Environment Preservation – Indispensible for Growth

What is the issue?

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- Pollution is an inevitable challenge for developing countries that compromise their environmental regulations for achieving rapid economic growth.
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- As pollution has increased massively in recent years, it has started to adversely impact both the economy and people's health.
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What is the larger pollution trend that is observed worldwide?

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- Currently, pollution load in certain jurisdictions has increased considerably, sometimes beyond the carrying capacity of the environment.
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- **Environmental Kuznets Curve** (EKC) – This is a hypothesis that maps environmental impact and per capita income.
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- It suggests that environmental degradation increases with income growth initially, but reaches a maximum and then declines thereafter.
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- Its logic is that in the initial phases, the demand for resources will force aggressive extraction and also generate more waste and emissions.
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- But when a country has achieved a certain level of development, pollution reduces with greater technical advancements and better regulations.
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- **India –** India's developmental activities are over-exploiting the natural resources and indiscriminately discharging untreated waste into the open.
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- India can be clearly said to lie on the upward part of the EKC curve and it needs to move to the 2nd stage to for achieving sustainable development.
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- Considering the acrimonious impact that this trend of environmental apathy is already displaying, it is not prudent for India to simply wait for the 2nd stage.
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- India should embrace tighter environmental norms and devote focus to the production and promotion of energy efficient technologies to curtail pollution.
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What is the current situation?

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- Though various measures have been adopted to manage pollution, significant progress has not been achieved in countries like India.
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- Before 1980, U.K. and the U.S. played a vital role in textile production and export, but now, countries like India and China dominate the sector.
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- Notably, in the last few decades, water-intensive and polluting industries like textiles and leather have shifted from developed to developing countries.
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- Sugar and paper industries that withdraw huge quantities of water and discharge effluents without adequate treatment are also getting concentrated in the developing world.
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- Hence, countries like India are now manufacturing products for the international markets at the cost of their domestic environment.
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What is the economic cost of pollution?

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- The economic loss on account of pollution includes the cost of treatment, loss of man-hours and negative effects on nature based businesses like agriculture.
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- Pollution also tends to impacts the socially vulnerable and poor communities more due to their weak coping options.
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- For example, if traditional drinking water sources get polluted, then one will have to switched to packaged refined water sources, which is a paid for service.
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- While the better off could afford this transition, the poor would now have to pay a premium for what was freely available – which might strain them more.
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- Consequently, they might have little option but to use the traditional water sources (even after contamination), which could lead to health complications.
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What is the way ahead?

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- Pollution is only a symptom of the larger malice of improper environmental regulations in place – which needs to be set right.
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- Notably, Environmental Quality Objectives and Uniform Standards have been imbibed by most western countries in their political agendas.
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- Such standards need to be emulated and strictly adhered to in the Indian context for the betterment of our environmental parameters.
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- People will have to be made scientifically aware and politically conscious of their right to a clean and safe surrounding.
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- Our policy makers need to give up their notion that environment needs to be bartered for economic growth.
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- Rather, an understanding that environmental preservation and development are indispensible for each other needs to evolve.
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Source: The Hindu

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