

CLIMATE CHANGE

❖ **COP26 a year later: where do 2021 climate pledges stand?**

❖ **CONTEXT:** A year ago at the U.N. climate talks in Glasgow, Scotland, countries, banks and business leaders announced a slew of climate plans and pledges.

❖ **National emissions plans**

- Nearly 200 countries agreed at 2021 COP26 summit to improve their emissions-cutting pledges, called Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs, in time for COP27, but only two dozen countries have so far done so. The world remains on a path to overshoot 2 degrees of warming beyond the pre-industrial average.
- Those to upgrade since COP26 include Indonesia and South Korea as well as Australia, which pledged a 43% emissions cut by 2030 from 2005 levels.
- Brazil submitted a plan in March 2022 that actually allows for higher emissions than under its 2016 pledge, though recent election victory by Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva raises hopes of more ambitious action to combat Amazon deforestation.
- The 27-country EU, the world's third-biggest polluter, plans to upgrade its target in 2023. China has resisted pressure to improve its pledge to peak emissions before 2030 – a goal that doesn't address the deep emissions cuts needed to avert disastrous global warming.

❖ **Deforestation**

- More than 100 countries pledged in last summit to end deforestation by 2030. Supporters included Brazil, Indonesia and Congo, which together contain more than 80% of the world's remaining tropical forests.
- To achieve that goal, however, the area deforested would need to shrink by 10% each year from the 2020 cover. Instead, deforestation fell in 2021 by just 6.3%, according to the Forest Declaration Platform which tracks progress on the goal.
- Amazon deforestation in 2021 hit its highest level since 2006, and preliminary government data suggests it rose a further 23% in the first nine months of 2022.
- Indonesia has seen deforestation slow since 2016. But Congo, which had promised to improve forest safeguards after COP26, instead announced plans to open up areas of pristine rainforest and carbon-rich peatlands to oil and gas drilling.

❖ **Methane pledge**

- To date, 119 countries and blocs including the United States and the European Union have joined the COP26 pledge to slash methane emissions 30% from 2020 levels by 2030. But only 15 of them have come up with concrete plans to do so, according to a report this month by the World Resources Institute.
- Several countries are expected to provide methane strategies in time for the Egypt conference. And China could also give an update on its plan to begin monitoring methane emissions – a promise made under the U.S.-China agreement announced in Glasgow.
- The focus on methane comes as the World Meteorological Organization warned of the biggest year-on-year jump in methane concentrations in 2021 since record-keeping began nearly 40 years ago.

❖ **Quitting fossil fuels**

- Around 20 countries including Germany, the United States, Canada, Britain and France pledged November 2021 to stop public financing for fossil fuel projects abroad by the end of 2022, except in "limited" circumstances that comply with climate goals.
- COP27 is expected to see a handful of new countries make the pledge. Signatories are also under pressure to translate the non-binding commitment into concrete policy, which some including France have done.
- Others such as Germany and the United States have yet to publish such policies, and questions remain about how strict those plans will be. Germany in 2022 called for new investments in gas, as it scrambles to replace its Russian gas supply with alternatives – which campaigners say could violate the commitment.
- A fledgling international alliance to halt new oil and gas drilling also hopes to announce new members at COP27. Launched by Denmark and Sweden at last year's climate talks, the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance counts France and Sweden among its members, but has yet to win support from any major fossil fuel producers.

❖ **\$100 billion by 2023**

- Rich countries' failure to deliver promised finance to poorer nations has eroded trust at recent climate talks and made collective progress harder.
- At the heart of the issue is a 2009 pledge from developed countries to transfer \$100 billion per year by 2020 to vulnerable states. The amount has become symbolic, even as it falls far short of the actual sums needed for poor nations to cope with severe climate impacts.
- Rich countries fell \$16.7 billion short of the target in 2020 and have signalled that it won't be met until 2023. Analysis by the German and Canadian governments suggests wealthy countries will deliver more than \$100 billion in the years after 2023.

