

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 13-09-2023

New Delhi Declaration & Climate Commitments

The G20 Leaders' Summit, held in New Delhi on September 9 and 10, adopted the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, where climate change took a prominent position on the global geopolitical agenda. External Affairs Minister Jaishankar, in a statement, highlighted key outcomes of the Summit. These include –



Green Development Pact

Action Plan on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Reforms of multilateral development banks

He also listed the Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA) as one of the landmark initiatives launched during the Summit in New Delhi.

The India-proposed GBA is an initiative to develop an alliance of governments, international organisations and industry to facilitate the adoption of biofuels.

Nineteen countries and 12 international organisations have joined the GBA.

Other priorities include –

Promoting an inclusive and accessible transition to sustainable energy,

Accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

Fostering resilience and sustainability in urban development,

Mitigating disaster risks and bolstering infrastructure resilience.

The New Delhi Declaration also underscores inadequacies in addressing climate change, expressing concern that global ambition and implementation of the Paris Agreement commitments to address climate change, remain insufficient.

It, however, reiterates the G20's commitment to “achieving global net-zero greenhouse gas emissions/carbon neutrality by or around mid-century.”

Commitment to Energy Transition:

The Declaration commits to accelerating clean, sustainable, just, affordable and inclusive energy transitions as a means of enabling strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth and achieve climate objectives. It also commits to working towards tripling renewable energy capacity, globally, by 2030. Additionally, the document endorsed expediting the manufacturing, utilisation and advancement of transparent and robust global markets for hydrogen generated through zero and low-emission technologies. The Declaration mentions phasedown and rationalising inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and supports reliable and sustainable supply chains for energy transitions, including critical minerals.

However, G20 countries, home to 93% of global operating coal power plants and 88% of new proposed unabated coal power plants, made no commitments to end new coal power plant construction.

Climate Finance:

The New Delhi Declaration represents a significant shift in the financial dialogue as higher figures are being quoted and the discourse has moved from finance for mitigation to that for resilience and adaptation.

The Declaration says that \$5.8-5.9 trillion is needed before 2030 for developing countries to achieve their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Additionally, it estimates an annual expenditure of \$4 trillion for developing countries to attain net zero emissions by 2050.

Reforms for Multilateral Development Banks:

The New Delhi Declaration endorses reforms for Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), including the Sustainable Finance Working Group (SFWG) recommendations to expand blended finance and risk-sharing mechanisms.

The SFWG's recommendations emphasise the increased role of MDBs in mobilising climate finance, particularly through concessional resources.

The Declaration also supports SFWG's recommendations on mechanisms for timely and sufficient mobilisation of climate finance while ensuring assistance for transitional activities aligned with each country's circumstances.

Sustainable Cities & Resilient Infrastructure:

The New Delhi Declaration emphasises the need for improved financial mobilisation and efficient utilisation of existing resources to create inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities.

Additionally, the Declaration encourages Development Financial Institutions and MDBs to investigate opportunities for financing urban infrastructure.

Regarding building resilient infrastructure, the New Delhi Declaration calls for the expedited advancement of early warning and early action initiatives.

These include reinforcing national and local capabilities, utilising innovative financial mechanisms, attracting private sector investments and facilitating the exchange of knowledge.

Conclusion:

The New Delhi Declaration recognises the need to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 43% by 2030 (relative to 2019 levels) and notes that global peaking must occur before 2025.

However, the Declaration skipped most of the contentious issues — greater emission cuts, phase-out of fossil fuels, massive mobilisation of financial resources — and stuck to previously stated positions.

EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM, 2023

The 8th Eastern Economic Forum 2023 is taking place between 10–13 September 2023 in Vladivostok.



The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush left for Russia to represent India at the Eastern Economic Forum which is being held at the Russian port city of Vladivostok.

Eastern Economic Forum is an international forum held each year in Vladivostok, Russia.

The Eastern Economic Forum is a key international platform for establishing and strengthening ties within the Russian and global investment communities, and for comprehensive expert evaluation of the economic potential of the Russian Far East, the investment opportunities it offers, and business conditions within advanced special economic zones.

Establishment

The Eastern Economic Forum was established by decree of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in 2015 to support the economic development of Russia's Far East and to expand international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.



Sponsors

The Far East Economic Forum is sponsored by the organizing committee appointed by Roscongress, an association of the Russian Government, which also sponsors other international forums, such as St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

India in the 8th Eastern Economic Forum 2023

The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal left for Russia to represent India at the Eastern Economic Forum.

