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The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change

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Why in News

New research from ‘**The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change**’ highlights the benefits to health if countries adopt climate plans - **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** - that are consistent with the Paris Agreement aim of limiting warming to "well below 2°C".

- The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change, **published annually**, is an international, multidisciplinary collaboration, dedicated to **monitoring the evolving health profile of climate change**, and providing **an independent assessment of the delivery of commitments** made by governments worldwide under the Paris Agreement.
- The **countries considered** in the modelling study represent 50% of the world’s population and 70% of the world’s emissions – Brazil, China, Germany, **India**, Indonesia, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK and the US.

Key Points

- **Findings of the Study:**

- It **looked at three scenarios**: carrying on the current path, increasing efforts to achieve the Paris goals, and a more ambitious scenario, which put health at the heart of tackling climate change.

Placing **health as a key focus of the NDCs** could present an opportunity to increase ambition and realise health co-benefits.

- Millions of lives could be saved **annually by 2040** meeting Paris Agreement targets.

Adopting policies that are consistent with achieving the Paris Agreement and prioritising health could **save 6.4 million lives due to better diet, 1.6 million lives due to cleaner air, and 2.1 million lives due to increased exercise per year** across nine countries.

- If **India** can adhere to its commitments, then the study indicates it would be able to **save 4.3 lakh lives due to cleaner air and 17.41 lakh lives due to better diet**.

- **Paris Agreement:**

- **About:**

It is the **first-ever universal, legally binding global climate change agreement**, adopted at the Paris climate conference (COP21) in December 2015.

- **Objective:**

To keep global temperatures “well below” 2 degrees Celsius (C) compared to pre-industrial times and “seek to limit” even more, to 1.5 degrees C.

- **Long Term Goal:**

- A long-term global goal for **net zero emissions**. Countries have promised to try to bring global emissions down from peak levels as soon as possible.
- More significantly, they pledged “to **achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases** in the second half of this century”.

- **Mechanism:**

- Before the conference started, more than 180 countries had submitted pledges to cut or curb their carbon emissions through **Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)**.
- The INDCs were recognized under the agreement, but are **not legally binding**.

- **Funding:**

It stipulates that **developed country Parties shall provide financial resources to assist developing country Parties** with respect to both mitigation and adaptation. **Other Parties** are encouraged to provide or continue to **provide such support voluntarily**.

- **Issues in Achieving the Pledged Targets:**

- **Slow Implementation:**

Most of the nations have been slow to update their national contributions for reducing emissions for 2025-2030, however several have announced net zero emission targets in the recent past.

- **Credibility:**

The plans and policies of nations is not credible enough to meet the long term net zero targets as:

- The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 1.5 degrees Celsius Report** indicated that to stay within a reasonable

chance of achieving 1.5 degrees C, global CO₂ emissions have to fall by 45% from the 2010 levels by 2030 but current national contributions are not on track for such a fall.

- The **withdrawal of the USA in 2020 from the Paris deal** undermines the universality of the Paris Agreement and impairs states' confidence in climate cooperation. However, the **USA has recently started the process of rejoining the Deal.**

- **Accountability:**

- There is limited or no accountability for the long-term net zero goals and short-term national contributions.

- The transparency framework does not contain a robust review function, and the compliance committee is facilitative and limited to ensuring compliance with a short list of binding procedural obligations.

- **Fairness:**

- Issues of fairness and justice, both between and within generations, are unavoidable.

- There is no mechanism to check that whether the net zero targets, and pathways to net zero are fair or how much are states doing in comparison to others and relative to how much they should.

India's Scenario

- **India's Current Emissions:**

- According to a **United Nations Report**, India's per capita emissions are actually 60% lower than the global average.

- The emissions in the country grew 1.4% in 2019, much lower than its average of 3.3% per year over the last decade.

- **India's INDC, to be achieved primarily, by 2030:**
 - To reduce the emissions intensity of the GDP by about a third.
 - A total of 40% of the installed capacity for electricity will be from non-fossil fuel sources.
 - India also promised an additional carbon sink (a means to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere) of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by the year 2030.
- **Measures taken by India to Control Emissions:**
 - **Bharat Stage (BS) VI** Norms: These are emission control standards put in place by the government to keep a check on air pollution.
 - **National Solar Mission**: It is a major initiative of the Government of India and State Governments to promote ecologically sustainable growth while addressing India's energy security challenge.
 - **National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy 2018**: The main objective of the policy is to provide a framework for promotion of large grid connected wind-solar photovoltaic (PV) hybrid systems for optimal and efficient utilization of wind and solar resources, transmission infrastructure and land.

Source:IE