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## India's climate imperative

### Why in news?

India still attributes the heatwave in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and New Delhi to the wrath of Mother Nature rather than acknowledging the anthropogenic global warming.

### What has been the issue?

- In the absence of COVID-19, climate change-induced disasters would have been India's biggest red alert in recent years.
- The heatwave that scorched Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and New Delhi this year; torrential downpours in south India in 2021; and the super cyclone Amphan that battered West Bengal and Odisha in 2020 are symbols of man-made climate change.
- Temperatures over the Indian Ocean have risen by over 1°C since the 1950s, increasing extreme weather events.
- India is the fourth worst-hit in climate migration.
- Heat waves in India have claimed an estimated 17,000 lives since the 1970s.
- Labour losses from rising heat, by one estimate, could reach Rs.1.6 lakh crore annually if global warming exceeds 2°C, with India among the hardest hit.
- India needs a two-part approach: one, to adapt to climate impacts by building resilience against weather extremes, and two, to mitigate environmental destruction to prevent climate change from becoming more lethal.

### How climate resilience can be achieved?

- Extreme heat waves hit swathes of India.
- Heatwaves are aggravated by deforestation and land degradation, which also exacerbate fires.
- Agriculture, being water-intensive, does not do well in heat wave-prone

areas.

- A solution is to promote agricultural practices which are not water-intensive and to support afforestation that has a salutary effect on warming.
- Financial transfers can be targeted to help farmers' plant trees and buy equipment, for example, for drip irrigation that reduces heavy water usage.
- Insurance schemes can transfer some of the risks of extreme heat faced by industrial, construction and agricultural workers to insurers.
- Climate-resilient agriculture calls for diversification, for example, the cultivation of multiple crops on the same farm.
- There will need to be more localised food production.
- Weather-based crop insurance would help.
- Floods and storms are worsened by vast sea ingress and coastline erosion in the low-lying areas in the south.
- Southern States need stronger guidelines to avoid construction in locations with drainages.
- It is vital to map flood-risk zones to manage vulnerable regions.
- Environment Impact Assessments must be mandatory for commercial projects.
- Kerala has some flood-resistant houses constructed on pillars.
- Communities can build round-shaped houses, considering optimum aerodynamic orientation to reduce the strength of the winds.
- Roofs with multiple slopes can stand well in strong winds, and central shafts reduce wind pressure on the roof by sucking in air from outside.

### **How can climate change be arrested?**

- Leading emitters, including India, must move away from fossil fuels. But climate mitigation everywhere is painfully slow, because of a lack of political will.
- India has made slow progress in choosing 2070 as its target for net zero emissions.
- India gains from being part of the Glasgow declaration on forest protection that 141 countries signed in 2021.
- Management of dams can exacerbate glacier lake outbursts and floods. Nearly 295 dams in India are more than 100 years old and need repairs.
- In stemming landslides in Uttarakhand, regulations must stop the building of dams on steep slopes and eco-fragile areas, as well as the dynamiting of hills, sand mining, and quarrying.
- Dams in the southern States can moderate floods, but only if operated

year-round to anticipate the need to control flows during floods.

- Climate finance is most suited for large-scale global funding from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank.
- Smaller-scale financing can also be vital: the World Food Programme's funding for Nepal and Bhutan for community-based adaptation and agricultural resilience for vulnerable communities provides an interesting model.
- States can tap into the Union government's resources, financial and technological, from early warning meteorological systems to centrally sponsored climate schemes.
- MGNREGA funds can be used for climate adaptation in agriculture, waste management and livelihoods.
- States could make compensatory payment to local self-government resources being used for climate adaptation.

### **What is the way forward?**

- India's share in disaster management should be raised to 2.5% of GDP.
- Adaptation alone will not slow climate damages if the warming of the sea level temperatures is not confronted.
- A big part of climate action lies in protecting and expanding forest coverage.
- Regulation needs to be tightened and enforced to ensure forest protection while acquiring land.
- For public pressure to drive climate action, we need to consider climate catastrophes as largely man-made.

### **Reference**

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/indias-climate-imperative/article65654280.ece>



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