

The Transnational Challenge of Climate Change

What is the issue?

- The Amazon forest fires are getting to be a worldwide concern.
- It is high time that governments across the world deal with it as a transnational challenge and not let nationalism interfere in it.

What is the looming Amazon threat?

- Brazil's Amazon forests are ablaze with dozens of fires.
- Most of them are set intentionally by loggers and others seeking greater access to forestland.
- Many cities in Europe and elsewhere have seen high temperatures experienced never before.
- Heat waves have also accelerated melting of glaciers in Greenland.
- It is happening at a rate that was not anticipated by scientific models until much later this century.
- How long the Amazon fires can continue is unclear. But at the current scale, the fires are paving the way for a global climate catastrophe.

What are the countries' stances?

- European leaders and civil society in many places are organising protests to oppose policies that encourage the fires.
- However, the Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has stated that they are an internal matter.
- He claims that they were actually started by the very non-governmental organisations that are now raising concerns.
- The American President Donald Trump has withdrawn from the Paris Climate Agreement, saying that it was against the U.S.'s national interests.
- Across the Atlantic, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has spoken from both sides on climate change.
- He receives funding from climate science denial groups as well as says that he would lobby the U.S. to take climate change more seriously.
- The increasing importance of nationalist ideologies by countries are reflected in:
 - i. the burning of the world's largest forest reserves
 - ii. the withdrawal of the world's leading polluter from a major

- international treaty (US from the Paris deal)
- iii. the U.K.'s isolationist policies
- But these actions have consequences that far transcend national boundaries and impact all creatures that share life on the planet.

What are the causes for climate threats?

- Energy and transport are mainly responsible for the accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere.
- But, besides this, the changes in land use patterns too have played a role.
- Deforestation, industrial agricultural systems and desertification are major drivers of climate change.
- Agriculture, forestry and other land use activities accounted for a little less than a quarter (23%) of the total net anthropogenic emissions of GHGs between 2007-2016.
- A [recent IPCC report](#) on Climate Change and Land mentions desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security and GHG changes in terrestrial ecosystems.
- It notes that unless land is managed in a sustainable manner, the lean chance that humanity will survive climate change will become smaller still.

How has land management been?

- Land is part and parcel of people's lives as it provides food, water, livelihoods, biodiversity and a range of other benefits from its ecosystems.
- Decades of poor land management in the agricultural system are coming back as a threat;
 - i. soils have become depleted with heavy use of chemicals
 - ii. farms have few or no friendly insects
 - iii. monoculture has led to a reduction in the use of indigenous crop varieties with useful characteristics
 - iv. groundwater is depleted
 - v. polluted farm runoffs are contributing to contaminated water bodies and destroying biodiversity

How should land management be?

- Managing land better for farming would entail implementing more sustainable agricultural practices.
- This would mean reducing chemical input drastically, and taking the practice of food production closer to natural methods of agro-ecology.
- These would reduce emissions and enhance resilience to warming.
- The IPCC report, in this regard, calls for -

- i. avoiding conversion of grassland to cropland
 - ii. bringing in equitable management of water in agriculture
 - iii. crop diversification
 - iv. agro-forestry
 - v. investment in local and indigenous seed varieties that can withstand higher temperatures
- It also recommends practices that increase soil carbon and reduce salinisation.
- **Food system** - Establishing sustainable food systems means reducing food waste, which is estimated to be a quarter of the food produced.
- It also necessitates eating locally grown food and cutting meat consumption.
- Alongside these changes, it is important to put an end to deforestation and conserving mangroves, peatland and other wetlands.
- **Measures needed** - Land use policy should incorporate better access to markets for small and marginal farmers, and empower women farmers.
- It should also expand agricultural services and strengthen land tenure systems.
- Sustainable land management helps reduce stressors on ecosystems, helps societies adapt better to warmer climates and reduce their GHG emissions.

What is the way forward?

- Dealing with the transnational challenge of climate change requires a vision broader than the current narrow approach of nationalism.
- There is a need for a new planetary ethics that supports alternative systems for the future, for a sustainable earth. This should -
 - i. cultivate the growth of ecological sensibilities
 - ii. support pluralism
 - iii. enhances quality of life
 - iv. shift values away from consumerism
 - v. create new identities and cultures that transcend conventional boundaries

Source: The Hindu