



UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 08-09-2023

The Prime Minister's participation in the 20th ASEAN-India Summit and the 18th East Asia Summit

The Prime Minister attended the 20th ASEAN-India Summit and the 18th East Asia Summit (EAS) in Jakarta on 7 September 2023.

At the ASEAN-India Summit, the Prime Minister held extensive discussions with ASEAN partners on further strengthening of ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and charting its future course. The Prime Minister reaffirmed ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific and highlighted the synergies between India's Indo-Pacific Ocean's Initiative (IPOI) and ASEAN's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). He also emphasized the need to complete the review of ASEAN-India FTA (AITIGA) in a time bound manner.

Prime Minister presented a 12-point proposal for strengthening India – ASEAN cooperation covering connectivity, digital transformation, trade and economic engagement, addressing contemporary challenges, people-to-people contacts and deepening strategic engagement, as follows:

- Establishing multi-modal connectivity and economic corridor that links South-East Asia-India-West Asia-Europe
- Offered to share India's Digital Public Infrastructure Stack with ASEAN partners
- Announced ASEAN-India fund for Digital Future focusing on cooperation in digital transformation and financial connectivity
- Announced renewal of support to Economic and Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) to act as knowledge partner for enhancing our engagement.
- Called for collectively raising issues being faced by Global South in multilateral fora
- Invited ASEAN countries to join Global Centre for Traditional Medicine being established by WHO in India
- Called for working together on Mission LiFE
- Offered to share India's experience in providing affordable and quality medicines to people through Jan-Aushadhi Kendras
- Called for collective fight against terrorism, terror financing and cyber-disinformation
- Invited ASEAN countries to join Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure
- Called for cooperation in disaster management
- Called for enhanced cooperation on maritime safety, security and domain awareness

Two Joint Statements, one on Maritime Cooperation, and the other on Food Security were adopted.

In addition to India and ASEAN Leaders, Timor-Leste participated in the Summit as Observer.



At the 18th East Asia Summit, Prime reiterated the importance of the EAS mechanism and reaffirmed our support to further strengthen it. Prime Minister underlined India's support for ASEAN centrality and called for ensuring a free, open and rules based Indo-Pacific.

The Prime Minister highlighted synergies of visions for Indo-Pacific between India and ASEAN, and underscored that ASEAN is the focal point of Quad's vision.

The Prime Minister also called for a cooperative approach to address global challenges including terrorism, climate change and resilient supply chains for essential items including food and medicines, and for energy security. He highlighted India's steps in the area of climate change and our initiatives such as ISA, CDRI, LiFE and OSOWOG.

Human-Centric Globalisation: Taking G20 to the Last Mile, Leaving None Behind -Narendra Modi

'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' – these two words capture a deep philosophy. It means 'the world is one family'. This is an all-embracing outlook that encourages us to progress as one universal family, transcending borders, languages, and ideologies. During India's G20 Presidency, this has translated into a call for human-centric progress. As One Earth, we are coming together to nurture our planet. As One Family, we support each other in the pursuit of growth. And we move together towards a shared future - One Future - which is an undeniable truth in these interconnected times.

The post-pandemic world order is very different from the world before it. There are three important changes, among others.

First, there is a growing realization that a shift away from a GDP-centric view of the world to a human-centric view is needed.

Second, the world is recognizing the importance of resilience and reliability in global supply chains.

Third, there is a collective call for boosting multilateralism through the reform of global institutions.

Our G20 Presidency has played the role of a catalyst in these shifts.

In December 2022, when we took over the Presidency from Indonesia, I had written that a mindset shift must be catalysed by the G20. This was especially needed in the context of mainstreaming the marginalized aspirations of developing countries, the Global South and Africa.

The Voice of Global South Summit, which witnessed participation from 125 countries, was one of the foremost initiatives under our Presidency. It was an important exercise to gather inputs and ideas from the Global South. Further, our Presidency has not only seen the largest-ever participation from African countries but has also pushed for the inclusion of the African Union as a permanent member of the G20.

An interconnected world means our challenges across domains are interlinked. This is the midway year of the 2030 Agenda and many are noting with great concern that the progress on



SDGs is off-track. The G20 2023 Action Plan on Accelerating Progress on SDGs will spearhead the future direction of the G20 towards implementing SDGs.

In India, living in harmony with nature has been a norm since ancient times and we have been contributing our share towards climate action even in modern times.

Many countries of the Global South are at various stages of development and climate action must be a complementary pursuit. Ambitions for climate action must be matched with actions on climate finance and transfer of technology.

We believe there is a need to move away from a purely restrictive attitude of what should not be done, to a more constructive attitude focusing on what can be done to fight climate change.

The Chennai HLPs for a Sustainable and Resilient Blue Economy focus on keeping our oceans healthy.

A global ecosystem for clean and green hydrogen will emerge from our presidency, along with a Green Hydrogen Innovation Centre.

In 2015, we launched the International Solar Alliance. Now, through the Global Biofuels Alliance, we will support the world to enable energy transitions in tune with the benefits of a circular economy.

Democratising climate action is the best way to impart momentum to the movement. Just as individuals make daily decisions based on their long-term health, they can make lifestyle decisions based on the impact on the planet's long-term health. Just like Yoga became a global mass movement for wellness, we have also nudged the world with Lifestyles for Sustainable Environment (LiFE).

Due to the impact of climate change, ensuring food and nutritional security will be crucial. Millets, or Shree Anna, can help with this while also boosting climate-smart agriculture. In the International Year of Millets, we have taken millets to global palates. The Deccan High Level Principles on Food Security and Nutrition is also helpful in this direction.

Technology is transformative but it also needs to be made inclusive. In the past, the benefits of technological advancements have not benefited all sections of society equally. India, over the last few years, has shown how technology can be leveraged to narrow inequalities, rather than widen them.

For instance, the billions across the world that remain unbanked, or lack digital identities, can be financially included through digital public infrastructure (DPI). The solutions we have built using our DPI have now been recognised globally. Now, through the G20, we will help developing countries adapt, build, and scale DPI to unlock the power of inclusive growth.

That India is the fastest-growing large economy is no accident. Our simple, scalable and sustainable solutions have empowered the vulnerable and the marginalised to lead our development story. From space to sports, economy to entrepreneurship, Indian women have taken the lead in various sectors. They have shifted the narrative from the development of women to women-led development. Our G20 Presidency is working on bridging the gender digital divide, reducing labour force participation gaps and enabling a larger role for women in leadership and decision-making.

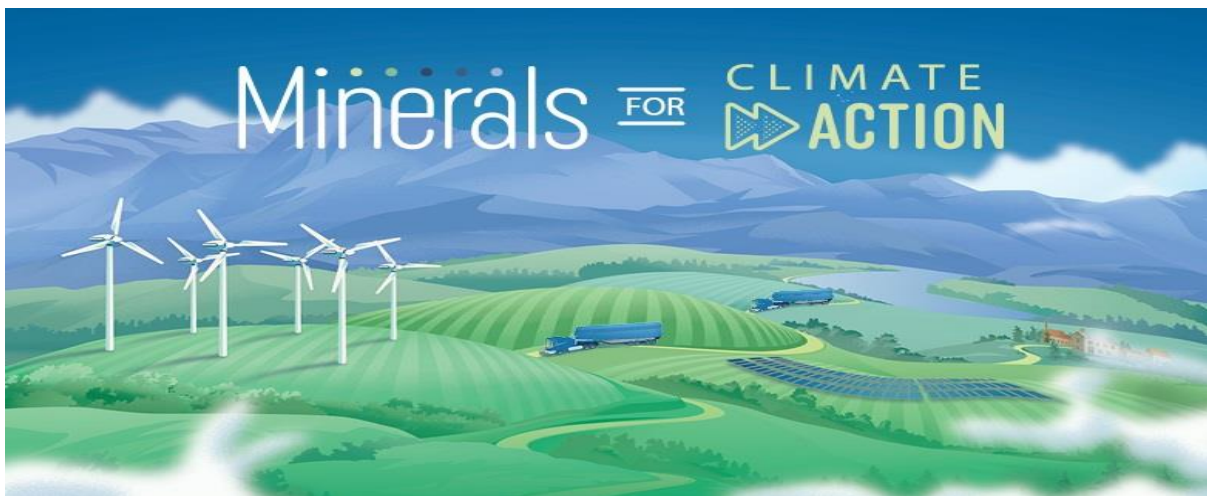
For India, the G20 Presidency is not merely a high-level diplomatic endeavour. As the Mother of Democracy and a model of diversity, we opened the doors of this experience to the world.

