
India's emissions 93% below than US – ASSOCHAM and E&Y

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According to a Report on climate change jointly brought out by ASSOCHAM and Ernst & Young, despite India being the 4th largest economy and 5th largest greenhouse gas emitter accounting for 5% of global emissions, its emissions are 70% below world average and 93% below those in the United States.

The Report highlights that emissions in India increased by 65% between 1990 and 2005 and are projected to grow by another 70% in next 12 years. However, emissions in India are low as compared to those other major economies as it accounts for only 2% of cumulative energy related emissions since 1850.

On a per capita basis, its emissions are 70% below the world average and 93% below those in the United States. Thus, following the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, India maintains that the major responsibility of curbing emissions rests with the developed countries, which have accumulated emissions over a long period of time.

The ASSOCHAM and E&Y report also highlights that India's greenhouse gas intensity is currently 20% lower than the world average. Factors contributing to the decline in energy intensity include improved energy efficiency, the increased use of renewable and nuclear power and enhanced public transport system and energy pricing reforms.

On the issue of climate change impact on society, agriculture production and food security, the report said that it will affect society through its adverse impact on the necessities and comforts of life, including water, food, energy, health, transportation, recreation and so on. Because societies and their built up environments have developed hand in hand with a relatively stable climate, most of the impact of a rapidly changing climate will pose a significant challenge for their sustenance. Society is especially vulnerable to extremes such as heat waves and floods, many of which are on the rise.

Further, vulnerability to climate change can be worsened by other societal and human induced issues as those that arise from, for example, poverty, unequal access to resources, insecurity relating to food and the incidence of diseases.

The effect of climate change on rainfall, temperature and water availability for agriculture will result in huge losses in agricultural production, undermining efforts to reduce rural poverty. The ill effects of malnutrition may rise phenomenally in coming decades.

Climate change will also result in drastic changes in run off patterns and in glacial melting which is expected to add to the ecological crisis by having an adverse impact on supplies for irrigation and human settlements. Central Asia, Northern China and the northern part of South Asia face an immense challenge with the retreat of glaciers @ of 10 meter to 15 meters a year in the Hiamalays.

With the increase in glacial melting, sea levels are also expected to rise rapidly and the permanent or temporary displacement of human habitation in coastal regions may be an outcome. Tropical cyclones and catastrophic storms are some of the other devastating consequences to which a large number of countries may be exposed. The impact of climate change on ecological systems is already visible. The plants and species that are unable to cope with this rapid change may face extinction.

Developing countries are expected to suffer the worst consequences of climate change because of their high levels of poverty and the limited capacity of their public health systems to respond. Major killer diseases which proliferate in these countries could detrimentally impact millions of people exposed to them. Rich countries are already preparing to deal with extreme climate situations that are a result of climate change.

On the positive side, higher levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere could increase plant productivity and therefore improve the yield of some crops. However, this may be more than compensated for by other factors such as water shortage. The weather in some parts of the planet may also be expected to improve.

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