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India's first private Satellite: ExseedSAT1

The 'Made in India' micro satellite ExseedSAT1, built by a small start up is the first built in the private sector to go into space.

It was launched through the Falcon 9 rocket of SpaceX.

So far building and launching satellites has been the exclusive preserve of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), the main driver of the impressive space programme. Early this year, through its commercial arm Antrix Agency, ISRO had encouraged private participation and building of satellites.

The satellite is a major boost to the private radio operators in the country.

The satellites of this form are called Cubesats as they are 10 cm across and 1kg weight. This satellite is freely available for all radio amateurs across the world. It is an open radio transponder that works on ham radio frequencies. The amateur radio services provide vital communication links during natural disasters.

Source: The Hindu.

Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

The OPCW is an intergovernmental organization and the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention, which entered into force on 29 April 1997.

The OPCW, with its 193 member states, has its seat in The Hague, Netherlands, and oversees the global Endeavour for the permanent and verifiable elimination of chemical weapons. The organization promotes and verifies the adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits the use of chemical weapons and requires their destruction. Verification consists both of evaluation of declarations by member states and onsite inspections.

The organization was awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize "for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons". The organization is not an agency of the United Nations, but cooperates both on policy and practical issues. India is one of its founding members.

Source: The Hindu.

India gets first witness protection scheme

The Supreme Court has approved Witness Protection Scheme and asked the states to enforce it

Aim of the scheme: to enable a witness to depose fearlessly and truthfully by providing appropriate protection from the state

The programme identifies “three categories of witnesses as per threat perception”:

- Category A: Those cases where threat extends to life of witness or family members during investigation, trial or even thereafter.
- Category B: Those cases where the threat extends to safety, reputation or property of the witness or family members during the investigation or trial
- Category C: Cases where the threat is moderate and extends to harassment or intimidation of the witness or his family members, reputation or property during the investigation, trial or thereafter.

The expenses for the programme will be met from a Witness Protection Fund to be established by states and Union Territories. The scheme would serve as the ‘law’ under Article 141/142 of the Constitution, until suitable Parliamentary and/or State Legislations on the subject is enacted

Source: The Hindu.

First baby born via uterus transplanted from dead donor

World’s first baby born after uterus transplant from *deceased donor* in Brazil.

According to Lancet report, a mother who received a uterus transplant from a dead donor gave birth to a healthy baby via caesarean section. Currently, uterus donation is only available for women with family members who are willing to donate.

Until recently, the only options available to women with so-called uterine infertility were adoption or the services of a surrogate mother. The first successful childbirth following uterine transplant from a living donor took place in 2014 in Sweden

The report shows that uterus transplants from deceased donors are feasible and may open access for all women with uterine infertility, without the need for live donors. Previously, there have been 10 other uterus transplants from dead donors attempted in the United States, Czech Republic and Turkey, but this is the first to result in a live birth.

Source: The Hindu.

Extreme weather report suggests neighbours worse hit than India

Climate Risk Index (CRI) developed by German watch analyses impacts of extreme weather events, in terms of fatalities and economic losses.

According to report India is 14th most affected countries by extreme weather events in the last 20 years. India’s neighbour Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal are even more affected. For the period from 1998 to 2017 Puerto Rico, Honduras and Myanmar rank highest.

Climate Risk Index: Index analyse number of deaths per 1, 00,000 inhabitants, extent of financial losses and loss per unit of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of countries. In the present analysis, only weather related events – storms, floods and temperature extremes (heat and cold waves) – are incorporated. Geological incidents like earthquakes, volcanic eruptions or tsunamis, for which data is also available, are not relevant in this context as they do not depend on the weather.

Source: The Hindu.

Editorial

To Read

Climate change: moving talks to action

With the 40-year-old environmental law framework no longer acceptable, do we need a new one?

With scientific clarity on the catastrophic adverse effects of climate change, and those responsible reneging on their promises, do we need a new framework for human well-being within global ecological limits?

Developed countries, with one-fifth the population, are responsible for half of global emissions. Their refusal to share technologies and financial resources, and the US, with 5% of the population responsible for 20% of emissions, pushing for similar obligations under the Paris treaty of 2015 creates an existential crisis for other countries.

Unfortunately, the information flowing to the public deals with the symptoms, not the causes of the problem. The United Nations is focusing on the “emissions gap”, urging countries collectively to do more, skirting the key issue of who should do what, when and how. Researchers are more nuanced, acknowledging that India and China are doing more than their fair share, yet shying away from highlighting why the US and the EU are not doing more. NGOs are fixated on keeping the rise in global temperature limited to 1.5-2°C, ignoring that energy- and emissions-intensive infrastructure are essential for dealing with adverse effects. Unravelling politics from science is not easy because of the way the issue was framed.

Climate change first came onto the global policy agenda in the 1980s when Europe organized conferences on global environmental impacts of energy use. The US reshaped the talks by establishing the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 1988, linking it to the World Meteorological Organization and the atmospheric sciences, and not to the United Nations Environment Programme. It reframed the problem in terms of temperature increase and brought in developing countries. This strategic thinking also effectively kept out the social sciences and issues of distribution. Consequently, peaking of global emissions focused on developing countries' use of coal rather than sharp reductions in developed countries' much larger and still growing transport emissions.

The defining feature of climate negotiations has been steady dilution of commitments of developed countries legitimized through multilateral negotiations, reflecting the global political and economic power balance. In 1992, when the climate treaty was being negotiated, the US insisted on three conditions. First, it would not accept any notion of “responsibility” and developing countries, including India, diluted the agreed principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” by adding “respective capabilities”. Second, per-capita emissions would not be a benchmark as it focused on lifestyles, which are not up for negotiation. Third, there will be no commitments for transfer of financial resources and technology. In the current negotiations, developing countries will again “compromise” to keep the treaty alive, as developed countries are not moving forward on providing the agreed upon finance and technology.

Multilateral environmental cooperation is based on trust as these treaties do not have a dispute settlement mechanism. The Kyoto Protocol in 1997, despite self-determined targets, led to the US' pull-out and its second commitment period is yet to come into force with the EU dragging its feet. The Paris Agreement ended differentiation as a principle but the compromises led to retention of elements, including provision of finance and technology, as a trade-off to developing countries agreeing to reduce emissions. Developed countries' continuing opposition to include these items in the rules raises questions on their commitment to multilateral cooperation. The re-emergence of China led to the first modification in the framework with a deal between the US and China, enabling the Paris Agreement. China balanced others' historical emissions with its

growth in emissions till 2030. By then, China will be a moderately well-off society with per-capita emissions near that of the US. The deal brought comparable standards of living into the centre of global climate policy.

Climate change is best understood in terms of levels of well-being, not thermal physics of the planet and climate models. With urbanization, once infrastructure reaches saturation levels, transport emissions rise to 40% of total emissions and buildings consume more than industry. Focus on global temperature limits and annual emissions reduction central in the climate pact ignores the trajectory of emissions, energy use patterns and their link with well-being in ecological limits. By 2050, to achieve comparable levels of well-being, India's GDP will rise seven times and emissions more than double from current levels, which are now below the global average. Climate change is unique because human activity has socioeconomic implications of sharing a scarce global atmospheric resource, but there is no discussion on the allocation principles.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bold attempt to reframe the global concern in terms of "climate justice" is included in the preamble of the Paris Agreement, but is not binding. It is now time to push research, policies and diplomatic interventions to ensure that equity will be reflected as part of the deliberations not as a stand-alone, and meaningless, side discussion.

With the 40-year-old environmental law framework no longer acceptable, even to its proponents, putting inclusive, equitable sustainable development as the conceptual basis of the emerging world order will give India the leadership role the global challenge is crying out for.

Mains Question

Q. Despite being one of the fastest growing trillion dollar economy, India is home to a third of the world's stunted children under five and a quarter of the children display wasting. Analyze the causes and suggest some measures.