

Environmental development, an optical illusion?



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Post-Covid times, the world stepped into 2022 with questions of if green recovery is possible and if humanity will move towards prosperous growth. But now as we are nearing the end of 2022, the final data available about the ground reality about this year have belied our hopes and expectations. For, this year also the activities of deforestation and air pollution have increased. Several species have become extinct and several have been perched on the verge of extinction.

In the recent mass bleaching event in the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, 60 per cent of coral reefs have been bleached. We have to wait and watch if the coral reefs will be restored. The events such as these would happen only in hot seasons. But it is a matter of concern for scientists that it has happened in the year of La Nina that refers to the periodic cooling of oceanic surface

temperatures. It shows that even during the time of cooling the earth's temperature has increased beyond the average.

Warming and deluge

In 2022 the earth's average temperature increased 1.1 to 1.3 degree Celsius more than during the period prior to the Industrial Revolution. According to the data obtained till now, 2022 may clinch the fourth or the sixth slot in the list of the hottest years in the human history. That the temperature was high even during the year of La Nina (cooling period) has demonstrated the intensity of climate change.

Scholars have shown this as an example of how the geo-political events such as Ukraine War and its resultant energy issues are tied up with climate change. So, it will be necessary to discuss environmental problems and climate change along with political issues in the days to come. The confusion caused by wars distracts the countries from taking initiatives to mitigate the ill-effects of climate change.

This year the total amount of icing in the Antarctica slid like never before. The glaciers have melted on a large scale in Switzerland. In March, 2022, owing to heat waves, food production was affected in Pakistan where severe floods claimed the lives of 1,400 people, affected 33 lakh people and destroyed about 17 lakh houses. The flood damage was estimated at \$3,000 crore. The experts have defined the role of climate change in the unprecedented rains that have lashed Pakistan.

The list of disasters caused by climate change in 2022 is pretty long. The most prominent of them are: The worst flooding in Bengal and the north-eastern states of India, the heat waves and the forest fires in China and Europe, the drought that affected food production in countries such as Somalia, Kenya and so on, the tropical cyclones such as Ana, Guambe, Isha that left a trail of destruction in South Africa, the cyclone that killed 131 persons in

the U.S. and the European forest fire that left over one lakh hectares of forest land gutted.

Climate change in India

The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) released a report on the climate change in India in 2022, containing data for the period of January-October. Out of the total 273 days taken up for a study, it was found that India witnessed extreme climate change-related events for 241 days (88 per cent), which claimed the lives of about 2,755 people. The death rate was higher in Himachal Pradesh, Most of the casualties happened during floods which destroyed four lakh houses and 18 lakh hectares of cultivable land and killed 70,000 heads of cattle. That this report is pertaining to only 10 months this year is a matter of grave concern.

Meanwhile, it has been predicted that 2023 will continue as a year of La Nina for the third time in a row. This phenomenon is called 'triple dip' that happens for the first time in this century.

How the average temperature will be like and how the climate change-induced events and rains will be like in 2023 will all depend on the impact of La Nina and the level of greenhouse emissions.

It is highly disappointing that at the climate summit (COP27) where some vital decisions were taken about finance, the matter of fossilized fuel was not discussed. So, it is expected by climate activists that some progress will be made in the matter of finding solutions to the issue of climate change at the forthcoming UAE summit to be held in 2023.

Apart from climate change, global meets held on the issues of biodiversity, pollution and use of plastics are getting due attention now. Nowadays the awareness of environment and climate change is increasing in the society.

Carrying all these rays of hopes, we have to step into 2023 set to welcome us whole-heartedly.

Translated by V.Mariappan.