

COP21 climate talks break new ground

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From Nov. 30 to Dec. 12, over 190 countries were involved in the Paris Climate Summit (COP21). This two-week meeting took place in Paris and was comprised of open discussion and debate over the international political response to climate change.

The main goal of the convention was to set up a universal framework to stabilize atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gasses (GHGs). The objectives for COP21 included revising the Kyoto Protocol implemented in COP3 and the Montreal Action Plan from COP11. The Kyoto Protocol aims to reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions based on the fact that global warming exists and is caused by man-made CO₂ emission.

The protocol recommends a decrease in CO₂ levels for industrialized countries, specifically suggesting an eventual collective reduction of CO₂ emissions by 5.2% as compared to levels during 1990.

The Montreal Action Plan was an agreement to extend the Kyoto Protocol beyond its initial expiration of 2012. Both of these treaties were not legally binding, which allowed for countries to continue emitting any amount of CO₂ without repercussions.

Originally, the conference was set to end on Dec. 11, but lack of a final resolution extended the conference for an extra day.

One of the most important aspects of a resolution at COP21 is its ability to be



photo courtesy of NPR

World leaders meet in Paris to discuss the ever-growing concern of global climate change.

properly and completely executed. The final paper had to access and respond to the issue of increasing CO₂ emissions, while creating a manageable plan for both developing and developed countries. Furthermore, a country's government had to be receptive to the idea.

Domestic politics created many issues while forming the COP21 draft text. The United States Senate has stated that it refuses to sign a legally binding international agreement. This statement upset many of the smaller, less economically secure countries that are greatly affected by climate change. Without legal enforcement, some countries believe that the United States may ignore and defy CO₂ emission limits that are decided upon at the climate summit. As a developing nation, the

Chinese government believes that its reliance on industry should provide a reason for the continuation of GHG emissions.

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, China releases the most GHGs out of any country, allowing little room for growth. Other developing nations have similar problems, which dragged out the debate.

On the other hand, countries like Germany, Sweden and Denmark set an example for the rest of the world. Germany receives 78% of its electricity as well as many of its other energy expenditures from renewable sources.

These countries have national initiatives to expand renewable energy and have passed meaningful legislation and significant progress in

lowering carbon emissions and increasing renewability. Although these countries are making significant progress, they are not making a large impact.

Many of these countries are small in size and have small economies. While their efforts are important, their relatively small sizes do not call for immediate action in energy compared to larger countries.

Despite much speculation, a final agreement was reached. This resolution, which is now being hailed as historic, unites almost 200 countries in an effort to diminish GHG emissions. The agreement aims to keep global temperatures well below 2.0°C above pre-industrial temperatures. However, although this goal is a vital step for climate change, it may not be attainable unless

drastic changes are made in CO₂ emissions around the globe.

The agreement also aims to mitigate the GHGs emitted via human activity to the level that natural sinks can absorb from 2050 and 2100, reviewing each country's progress in cutting CO₂ emissions every five years and encouraging richer countries to help poorer countries switch to renewable energy sources.

The agreement is not binding, but it has opened dialogues about political action towards climate change. Countries need to take action and create plans to follow through with the statements made at COP21. Without serious commitment and contribution from each country, the agreement could be rendered useless.

Exciting Asia Fest kicks off new year

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Asia Fest have certainly made the celebration one of the most exciting events of the season.

However, while talented performers celebrated Asian cultures and entertained the audience with a variety of performances in under two hours, months and months of hard work went into putting on the show.

The NCSSM Asian Cultures Club has been planning the event since November of 2015.

"Orchestrating the event was nerve-racking," says Asian Cultures Club officer Tanas Gangadhar. "The event was tough to pull off but seeing all the audience's happy faces made it all worth it."

With a publicity committee of 23 members led by senior Rose Huang, hours of work were put in weeks in advance of the event to create giant, colorful posters and eye-catching fliers.

