



Mains Practice Question

Q. Pledge for Net-Zero emission should be taken keeping the interests of our poorest and most vulnerable populations at the centre. Comment. (250 Words)

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Approach

- Start with writing the concept of Net-Zero emission and its significance.
- Discuss the issues which may emerge for India in its path to economic development.
- Discuss the way forward and conclude suitably.

Answer

Net-Zero Emission

- Net-zero emissions refer to the **balancing of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions**, either globally or in a region, with anthropogenic removals of the GHG so that the net effect is zero emissions.
- The push for such declarations from all countries began around 2019 at COP-25, when there was one year left for the Paris Agreement to come into effect.
- The very idea of net-zero declarations by individual countries and regions emerged from the need to hide the inaction of developed countries for the past 30 years.
- Even these declarations for the future are far from adequate to ensure the safety of the planet. The “enhanced pledges” of the US, UK and EU (27) for 2030, and their currently declared intention of achieving net-zero emissions around 2050, imply that just these two major regions will consume over 30% of even the remaining carbon budget.
 - Together with China, they will emit at least 20% more carbon dioxide than is available to the world to limit warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Issues may emerge to its path to economic development

- The big issue that must concern us as we move ahead will be to ensure that growth is equitable and that the **poor in the country are not denied their right to development** in this new energy future.
- The **per capita emissions of India remain low**, because we have massive numbers of people who still need energy for their development. Now, in the future, as we have set ourselves the goal to grow without pollution, we must work on increasing clean, but affordable, energy for the poor.
- As carbon dioxide emissions accumulate in the atmosphere — average residence time is 150-200 years — and it is this stock of emissions that “force” temperatures to rise, India has committed not to add to this burden. There will be a challenge for India’s industrial sector.
- India will need to invest huge money in renewable energy that may deprive the poor section’s access to the basic requirements as capital would be diverted from social sector to renewable energy sector.

Way Forward

- **Development For All:** The world needs much more ambition from rich countries (developed countries) so that less developed countries get some room to develop.
 - The world needs to eliminate the multiple forms of drudgery and deprivation that a large majority of our people are subjected to.
 - This requires ensuring access to modern, affordable, and reliable amenities and services to all. It is also critical to prepare for a world that is quite likely to be more than 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer. Our first defence against the climatic impacts in such a world will be development.
- **Strengthening Climate Governance:** India needs to build and strengthen its domestic institutions for climate governance. This will require identifying linkages between development needs and low carbon opportunities. In this context, a climate law can be useful.
- **Reaffirming CBDR:** In this upcoming climate change negotiations, India needs to reaffirm the long-standing principle of “common but differentiated responsibility” (CBDR) that requires richer countries to lead and argue against any pledge that risks prematurely limiting Indian energy use for development.
- **Increase Renewable Capacity:** According to the Council on Energy, Environment and Waters implications of a Net-zero Target for India's Sectoral Energy Transitions and Climate Policy¹ study, India's total installed solar power capacity would need to increase to over 5,600 gigawatts to achieve net-zero by 2070.
 - The usage of coal, especially for power generation, would need to drop by 99% by 2060, for India to achieve net-zero by 2070.
- India's energy future must be determined by the developmental needs of its people and their protection against the impacts of climate change.
 - India's efforts in the energy sector are evidence that it is punching far above its weight where climate action is concerned.
- While India does its fair share to check global warming, this should not be a blank cheque to developed countries to free ride on its efforts.
 - It is essential that the fair share of India's carbon space and consequently the energy future of its people be secured now.

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