UN Climate Action Summit

Why in News?

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi made comments on the need for all the countries to walk the talk on climate change action at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York.

What does this comment mean?

- It is a signal of India's own determination to align domestic policy with its international commitments.
- Mr. Modi's comments at the Summit have turned the spotlight on,
    1. The national contributions pledged under the Paris Agreement of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
    2. The possibility of India declaring enhanced ambition on cutting greenhouse gas emissions under the pact next year (2020).
- Several aspects place the country in the unenviable position of having to reconcile conflicting imperatives like,
    1. A declared programme of scaling up electricity from renewable sources to 175 GW by 2022 and even to 450 GW later.
    2. An emphasis on expanding coal-based generation to meet peaks of demand that cannot be met by solar and wind power.
- The PM told the international community in Houston that his government had opened up coal mining to 100% foreign direct investment (FDI).
- This FDI was not lost on climate activists campaigning for a ban on new coal plants and divesting of shares in coal companies.
- No less challenging is a substantial transition to electric mobility, although it would have multiple benefits, not the least of which is cleaner air and reduced expenditure on oil imports.

What should be done domestically?

- Advancing the national climate agenda in the spirit of Mr.Modi's comments requires the Central government to come up with a **strong domestic action plan**.
- The existing internal framework, the National Action Plan on Climate Change **(NAPCC) is too old**.
- It **lacks the legal foundation** to incorporate the key national commitment

under the Paris Agreement: to reduce the emissions intensity of economic growth by a third, by 2030.

- To make a case for major climate finance under the UNFCCC, we should
    1. Update the NAPCC and its mission-mode programmes
    2. Legislation approved by States for new green norms governing buildings, transport, agriculture, water use and so on.
    3. Arrive at a funding plan for all States to help communities adapt to more frequent climate-linked disasters (cyclones, floods, etc).
- There's wide support for India's position that it cannot be held responsible for the stock of atmospheric CO_2 influencing the climate.
- Even today, per capita CO_2 emissions remain below the global average.
- Ironically, the country is a victim of climate events on the one hand and a major emitter of GHGs in absolute terms on the other.
- In New York Summit, Mr. Modi relied on the environmentalism culture of India to reassure the international community on its ability to act.
- In coming years, national actions will have to be demonstrably effective in curbing carbon emissions.

Source: The Hindu

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