

Net zero emissions target

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India is an emerging economy where Greenhouse Gas emissions are set to increase, albeit from a low base, in pursuit of its development and poverty eradication goals. It is to be noted that India's historical cumulative emissions from 1850 to 2019 amount to less than 4 percent of cumulative carbon dioxide emissions of the world from the pre-industrial era, despite being home to 17 per cent of the world's population. Hence, India's responsibility for global warming thus far has been minimal and even today its annual per capita emissions are only about one-third of the global average.

India, at the 26th session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26) in November, 2021, announced its target to achieve net zero by 2070. In recognition of the Para 19 of Article 4 of the Paris Agreement, India's long-term low-carbon development strategy, has been submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and it reaffirms the goal of reaching net-zero by 2070. India's long-term low-carbon development strategy is based on the principles of equity and climate justice and the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities.

India's long-term low-carbon development strategy rests on seven key transitions to low-carbon development pathways. These include i) low-carbon development of electricity systems consistent with development, ii) develop an integrated, efficient and inclusive transport system, iii) promote adaptation in urban design, energy and material efficiency in buildings, and sustainable urbanisation, iv) promoting economy-wide decoupling of growth from emissions and development of an efficient, innovative low emission industrial system, v) development of carbon dioxide removal and related engineering solutions, vi) enhancing forest and vegetation cover consistent with socioeconomic and ecological considerations and vii) economic and financial needs of low-carbon development. With respect to each of these transitions, India's low-carbon development strategy document has elaborated the international and national context as relevant, the current policies and programmes already being implemented as well as the key elements for each transition, potential benefits and challenges.

There are several indices which rank countries on their performance to combat the challenge of climate change. However, there are many differences and disagreements with respect to the methodology, the conceptual framework as well as outcome of these indices both for India and the World.

Government has taken several actions to address the rapidly growing environmental problems in the country. Some of the noteworthy actions are listed below:

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in January, 2019 with an aim to improve air quality in 131 cities (non-attainment cities and Million Plus Cities) in 24 States/UTs by engaging all stakeholders. The programme envisages to achieve reductions up to 40% or achievement of National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter₁₀ (PM₁₀) concentrations by 2025-26. 95 cities showed improvement in PM concentration in FY 2021-22 in reference to 2017-18 & 20 cities are within the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) in FY 2021-22. To monitor air quality, till now 1,366 Monitoring Stations (910 Manual stations in 389 cities, 28 states & 7 UTs and 456 CAAQMS in 227 cities, 27 states & 4 UTs) have been installed.
- PRANA a portal for monitoring implementation of NCAP has been launched. Under Swachh Vayu Survekshan (SVS) 2022, which is the evaluation of self-assessment report of NCAP cities, top 9 best performing cities have been awarded.
- The Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Area (CAQM) has come out with a

policy to curb air pollution in NCR, along with a standard list of approved fuels for NCR for industrial and other applications.

- Levels of PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ in Delhi had registered a dip of almost 30% since 2016 while the number of clean air days had increased by almost 50% during the same period.
- Country has leapfrogged from BS-IV to BS-VI norms for fuel and vehicles from 1st April, 2020.
- Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) has been launched as an initiative to set up Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG) production plant and make CBG available in the market for use in automotive fuels.
- Installation of Vapour Recovery System (VRS) in new and existing petrol pumps selling gasoline >100kl per month in million plus cities and those selling >300kl per month in cities with population between 1 lakh to 1 million. Subsidy on E-vehicles under Faster Adoption and manufacture of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India.
- For conservation of rivers, Ministry of Jal Shakti supplements efforts of the States/UTs by providing financial and technical assistance for abatement of pollution in identified stretches of rivers in the country through the Central Sector Scheme of Namami Gange for rivers in Ganga basin and the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) for other rivers.
- India added ten wetlands to the List of Wetlands of International Importance (also called Ramsar Sites) within the framework of the Ramsar Convention, taking the total number of Ramsar Sites in India to incredible 75, the highest in Asia by August 2022.
- The government has taken a defining step to eliminate single use plastics. A ban has been imposed on identified single use plastic items from 1st July 2022.
- Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, published by Space Applications Centre (SAC) Indian Space Research Organisation, Ahmedabad, provides the extent of land degradation and desertification in India, states that the land degradation and desertification in the country has been estimated to be 97.84 million hectares in 2018-19. It provides state-wise area of degraded land which is helpful in planning and implementation of schemes aimed at restoration of land by providing important data and technical inputs.
- Ministry has initiated the work of Circular Economy. 11 Committees constituted for development of circular economy (CE) action plans for different categories of wastes have finalized CE Action Plans for 10 waste categories. EPR rules have been notified for 4 categories of waste a) Plastic waste, b) Waste tyre, c) Batteries, and E-Waste.

In consonance with National Forest Policy (NFP), 1988 which envisages the national goal to have a minimum of one-third of the total land area under forest or tree cover and two-third of the area under such cover in the hill and mountainous regions of the country, various afforestation related schemes implemented by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and other ministries aim at promoting tree plantations. MoEFCC supports the States/Union Territories for carrying out various afforestation/tree plantation activities under Centrally Sponsored Schemes like National Mission for a Green India (GIM), Nagar van Yojana, compensatory afforestation under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) etc. State/UTs also implement various schemes promoting tree plantation activities under State/UT Plan, MGNREGA etc.

Further, the Trees Outside Forests in India (TOFI) program has been launched by the MoEFCC, Government of India and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for implementation in seven states including Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh with an outlay of \$ 25 million for a period of five years. The purpose of this program is to expand the planting of trees outside of forests (TOF) for enhanced provision of ecosystem services, especially carbon sequestration, and increased inclusive livelihoods and economic opportunities for the rural population.

This information was given by Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.

MJPS/NSK

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