



## General Studies-3; Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

### Climate Crisis

#### Introduction

- Political leaders of Western nations express alarm and make promises about the climate crisis, but do little to tackle it. India is not far behind.

#### India-US Partnership

- India-US Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership** was launched at the Leaders' Summit on Climate called by US President Joe Biden.
- The United States has set an economy-wide target of reducing its net greenhouse gas emissions by 50-52 percent below 2005 levels in 2030.
- India has set a target of installing 450 GW of renewable energy by 2030.**
- The partnership will aim to
  - mobilise finance and speed clean energy deployment;
  - demonstrate and scale innovative clean technologies needed to decarbonise sectors including industry, transportation, power, and buildings; and
  - build capacity to measure, manage, and adapt to the risks of climate-related impacts.

#### Flaws in India's Actions

- While substantially increasing Renewable Energy (RE), India is also expanding fossil fuel extraction and use.**
  - The government has auctioned 60 new coal mining blocks, and several new thermal power stations are being considered.
  - This includes mining in some of the most biodiverse forests in Central India.
  - While public transportation has been given more investment in the 2021 budget, there is no discouragement of private cars, and fossil fuel use continues to rise.**
- India includes mega-hydropower in RE, despite the ecological and social havoc it causes.

- RE production is mostly of the mega-park type. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) said that 10,000 sq km in seven states are available for such parks.
  - These projects have serious ecological and social impacts but do not need an environmental impact assessment, under the assumption that RE is necessarily “clean” and eco-friendly.
  - About 60,000 hectares of Kachchh’s ecologically fragile grassland-desert ecosystem have been allotted to energy mega-parks.
  - The Government’s target is 40 GW of rooftop solar, but poor policy back-up has hindered it.
- A shift from petrol-diesel to electric cars, would significantly expand devastating mining across the world.
  - This is a consequence of thinking of climate and ecological crises only from a carbon perspective, ignoring biodiversity loss and pollution.
  - Unless luxury and wasteful consumption is eliminated, unsustainability and people’s displacement are inevitable.

## Viable Alternatives

- Viable alternatives have been demonstrated across the world.
- The Delhi government is supporting 150 government schools to generate rooftop solar energy, helping them save Rs 8.8 crore on electricity and earn Rs 8.5 crore from selling power back to the grid.
- A study in the US shows that **rooftop solar can create 30 times more jobs than mega-solar parks.**
- **Integrated power micro-grids** can provide adequate power for entire villages and urban neighbourhoods, and be locally managed.
- Alternatives to energy-guzzling sectors like urban construction and privatised transportation exist.
- Sensitive architecture can dramatically reduce electricity use.
- Most important is demand regulation.

## Way Forward

- Intense civil society pressure could force appropriate action by the Government.
- Consumer behaviour that uses wasteful and luxury power can be changed and regulated, and power redistributed to those who do not have enough.
- All this should be part of the National Energy Policy.
- People’s mobilisation will be crucial to make all this happen.
- While we all have a right to the energy, we cannot keep demanding more and more, nor can we allow the unsustainable and inequitable ways in which it is produced and distributed.
- **Without us sustaining the earth, the planet will not sustain us. In this, India needs to show global leadership.**