development path.
- It is hoped that the well-being of the masses will take precedence over short-term economic gains for a few.

Source: The Indian Express

Quick Facts

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

- IPCC was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988.
- It is the United Nations body for the assessment of climate change.
- It provides a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts.

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