

# BEYOND ZERO SUM: THE HINDU EDITORIAL CALLING RICH COUNTRIES TO COMMIT TECHNOLOGY AND FUNDS TOWARDS NET ZERO CARBON EMISSIONS

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

The [visit of the U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, John Kerry](#), ahead of a leaders' summit convened by President Joe Biden later this month on the climate challenge, has prompted a review of India's long-term policy course. To the developed world, India presents a study in contrasts, with carbon dioxide emissions that rank in the top five globally, while millions of its citizens remain mired in energy poverty and underdevelopment. Ironically, to many smaller countries, including island nations hit by intense storms, lost farm productivity, droughts and heat waves linked to a changing climate, India contributes to the problem with its total annual emissions. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the clamour is growing for India to join many other big economies and commit itself to net zero emissions: to balance carbon emissions with their removal from the atmosphere, by a specific date. Evidently, Mr. Kerry sought to explore the possibility of raising national ambition, with the assurance that the U.S., pursuing major green technology initiatives in the post-Donald Trump era, would support such a road map. His meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been positive. It would, of course, reassure not just India but other emerging nations as well, if the climate diplomacy of the North under the Paris Agreement is underpinned by funding and technology transfer guarantees to reduce emissions. If climate change is the biggest crisis today, the solutions require the U.S, the U.K., Europe and others who occupied the bulk of the world's carbon budget to give up further emissions in favour of the developing world and fund the transition.

Even if India does not commit itself to a net zero deadline, and prefers to wait for the post-pandemic development pathways to become clear, it cannot afford to ignore the impact that its project decisions — such as deforestation — will have on the climate. At the peak of COVID-19 last year, the Centre saw it fit to press ahead with environmental clearances that would have a serious negative impact. It extended the deadline for coal plants to adopt strict pollution control, and proposed gross dilution of norms to assess environmental impact of projects. Fuel prices, at historic highs due to taxation, pay no specific environmental dividend, and the poorest are worst hit by its inflationary effects. What India should be doing in the run-up to the UN Convention on Climate Change in Glasgow, scheduled later this year, is to come up with a domestic climate plan that explains to the citizen how it will bring green development in this decade, specifying a target by sector for each year. This would align internal policies with the justifiable demand that rich countries uphold the principle enshrined in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, of common but differentiated responsibilities to build equity. Taxing luxury emissions, whether it is cars, air-conditioners, big properties or aviation, for specified green development outcomes, will send out a convincing message.

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From the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, to the landmark Ayodhya verdict, 2019 proved to be an eventful year.

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