New Zealand's Zero-Carbon Act

Why in news?

New Zealand's Parliament recently passed The Zero-Carbon Act, which will commit New Zealand to zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner.

What is the Act on?

- The Act comes as part of the country's attempts to meet its Paris climate accord commitments.
- The Act is not a separate legislation but is an amendment to the existing Climate Change Responses Act, 2002.
- The Act is titled Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act.
- It provides a framework by which New Zealand will be able to develop and implement climate change policies in line with the Paris Agreement.
- The objective is to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degree Celsius.
- According to the New Zealand government, this is the first legislation in the world to make a legally binding commitment to living within 1.5°C of global warming.

What are the key targets?

- The Bill presents the country's plan on how to act over the next 30 years, to safeguard its future and that of its children.
- The key aims of the Act include:

i. reducing all greenhouse gases (except methane) to net zero by 2050
ii. reducing emissions of biogenic methane (produced from biological sources) up to 10% below 2017 levels by 2030 and to 24-47% below 2017 levels by 2050
iii. establishing an independent Climate Change Commission
iv. establishing a system of emissions budget

- The Act proposes separate targets for biogenic methane.
- [Biogenic methane is emitted by livestock, waste treatment and wetlands.]
- This is because methane is a short-lived climate pollutant with an atmospheric lifetime of around 12 years.
- While its lifetime in the atmosphere is much shorter than carbon dioxide (CO_2), it is much more efficient at trapping radiation.

- In other words, it is a more potent greenhouse gas than CO_2.

How suitable is New Zealand to this?

- The country is well positioned to undertake steps to mitigate climate change.
- Its capacity to generate electricity from renewable resources is at 80%.
- It is working towards phasing out the use of offshore oil and gas.
- Also, the government is working towards investing over $14.5 billion to better its public transport system.
- Steps are also being made to promote walking and cycling infrastructure.
- The government anticipates that GDP and household incomes in New Zealand will continue to rise.
- In turn, this would minimise the cost of adapting to climate change for the citizens.

Source: Indian Express

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering