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**1. What does the 2023 'State of the Climate in Asia' report say? What does it mean for India?**

**Why in News?**

Asia has warmed faster than the global average since 1960, the World Meteorological Organization's 2023 'State of the Climate in Asia' report said. It also reiterated that 2023 was the warmest on record around the world. The climate report also noted an "alarming gap" between climate projections and the ability of Asian countries to adapt to and mitigate climate change and its impacts.

**What toll did heat exact on Asia?**

More than 2,000 people were killed and more than nine million were affected by extreme climate events across Asia in 2023. More than 80% of these events were related to storms and floods. The report also recorded several parts experiencing severe heat waves, leading to multiple fatalities, but acknowledged that heat-related mortality is widely under-reported. In India, severe heat waves in April and June killed around 110 people. A prolonged heat wave engulfed large parts of South and South-East Asia in April and May, affecting areas from Bangladesh and eastern India to southern China.

**EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS IN INDIA LAST YR**

■ **APRIL-JUNE:** Severe heatwave, 110 people dead from heatstroke.

■ **OCTOBER:** Glacial lake outburst flood in Sikkim; 40 deaths

■ **AUGUST:** Floods in Himachal, Uttarakhand; 25 deaths, agri, infra damaged.

■ **DECEMBER:** Cyclone Michuung makes landfall in Andhra; 22 deaths

**How did floods and storms affect Asia?**

Tropical cyclone Mocha, which affected Myanmar and Bangladesh in May 2023, was the strongest cyclone in the Bay of Bengal in the last decade. Shortly after, floods, landslides, and lightning killed around 600 people across India, Pakistan, and Nepal in June and July 2023. In India, floods and landslides in August 2023, primarily in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, killed at least 25. Lightning accounted for 1,200 deaths around India through the year.

**How well can Asia spot a coming disaster?**

An early-warning system is an integrated process that monitors, predicts, and forecasts hazards. It also includes activities related to risk-assessment, communications, and preparedness that allow individuals, communities, governments, businesses, etc. to take timely action to mitigate risks.

Thanks to such systems, for example, authorities in Bangladesh had a day's head-start to prepare for cyclone Mocha and take anticipatory action in Cox's Bazar, which allowed local communities to better survive its landfall. Twenty-one Asian countries reported the status of their early warning systems to the UN. According to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the average composite score for the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems was 0.46 out of 1 in Asia; 0.58 for preparedness to respond; and 0.50 for observation and forecasting.

To compare, the world scored 0.35, 0.78, and 0.33, respectively, on average on these counts. Warning and dissemination was the strongest area under the framework for Asia while risk knowledge was the weakest. According to the report, fewer than half of all Asian countries have the tools to mitigate climate change impact.

### **What do these findings mean for India?**

Extreme climate events are rising globally, including in India. But with improved preparedness, we can minimise the damage. India used early warnings when cyclone Mocha, one of the strongest in the Bay of Bengal, was about to hit. Earlier, similar cyclones have killed thousands of people.

While India has historically demonstrated commendable resilience in responding to floods, storms, and droughts, the new and escalating challenges posed by climate change — such as unprecedented heatwaves, the retreat of glaciers, and rising sea levels — reveal that our preparedness is alarmingly inadequate.

These emerging threats require urgent attention and a strategic overhaul of our current policies and adaptation strategies. It is crucial that we empower our communities with the necessary resources and policies to effectively combat these evolving climatic adversities.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: The Hindu

## **2. When is a candidate elected unopposed?**

### **Why in News?**

On April 22, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party opened its tally in the Lok Sabha when its nominee for the Surat constituency in the western State of Gujarat, Mukesh Dalal, was elected unopposed. This followed the rejection of the nomination papers of the Congress candidates [main and substitute nominees] the previous day and the withdrawal of other nominees. This means Gujarat's second largest city will not go to the polls on May 7.

### **How is a candidate declared elected before polling?**

Section 53 (3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 deals with the procedure in uncontested elections. According to this proviso, if the number of such candidates is less than the number of seats to be filled, the returning officer (RO) shall forthwith declare all such candidates to be elected. In this regard, the RO's actions are governed by Section 33 of the Act which pertains to the presentation of nomination papers and requirements for a valid nomination.



Sub-section 4 says: "On the presentation of a nomination paper, the returning officer shall satisfy himself that the names and electoral roll numbers of the candidate and his proposer as entered in the nomination paper are the same as those entered in the electoral rolls..." In the given instance, three proposers of the Congress' candidate for Surat, Nilesh Kumbhani, claimed in an affidavit to the district election officer (DEO), Sourabh Pardhi, that they had not signed his nomination form. They did not also turn up before the DEO on April 21 to support the candidate's nomination form.

Besides, the Handbook for Returning Officers (Edition 2) issued by the Election Commission (EC) in August 2023, in the chapter titled uncontested election, states that "if in any constituency, there is only one contesting candidate, that candidate should be declared to have been duly elected immediately after the last hour for withdrawal of candidature. In that event, a poll is not necessary." It also says that "all those candidates, who are returned as uncontested and [who] have criminal antecedents, must publicise the details in the prescribed format as per timeline."

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance  
Source: The Hindu

### 3. What is the scope for negative voting in the election system?

#### Introduction



There is ample scope in the system. While the NOTA (none of the above) option has been in force since 2013, the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, allows electors to decide not to vote through Rule 49-O. A remark to the effect that the elector has decided not to record his or her vote would have to be made in the "remarks column" against the entry relating to the elector in the Register of Voters by the presiding officer, after which the signature or thumb impression of the elector would have to be obtained against such a remark.

#### NOTA on EVM

The option of NOTA, introduced through the Supreme Court's intervention, has been available on electronic voting machines (EVMs) since November 2013. This became a reality in the wake of a verdict given by a Bench of the Supreme Court in September 2013, while allowing a

petition filed by the People's Union for Civil Liberties. The then CJI, who wrote the judgment, said: "Giving right to a voter not to vote for any candidate while protecting his right of secrecy is extremely important in a democracy. Such an option gives the voter the right to express his disapproval of the kind of candidates being put up by the parties." He expressed the hope that "gradually, there will be a systemic change and the parties will be forced to accept the will of the people and field candidates who are known for their integrity."

### **Difference between Rule 49-O and NOTA option**

There is a difference between an elector exercising Rule 49-O and one using the NOTA option. In the case of the former, the likelihood of such an elector compromising his or her secrecy is high, as there is a procedure to be followed manually at a polling booth. However, in the case of the latter, there is no such issue.



But, according to the Handbook for ROs, the NOTA votes are not to be taken into account for calculating the total valid votes polled for the return of the security deposit. The EC's stand has been that the person getting the largest number of votes in any constituency will still be declared the winner, regardless of the number of NOTA votes.

But, with respect to local bodies' polls, the situation is different, at least in Maharashtra. Through an order in November 2018, the Maharashtra State Election Commission said that NOTA would be regarded as a fictional electoral candidate for the polls to urban local bodies, and wherever NOTA gets the highest votes, the Commission would go for re-poll.

### **What are the developments post NOTA?**

There have been instances wherein votes obtained by political parties were lower than the NOTA votes. But, a section of activists and constitutional experts has been critical, calling NOTA a "toothless tiger" with no implications on the results, despite the fact that NOTA was reported to have netted over 1.29 crore votes in the State Assembly elections and the Lok Sabha elections combined in the last five years.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu