

# THE ECONOMIC TIMES

*Date: 22-04-24*

## Travel, With Care For Local Concerns

### *Tackle anti-tourism 'movements' with sensitivity*

#### **ET Editorials**

Tourism is one of the key things that make the world — and the world economy — go round. But there's a countercultural movement at play, especially in the major tourism-driven economies in Europe. The €109 bn that 85.1 million international tourists generated for Spain's economy last year, for instance, is unable to drown out increasing anxiety that many Spaniards, particularly in cities like Barcelona, are experiencing. The crescendo of '¡Vete a casa!' — 'Go home!' — in some of the country's major tourist centres is as real as the nearly 13% that tourism contributes to its economy. The pushback is neither new nor limited to Spain or Europe. For tourism to remain a vibrant economic sector, it will require balancing the right to travel with respecting the rights of residents. As more and more Indians travel for leisure and business (business plus leisure), we also need to keep a balancing act that requires localisation, innovation and sensitivity in mind.

UN World Tourism Organisation reported an estimated 1.3 bn international arrivals in 2023 — 88% of pre-Covid numbers. Growing affluence and burgeoning service industries make tourism a strong economic sector, particularly for local economies. In 2023, travel and tourism directly accounted for 9.1% of global GDP. But fatigue and creeping community anxiety noticeable in urban tourist destinations is a result of a failure to manage capacities and changes that servicing a growing tourist influx demands.

Problems such as outpricing residential properties need deft balancing of travellers' and residents' rights. Policies for investing in tourism must be based on supporting initiatives that also elevate local priorities beyond the likes of local merchandise sales and turnstile proceeds at tourist destinations and landmarks.

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## An Export-Minded Self-Reliance Mix

#### **ET Editorials**

India is trying to enlarge its global presence in manufacturing while offering tariff-based protection for local production. These seemingly contradictory policy objectives need to be calibrated carefully to attain the desired outcome. By itself, export promotion, if pursued vigorously, can raise the share of manufacturing in economic output. Protection, however, has a poorer record in enabling local industry to acquire global scale. It has been India's experience as well till the economic reforms of the 1990s that led to liberalisation. The infant industry argument had been taken well past its economic rationale, leading to a balance of payments crisis.

Over the next quarter century, India brought down import duties to competitive levels. Yet, the trade deficit in manufacturing did not yield expected improvement.

Now the situation is different. Global supply chains are seeking resilience, and protection for domestic manufacturing India offers is for all takers, not just local companies. This blunts the infant industry case somewhat while allowing global capital time to seed value chains in the country. Tariff protection is a necessary defence the rest of the world is adopting to excess Chinese manufacturing capacity. Any economy offering a manufacturing base in a 'China Plus One' scenario will have to build a temporary fence around Chinese exports.

This approach has a better chance of attaining the goal of self-reliance while expanding India's footprint in manufacturing exports. It gets around the issue of access to technology and capital that is usually a fallout of protective trade. It also steers the economy away from being swamped by goods from export-oriented free trade partners. A rising share of manufacturing in an economy the size of India's also helps to rebalance global economic growth against China. Export orientation and self-reliance need not be as contradictory as orthodox economic policymaking would suggest. Finding the right mix is key. This time, India may just have found the right blend.



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## **Sobering assessment**

### ***The richer nations must show more support for the poorest countries***

#### **Editorial**

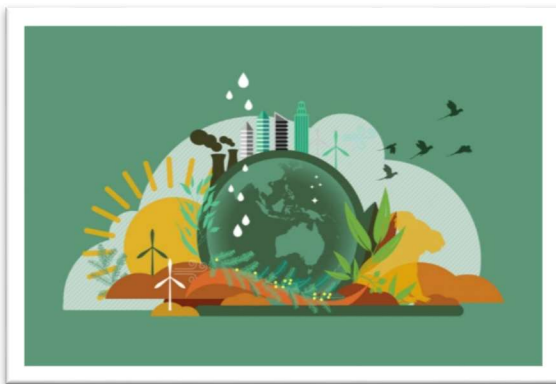
The global economy has avoided the spectre of a debilitating recession, with the IMF last week raising its forecast for worldwide aggregate growth in 2024 to 3.2%, from the 2.9% it had projected in October. The IMF has underlined the fact that the global economy has, with surprising resilience, ridden out several adverse shocks as well as 'significant central bank interest rate increases aimed at restoring price stability' and sustained the growth momentum, largely on the back of advanced economies led by the U.S. undergirding demand. However, the Fund has also pointed to a growing gulf between the economic north and south by observing: "A troubling development is the widening divergence between many low-income developing countries and the rest of the world. For these economies, growth is revised downward, whereas inflation is revised up." These poorest countries, in Africa and including some Latin American, Pacific island and Asian nations, had also suffered the most scarring from the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of estimated drop in output relative to pre-pandemic projections, and were struggling to recover. To compound their woes, these economies were now saddled with a mounting debt service burden that was severely impairing their ability to spend on vitally needed public goods including better education, health care and social nets to improve food security.

The IMF's twin development lender, the World Bank, has, in a separate report, pointed out that for the first time in this century, half of the world's 75 poorest countries were experiencing a widening income gap with the wealthiest economies, marking a "historic reversal" of development. As the World Bank Group's Chief Economist Indermit Gill observed in a blog post on the lender's site, "[the 75 poorest countries] are home to a quarter of humanity — 1.9 billion people... and are home to 90% of people facing hunger or malnutrition". More distressingly, while these countries were midway through what he termed, potentially 'a lost decade', Mr. Gill averred that the rest of the world was "largely averting its gaze" even as the governments in at least half these nations were mostly paralysed by debt distress. Citing the examples of South Korea, China and India as countries that had transitioned from being borrowers of low-interest loans from the World Bank's International Development Association into economic powerhouses that were today IDA donors, the Bank's chief economist stressed it was imperative that the world's richer countries financially support the poorest nations. Given that the world needs to tap every reserve of economic potential to achieve universal peace and prosperity, it can ill afford to turn its back on a quarter of its people.

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## The challenges of renewable energy

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At a recent speech, the United Nations Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell said the "next two years are essential in saving our planet." Record-breaking heat, shortage of water, and other environmental issues are regular headlines in the context of the need to achieve development, increase employment, and reduce poverty and inequality, among others. Yet, the linkages between the pathways of development, sustainability, and climate change mitigation are far from well-understood. Our current models of development drive greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, are unsustainable, and inequitable. Although India aims to achieve Net Zero GHG

emissions by 2070, mainly led by a massive transition to large-scale renewable energy, the implications of such a transition on developmental or sustainability outcomes are unclear at the local and national levels.

### Examining solar parks

Let us take the example of large-scale solar parks — a key pillar of India's mitigation strategy. We have 214 sq. km of land under solar parks, but some studies estimate that we may need 50,000-75,000 sq. km, which is about half the size of Tamil Nadu, to achieve our Net Zero targets.

At the local level, farmers in villages near India's two largest solar parks – in Bhadla in Rajasthan and Pavagada in Karnataka – report different experiences. In Bhadla, farmers have lost sacred common lands called Orans and pastoralists are faced with shrinking grazing lands, forcing some to sell their livestock at throwaway prices. Such losses have led to protests demanding recognition of common land under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. On the other hand, many farmers in Pavagada were content with the steady annual income they

received by leasing out land for solar parks. This land was drought-stricken and did not yield significant agricultural income. All the same, water security issues and economic disparity between large and small landowners are challenges for the region.

At a more regional or national scale, solar parks may compete for essential natural resources. Solar panels require large amounts of water for their regular cleaning. Yet, our current national-level estimates for the land available for solar parks do not account for the availability of nearby water sources. Similarly, the land needed for solar parks may compete with other productive activities — agriculture and related livelihoods, with the potential for impacts on food security. Impacts on biodiversity loss with the construction of large-scale solar parks are also location-specific, and under-researched. For instance, open natural systems such as deserts provide essential ecosystem services that, if disturbed, would cause ecological damage and even contribute to climate change. Crucially, all of these resource requirements and impacts on livelihoods and biodiversity are subject to uncertainty regarding feasibility and economic viability of other emerging low carbon technologies and the changing climate itself.

### Different approaches

Large-scale renewable energy development can avoid reproducing the injustices of past large-scale infrastructure projects, while being sensitive to developmental objectives. Experimenting with ownership models is one approach. The parks need not necessarily be owned by the state or private companies. Community initiatives could help generate revenues for the communities, further promoting small businesses and upskilling, improving incomes, stimulating local economies, and improving energy access.

Solar and wind park development is exempted from Environmental and Social Impact Assessment. The legal and regulatory architecture must be revised and strengthened to limit adverse social and environmental consequences. In terms of impacts on small and medium landowners where private land is being used, there is no mechanism to monitor if a fair price is paid to those leasing their land. Involving local governance units in the planning and siting processes can provide an opportunity to align local developmental objectives with solar park development.

Wasteland classification needs a significant overhaul. Recognition of commons under the FRA would help improve environmental and equity outcomes by granting land ownership to communities dependent on commons. If such land is to be leased or acquired for solar parks, solar park development corporations will have to engage with local governance units such as the Gram Sabha to initiate the project.

Encouraging research and experimenting with ‘agrivoltaics’ is another way to think about sustainably developing renewable energy. Agrivoltaics pair solar with agriculture, creating energy and providing space for crops, grazing, and native habitats under and between panels. Thus, farmers can grow crops while also being ‘prosumers’ — producers and consumers — of energy.

Many of these challenges and opportunities relate to solar in particular, but similar issues abound with other mitigation technologies. Wind energy, for instance, has adverse consequences on bird ecosystems. Large-scale renewable energy projects could have positive employment outcomes at the district level, but they lead to massive employment shifts between sectors at the national level. Adequate skilling and training programmes targeting the unskilled and poorer populations are essential to protect them.

## Seize the opportunity

We are at the cusp of a second green revolution, this time involving energy. We have an opportunity to anticipate the unintended consequences of this revolution, and align our technological, economic, and institutional structures to maximise synergies between sustainability, climate change mitigation, and development related outcomes.



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## गहराता जा रहा है धरती का संकट

रमन कांत, ( लेखक भारतीय नदी परिषद के अध्यक्ष हैं )



मानव गतिविधियों के चलते हमारी धरती अनेक प्रकार के झंझावत झेल रही है। बेतरतीब विकास और प्राकृतिक संसाधनों के अंधाधुंध दोहन से पृथ्वी का संकट गहरा रहा है। यही कारण है कि आए दिन किसी न किसी हिस्से में प्राकृतिक तबाही होती रहती है। दुबई शहर बेमौसम बरसात के कारण कराह उठा। 16 अप्रैल को हुई घनघोर बारिश ने वहां जनजीवन अस्त-व्यस्त कर दिया। वहां एक ही दिन में 250 मिलीमीटर से भी अधिक बरसात हुई। दुबई में इतनी बरसात दो वर्षों में होती है। दुबई की सारी चकाचौंध प्रकृति के एक झटके से बेरौनक हो गई। दुबई में बारिश के कहर के तीन दिन बाद पाकिस्तान

ने प्रकृति की मार झेली। वहां हुई जोरदार बारिश के कारण 80 से अधिक लोगों की जान गई और सैकड़ों घर क्षतिग्रस्त हो गए। हिमाचल प्रदेश में भी अप्रैल माह में हिमपात देखने को मिल रहा और वह भी उस समय जब देश के कई हिस्सों में समय से पहले गर्म हवाएं चल रही हैं। बीते दिनों हैदराबाद में भी भारी बारिश देखने को मिली। ऐसी घटनाएं विश्व भर में अब कहीं अधिक देखने को मिल रही हैं। प्रकृति का ऐसा व्यवहार जहां चिंतनीय है, वहीं यह सोचने पर भी मजबूर कर रहा है कि आखिर ऐसा क्यों हो रहा है? यह तथ्य किसी से छुपा नहीं कि इन सब घटनाओं के मूल में जलवायु परिवर्तन है। जलवायु परिवर्तन के दुष्परिणाम वर्ष भर नए-नए रूप में प्रकट होते ही रहते हैं।

यह सर्वविदित है कि मानव की प्रकृति के प्रतिकूल गतिविधियां धरती का तापमान लगातार बढ़ा रही हैं। महासागर हों या पहाड़, नदियां हों या खेती की जमीन सब जगह प्रकृति कराह रही है। अनेक देशों में पहाड़ी क्षेत्रों के जलाशय सूख रहे हैं और वन क्षेत्र सिकुड़ रहे हैं। इसी कारण आए दिन जब जंगली जानवर अपनी प्यास बुझाने बाहर आते हैं तो मानव के साथ उनका संघर्ष होता है। जंगलों की घटती नमी के कम होने और अत्यधिक तापमान के कारण जंगलों में आग लगने के मामले भी बढ़ रहे हैं। बरसाती नदियां सूख रही हैं तो बड़ी नदियों में पानी की मात्रा लगातार घट रही है। खेती वाली

जमीन में कार्बन तत्व लगातार घट रहा है। इससे अन्न उत्पादन पर भी असर पड़ा रहा है। एक ही देश के अलग-अलग हिस्से सूखे और बाढ़ की चपेट में आ रहे हैं। जलवायु परिवर्तन की समस्या बढ़ाने के कारणों में बढ़ती आबादी और उसका उपभोक्तावाद भी शामिल है। अधिक आबादी की जरूरतें पूरी करने के लिए तथा अधिक से अधिक उपभोग करने की प्रवृत्ति के चलते प्रकृति के संसाधनों का अधिक दोहन हो रहा है। उपभोक्तावाद के चलते ही कार्बन डाईआक्साइड, क्लोरो फ्लोरो कार्बन और मीथेन जैसी ग्रीनहाउस गैसों अधिक मात्रा में वातावरण में पहुंच रही हैं। उपभोग की वस्तुओं के निर्माण से लेकर दैनिक जरूरत के पानी की खपत लगातार बढ़ रही है, जबकि उसका संरक्षण उस अनुपात में नहीं किया जा रहा है।

कई देशों में जगह-जगह कचरे के पहाड़ बन रहे हैं। दुनिया में प्रति वर्ष लाखों टन प्लास्टिक कचरा उत्पन्न होता है, जिसके वर्ष 2050 तक कई गुना बढ़ने का अनुमान है। भारत में भी अच्छा-खासा प्लास्टिक कचरा पैदा होता है, जो विगत पांच वर्षों में दोगुना हुआ है। इसमें करीब 90 प्रतिशत कूड़े के ढेर, नदी और नालों में जाता है। प्लास्टिक कचरे से पृथ्वी की जैव-विविधता बुरी तरह प्रभावित होती है। इस कचरे के छोटे-छोटे कण धीरे-धीरे पानी में घुल जाते हैं। इसका मानव स्वास्थ्य पर बुरा प्रभाव होता है। प्लास्टिक का कचरा धरती के लिए एक बहुत बड़ा संकट बन गया है, लेकिन उसका उपयोग कम करने की कोई ठोस पहल नहीं हो रही है। प्लास्टिक के कचरे से महासागर अटे पड़े हैं। वह अन्य तरह से भी धरती की सेहत के लिए खतरा बन रहा है। इसी कारण इस वर्ष पृथ्वी दिवस की थीम धरती बनाम प्लास्टिक है। चूंकि प्लास्टिक से बहुत नुकसान हो रहा है इसलिए उससे छुटकारा पाने के लिए ठोस कदम उठाने ही होंगे।

पृथ्वी की संपूर्ण जैव-विविधता खतरे में पड़ गई है। मानव गतिविधियों के कारण पृथ्वी हांफने लगी है। उसकी ऐसी हालत किसी के भी हित में नहीं है। कोई दूसरी पृथ्वी नहीं है। अभी समय है चेतने का, सुधारने का और उपभोक्तावाद पर लगाम लगाने का। अगर हम अब भी नहीं चेतते तो संकट इतना गंभीर हो सकता है कि उससे निपटना मुश्किल हो जाए। धरती को बचाने के उपाय अमल में लाने में पहले ही देर हो चुकी है। सरकारों के साथ समाज को भी यह समझना होगा कि आधुनिक जीवनशैली में बदलाव लाए बिना बात बनने वाली नहीं है। हमें भौतिकतावादी जीवन छोड़ना होगा। खाने-पीने की चीजों की बर्बादी रोकनी होगी और बिजली-पानी का किफायती उपयोग करना सीखना होगा। हमें यूज एंड थ्रो संस्कृति का परित्याग करना होगा। यह संभव नहीं कि कुछ लोग तो जीवनशैली बदलें और शेष लोग यह मानकर चलते रहें कि उन्हें ऐसा करने की आवश्यकता नहीं। यह सोच भी सही नहीं कि जलवायु परिवर्तन रोकने की जिम्मेदारी पर्यावरण संगठनों और सरकारों की है। सरकारें और पर्यावरण संगठन तभी कुछ हासिल कर पाएंगे, जब लोग भी उनका सहयोग करने के लिए तत्पर होंगे। यह तत्परता सभी को दिखानी होगी-उन्हें कुछ अधिक, जो एसी, लकजरी कारों, विमानों आदि का प्रयोग अधिक करते हैं। धरती की रक्षा में उसके संसाधनों का अधिकाधिक उपभोग करने वालों की जिम्मेदारी अधिक है, क्योंकि भारत सरीखे देशों को गरीबों के जीवनस्तर में भी सुधार करना है।