❖ **Greening business**

- Launched ahead of 2021 U.N. talks, the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero – known by its acronym GFANZ – acts as the umbrella group for financial services firms looking to reach net-zero emissions across their portfolios.
- The group now counts more than 550 members, including most of the world's leading banks, insurers and asset managers, with collective assets of more than \$150 trillion.
- Since joining, 118 asset managers, 44 asset owners and 53 banks have set shorter-term targets to cut emissions, and more are expected to do so in coming months. GFANZ, led by former Bank of England governor Mark Carney, also launched a series of projects to accelerate change in the real economy, including those helping to set standards and frameworks for disclosure and setting targets.

- Despite that, the group and some of its members have been criticised for not going fast enough, particularly on the provision of financing to companies expanding production of fossil fuels. And recently, climate activists criticized GFANZ for dropping a requirement that its members sign onto a U.N. emissions reduction campaign.
- ❖ **Data reporting standards**
- Announced during COP26, the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) was set up to establish baseline standards for the reporting of environmental data from companies globally, amid complaints from investors and companies that disclosures were hard to compare.
- Since then, the group has announced Emmanuel Faber, the former head of French yogurt maker Danone, as its chair and appointed a high-profile leadership group to hammer out guidelines in time to launch them in 2023.
- Despite that, the European Union and U.S. regulators have moved to launch their own rules; all with slight differences that companies fear could raise the cost of compliance and end up with even less clarity.

POLITY

- ❖ **Can convicted legislators be disqualified from Assembly?**
- ❖ **CONTEXT: Two Uttar Pradesh legislators were convicted on criminal charges in recent days, but only one of them has been disqualified and his seat declared vacant by the State's Legislative Assembly secretariat. Azam Khan, the Samajwadi Party MLA for Rampur, was sentenced to a three-year jail term, for making an inflammatory speech in 2019. As disqualification upon conviction on a criminal charge, accompanied by a prison sentence of two years and more is immediate, the Assembly secretariat declared his seat vacant. However, there has been no such response in regard to Vikram Singh Saini, MLA from Khatauli, after he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment in connection with the Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013.**
- ❖ **When does conviction attract disqualification?**
- Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951, contains provisions aimed at decriminalising electoral politics.
- There are two categories of criminal cases that attract disqualification upon conviction.
- In the first category are offences that entail disqualification for a period of six years upon any conviction. If the punishment is a fine, the six-year period will run from the date of conviction, but if there is a prison sentence, the disqualification will begin on the date of conviction, and will continue up to the completion of six years after the date of release from jail.
- Major IPC offences are included under this head: making speeches that cause enmity between groups (Sec.153A) and doing so in a place of worship (Sec.505), bribery and personation during elections and other electoral offences, offences relating to rape and cruelty to women by husband and latter's relatives.
- Besides, serious provisions of special laws such as the Protection of Civil Rights Act, Customs Act, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act etc are among the category of offences that entail disqualification regardless of the quantum of punishment.
- Laws for prevention of Sati, corruption, terrorism and insult to national flag and national anthem etc are also part of this group. All other criminal provisions form a separate category under which mere conviction will not entail disqualification. A sentence of at least two years in prison is needed to incur such disqualification.
- ❖ **Is there legal protection for legislators against disqualification?**
- Under Section 8(4) of the RPA, legislators could avoid immediate disqualification until 2013. The provision said that with respect to a Member of Parliament or a State legislator the disqualification will not take effect for three months. If within that period, the convicted legislator files an appeal or revision application, it will not take effect until the disposal of the appeal or application. In other words, the mere filing of an appeal against conviction will operate as a stay against disqualification.
- In Lily Thomas vs. Union of India, the Supreme Court struck down clause (4) as unconstitutional, thus removing the protection enjoyed by lawmakers.
- ❖ **Can the disqualification be removed?**
- The Supreme Court has the power to stay not only the sentence, but also the conviction of a person. In some rare cases, conviction has been stayed to enable the appellant to contest an election. However, the SC has made it clear that such a stay should be very rare and for special reasons.
- The RPA itself provides a remedy through the Election Commission. Under Sec. 11 of the Act, the EC may record reasons and either remove, or reduce the period of, a person's disqualification.
- The EC exercised this power for Sikkim Chief Minister P.S. Tamang, who served a one-year sentence for corruption, and reduced his disqualification so as to contest a byelection and remain in office.

PRELIMS

1. **PMNRF, the emergency fund**
- ❖ **CONTEXT: The recent collapse of a suspension bridge in Morbi in Gujarat has brought this fund in news.**
- Historically, this fund was instituted by former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1948). It then aimed to assist displaced persons from Pakistan. It was established by public contributions.
- In current times it is used to tackle natural calamities such as floods, cyclones and earthquakes etc.
- PMNRF is also used to help with medical treatment like kidney transplantation, cancer treatment, acid attack and to the victims of the major accidents and riots.
- The fund consists entirely of public contributions and does not get any budgetary support.
- The corpus of the fund is invested in various forms with scheduled commercial banks and other agencies. Disbursements are made with the approval of the Prime Minister.
- PMNRF has not been constituted by the Parliament.

- The fund is recognized as a Trust under the Income Tax Act and the same is managed by Prime Minister or multiple delegates for national causes.
- PMNRF operates from the Prime Minister's Office and does not pay any license fee.
- It is exempt under Income Tax Act, 1961 under Section 10 and 139 for return purposes. Contributions towards PMNRF are notified for 100% deduction from taxable income under section 80(G) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- PMNRF accepts only voluntary contributions by individuals and institutions. Contributions flowing out of budgetary sources or from the balance sheets of the Public Sector Undertakings are not accepted.
- The PMNRF is audited by an independent auditor outside the Government.

❖ **PM CARES Fund**

- PM CARES Fund has been registered as a Public Charitable Trust.
- The trust deed of PM CARES Fund has been registered under the Registration Act, 1908 at New Delhi on 27th March, 2020.

❖ **Objectives :**

- To undertake and support relief or assistance of any kind relating to a public health emergency or any other kind of emergency, calamity or distress, either man-made or natural, including the creation or upgradation of healthcare or pharmaceutical facilities, other necessary infrastructure, funding relevant research or any other type of support.
- To render financial assistance, provide grants of payments of money or take such other steps as may be deemed necessary by the Board of Trustees to the affected population.
- To undertake any other activity, which is not inconsistent with the above objects.

❖ **Constitution of the Trust :**

- Prime Minister is the ex-officio Chairman of the PM CARES Fund and Minister of Defence, Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Finance, Government of India are ex-officio Trustees of the Fund.
- The Chairperson of the Board of Trustees (Prime Minister) shall have the power to nominate three trustees to the Board of Trustees who shall be eminent persons in the field of research, health, science, social work, law, public administration and philanthropy.
- Any person appointed a Trustee shall act in a pro bono capacity.

❖ **Other facts:**

- The fund consists entirely of voluntary contributions from individuals/organizations and does not get any budgetary support. The fund will be utilised in meeting the objectives as stated above.
- Donations to PM CARES Fund would qualify for 80G benefits for 100% exemption under the Income Tax Act, 1961. Donations to PM CARES Fund will also qualify to be counted as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure under the Companies Act, 2013
- PM CARES Fund has also got an exemption under the FCRA and a separate account for receiving foreign donations has been opened. This enables PM CARES Fund to accept donations and contributions from individuals and organizations based in foreign countries. This is consistent with respect to Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF). PMNRF has also received foreign contributions as a public trust since 2011.
- PM CARES Fund is audited by an independent auditor.
- PM CARES Fund can receive contributions from Public Sector Undertakings. However, contributions flowing out of budgetary sources of the PSUs are not accepted.
- ✓ Prime Minister in June 2022 this year released benefits like scholarships and health insurance under the PM CARES for Children scheme to support children who lost their parents due to Covid-19 pandemic.

2. **One-Horned Rhino**

- ❖ **CONTEXT:** The horns of rhinoceroses may have become smaller over time from the impact of hunting, according to a recent study which analysed artwork and photographs of the animal spanning more than five centuries.

❖ **Five species face threat**

- Rhinos have long been hunted for their horns. The five surviving rhino species are threatened by habitat loss and hunting.
- The study found that the rate of decline in horn length was highest in the critically endangered Sumatran rhino and lowest in the white rhino of Africa, the most commonly found species in the wild and in captivity.
- This observation follows patterns seen in other animals, such as tusk size in elephants and horn length in wild sheep, which have been driven down by directional selection due to trophy hunting, the study said.
- The RRC's repository holds a collection of more than 4,000 rhino images, including artistic portrayals from 1481 and photographs, of which the earliest was taken in 1862. The scientists used this for two research approaches.
- They studied 3,158 images to assess the changes in representations of rhinos and human interactions with the animal over 500 years. They identified 80 images of all five rhino species, to analyse changes in horn length over time, extracting morphological data from photographs.

❖ **About:**

- There are five species of rhino – white and black rhinos in Africa, and the greater one-horned, Javan and Sumatran rhino species in Asia.
- IUCN Red List Status:
 - Black Rhino: Critically endangered. Smaller of the two African species.
 - White Rhino: Near Threatened. Researchers have created an embryo of the northern white rhino by using In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) process.

- One-Horned Rhino: Vulnerable
- Javan: Critically Endangered
- Sumatran Rhino: Critically Endangered. It has gone extinct in Malaysia.
- Only the Great One-Horned Rhino is found in India.
- Also known as Indian rhino, it is the largest of the rhino species.
- It is identified by a single black horn and a grey-brown hide with skin folds.
- They primarily graze, with a diet consisting almost entirely of grasses as well as leaves, branches of shrubs and trees, fruit, and aquatic plants.
- ❖ **Habitat:**
 - The species is restricted to small habitats in Indo-Nepal terai and northern West Bengal and Assam.
 - In India, rhinos are mainly found in Assam, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.
 - Assam has an estimated 2,640 rhinos in four protected areas, i.e. Pabitora Wildlife Reserve, Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park, Kaziranga National Park, and Manas National Park.
 - About 2,400 of them are in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR).
- ❖ **Protection Status:**
 - IUCN Red List: Vulnerable.
 - CITES: Appendix I (Threatened with extinction and CITES prohibits international trade in specimens of these species except when the purpose of the import is not commercial, for instance for scientific research).
 - Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I.
- ❖ Threats: Poaching for the horns, Habitat loss, Population density, Decreasing Genetic diversity.
- ❖ **What are the Conservation Efforts?**
 - The five rhino range nations (India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia) have signed a declaration 'The New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019' for the conservation and protection of the species.
 - Recently, the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has begun a project to create DNA profiles of all rhinos in the country.
 - National Rhino Conservation Strategy: It was launched in 2019 to conserve the greater one-horned rhinoceros.
 - Indian Rhino Vision 2020: Launched in 2005, it was an ambitious effort to attain a wild population of at least 3,000 greater one-horned rhinos spread over seven protected areas in the Indian state of Assam by the year 2020.
- 3. India's First Floating Financial Literacy Camp**
- ❖ **CONTEXT: India Post Payments Bank (IPPB), conducted India's First Floating Financial Literacy Camp with an initiative called 'Niveshak Didi' to promote Financial Literacy 'By the women, for the women', in Srinagar, J&K.**
 - India, being a large & growing economy, still finds it challenging to spread financial literacy across demography, as an enormous share of population still resides in rural areas. IPPB created a new legacy with the help of world's largest postal network to extend its reach to the last mile and bridge financial inclusion gaps.
 - To take the Financial Literacy drive ahead, IPPB, in collaboration with Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) under the aegis of Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), launched the initiative called 'Niveshak Didi' to promote Financial Literacy "By the women, for the women" concept.
 - 'Niveshak Didi' initiative is based on the ideology of women for women as rural area women feel more comfortable to share their queries with a female itself.
 - Three representatives 'Niveshak Didi' from the Kashmir valley were given certificates during the recent IEPFA Conference in Srinagar, J&K.
 - As part of launch of 'Niveshak Didi' initiative, IPPB conducted India's First Floating Financial Literacy Camp by a newly appointed 'Niveshak Didi'. The Floating Financial Literacy Camp was conducted among the local residents around the world-famous Dal Lake of Srinagar.
 - Since Shikara is part & parcel of their life, the gathering did take place on multiple Shikaras and the 'Niveshak Didi' held the Financial Literacy session in local Kashmiri language from Shikara itself, thus the whole session was conducted in the waters of Dal Lake.
- ❖ **About IPPB**
 - India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has been established under the Department of Posts, Ministry of Communication with 100% equity owned by the Government of India. IPPB was launched by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on September 1, 2018.
 - The bank has been set up with the vision to build the most accessible, affordable and trusted bank for the common man in India. The fundamental mandate of IPPB is to remove barriers for the under-banked and reach the last mile leveraging a network comprising 160,000 post offices (145,000 in rural areas) and 400,000 postal employees.
- 4. Bank guarantees**
- ❖ **CONTEXT: NHAH has started accepting Electronic Bank Guarantees (E-BGs) and has also digitalized all its existing Bank Guarantees**
 - A bank guarantee is defined as a guarantee provided by a lending institution under which the bank will assume the overall costs in case a borrower defaults on their liabilities or obligations.
 - A bank guarantee is seen as a provision placed in the bank loan prior to them agreeing to provide the money. The bank will also charge a fee for providing the guarantee. It also encourages companies and consumers to make purchases they would otherwise not make, which helps to increase the business activity along with consumption and also provides entrepreneurial opportunities.

- Commercial banks often help to provide bank guarantees to individuals or business owners who want to borrow money for purchasing new equipment.
- For example, with the help of a guarantee, the bank assumes liability for the debtor in case they fail to fulfil their contractual obligations. The bank offers to stand as a guarantor on behalf of business customers in a transaction. Most bank guarantees also charge a fee that is equal to a small percentage of the entire contract amount (The percentage is normally 0.5% to 1.5% of the total guaranteed amount).
- There are different kinds of guarantees like bid bond guarantees, performance guarantees, advance or deferred payment guarantees and financial guarantees. The guarantees are also used for different reasons. They are often included in arrangements that take place between a small firm and a large organisation. The larger organisation may also seek protection against any counterparty risk, and it requires the smaller party to receive the bank guarantee in advance of their work.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Discuss global warming and mention its effects on the global climate. Explain the control measures to bring down the level of greenhouse gases which cause global warming, in the light of the Kyoto Protocol, 1997.

Global warming is the long-term heating of Earth's surface observed since the pre-industrial period (between 1850 and 1900) due to human activities, primarily fossil fuel burning, which increases heat-trapping greenhouse gas levels in Earth's atmosphere.

Effects on Global Climate

- Early snowmelts, disappearing glaciers, and severe droughts are causing more water shortages.
- Rising sea levels lead to more coastal flooding.
- Heatwaves, heavy downpour, and increased flooding levels create trouble for farms, forests, and cities.
- Disruption of coral reefs and alpine meadows could cause many plant and animal species to extinction.
- Allergies, asthma, and infectious diseases will become more common due to higher levels of air pollution.

Control measures to bring down the level of greenhouse gases which cause global warming

- The Kyoto Protocol was an international treaty that commits state policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It was adopted in 1997 and entered into force in 2005.
- The Kyoto protocol targets emission of six gases which includes Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), Methane (CH₄), Nitrous Oxide (NO₂), Sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆), group of hydrocarbons (HCFs), and groups of per fluorocarbons (PFCs).
- There are various mechanism to reduce levels of greenhouse gases under the Kyoto Protocol:
 - The clean development mechanism allows the country with emission-reduction commitment under the Kyoto Protocol to implement projects in developing countries.
 - Carbon credit is a tradable certificate which is equal to one tonne of carbon dioxide. It attempts to limit the growth of concentration of greenhouse gases. Carbon credits can be acquired through afforestation, carbon sequestration, methane capture, etc.
 - Joint implementation allows country with an emission reduction commitment under Kyoto Protocol to earn emission reduction units from emission reduction projects.
 - Emission trading allows countries to sell unused emission units to other countries which have exceeded their targets.

The Kyoto Protocol is based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and is only global treaty with binding limits on greenhouse gases emissions.

MCQs

- Consider the following statements
 - Bank Guarantee a promise made by the bank to any third person to undertake the payment risk on behalf of its customers
 - Bank guarantee reduces the financial risk involved in the business transaction.

Which of the above statement/s is are correct?

 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2**
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Which of the following state recently introduce 10 minutes of 'dhyana' (Meditation) in schools, PU colleges?
 - Kerala
 - Karnataka**
 - Tamil Nadu
 - Rajasthan
- With reference to UN climate summit (COP26) consider the following statements
 - For the first time at COP 26 conference, there was an explicit plan to reduce use of coal.
 - Coal is responsible for more than 50% of annual CO₂ emissions.
 - Countries only agreed a weaker commitment to "phase out" rather than "phase down" coal after a late intervention by China and India

Choose the correct statement/s using the codes given below

- 1 only**
- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only

4. Consider the following statements
 1. India's First Floating Financial Literacy Camp has been conducted in Loktak lake
 2. The floating camp has been organised by SBI in association with Corporate Affairs ministry
 Choose the correct statement/s using the codes given below
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2**
5. Consider the following statements about Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) and mark the incorrect statement?
 - a) It was initially established with public contributions to assist displaced persons from Pakistan.
 - b) The fund consists mainly of public contributions and gets budgetary support in event of major calamities and is audited annually by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India**
 - c) Overflows from balance sheets of PSUs is not accepted in PMNRF
 - d) The disbursement out of the fund is made at the discretion of the Prime Minister and.
6. With reference to PM CARE fund, consider the following statements:
 1. PM CARES fund is under the operative control of PMO.
 2. It is a fund of government of India created under the Disaster Management Act.
 Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only**
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Consider the following statements:
 1. Asiatic lion is naturally found in India only.
 2. Double-humped camel is naturally found in India only.
 3. One-horned rhinoceros is naturally found in India only.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only**
 - b) 2 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3
8. Consider the following statements:
 1. According to the Constitution of India, a person who is eligible to vote can be made a minister in a State for six months even if he/she is not a member of the Legislature of that State.
 2. According to the Representation of People Act, 1951, a person convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to imprisonment for five years is permanently disqualified from contesting an election even after his release from prison.
 3. The above-mentioned Act was amended five times
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 and 3 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 2 only
 - d) 3 only**
9. Recently cabinet approved the Nutrient Based Subsidy rates, which of the following nutrients are covered?
 1. Nitrogen (N)
 2. Phosphorus (P)
 3. Potash (K)
 4. Urea
 Select the correct answer using the code given below
 - a) 1, 3 and 4 only
 - b) 2 and 4 only
 - c) 1, 2 and 3 only**
 - d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
10. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct regarding AD-1 missile recently tested successfully from Odisha coast?
 1. The AD-1 is a long-range interceptor missile designed for both low exo-atmospheric and endo-atmospheric interception of long-range ballistic missiles as well as aircraft.
 2. It is propelled by a two-stage liquid motor.
 Choose the correct answer using the codes given below
 - a) 1 only**
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2