Similarly, the food committee of 22 members led by senior Prathmesh Patel contacted many restaurants in the Durham area to provide food

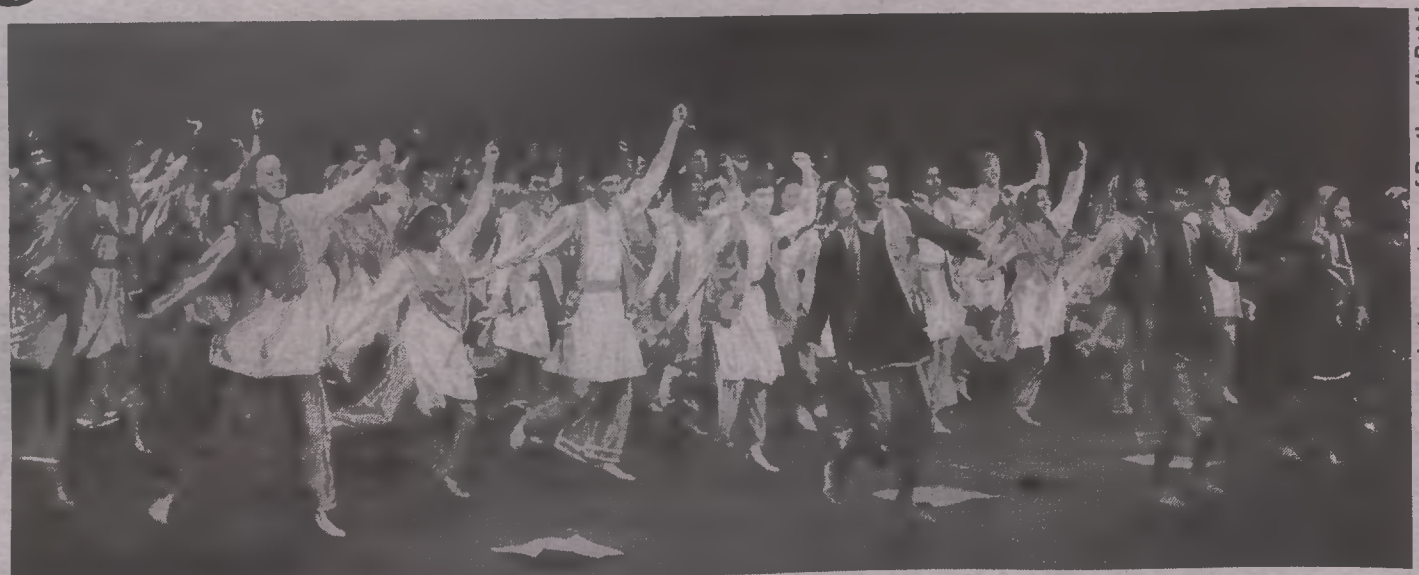


photo courtesy of Prathmesh Patel

NCSSM Bhangra closes the show with a traditional Punjab dance. It was the largest group of the 19 acts.

for the performers.

Over the course of two months, seven restaurants and cafes such as Sitar Indian Cuisine and the Shanghai Chinese Restaurant all became donors to this event.

Besides the Asian Cultures club, the show would not have been possible had it not been for the hard work and dedication of the NCSSM tech crew led by seniors Morgan Pyrtle, Allison Hopkins, and

Mackenzie Harrison.

The tech crew worked the whole night directing lights, sound, microphones, and the projector, as well as organizing rehearsals and production.

"It was surprising how much more work was required," says Asian Cultures Club officer Katherine Li. "It was very hectic with rehearsals and making sure that communication was smooth between tech, act leaders, and

the administration. However, the show was just surreal, and it was extremely rewarding to see everything come together because we have worked so hard on it for so long."

With months of planning, hard work, and dedication, the Asian Cultures Club and students from all walks of life at NCSSM managed to put on one of the most memorable and exciting shows of the school year.

By celebrating a variety of cultures and displaying school spirit, Asia Fest is an embodiment of the vibrance and talent that abounds in the student community.

The performers, leaders, and committee members, along with the student body and faculty, certainly managed to begin 2016 with a bang by putting on this truly electrifying show.