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FORTUNE IAS NEWS DAILY EXPLAINER

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THE HINDU

A case for Nepal: suing major carbon emitters for floods

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Why in Focus?

- The **Nepal floods of August 2026, which killed thousands and are blamed largely on climate change**, raise the question of **whether victims can seek remedies from major emitters** through climate litigation.

Climate Litigation: Legal cases brought against states or companies over harms and risks linked to climate change.

Key Highlights:

- **Following the floods**, **climate litigation gives Nepal's victims a possible legal route** to hold major emitters accountable for these "climate wrongs".
- This follows a path already used in **Europe and the U.S.**, where **people exposed to climate risks have sued governments and companies** for harm to **life, health and property**.
- But such cases face a hurdle: it is hard to prove that a **distant company's emissions** harmed specific people, as emissions add up globally over time.
- So victims must first show they are a **specific group at risk**, like people in Nepal's **Trishuli and Bhote Koshi basins**, who have faced glacial lake floods for three decades.

Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF): A sudden flood caused when a lake formed by a melting glacier bursts its natural barrier.

- **Courts have begun to accept this link through cases** like:
  - **Lliuya v. RWE case :** A Peruvian farmer sued German company RWE over its role in the flood risk from a melting glacial lake and it tested whether a company can be held responsible for a share of climate harm in another country.
  - **Milieudefensie v. Shell case** : It sought to hold Royal Dutch Shell accountable for its greenhouse gas emissions and failure to align its climate policies with the Paris Agreement goals.
  - **Asmania v. Holcim case** : Indonesian islanders, who face sea-level rise, sued the Swiss cement company Holcim for its large CO2 emissions.

Implications:

- Proving a **direct link between distant emitters and local victims** is legally difficult.
- Victims in **vulnerable countries** bear the cost

of emissions they did little to cause.

- Without **binding precedent**, outcomes of climate cases remain uncertain.
- Weak proof of **imminent risk** can defeat otherwise valid claims

Way Forward:

- Identify the **exposed group** clearly to establish **litigation**.
- Use evidence of **glacier retreat and GLOF risk** to show imminent danger.
- Bring cases against major **GHG emitters**, as growing judicial awareness supports such claims.
- Rely on **transboundary application of civil law**
- Seek both **emission reduction and compensation** for present and future damages.

Mains Question:

Examine the role of climate litigation in holding major emitters accountable for **transboundary climate harms**, with reference to the Nepal floods. (250 words, 15 marks)

Cracker conundrum: On need for strict enforcement of cracker ban

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Why in Focus?

- After **the Supreme Court temporarily relaxed the cracker ban**, AQI in several north Indian cities **turned "severe"** on Deepavali night, with **PM2.5 above 1,000 on some Delhi-area sensors**

PM2.5: Fine particles in the air, smaller than **2.5 micrometres**, that can enter the lungs and harm health. In India its permissible limits are 40 µg/m³ (annual average) and 60 µg/m³ (24-hour average).

- This has led to **calls for the Court to give a final view on crackers well before Deepavali**, so that the government can frame a time-bound policy.

Key Highlights:

- The **Supreme Court temporarily relaxed the cracker ban**, while waiting for direct proof of health and environmental harm
- The Court states that **it knows crackers harm health and the environment**, but it wants direct proof of the harm, which is almost impossible to give.
- This is because crackers are only an **added source** on top of vehicles, industry, construction dust and stubble burning, which get trapped by **slow winds and dry post-monsoon air**.
- Still, **the spikes point to crackers, as Delhi's five-day average AQI rose after Deepavali** from about 298 to 358 (2024), 259 to 315 (2025) and 350 to 376 (2026).
- **Green crackers** are not a full answer, as **CSIR-NEERI** says they cut emissions by only **30-45%** under strict lab conditions.

Green Crackers: CSIR-NEERI developed SWAS (safe water releaser), SAFAL (safe minimal aluminium) and STAR (safe thermite cracker) low-emission crackers that reduce emissions

- **A total ban may lead to the illegal supply of crackers from neighbouring regions**, weakening enforcement.
- **Delayed decisions leave stockists insufficient time to supply green crackers**, as the festive season begins about two weeks before Deepavali.

Implications:

- Poor air quality harms **public health**, especially in north Indian cities.
- Lack of **direct evidence** delays firm action against crackers.
- **Weak policing of sales** makes any restriction **hard to enforce**.
- **Last-minute court decisions** leave traders and the government unprepared.
- **Treating crackers as religious practice may**

weaken the principle that **health and life come first**.

Way Forward:

- **The Supreme Court must issue a final ruling** on cracker regulation before Deepavali
- **Develop a comprehensive policy** to address the environmental and health impacts of crackers.
- **Enhance enforcement mechanisms to prevent illegal cracker sales** and ensure compliance with regulations.
- **Promote the use of low-emission crackers** and provide incentives for their adoption.

Mains Question:

Discuss the environmental and societal implications of regulating firecrackers in India, and suggest measures for effective enforcement of such regulations. (250 Words, 15 marks)

The next test for renewable energy

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Why in Focus?

- India hosted the **Bharat Renewable Energy Summit** last week, and Türkiye is hosting **COP31 UNFCCC** this week, with a proposed global electrification target of **"35 by 35"**.

35 by 35: The target aims to increase electricity's share in global energy consumption to 35% by 2035.

- The global renewable push faces gaps in **grids, supply chains and AI-driven power demand**, so the transition needs to be **reliable, secure and digital**.

Bharat Renewable Energy Summit: Organised by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and International Solar Alliance at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, to promote renewable energy cooperation, with participation from countries including Australia, France, Germany, the UK and others.

Key Highlights:

- Global renewable capacity reached **5,149 GW in 2025**, with **692 GW** added in one year, nearly **97%** of it solar and wind.
- But deployment is uneven, as **China** made up nearly two-thirds of last year's additions and **Africa only 1.6%**, while about **560 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa** have no electricity.
- **Three challenges** slow the transition:
  - **Electricity grids designed for coal- and gas-based power plants are not equipped to efficiently transmit renewable energy,**
  - **A few countries control the supply chains for clean technology**
  - **AI is sharply raising power demand.**
- **Renewables must be reliable, but India's battery storage is only about 9 GWh**, and electricity producers are **paid for supplying power**, not for adjusting supply when demand changes.
- **To be secure, supply chains must not depend on one country**, as China holds 70% of cleantech manufacturing investment, while India has built about 262 GW of solar module capacity and launched the Critical Minerals and Green Hydrogen Missions.
- **To be digital, grids need smart technology, as India has deployed about 54 million smart meters**, and data-centre power use may rise from 485 TWh to 950 TWh by 2030 globally

Smart meters: Digital devices that automatically measure and record electricity in real-time (typically every 15–30 minutes) and transmit this data securely to utility companies via wireless networks.

Implications:

- **DISCOMs pass the cost of unused renewable electricity on to consumers** through higher electricity bills.
- **Uneven deployment leaves regions** like **Africa** behind.
- Dependence on a few countries for **cleantech** may swap one energy dependency for another.

- **AI-driven data centres** strain energy and water.

Way Forward:

- **Increase global grid investment to about $1 trillion annually** to support renewable energy integration.
- **Develop local manufacturing and resilient supply chains** with support from multilateral institutions.
- **Implement smart meters and AI to forecast renewable output** and optimize energy systems.
- **Ensure data centres disclose power, water, and carbon intensity** to promote resource efficiency.

Mains Question:

Examine the challenges and strategies for integrating renewable energy into existing energy systems to ensure reliability, security, and digital advancement. (250 Words,15 marks)

At COP31, 'overshoot' narrative cannot replace climate action

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

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Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Why in Focus?

- The **31st Conference of the Parties (COP31)** to the **UNFCCC** began in **Antalya, Türkiye**, as the world prepares to accept that warming will exceed **1.5°C**.

Key Highlights:

- "Overshoot" refers to **temporarily exceeding the 1.5°C global warming limit and then trying to bring temperatures back below it by 2100**.
- Critics argue that **this could allow developed countries to delay immediate emission cuts** by relying on future carbon removal.
- **Climate finance** is also falling short, as developed countries reported **$137 billion in 2024**, but its true value is estimated at only **$33-45 billion**, with **65% given as loans**.
- **Adaptation finance** was **$26 billion in 2023**, against a need of at least **$310-365 billion every year by 2035**.

Adaptation Finance: Financial resources provided to help countries, especially vulnerable developing nations, adapt to the impacts of climate change and strengthen resilience against climate-related risks

- **Overshoot relies on large-scale CO_2 removal to bring global temperatures back below 1.5°C**, but technologies such as **direct air capture are costly** and their effectiveness at the required scale remains uncertain.

Direct Air Capture: A technology that uses specialised machines and chemical filters to capture CO_2 directly from the atmosphere and store it underground or use it in industrial processes, helping reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide levels.

- **Climate pledges require around 1.2 billion hectares of land for activities** such as tree planting and bioenergy production.
- **Most of this land is in developing countries, raising concerns that local communities** may lose access to their land and face an unfair burden."
- **Developing countries face a double burden**: they are expected **to support global climate action**, while measures like the EU's CBAM **increase the cost of their exports**.

Implications:

- **Overshoot** may delay emission cuts by relying on future carbon removal.
- **Global South** land and resources may become sinks for the **Global North's emissions**.
- **Loan-based and unmet finance** deepens the debt burden of developing countries.
- Trade measures like **CBAM** may harm industrial development in the **Global South**.
- **Buzzwords (like overshoot)** may hide the real issue of who is responsible for past emissions.

Way Forward:

- **Developed countries** should make immediate, deep cuts and reach **net-zero well before 2050**.
- Provide predictable, **grant-based public finance** to developing countries under **Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement**.

Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement: The obligation of developed countries to provide finance for climate adaptation and mitigation in developing countries.

- Remove **intellectual property** and other barriers so technology is transferred, not sold at a premium.
- Clearly allocate responsibility for **carbon removal**, including who pays and where it happens.

