

# The Big Picture - Climate Change & India

Rajya Sabha TV programs like 'The Big Picture', 'In Depth' and 'India's World' are informative programs that are important for UPSC preparation. In this article, you can read about the discussions held in the 'Big Picture' episode on "Climate Change & India" for the [IAS](#) exam.

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/AB2JqRZfT1E>

**Anchor** - Vishal Dahiya

**Guests** - Hem Kumar Pande, Former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change; Prof. C.K. Varshney, Former Dean, School of Environment Sciences, JNU; Sandeep Sen, Senior Journalist & Author.

## What's in the News?

- The 25th Conference of Parties (CoP25) to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** will be held in Spain on 2nd December 2019.
- CoP25 is of profound significance as countries prepare to move from the pre-2020 period under the [Kyoto Protocol](#) to the post-2020 period under the Paris Agreement.
- India is all set to stress upon the specific needs:
  - for fulfilling pre-2020 commitments by the developed countries and
  - that pre-2020 implementation gaps should not pose an additional burden to developing countries in the post-2020 period.
- India's stand in the CoP25 will be based on the principles and provisions of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** and the Paris Agreement.
  - It will be based, particularly on the principle of **Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)**.

## Topics of focus:

- **Agenda:**

The main agenda of the CoP25 is to reduce carbon and pressurize developing countries into fulfilling their commitments to reduce carbon.

- **Topics of focus in CoP25 would be:**
  - **Aggressive approach:** An aggressive approach towards climate change has to be adapted. This would be discussed during the CoP25. It would involve discussion on the unrest situation in Chile.
    - CoP25 will take place under the Presidency of the Government of Chile and will be held with logistical support from the Government of Spain due to the unrest situation in Chile.
    - It would allow room for discussion on how countries could maintain caution while adopting an aggressive approach towards climate change.
  - The issue of **Carbon Trading** remained unresolved after CoP24, which was held in Katowice, Poland. Hence, it would also be taken up for discussion during the CoP25.

- Carbon trading is the process of buying and selling permits and credits to emit carbon dioxide.
- **Finance and Capacity Building** would also be taken up for discussion.

#### Issues:

- The **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** report states that it's a terrible wake-up call regarding the issue of climate change.
  - For example, the increased frequency of floods in Venice is an attribute to climate change.
  - Forest fires are on the rise in California and Australia. They endanger human life and destroy the carbon balance by destroying trees- the carbon absorbers and pushing the stored carbon into the atmosphere.
- The **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)** report warns emissions must fall by almost **7.6 percent** between 2020-2030.
  - UNEP's annual **Emissions Gap Report** states that the temperature rise of 3.2 °C is inevitable even if all the current commitments made by the countries under the Paris agreement are fulfilled.
- The funds committed till now in the **Green Climate Fund (GCF)** are 59 billion dollars contrary to the 100 billion dollars per year commitment that was agreed upon.
- India has been focusing on carbon reduction instead of carbon elimination which isn't effective.
  - **Carbon reduction** involves providing subsidies to fossil fuel companies to reduce carbon.

#### Asynchrony of Objective vs. the Target

- The target is to be carbon neutral by 2050. However, the current scenario of India poses a problem.
- There is a huge gap between the objective and the target, as India is still looking in the wrong direction by focussing on subsidizing the fossil fuel companies, instead of looking for positive solutions.
  - **Fossil fuel subsidies** essentially function as a negative carbon price, reducing the cost of developing fossil fuels – so not only are their true costs being shifted onto the poor via climate and health impacts, but the fossil fuel industry is actually being paid for this privilege.

#### Efforts being made:

- **Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM)** was established in 2013, to promote the implementation of approaches to address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.
- Forums such as **UNFCCC** put pressure on the developed and developing countries to invest in renewable energy and reduce their carbon intake.
- **GCF** is a fund that has been established within the framework of the UNFCCC.
  - It has been established to assist developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices to counter climate change.

#### India's role in fighting climate change:

- India has to work simultaneously on:

- Building capacity for renewable energy production from available resources, and
- Bringing parity between nations.
- India has an ambitious goal of increasing its current solar production from 3 gigawatts (GW) to 100 gigawatts by 2022.
- **National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC)**, was set up in 2015 to meet the cost of adaptation to climate change for the State and Union Territories of India that are extremely vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.
- India should be investing in Renewable Energy and has taken the lead by initiating the [International Solar Alliance](#).

### Challenges:

- The previous models which predicted 2 °C increase in the global average to be reasonably safe, no longer stand valid.
  - Political will and global commitment have to be present to reverse climate change.
- A firm commitment along with a cooperative and behavioral change is required from the developed countries towards the developing countries.
- The developed countries do not support the developing countries in their efforts against climate change, although they have been major contributors of carbon emissions in the past.
  - The USA has backed out of the post-2020 commitment (Paris Agreement).
- Time is of the utmost importance when it comes to addressing the issue of climate change.
- India has to work on economical technology innovation to make renewable energy more affordable.

### Way Forward:

- Climate change and global warming represent global problems that require global solutions.
- Climate change can be contained by consuming less and absorbing more carbon.
  - Developing countries such as India, would have to create **Carbon sinks** which act as absorbers of the excess carbon produced.
- The focus of the countries should be averted from solutions which offer negative incentives to the carbon industry. The focus of all countries should be on the development of renewable energy.
  - Significant investments in Renewable energy companies would make fossil fuel companies unviable. The total energy consumption from renewable energy sources is increasing globally, however, it is not increasing at a rapid pace. Thus substantial investments need to be made.
  - However, small countries would be unable to make a drastic shift as their resources are meager and thus need to be supported in their efforts.
- India's budget on research and development needs to be increased, such that focus can be given to the development of the required technology.
  - India has to work on economical technology innovation to make renewable energy more affordable.

- Renewable energy should be made a public good and affordable. This would help in the reduction of dependence on fossil fuels.
- The citizens and the government, both have to be involved in the efforts against climate change to be able to introduce a radical change.
- The commitments put forward by the **Paris Agreement and the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)** are inadequate to maintain the temperature rise at 2 °C. Thus formulation of stringent and ambitious commitments would have to be focused upon.
- Hence, this opportunity should be utilized to come up with innovative and creative ideas on how countries could address the issue of carbon emission and increase parity.

#### Conclusion:

The extent of harm caused by climate change to the people and the solution to the problem is recognized very well. The solution to tackle the problem is the will and the commitment to work towards the solution while helping each other at an individual and a global level.