Climate finance

- Developed countries have insisted upon two points on the issue of climate finance.
- First, they maintain that their commitment to reaching the target of $100 billion in climate finance a year for developing countries, first promised in 2009, is close to being met.
- Second, they view the mobilization of private finance as a critical component of climate finance.
- The UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) released a report on the progress made by developed countries toward achieving the goal of mobilizing $100 billion per year.
- The report makes two things clear while estimates vary, it is widely accepted that the $100 billion goal has not been achieved in 2020, and an earlier effort to mobilize private finance by the developed countries has met with comprehensive failure.
- The SCF report relied mainly on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Oxfam reports for aggregate climate finance trends.
- The OECD report claims that developed countries have mobilized $83.3 billion in climate finance in 2020 ($68.3 billion in public finance, $13.1 billion in mobilized private finance, and $1.9 billion in export credits)
- A challenge for low -income countries Developing countries have for a long time insisted that a significant portion of climate finance should come from public funds as private finance will not address their needs and priorities especially related to adaptation.
- Climate finance already remains skewed towards mitigation and flows towards bankable projects with clear revenue streams.
- Adaptation is unlikely to offer commercially profitable opportunities for private financiers.
- Vulnerable, debt -ridden, and low-income countries with poor credit ratings needing adaptation finance the most, find it challenging to access private finance.
- Following the dismal failure to meet the $100 billion goal, developed countries pushed the target year for achieving it to 2025 from 2020.
- Last year, at COP26 (Glasgow), developed countries came up with a Climate Finance Delivery Plan (CFDP) to meet the goal.

THE HINDU

Changes in Ph.D. course

- The UGC on November 7, 2022, notified the University Grants Commission (Minimum Standards and Procedures for Award of Ph.D. Degree) Regulations, 2022
- One of the notable changes it made was to the evaluation and assessment criteria for the award of the degree, where it has waived the need to mandatorily publish a research paper in a peer- reviewed journal.
- This is accompanied by completely abolishing MPhil, which has been a gateway for Ph.D. programmes, in line with the recommendation in the National Education Policy 2020.
- The eligibility criteria for admissions too have been revised, and a candidate can register after completing a one-year (or two semester) master's degree program after a four-year (or 8-semester) bachelor's degree program or a two-year (or four-semester) master's degree program after a three-year bachelor's degree program with at least 55% marks or its equivalent grade.
- There are also important changes to course work.
- Earlier, the description of course work candidates needed to finish was more detailed, with at least four credits assigned to courses on research methodology. Candidates were also required to finish this either in the first semester, or by the second semester.
- Only candidates who were awarded MPhil or had completed their MPhil were exempted open-ended new regulations Ph.D.ve it more open-ended and says that all Ph.D. scholars "shall be required to train in teaching/ education/ pedagogy/ writing related to their chosen PhD subject."
- They can also now be assigned 4-6 hours per week of teaching/research assistantship for conducting tutorials, or laboratory work and evaluation.

THE HINDU

Operation Barkhane

- On November 9, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the end of the decade-long Operation Barkhane in Africa.

What is Operation Barkhane?

- France began its military operations in the Sahel in January 2013.
- Titled Operation Serval, it was linked to al-Qaida and took control of northern Mali.
- However, in 2014, the mission was scaled up, renamed Operation

Barkhane, and was aimed at counter-terrorism.

- The objective was to assist local armed forces to prevent the resurgence of non-state armed groups across the Sahel region.
- Around 4,500 French personnel were deployed with the local joint counter-terrorism force.

Has France achieved its objectives?

- French operations had two objectives in the Sahel.
- First, to liberate Mali from the insurgency in the north and second, to see through counter-terrorism operations in West Africa, including the neutralization of key terrorists.
- In its major successes, France regained Mali's northern regions from the extremists in 2014 through Operation Serval.
- . However, Operation Barkhane saw a series of failures.
- First affiliated, despite the organization stressed the growth of new groups affiliated to terrorist organizations, including the Islamic State.
- Second, the failure of the operation led to a humanitarian crisis.

Why did Mr. Macron pull out?

- First, France's relations with the military rulers grew hostile after a series of coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea.
- Relations between France and Mali soured after the latter expelled the French ambassador when he disagreed with the junta's decision to remain in power until 2025.
- In addition, France was contemptuous of Malian authorities negotiating a peace deal with insurgent groups.
- Secondly, since Operation Barkhane was widely perceived as a failure, anti-French sentiments and questions over France's intentions flared up, with a further demand for France's withdrawal from the region.
- Finally, France and other Western countries claim that the Wagner Group, a private military company close to the Kremlin, is playing a major role in fuelling the insurgency and discrediting French withdrawal.

THE HINDU

Data regulation

- The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in their Digital Economy Report found that businesses using the internet for global trade have a higher survival rate than those who do not.
- Therefore, cross-border is essential for economies [especially growing

economies] to protect data during cross-border transfers.

- Countries mandate data that are created within their borders to remain stored within its territorial boundaries.
- This process of storing data locally is referred to as data localization.
- The need for data localization
- The requirement of data localization strengthens the protection of personal data, as all of us while using the internet are sending data in some manner or form.
- For instance, obligations under the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), obligate businesses in the EU to keep the data secured within the boundaries of the EU.
- Governments need to be re-assessed to see if there tends to be a uniformity in the nature of data that different businesses operate and exploit.
- India is one of the most powerful markets in terms of data creation and use, the need for data localization is essential.
- In a similar pattern, due to the increasing number of digital payments in the country, the Reserve Bank of India has also mandated payment system data information to be stored in India for better monitoring and safety.
- Imposing restrictions on the free flow of data can not only create an impact on the global economy but also become a hindrance for local markets.
- If governments look at data localization from the point of security and counter data breaches, it can, due to the forced localization of data, make data security more vulnerable as the data no longer undergoes sharding.
- This is particularly true of countries with poor IT infrastructure.
- Moreover, developed countries may use sophisticated tools for data surveillance which can simply forfeit the purpose of achieving data security through relocation.
- There can also be an increased risk of local surveillance through the implementation of stringent data localization laws.
- A lot of countries prohibit the transfer of data on the account of 'national interest' which is a very broad term and could encompass various situations.
- Such variations can foster a varied set of challenges in different settings and the nature of businesses.

- Further, the mandate of data localization increases the operational costs of the businesses.
- Another downside of this could be the promotion of monopoly and eradication of small and mid-size businesses from the market

A multiple-stakeholder approach

- Data is the enabler of businesses and digitization has been essential for growth and innovation.
- In this age of rapid technological growth, governments should shift to alternate standards (such as encryption) rather than enforcing strict measures on data localization that could restrict trade and innovation.
- One should also reflect on how far we can go with a sovereignty- based model in a digitally connected world.
- It has become increasingly troublesome to solve jurisdictional issues in case of cybercrimes and online defamation which rely heavily on international cooperation multiple-stakeholder making it difficult and expensive for prosecutors to act.
- Therefore, a way forward could be to move with a multiple stakeholder approach which can not only help in looking at data localisation alone, but also other issues such as privacy and governance.
- The 'globalization' approach is one such method in the digital space, wherein laws can be harmonized globally, but by paying attention to local interests.

THE HINDU

Chinese vessels in the Indian Ocean region/maritime security

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