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India & climate change

The backdrop

Scientists from around the world with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) tell us that during the past 100 years, the world's surface air temperature increased an average of 0.6° Celsius (1.1°F). This may not sound like very much change, but even one degree can affect the Earth. While the debate continues on whether global warming is a serious threat or not, we have witnessed some effects of climate change happening now. The sea level is rising. Models predict that sea level may rise as much as 59 cm (23 inches) during the 21st Century, threatening coastal communities, wetlands, and coral reefs. The Arctic sea ice is melting. The summer thickness of sea ice is about half of what it was in 1950. Melting ice may lead to changes in ocean circulation and warming in the Arctic. The Glaciers and permafrost are melting. Over the past 100 years, mountain glaciers in all areas of the world have decreased in size and so has the amount of permafrost in the Arctic. Warming has also caused changes in the timing of spring events and the length of the growing season. Heat waves have become more common in more areas of the world.

The debate

The main issue is that of "burden-sharing". Climate scientists say that the world must stop the growth in greenhouse gas emissions and start making them fall from around 2015 to 2020. By 2050 they estimate the world must cut its emissions by 80% compared with 1990 levels to limit global warming

to a 2C average rise. The climate negotiations are complicated as they impact the global economy: 1 How much are industrialized countries willing to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases? 2 How much are major developing countries such as China and India willing to do to limit the growth of their emissions? 3 How is the help needed by developing countries to engage in reducing their emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change going to be financed? 4 How is that money going to be managed?

The Copenhagen conference -What resulted post the conference?

The Copenhagen Accord, as it is now called makes reference to the need to keep temperature rises to no more than 2C and says rich countries will commit to cutting greenhouse gases and developing nations will take steps to limit the growth of their emissions – but sets no targets. There are promises of short term finance to the tune of \$10 bn a year over three years for poor countries to help them fight climate change, and a long term funding package worth \$100 bn a year by 2020. There are also references to the importance of reducing deforestation and efforts to give poor countries access to technology that helps them go green.



Is it what we expected?

Originally, the plan was for the Copenhagen talks to deliver a comprehensive, legally-binding international deal to tackle climate change. In the immediate run-up to the negotiations, it was hoped a political agreement could be reached, which could then be turned into a legal treaty this year. We did come out of the talks with a political agreement drawn up by leaders and which was eventually accepted by the conference of more than 190 countries this morning, but there are some major holes in the deal: There is no mention of any long term global emissions cut targets – although the 50% reduction by 2050, which was dropped at the last minute, is what would be needed to meet the 2C temperature cap still referred to in the deal. There is no target, either, for the long term cuts developed countries must make. Perhaps more significant, though, is the absence of any timescale for when or even if the deal could be turned into a legally-binding treaty.

The argument

India has not contributed historically to the problem. U.S. per capita emissions are probably 12 times those of India's. If the U.S. meets the ambitious goal of cutting emissions 83% by 2050 -- as stipulated in the recent energy bill passed by the House of Representatives -- U.S per capita emissions would drop from 20 tons to three or four tons per person annually.

That per capita standard would still be double India's current level of two tons per person. Because emissions linger in the atmosphere for 50 years, scientists tell us that

all countries must cut their emissions over the next four decades to protect the planet. So if the U.S., the EU, and Japan slash emissions, but China, India and other developing countries continue to emit greenhouse gases unabated, by 2050 the overall global emissions might decrease, but not by enough.

But a per capita emissions standard does not consider population growth. It only looks at the quantity of greenhouse gases each person emits. After a century of inaction, the world community agreed that population growth needed to be managed. From 1950 to 2000, world population grew 2.5 billion to six billion -- an increase of about 140%. Over that period, India went from 350 million people to over a billion -- up 182%, outpacing even China's increase. By comparison, the U.S. grew from 157 million to 287 million -- a rate of increase that is well below the world average.

If developed nations are held responsible for emissions that they historically contributed, oblivious to their impact on climate change, why shouldn't developing nations take responsibility for producing generations of people who will generate emissions into the future?



India's role

India has taken a somewhat unrealistic stand about the whole issue, saying that it wants an international agreement in Copenhagen, but cannot agree to binding emission cuts. While this may sound good, it does leave a lot of space open for future maneuvering. The stance taken by

India is that while developed nations have already gained from unlimited emissions during their growth and maturity phases to attain very high standards of living, the same growth and living standards are being denied to the developing nations by asking them to cap emissions. While there is undoubtedly some element of truth in this, what is important is to look at the bigger picture.

The reality today is that we are running out of planet Earth. There is simply no way our planet can take our abuse any more, and this realization is dawning pretty rapidly on us in the form of climate change. And with the failure of the conference what we then have is nobody ready to agree to any kind of limits.

Countries will be expected soon to submit their pledges for the action they will take to tackle climate change, for entry into the appendix, and some who promised a range of figures need to decide if they go for the most ambitious targets. Climate change secretary Ed Miliband he wished there had been a timescale for a legally-binding deal, and he is among those who have said they would continue to work for that at upcoming climate summits. But if this is, as leaders said, the first step, then it is the first step on what seems likely to be a long and difficult road. India is a formidable player in the world scene due to its growing economic muscle. What it also needs to be is a mature player which thinks long-term, rather than seeing the whole scenario as an us versus them battle. By keeping an open attitude, India can lead the way ahead in mitigating climate change.