Shri Sonowal will be addressing the India-Russia Business Dialogue at the Eastern Economic Forum where he will be highlighting the pivotal role of trade, commerce, and business in fostering stability and sustainability within the special and privileged strategic partnership between India and Russia.

India's Shipping Minister will also be speaking at the session on Eastern Maritime Corridor. Aim: To further strengthen the bilateral relation between the two countries, including exploring possibilities of the Northern Sea Route and establishing a Trans-shipment Hub in the Bay of Bengal.

Eastern Maritime Corridor [Vladivostok-Chennai Maritime]

Vladivostok-Chennai Maritime Corridor is a proposed full-fledged sea route of approximately 5,600 nautical miles between Russia's eastern port city, Vladivostok, and Chennai on the Eastern Indian seaboard.

This shipping link would enable to transfer of cargo between Chennai and Vladivostok in 24 days in comparison to over 40 days currently taken to transport goods from India to Far East Russia via Europe.

Passing through the Sea of Japan, South China Sea, and Strait of Malacca, the maritime corridor aims to counterbalance China's growing influence in Southeast Asia by posing grave security and economic challenges to their Maritime Silk Road.

The Eastern Maritime Corridor is aimed at reducing cargo transit times between our nations. The journey from Indian ports to the Russian Far East takes just 24 days, compared to 30 days through the port of Novorossiysk.

This corridor holds immense potential to unlock new opportunities for trade and cooperation for both India and Russia.

Nitin Gadkari on additional 10% GST on sale of diesel vehicles

Several media report suggested that Centre is likely to impose additional 10% GST on the sale of diesel vehicles.



Later, the Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari clarified that there is no such proposal currently under active consideration.

Background

While speaking at a conference, Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari had said that people needed to move away from fuels such as petrol and diesel.

He further said that if the use of diesel-run vehicles (and equipment such as diesel-run generators) continued, he might consider proposing to the Finance Minister that an additional 10% GST be imposed on these vehicles as pollution tax.

Later, through a post, he clarified that there is no such proposal currently under active consideration by the government.

Recently, a committee appointed by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas recommended a **ban on diesel four-wheel vehicles by 2027** in cities with a population of more than 1 million.

The government already imposes a 28% tax on diesel cars, plus an additional cess depending on the engine capacity, taking the total tax to almost 50%.

Reasons for the pushback

As part of its goal to achieve net zero emissions by 2070, the government's stated aim is:

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and

to produce 40% of India's electricity from renewables.

According to a report:

Diesel accounts for about 40% of India's petroleum products consumption;

Around 87% of total diesel sales are to the transport segment, with trucks and buses accounting for about 68% of diesel sales in the country;

Three states — Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Haryana — account for almost 40% of the diesel sold in India.

How have car-makers responded to this pushback?

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker, stopped making diesel vehicles from April 1, 2020, and has signalled that it does not plan to re-enter this segment. Tata Motors, Mahindra, and Honda no longer produce 1.2-litre diesel engines; diesel variants are available only for 1.5-litre or bigger engines. Diesel variants are still available from Korea's Hyundai and Kia, and Japan's Toyota Motor has its Innova Crysta range. However, most carmakers have substantially moved to deleverage their diesel portfolios since 2020. As a result, the contribution of passenger vehicles to overall diesel demand has fallen to 16.5% currently, considerably lower than the 28.5% in 2013.

Increased emissions of oxides of nitrogen (NOx)

Higher compression ratio of diesel engines means increased emissions of NOx. This is one of the main drawbacks of diesel engines versus petrol.

Volkswagen scandal of 2015

The German automaker was found to be activating emissions controls in its diesel engines during lab tests while allowing them to emit dozens of times more NOx in actual driving.

This led to a rise in the negative perception about diesel across markets, including India.

Rollout of the new BS-VI emission norms

The reason why Maruti Suzuki and other carmakers announced an exit from the diesel segment was the rollout of the new BS-VI emission norms.

BS-VI emission norms kicked in from April 1, 2020 and it increased the cost of upgrading their diesel engines to meet the new standards.

The manufacturers have argued that the government's decision to leapfrog directly from BS-IV to BS-VI made the retention of diesel in their portfolio unviable.

What is the reason an individual user might prefer diesel to petrol?

The higher fuel economy of diesel engines compared to petrol Diesel has greater energy content per litre, and diesel engines are inherently efficient.