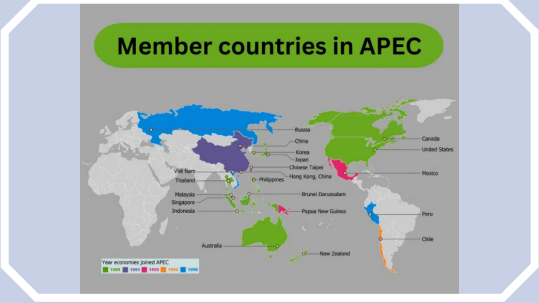
Mains Question:

Critically examine the concept of "overshoot" in climate negotiations and its implications for climate equity and the Global South. (250 words, 15 marks)

KEYWORDS

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

- **Why in News?: APEC has gained attention ahead of the 2026 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting**, scheduled to be hosted by China.
- APEC is a **regional economic forum** established in **1989** to **promote trade, investment and economic cooperation** in the Asia-Pacific region.
- It has **21 member economies**, including **the USA, China, Japan, Russia and Australia**.
- APEC promotes **free and open trade, investment facilitation and regional economic integration** through voluntary cooperation.
- **India is not a member of APEC**, but has expressed interest in joining the forum.



National Air Quality Index (AQI)

- **Why in News?: Deteriorating air quality in Delhi-NCR has brought renewed attention to the Air Quality Index** and its role in monitoring air pollution and associated health risks.
- Launched in **September 2014** by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**, it follows the principle of **"one number, one colour, one description"**.
- It measures **eight pollutants**: **PM2.5, PM10, Nitrogen Dioxide, Sulphur Dioxide, Carbon Monoxide, Ozone, Ammonia and Lead**.
- AQI classifies air quality into **six categories**: Good (0–50), Satisfactory (51–100), Moderate (101–200), Poor (201–300), Very Poor (301–400) and Severe (401–500).
- It uses six colour-codes: **Green (0–50), Yellow (51–100), Orange (101–150), Red (151–200), Purple (201-300) and Maroon (301–500).**

India-Bangladesh Extradition Treaty

- **Why in News?:** The **treaty has gained attention amid discussions over the possible extradition** of former Bangladesh Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina** to Bangladesh.
- Signed on **28 January 2013** and came into force on **23 October 2013**; it was amended in **2016** to simplify extradition procedures by accepting an arrest warrant instead of requiring detailed evidence.
- It facilitates the **reciprocal extradition of fugitives** to address cross-border crimes, terrorism and insurgency
- It covers offences punishable with at least **one year of imprisonment**, subject

to the principle of **dual criminality** (the offence must be punishable in both countries).

- Under **Article 6**, **extradition may be refused for political offences** (offences against the government for political reasons such as treason or sedition), but exceptions include serious crimes such as **murder, terrorism and kidnapping**.

Smart Cities Mission (SCM)

- **Why in News?:** Although the Smart Cities Mission formally concluded on **31 March 2025**, **completing pending projects and maintaining created assets remain key priorities**.
- Launched on **25 June 2015** by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme to develop **100 smart cities**.
- The mission has two approaches: **Area-Based Development (ABD) and Pan-City Solutions**, which use technology to improve services across the city.
- **Under ABD**, development is carried out through **retrofitting, redevelopment and greenfield development**.
- **Pan-City Solutions use technology-based projects across the entire city to improve services** such as transport, traffic management and waste management.
- As of **31 March 2026**, **7,790 of 8,064 projects (97%)** had been completed, with Integrated Command and Control Centres established in all 100 cities.

Places in News

Hokersar and Shallabugh Wetlands

- **Why in News?:** The Asian Waterbird Census 2025 recorded around **4.03 lakh birds in Hokersar** and **3.96 lakh in Shallabugh**, highlighting their importance as habitats for migratory birds.
- Both are **Ramsar Sites** located in the Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Kashmir; Hokersar is in **Budgam district**, while Shallabugh is near Srinagar.
- **Hokersar Wetland**, also known as the **Queen of Wetlands**, is a **natural perennial freshwater wetland** and an important habitat for migratory waterbirds from Siberia and Central Asia.
- **Shallabugh Wetland** is situated in the deltaic region of **Sindh Nallah** (a stream), near Anchar Lake, and supports migratory birds as well as local livelihoods through fishing
- Both wetlands face threats from **encroachment, pollution, siltation and habitat degradation**, requiring effective conservation and sustainable management.



Paraguay

- **Why in News?:** Paraguay's President **Santiago Peña was impeached and removed from office on 6 November 2026** following a banking scandal involving Ueno Bank.
- Paraguay is a **landlocked country in South America**, bordered by **Brazil, Argentina and Bolivia**.
- Its capital and largest city is **Asunción**, located on the eastern bank of the Paraguay River.
- The country is divided by the **Paraguay River** into the **Eastern Region and the Western Region (Gran Chaco)**.
- Paraguay is known for its hydropower potential, particularly the **Itaipu Dam**, jointly operated with Brazil.


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