

COP 26: The future of the world is at stake

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Human wellbeing has increased, but so has inequality



Harini Nagendra,

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Since World War II, a global acceleration in economic and industrial growth has led to multiple rips and tears in the delicate balance with nature. About 11,500 years ago, the earth – our only planetary home – entered a long period of stable climate called the Holocene. Climatic conditions were perfect for humanity to flourish across the globe, being not too hot and not too cold – enabling humanity to develop agriculture,

domesticate animals, slowly and steadily cut down the forests and drain the swamps to build homes, first as huts built of plant material, then with concrete and metal, now moving to a world filled with high rises.

Human wellbeing has increased, but so has inequality. The impact of uncontrolled material progress is all around us – the pollution of the air, water and soil, the widespread devastation of ecological habitats and the ruination of human health. But at a global scale, less visible to us, other critical processes are going out of whack. Global warming of the planet due to the uncontrolled emission of greenhouse gases, which trap the heat in the atmosphere, has led to the melting of icecaps and glaciers, and the compression of weeks and months of rainfall into days and hours, followed by prolonged periods of drought.

India and its adjacent countries will be hard hit by climate change. Countries like the Maldives will be completely submerged in a few decades, along with large parts of countries like Bangladesh. The Indian coastline -- with prosperous, thriving megacities like Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai -- will be severely impacted by floods. Bengaluru will not be spared either. As oceans heat up, the change in temperature destabilises air and water currents, derailing expected weather patterns. Not just typhoons, hurricanes and tornadoes, the monsoon itself will become erratic, landing and withdrawing at unexpected times. Of course, this will lead to losses in agriculture, increasing the price of food, and worsening already widespread hunger. Climate scientists unanimously believe that the impacts we are already seeing are just the tip of the iceberg – much worse lies in store for us ahead, unless we can very quickly act to arrest climate change.

In 1994, a number of countries signed up to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to combat climate change. Twenty-seven years later, emissions of greenhouse gases have spectacularly increased, instead of stabilising or decreasing. Every year, at an annual Conference of Parties (CoP) meeting, the countries that have signed onto the UNFCCC review progress, and agree on new goals and timelines. The CoP meetings scheduled for November 2020 could not take place because of the pandemic, and were postponed to 2021. The 26th CoP meetings will take place in Glasgow starting today, and extending until November 12.

The world has placed a lot of its hope on the deliberations at this meeting. Yet, past experience does not offer us much hope. Fossil fuel companies continue to be a powerful force lobbying for governments to continue burning carbon, and despite growing public opinion, many of the powerful western countries that have played a leading role in contributing to climate change have not come on board, or at least, not enough to make a difference.

While the countries responsible continue to fiddle, like Nero, as we accelerate towards the cliff, what can the rest of the world do? Cities like Bengaluru, responsible for a large and growing proportion of greenhouse gas emissions, must take the leadership to drive the change. There is much that can be done to make Bengaluru more climate-friendly,

from better solid waste management to greater focus on tree plantation and wetland restoration, and an increased push towards renewable energy use. But the time is now. And the future of the world is at stake.

NEXT STORY



Sanjay Verma,

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At the recent National Policy on Cooperatives meet, Amit Shah, Union Minister for Cooperation said that the Centre has no intention to bring new legislation for state cooperatives. He further said that uniformity needs to be brought in cooperative state laws, which will be possible only after dialogue with the state governments. This stance of the government has come contrary to a dominant perception that with the formation of the Cooperative Ministry, the government may centralize the cooperative laws in the country as Cooperation is a state subject. What is the background of a clear-cut stance of the government on this issue now? Do efforts in bringing uniformity to date have borne fruits? Why has it become so important now?

The Standing Committee on Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Food Processing in its report recently recommended that the Ministry of Cooperation shall exercise utmost prudence in chalking out its activities/programs at the national level, so that federal features of the country are not impinged upon and all stakeholders in the cooperative sector are duly benefitted.

They observed that cooperative societies under State Cooperative Acts are governed by the registrars of cooperative societies. It appears that the new Ministry may have taken the views of the Report seriously. The recent initiatives in the Ministry, through its outreach events conducted in the states, are also a clear indicator that the government is giving timely priority in redressing the issues of the cooperatives sector in the states and is trying to make them understand that the new Ministry is keen to take up all of their concerns.

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Bringing in uniformity in cooperative laws of the states needs extensive discussions to arrive a proper consensus. The Constitution Amendment Act 2011 was a big step toward the democratic growth of cooperatives. The Constitutional amendment was incorporated by many states like Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra, but the lack of its uniform implementation hindered the autonomous growth of cooperatives. A roadblock to uniformity in cooperative laws appeared when petitions were filed in the