

## **1. Climate Change is taking its Toll on India**

### **Context:**

- Winter in Delhi was also once the season when the city heaved a sigh of relief after summer's furnace blast and was a time for outdoor parties.
- This year, there's a mucky smog so bad that the Supreme Court this week called it "worse than hell" and apocalyptically offered the opinion it would be "better to get Explosives and kill Everyone".

### **What is Climate Change?**

- Climate change' as a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.
- The **major characteristics of climate change** include rise in average **global temperature, ice cap melting, changes in precipitation**, and increase in ocean temperature leading to sea level rise.

### **Impact of Climate Change on the Economy:**

- The World Bank calculates climate change will **save nearly 3 per cent off India's GDP** and depress living standards of nearly half its population by 2050.
- The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction estimates India's suffered \$79.5 billion in economic losses in 19 years due to climate-change disasters.
- **Indian cities easily cornered 22 out of 30 spots on a Greenpeace list of the world's 30 most polluted cities.** City-dwellers can don masks and pray their lungs aren't too horribly affected by air pollution.

### **Impact on Agriculture:**

- Farmers can't get through a season if weather patterns start to alter. And that's indeed what happened in a large swathe of southern and western India this year.
- In parts of Karnataka, there wasn't enough rain in June-July, so farmers postponed crop sowing. But then heavy, unseasonal rains in August destroyed a quarter of their crops. Kodagu, the coffee-growing region, was particularly badly hit. More importantly in developing countries, it will be difficult for farmers to carry on farming in the increased temperatures.
- **The monsoon accounting for 75% of India's rainfall significantly impacts country's agriculture** and livelihood of tens of millions of small farmers.

- Climate change is likely to intensify the variability of monsoon dynamics, leading to a rise in extreme seasonal aberrations, such as increased precipitation and devastating floods in some parts of the country as well as reduced rainfall and prolonged droughts in other areas.

### **Delhi's Woes:**

- The Delhi Government, faced by the smoggy reality of climate change, quickly brought its odd-even number scheme back into action and banned construction.
- Incidentally, it should be mentioned that the number of vehicles in Delhi alone have soared stratospherically. In 1988, some 2.3 million vehicles plied on Delhi roads. Now there are 11.2 million.
- **Effective public transportation — with electric or CNG-run buses — must become a top priority in Indian cities.**

### **Options to Tackle Pollution Problem:**

- One immediate solution before us is to plant millions of trees and ensure as many survive as possible to help suck up pollution.
- **India's the third-largest emitter of heat-trapping carbon dioxide** (behind China and the US), though still one of the lowest per-capita emitters.
- **So shifting away from coal use to renewable power and other low-carbon infrastructure would be a key step to mitigating local pollution.**
- Climate-change experts now say it will be almost impossible to cap global warming to 20C as sought by governments worldwide.
- They forecast temperatures will raise 30C by 2100. The higher levels of carbon dioxide in the upper atmosphere have risen alarmingly in the last four to five years.

### **Way Forward:**

- The UN has been warning of runaway climate change with disastrous consequences. International Labour Organisation forecast, that by 2030, India will lose the equivalent of 34 million full-time jobs due to global warming.
- It's time for a people's movement to make combating toxic air and climate change a top priority. And it must start now.