Today, accomplishing things at scale is a quality that is associated with India. The G20 Presidency is no exception. It has become a people-driven movement. Over 200 meetings will have been organised in 60 Indian cities across the length and breadth of our nation, hosting nearly 100,000 delegates from 125 countries by the end of our term. No Presidency has ever encompassed such a vast and diverse geographical expanse.

It is one thing to hear about India's demography, democracy, diversity and development from someone else. It is totally different to experience them first-hand. I am sure our G20 delegates would vouch for this.

Our G20 Presidency strives to bridge divides, dismantle barriers, and sow seeds of collaboration that nourish a world where unity prevails over discord, where shared destiny eclipses isolation. As the G20 President, we had pledged to make the global table larger, ensuring that every voice is heard and every country contributes. I am positive that we have matched our pledge with actions and outcomes.

Critical Minerals for a Green Future



As India is set to host the G20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi, there is a growing consensus on the importance of critical minerals for the clean energy transition. The meet could consolidate India's efforts to secure critical minerals' supply chains.

Critical Minerals and Materials

A mineral is critical when the risk of supply shortage and associated impact on the economy is (relatively) higher than other raw materials. These minerals are essential for economic development and national security, and their lack of availability/ the concentration of extraction/ processing in a few geographical locations could potentially lead to supply chain vulnerabilities.



These (such as lithium, graphite, cobalt, titanium, and rare earth elements [REE]) are essential for the advancement of many sectors, including high-tech electronics, telecommunications, transport, and defence.

Significance of Critical Minerals and Materials

Important for Nation's Economic and National Security

Critical minerals are important to a nation's economic and national security and have no viable substitutes.

Critical minerals such as cobalt, lithium, silicon, graphite, and REE are used in clean technologies like solar modules, wind turbines, and batteries.

Building Blocks of Modern Civilisation

The deployment of these technologies can help meet India's sustainability targets of 500 GW of non-fossil power capacity by 2030 as well as the emissions-intensity target of 45 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

Therefore, these minerals can be termed as the building blocks of modern civilisation.

Why Establishing a Reliable Supply Chain for Critical Minerals is Important for India

The Growing Demand for Clean Technology

The growing demand for clean technologies has led to an uptick in global mining of various critical minerals.

According to the Union Ministry of Mines, the annual production of key minerals such as lithium, REE, and cobalt registered an increase of 240 per cent, 134 per cent, and 67 per cent respectively, between 2016 and 2022.

To Reduce Import Dependency and Create a Domestic Value Chain

Global supply chains of critical minerals are **complex and can be vulnerable to unforeseen disruptions** caused by the vagaries of trade treaties, geopolitical factors.

Therefore, **securing the supply chain of critical minerals is important** for reducing India's import dependence, strengthening national security, and developing a domestic value chain to cater to the growing demand.

Steps Taken by the Government for Growth of The Domestic Critical Minerals Sector

Exploration, Processing, Use and Recycling: To fulfil the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, the government is committed to the growth of the domestic critical minerals sector with a focus on exploration, processing, use and recycling.

Policy Reforms: Some policy reforms have been undertaken through key amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Development & Regulation) Act, 1957 in 2015, 2020, 2021, and recently in 2023.

New Auction Regime

To increase the domestic source of production, the Ministry of Mines came up with a new auction regime in 2015.



This envisaged the granting of mining licences and composite licences for mine development through a transparent and time-bound process.

Collaboration Between Public and Private Sector

The National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET) is supporting the exploration of critical minerals with private agencies being empanelled to receive funding for such activities.

The MMDR Amendment Act, 2023 also facilitates mining by including a provision of Exploration Licenses (EL) for deep-seated and critical minerals. It also omitted six minerals including lithium, from the list of 12 atomic minerals.

The MMDR Amendment Act, 2023 empowers the central government to auction mines and promote production of 26 crucial minerals in India rapidly.

Cooperative Federalism

The central government has taken the responsibility to exclusively auction concessions related to 24 critical minerals, while making sure that the revenues accrue to the concerned state governments.

This measure will improve the revenue receipts of state governments, giving a healthy boost to their fiscal position.

Outcome of G20 Energy Transitions Ministers' Meeting Under India's Presidency Share, Collaborate and Build

The outcome document highlights the aim to share, collaborate and build on the sense of responsibility.

Further it emphasises solidarity amongst the G20 members in accelerating the clean, sustainable, just, affordable, and inclusive energy transitions.

This can be achieved by following various pathways, as a means of enabling secure, sustainable, equitable, shared, and inclusive growth.

Energy Security and Diversified Supply Chains

The document highlighted the importance of ensuring that the growing global energy demand is matched by sustainable and affordable energy supplies.

The nations affirmed their commitments to aim to advance technological collaboration and cooperation amongst G20 members, other international partners, and multilateral institutions.

This will strengthen energy systems with a view to ensuring energy security and stabilizing energy markets.

Universal Energy Access

That access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and **modern energy for all is a moral imperative and a basic human need.**

The countries have committed to expand on the achievements of previous G20 Presidencies and take actions to pursue shared objectives of attaining SDG7(Affordable and Clean Energy) targets through enhancing international cooperation and investment in technologies.

This will accelerate progress on clean cooking, electricity access and eradicating energy poverty, providing support for all sections of society to ensure that no one is left behind.

Way Forward

International Collaboration: Apart from strengthening domestic mechanisms, collaborative international efforts through multilateral and bilateral engagements can help in building a resilient critical minerals value chain.

Collective Action

Collective action is important to achieve the targets and the government is forming new partnerships and alliances related to critical minerals.

These include India's entry into the Minerals Security Partnership(MSP),the Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) and the efforts of Khanij Bidesh India Ltd (KABIL) to seek mineral acquisition opportunities in countries like Chile and Argentina.

Central Empowered Committee: SC hands over its green watchdog committee to Environment Ministry



The Central Empowered Committee (CEC) will now report to the Environment Ministry which will nominate its members and have the final say on the merit of its recommendations.

The SC hands over its green watchdog committee(set up two decades ago) to the Environment Ministry.

About the Central Empowered Committee (CEC)

Mandate of the CEC

Events that led to the Handing over of CEC



Highlights of the Notification Regarding new set-up of CEC

Concerns about the new set-up of CEC

About the Central Empowered Committee (CEC):

The CEC was set up in **2002** (and reconstituted in 2008) by the SC to 3 flag cases of official non-compliance with its orders related to conservation.

The current CEC is chaired by retired IAS officer (PV Jayakrishnan) and includes retired Forest service officers and a lawyer and naturalist.

Until now, the CEC reported directly to the SC and often evaluated the Environment Ministry's decisions.

Mandate of the CEC:

The CEC has rendered **outstanding services to the cause of environment.**

It has filed thousands of reports on issues referred to it by the apex court that have shaped the discourse around environment policy.

These include **compensatory afforestation**, net present value of forests, Kudremukh mining, Aravali forests and Bellary mining.

In 2006, a CEC report resulted in a month's simple imprisonment of a former Maharashtra minister and serving Forest Secretary for permitting wood mills to operate in violation of the SC's order.

In (May) 2023, the CEC's recommendation to cancel the double-tracking of a railway line from Castle Rock in Karnataka to Kulem in Goa was accepted by the SC.

Events that led to the Handing over of CEC:

In (March) 2023, the CEC filed a report against reconstructing a convention centre at Patnitop in J&K after the SC had allowed it.

The SC did not consider it "appropriate" and observed that the CEC could not question the SC.

The Bench asked for a few "young" names from the government to replace some of the ageing members of the CEC.

In (May) 2023, Solicitor General said that the government would publish a draft notification under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act 1986 to make CEC a permanent statutory body, after placing the draft before the SC.

In (August) 2023, the SC permitted the ministry to proceed further with the constitution of the CEC as a permanent body would be in the interest of all the stakeholders.

On September 5, the ministry issued the notification.

Highlights of the Notification Regarding new set-up of CEC:

The notification makes it clear that the Committee shall function **under the administrative control of the Central Government** in the Ministry of Environment.



It diluted the CEC's autonomy on four key counts:

The committee will report to the ministry, instead of the SC;

The ministry will pick all the members and the SC will have no role in the process;

The ministry, and not the court, will fund the committee;

The provision of having two NGOs in the committee has been done away with. Now anyone considered an "expert" can be included as a member.

In case any suggestion or recommendation of the CEC is not acceptable to the State or Central Government, the Government shall give reasons in writing for not accepting the same.

Such a decision of the Central Government shall be final.

Concerns about the new set-up of CEC:

The ministry will have total control over the committee: The new CEC will be accountable to the ministry and hence cannot evaluate its decisions.

Role and influence of the SC has been further reduced: For example, the recent amendments to the Forest Conservation Act completely undermined the SC's landmark judgement in the Godavarman case.

Therefore, the Forest Bench of the SC will no longer be flooded with appeals.

Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan 2023 Rankings

Climate Change Minister Bhupender Yadav recently announced awards under the Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan 2023 (clean air survey).

About Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan (Purpose, Methodology, Components, etc.)

Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan 2023 Rankings

About NCAP (Purpose, Targets, etc.)

About Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan:

In September 2022, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change released guidelines on 'Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan- Ranking of Cities' under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

The aim of launching Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan is to give ranking to 131 cities in the country for implementing City Action Plans prepared as part of NCAP for reducing air pollution up to 40% by 2025-26.

Methodology for Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan:

131 cities are categorized into three groups based on population.

47 cities are in the first group having population more than 10 lakh.

44 cities are in the second group having population between 3 to 10 lakh.

Third group consists of 40 cities having population less than 3 lakh.

Cities are required to do the self-assessment as per the framework provided on PRANA online portal.

'PRANA' is the acronym for Portal for Regulation of Air-pollution in Non-Attainment Cities.

Major Components of Assessment –

- solid waste management,
- road dust management,
- management of construction and demolition waste,
- control of vehicular emissions and industrial pollution.

3 best performing cities in each group will be given cash award in the spirit of competitive federalism.


This Sarvekshan provides a tool to cities to plan their actions in order to improve the air quality.

Important Point to be Noted –

It is not based on the measurement of the air quality parameters to rank the cities.

It is based on the actions taken by the cities to improve the air quality in different domains.

About Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan 2023:

CITY LAGS IN AIR QUALITY																							
<p>Category 1 Cities with population over 10 lakh</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>City</th> <th>Rank</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Indore</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Agra</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Thane</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Srinagar</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Bhopal</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>Trichy</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>Vadodara</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>Ahmedabad</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>Delhi</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr><td>Mumbai</td><td>10</td></tr> </tbody> </table>		City	Rank	Indore	1	Agra	2	Thane	3	Srinagar	4	Bhopal	5	Trichy	6	Vadodara	7	Ahmedabad	8	Delhi	9	Mumbai	10
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Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Bhupender Yadav recently announced awards under the Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan 2023 (clean air survey).

Under the 1st category (more than 10 lakh population) Indore ranked first followed by Agra and Thane.



Indore received the highest score of 187 out of 200.

In second category (between 3-10 lakhs population), Amravati secured first rank followed by Moradabad and Guntur.

Similarly, for third category (less than 3 lakhs population) Parwanoo (Himachal Pradesh) secured first rank followed by Kala Amb (Himachal Pradesh) and Angul (Odisha).

Scores were given in eight categories –

Biomass and municipal solid waste and burning,

Road dust,

Dust from construction and demolition waste,

Vehicular emissions,

Emissions from industries,

Other emissions,

IEC activities or public awareness,

Improvement in PM10 concentrations.

The assessment was done based on submission of a self-assessment report, along with supporting documents, by urban local bodies.

In the 2022 survey, Lucknow, Prayagraj and Varanasi were ranked top 3 cities in the million plus population category. However, all three have been ranked lower this year.

National Clean Air Programme:

National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), launched in 2019, is India's flagship program for better air quality.

It was launched as a long-term, time-bound, national level strategy to tackle the air pollution problem across the country in a comprehensive manner.

Goal: 20% to 30% reduction in Particulate Matter concentrations by 2024 keeping 2017 as the base year.

Under NCAP, 132 non-attainment cities have been identified across the country based on the Air Quality data from 2014-2018.

Non-attainment cities are those that have fallen short of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for over five years.

Nomadic Elephant

It is a joint military exercise between India and Mongolia. The aim of the Nomadic Elephant exercise is to train the army troops in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations, under United Nations (UN) mandate. One of the visions of



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the exercise Nomadic Elephant is to promote defence cooperation and enhance military relations between the two army forces of the countries.

No 18, B.B.M.P Building
Kanakapura road ,
Tata Silk Farm, Jayanagar,
Bengaluru, Karnataka-560028

080 - 26765004

rvta@rvei.edu.in

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