News: “The Future of Earth, 2020” report was released in Bengaluru by the South Asia Future Earth Regional Office, Divecha Centre for Climate Change, and the Indian Institute of Science.

About the report

- As many as 222 leading scientists from 52 countries conducted the survey by Future Earth, an international sustainability research network. The Bengaluru launch was among similar parallel ones across other parts of the world scheduled between February 13 and 21.

- The report was prepared with the aim of reducing carbon footprint and halting global warming below 2 degree Celsius by 2050.

Key highlights of the report

A. Global risks

It has listed five global risks that have the potential to impact and amplify one another in ways that may cascade to create global systemic crisis.

These 5 global risks are:

1. failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation;
2. extreme weather events;
3. major biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse;
4. food crises; and
5. water crises,

How are these global risks interrelated?

- Extreme heat waves can accelerate global warming by releasing large
amounts of stored carbon from affected ecosystems, and at the same time **intensify water crises** and/or **food scarcity**. The **loss of biodiversity** also **weakens the capacity** of natural and agricultural systems to cope with climate extremes, increasing our vulnerability to food crises.

### B. Climate change

- Over the last 18 months, major assessments by the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**, the US National Climate Assessment, and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, have all argued that **time is running out to reduce greenhouse gas emissions**.

- This has inspired declarations of a climate crisis or climate emergency by the leaders of more than 700 cities, States and governments. Yet, **during 2019**, the **concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere reached more than 415 ppm**, and the **five years from 2014 to 2018 were the warmest recorded** over land and ocean since 1880.

### C. Populism

- **Right-wing populism**, a breed of politics that exploits people’s fears during times of economic decline and growing inequality, and that focuses on nationalist tendencies to clamp down on borders and reject immigrants, is **on the rise around the world**. This often leads to a **denial of climate change facts or impacts**.

### D. Biodiversity

- Humans have now **“significantly altered” 75% of Earth’s land area**; about a **quarter of species** in assessed plant and animal groups are threatened.

- In 2018, the **world’s last male northern white rhino died in his Kenyan enclosure**, while the **Brazillian blue parrot, Spix’s Macaw**, was **declared extinct in the wild**.

- Reversing the trends of loss of life on Earth will require some new ways of thinking about conservation.
E. Food crisis

Strains on food production are expected to increase, as a result of various forces including climate change, biodiversity loss, and a global population on the rise.

F. False news

- False news travels six times faster and can reach up to 100 times more people.

- The flow of information in the world is changing, as today, around half of the planet’s 7.6 billion people are online, deeply influenced by social media, search engines and e-commerce algorithms.

- These digital platforms tend to favour the spread of information designed to engage with emotion over reason, can cause the propagation of “fake news”, and can lead to social harms like an erosion of trust in vaccines.

Efforts of India in environment education

The National Education Policy (NEP) will address the question of environmental health and education at the school level. Children in the last four years of secondary education will have a reasonable grounding to be sensitive towards the environment. Without it no government rules and policies can be helpful.

Note: to read about NEP, 2019 in detail, clock on the link below: