

UPSC Daily Current Affairs 19 AUG 2021

India decides to ratify Kigali Amendment to Montreal Protocol

(Topic- GS Paper III–Environment, Source-Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- India has recently decided to ratify a key amendment to the 1989 ozone-saving Montreal Protocol following similar decisions by the United States and China in the past few months.

About Kigali Amendment

- The Kigali Amendment, named after the Rwandan capital where it was negotiated, enables the phase-out of hydrofluorocarbons, a set of chemicals notorious for their capacity to warm the planet.
- It is a legally binding agreement designed to create rights and obligations in international law.
- The Montreal Protocol was originally created to preserve and restore the ozone layer, and it worked.
- The Protocol was an agreement between participating countries to phase out certain ozone-depleting gases.
- HFCs were used to replace the substances banned in that agreement because they have zero impact on the ozone.
- **It is estimated that a complete phase-out of HFCs by 2050 would prevent about 0.5 degree Celsius rise in global temperatures by the end of this century**
- However, HFCs are powerful greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change, so this amendment adds HFCs to the list of chemicals that countries promise to phase out.

Background

Ozone-saving provisions

- The 1989 Montreal Protocol is not a climate agreement.
- It is instead aimed at protecting the earth from ozone-destroying chemicals like the chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs, that were earlier used in the air-conditioning and refrigerant industry.
- The widespread use of CFCs had caused a hole in the Ozone layer of the atmosphere, which allowed some harmful radiations to reach the earth.
- The Montreal Protocol led to the replacement of CFCs with HFCs which do not destroy the Ozone layer.
- But they were later found to be extremely potent in causing global warming.
- So, the HFCs solved one problem but were contributing in a major way in another.
- But these could not be eliminated under the original provisions of the Montreal Protocol which was meant to phase out ozone-destroying chemicals only.
- The Kigali Amendment enabled the Montreal Protocol to mandate the elimination of HFCs as well.

Details of the agreement

- **Article 5 of the Montreal Protocol** created separate standards for developing countries and non-developing.
- Whether a country was categorized as developing or non-developing depended on individual economic conditions at the time of the agreement or pending special request.
- Because the Protocol was created in the 1980s and countries economic situations have changed, the Kigali Amendment created three updated groups for compliance with the additional terms.

Groups

- The first group, which includes the “old” industrialized countries, is committed to reducing the use of HFCs by 45% by 2024 and by 85% by 2036, compared to their use between 2011 and 2013.
- A second group, which includes China and Brazil, is committed to reducing its consumption by 80% by 2045.
- Finally, this deadline is extended to 2047 for the rest of the countries, **including India and several countries in the Middle East**, which are large consumers of air conditioning.

Recent Development

- According to a recent factsheet issued by Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), a US-based environmental organisation, and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), 122 countries had ratified the Kigali Amendment by the end of July 2021.
- Under the Kigali amendment, the United States, China and India are in a separate group of countries, with different time schedules to phase out their HFCs and replace them with climate-friendly alternatives.

Target

- China and the United States have to achieve the same target by the years 2045 and 2034 respectively.

India and HFC

- India has to reduce its HFC use by 80 per cent by the year 2047.
- India will also draw up a national strategy for the phase-down of HFCs by the year 2023 in "consultation with all industry stakeholders".
- It said that existing domestic laws that govern the implementation of the Montreal Protocol would be amended by the middle of 2024 to facilitate the HFC phase-down.
- India's reductions have to begin only after 2028.

National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)

(Topic- GS Paper III– Economics, Source-Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- The Union Cabinet has recently approved the implementation of the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP).

About National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)

- It is a centrally sponsored scheme with a special focus on the Northeast and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The scheme has a sunset clause, ending November 1, 2037.

Objectives

- It has the objective to augment the availability of edible oils and reduce the import of edible oils by increasing the production and productivity of oilseeds and oil palm.
- The mission will ensure that farmers get all facilities, from quality seeds to technology to promote farming to produce palm oil and other oil seeds.
- **It will help to reduce the oil import.**
- **North-eastern states and Andaman and the Nicobar Islands could be promoted for palm farming.**

Viability gap funding

- The Centre will give oil palm farmers a price assurance, with industry mandated to pay the viability gap funding of 14.3% of crude palm oil prices.
- In a bid to encourage oil palm cultivation in northeastern India and in the Andaman and Nicobar islands, the Centre will bear an additional cost of 2% of the crude palm oil prices in these States.

Related Information

- India produces less than half of the roughly 2.4 crore tonnes of edible oil that it consumes annually.
- It imports the rest, buying palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia, soyoil from Brazil and Argentina, and sunflower oil, mainly from Russia and Ukraine.

Government Initiatives

Kharif Strategy for Oilseeds

- The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has formulated **Kharif Strategy 2021 to achieve self-sufficiency in edible oils.**
- It is an ambitious plan for the free distribution of high yielding varieties of seeds to the farmers for the Kharif season 2021 in the form of mini-kits.
- Strategy for both area and productivity enhancement has been formulated for soybean and groundnut under the National Food Security Mission (Oil Seeds and Oil Palm).
- It will bring an additional 6.37 lakh hectare area under oilseeds and is likely to produce 120.26 lakh quintals of oilseeds and edible oil amounting to 24.36 lakh quintals.

National Food Security Mission (Oil Seeds and Oil Palm):

Objective

- To augment the availability of edible oils and reduce the import of edible oils by increasing the production and productivity of oilseeds and oil palm.

Merger of NMOOP under NFSM:

- National Mission on Oilseeds & Oil Palm (NMOOP) was launched in 2014-15 and continued up to 2017-18.
- From 2018-19 onwards, the NMOOP is being implemented under NFSM as NFSM-Oilseeds & Oil palm comprising the sub-components NFSM- Oilseeds, NFSM-Oil Palm and NFSM-Tree Borne Oilseeds (TBOs).

Funding Pattern

- The cost-sharing pattern between Central and State Governments is in the ratio of 60:40 for general category of States and 90:10 for North Eastern and the Himalayan States.

Tiwa tribes

(Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture, Source-Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- Recently, Tiwa tribesmen took part in a dance during the Wanchuwa festival in Karbi Anglong district of Assam.

About Tiwa tribe



- They are also known as Lalung.
- These are the indigenous community inhabiting the states of Assam and Meghalaya and are also found in some parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

- They are recognized as a Scheduled tribe within the state of Assam but they still do not benefit from the ST status in the state of Meghalaya.
- They are divided into 2 sub-groups-
 - a. Hill Tiwa
 - b. Plains Tiwa

About Hill Tiwa

- They live in the westernmost areas of the Karbi Anglong district.
- They speak a Tibeto-Burman language.
- The descent system is **matrilineal**.

About Plains Tiwa

- They live on the flatlands of the Southern bank of the Brahmaputra valley.
- The vast majority speak Assamese as their mother tongue.
- Their descent system is patrilineal.
- They practice Jhum or shifting cultivation, where the land is first cleared of any vegetation that is later set on fire (slash-and-burn).

About Wanchuwa festival

- This festival is celebrated by Tiwa tribesmen to mark their good harvest.
- It comes with songs, dances, a bunch of rituals and people clad in their native attires.

Other Festivals

- The main festivals of the Tiwa tribes are: Three Pisu (Bihu), Borot utsav, Sogra puja, Wanchuwa, Jonbeel Mela, Kabla, Langkhon Phuja and Yangli Phuja.

UNITE Aware

(Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation, Source-The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, presiding over a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) open debate on technology and peacekeeping, his first as External Affairs Minister, announced the rollout of a technological platform in partnership with the UN i.e. '**UNITE Aware**'.
- India, as a major contributing nation to UN peacekeeping activities, has been keen on using its month-long UNSC Presidency to prioritise peacekeeping.

About the UNITE Aware

- It is a mobile tech platform that has been developing in partnership with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Operational Support.
- **It will provide terrain-related information to the Blue Helmets in the line of duty**

- This initiative is based on the expectation that an entire peacekeeping operation can be visualised, coordinated and monitored on a real-time basis.

The minister has also outlined a four-point framework for securing the peacekeepers:

- a. Need for the deployment of proven, cost-effective and field-serviceable technologies that were environmentally friendly in their construction.
- b. Peacekeepers needed sound information and intelligence.
- c. Need for precise positioning and overhead visualisation.
- d. Investment in capacity building and training of peacekeepers with regard to technology.

Related Information

About UN peacekeeping

- United Nations Peacekeeping is a joint effort between the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support.
- They are often referred to as Blue Berets or Blue Helmets because of their light blue berets or helmets.
- Every peacekeeping mission is authorized by the Security Council.
- The financial resources of UN Peacekeeping operations are the collective responsibility of UN Member States.
- According to the UN Charter, every Member State is legally obligated to pay their respective share for peacekeeping.

UN Peacekeeping is guided by three basic principles:

- Consent of the parties
- Impartiality
- Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

Note:

- Resolution 2532 (2020), adopted in July 2020, expressed support for the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire to help unite efforts to fight COVID-19 in the world's most vulnerable countries.

[United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress \(UNWGIC\)](#)

(Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization, Source-PIB)

Why in the news?

- India will host the second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) in October 2022, at Hyderabad.
- **The theme is -"Towards Geo-enabling the Global Village."**
- **The first UNWGIC was organized by China in October 2018.**

About United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC)

- The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) organizes the United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) every four years.

Objectives

- To enhance international collaboration among the Member States and relevant stakeholders in Geospatial information management and capacities.

About United Nation Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM):

- It has been established by United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2011.

Aim

- To play a leading role in setting the agenda for the development of global geospatial information and to promote its use to address key global challenges.

Members

- It consists of government experts from United Nations Member States as well as experts from international organizations, as observers.
- **The UN-GGIM is scheduled to meet at least once a year and reports directly to ECOSOC.**

Oil bonds

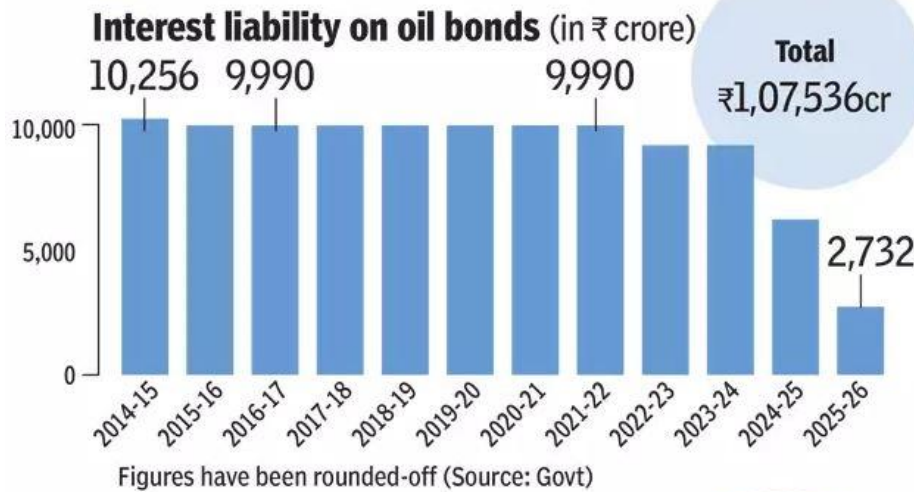
(Topic- GS Paper III–Economics, Source-Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- The Centre has argued that it cannot reduce taxes on petrol and diesel as it has to bear the burden of payments instead of oil bonds issued by the previous UPA government to subsidise fuel prices.

What are oil bonds?

'PAYING FOR PAST BURDEN'



“ If I did not have the burden to service the oil bonds, I would have been in a position to reduce excise duty on fuel... Previous government has made our job difficult by issuing oil bonds

—NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FM



- Oil bonds are special securities issued by the government to oil marketing companies in lieu of cash subsidy.

Tenure

- These bonds are typically of a long-term tenure like 15-20 years and oil companies are paid interest.
- Before the complete deregulation of petrol and diesel prices, oil marketing companies were faced with a huge financial burden as the selling price of petrol and diesel in India was lower than the international market price.
- This 'under-recovery' is typically compensated through fuel subsidies allocated in the Union budget.
- However, between 2005 and 2010, the UPA government issued oil bonds to the companies amounting to Rs 1.4 lakh crore to compensate them for these losses.

Why do governments issue such bonds?

- Compensation to companies through issuance of such bonds is typically used when the government is trying to delay the fiscal burden of such a payout to future years.
- Governments resort to such instruments when they are in danger of breaching the fiscal deficit target due to unforeseen circumstances that lead to a collapse in revenues or a surge in expenditure.

- These types of bonds are considered to be 'below the line' expenditure in the Union budget and do not have a bearing on that year's fiscal deficit, but they do increase the government's overall debt.
- However, interest payments and repayment of these bonds become a part of the fiscal deficit calculations in future years.

How much has been repaid?

- The oil bonds issued in the UPA regime were worth Rs. 1.4 lakh crore out of which Rs. 1.3 lakh crore was inherited by the NDA government when it came to power.
- Out of the total Rs. 1.3 lakh crore that the government owes the oil companies, only two bonds that have matured and are worth Rs. 3,500 crore have been paid back.
- The next two bonds mature this year in October and November adding up to Rs 10,000 crore which needs to be paid out