Best Examples of CSR by Companies

The Business Ethics 100 Best Corporate Citizens list was developed and first published in 2000. It has since gained national recognition as an indicator of best practices in the area of corporate social responsibility and is regarded as the third most influential corporate ranking, behind Fortune magazine's "Most Admired Companies" and "100 Best Companies to Work For," according to a PRWeek/Burson-Marsteller CEO Survey. The methodology for the list was developed by Marjorie Kelly, then Editor of Business Ethics magazine, and Samuel P. Graves and Sandra Waddock of Boston College. Together they created a scoring system that ranked companies according to financial, environmental, social, and governance performance. The methodology has evolved slightly since the list was first created. In each newsletter we would be featuring one CSR program included in the list.

Starbucks Shared Planet

The messaging for the company's "Shared Planet" CSR campaign is simply - "You and Starbucks. It's bigger than coffee." Starbucks attempts to engage its consumers in its CSR activities by drawing a clear connection between consumption and the work Starbucks does with coffee farmers. The Starbucks Shared Planet website is inspiring in the way it talks and draws you into its 2015 goals-



1. Ethical Sourcing: They believe in buying and serving the best coffee possible. Their goal is for all of their coffee to be grown under the highest standards of quality, using ethical trading and responsible growing practices. Starbucks bought 385 million pounds of coffee in 2008. Seventy-seven percent of that – 295 million pounds worth – was responsibly grown and ethically traded, meeting the Starbucks Shared Planet ethical sourcing principles for coffee. By 2015, their goal is to buy 100 percent of their coffee this way.

Here are some other ways Starbucks is working with coffee-growing communities: Supporting small-scale and Fair Trade farmers, Paying the prices that quality coffee commands, Buying Certified Organic coffee, Helping conserve wildlife and biodiversity in Africa's coffee regions through the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), Investing in a better future for farmers through loan programs, Involving partners and customers in their work with coffee farmers in Costa Rica with Earthwatch Expeditions

2. Environmental Stewardship: By 2015, their goal is for 100 percent of their cups to be reusable or recyclable and 100% recycling in their stores. Another of their goal is to take on climate change. They are pursuing a climate change strategy, including finding ways to minimize use of energy, water and other resources, upgrading existing stores and building new stores to use 25 percent less energy.

3. Community Involvement: Their company mission to inspire and nurture the human spirit outside the walls of the Starbucks stores, which means reaching out to communities, and bringing together partners and customers to get involved in their communities. They want to inspire action – and have a goal to contribute more than one million hours of community service per year by 2015. The Starbucks Shared Planet website offers customers the opportunity to pledge to use their own mugs for their Starbucks coffee, as well as a "Volunteer to Volunteer" section, where website visitors can learn more about volunteer opportunities. This has a social networking component and is designed to be "a catalyst for conversation and connection that inspires people to contribute to a cause greater than themselves".

The Starbucks Shared Planet is a very interesting example of an initiative by company that engages consumers in their CSR activities. There is potential to educate consumers about Starbucks' CSR, thus possibly increasing loyalty; to make customers feel a stronger relationship with the company; and to increase the impact of the company's overall CSR activities. However, this will all depend on how the initiative is executed. We look forward to following this initiative, and also to hearing any of your thoughts on this project.

Google v.s Bing

Since it was launched by Microsoft in the last week of May, Bing has won some rave reviews. More importantly, it has made inroads into the competitive world of search engines. When Google burst on the scene with its unique PageRank algorithm*, it blew all other search engines out of the water. But since then, both Yahoo and Microsoft have put in place a system for sorting out search results largely similar to what Google had introduced. This is the first time Google has faced some real challenge but Microsoft will need something more than a Bing if it hopes to match Google, which in its 11-year existence that it has an almost unassailable lead on its competitors.

Bing is a decent effort from Microsoft and it is good that for once web users have a viable choice; but unless someone somewhere thinks differently and comes out with a few radical ideas, Google's spider will continue to crawl web unchallenged.

Google recognized that providing the fastest, most accurate results required a new kind of server setup. The software behind the search technology conducts a series of simultaneous calculations requiring only a fraction of a second. Traditional search engines rely heavily on how often a word appears on a web page. Google uses more than 200 signals, including their patented PageRank™ algorithm, to examine the entire link structure of the web and determine which pages are most important.

PageRank Technology: PageRank reflects their view of the importance of web pages by considering more than 500 million variables and 2 billion terms. Important pages receive a higher PageRank and are more likely to appear at the top of the search results.

Hypertext-Matching Analysis: The search engine also analyzes page content. However, instead of simply scanning for page-based text (which can be manipulated by site publishers through meta-tags), the technology analyzes the full content of a page and factors in fonts, subdivisions and the precise location of each word. It also analyzes the content of neighboring web pages to ensure the results returned are the most relevant to a user's query.

We love lists! In this section Imprimis features the best and the most popular.....

This time: sites you might not know about

www.howstuffworks.com :a tremendous source of learning!

www.stumbleupon.com is the collective recommendations of thousands of hours of searching by web users who share your interests. Call it a "recommendation engine".

www.slate.com Web journalism continues to evolve, and if you want to see that evolution in action, you'll start reading Slate, a publication that's fun, literary and thoughtful.

www.webmd.com With online health information, you don't want to mess with bogus sources. WebMD delivers reliable medical information for today's DIY health consumers.

www.plaxo.com is a social network that resembles LinkedIn to a certain degree. You're able to create your own profile with a section about you, your contact information and your "pulse stream," which is made up of your presence on social media sites such as Twitter.