Diesel engines do not use high-voltage spark ignition (spark plugs), and use less fuel per kilometre as they have higher compression ratios.

This makes diesel the fuel of choice for heavy vehicles.

Better for haulage (commercial transport of goods)

Diesel engines offer more torque (rotational or turning force), and are less likely to stall as they are controlled by a mechanical or electronic governor

Earlier the issue of the cost of running the vehicle

The main reason for this was the significantly lower price of diesel compared to petrol — at its peak, the difference was Rs 25 per litre.

This was evident from that fact that, in 2013, diesel cars accounted for 48% of passenger vehicle sales in the country.

But this changed when the decontrol of fuel prices started in late 2014. The price difference is now around Rs 7 per litre.

Diesel cars accounted for less than 20% of overall passenger vehicle sales in 2021-22.

A further increase in taxation on diesel vehicles will impact sales further, given that the tax incidence on this segment is already very high.

President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu Inaugurates 'First Global Symposium on Farmers' Rights' in New Delhi, today

Farmers are 'Annadatta' and only if there is food then there is body, and if there is body then any work gets done, that is why farmers need to be saluted and it is our duty to protect their rights and future Rich agricultural heritage of our country has flourished due to the efforts of our farmers, who have carefully nurtured and developed numerous plant varieties - Shri Narendra

The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu inaugurated first 'Global Symposium on Farmers' Rights' (GSFR) today, in a ceremony held at ICAR Convention Centre, National Agricultural Science Centre, New Delhi. President Murmu conferred the 'Plant Genome Saviour Communities' Award (6) and 'Plant Genome Saviour Farmers Reward' (16) and 'Plant Genome Saviour Farmers Recognition' (4) awards to the invited Indian farmers. These awards are instituted by the PPVFR Authority as per the provisions of the PPVFR Act, 2001. She also inaugurated the newly constructed 'Plant Authority Bhawan', the office of the PPVFR Authority, and an online plant variety 'Registration Portal'. Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, MoS Shri Kailash Chaudhury and Secretary, Shri Manoj Ahuja were also present on the occasion.



In her address, Smt Droupadi Murmu congratulated organizers FAO and the Secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Treaty) for appropriately choosing India as the country to host the prestigious meeting, given its rich agricultural, cultural and ethnic diversity. She welcomed the delegates in the land of "Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam" (world is one family), a philosophy deeply ingrained in India's culture and traditions. She said that farmers have toiled and enterprisingly developed or conserved landraces, wild-relatives and traditional varieties of crops, and provided the building blocks for the modern crop breeding programs, thus ensuring food and nutritional security for human beings and live-stocks alike. She said that holding of GFSR was very appropriate, as farmers are primary food producers ('annadatta') and only if there is food then there is body,

and if there is body then any work gets done. That is why farmers need to be saluted and it is our duty to protect their rights and future.

Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya virtually interacts with over 3000 farmers from various states at 1.60 lakh Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhi Kendras

PMKSK are fast growing as the central hub for outreach activities for agriculture, enhancing awareness in new and developing knowledge in agriculture sector, *samvaad* with the farmer community, and extension activities through Agriculture Universities: Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya

"PMKSK will soon become an Institution and not merely a One-Stop Shop for all agriculture and farming related activities"

"Let us try to reduce use of chemical fertilizers by 20% in the coming Rabi season, and substitute this by alternate Fertilizers"

“Over 1.60 lakh Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhi Kendras (PMKSKs) are functional in the country at present. The aim behind PMKSKs is to create a ‘One-Stop Shop’ network of more than 2 lakh such kendras to ensure that farmers have access to quality assured products for enhancing their knowledge about farming and agricultural practices.” This was stated by Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya as he interacted virtually with over 3000 farmers from various states at 1.60 lakh Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhi Kendra (PMKSKs) across the country. There was two way interactions with the farmers from states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand. Shri Bhagwanth Khuba, MoS(C&F) was also present during the virtual interaction session.

Dr Mandaviya stated that PMKSKs are fast growing as the central hub for outreach activities for agriculture, enhancing awareness in new and developing knowledge in agriculture sector, *samvaad* with the farmer community, extension activities through agriculture Universities. “These are not just outlets for fertilizers, equipment, sales but these are organizations of farmer’s welfare”, he stated. PMKSK will soon become an Institution and not merely a One-Stop Shop for all agriculture and farming related activities, he said.

The Union Minister encouraged the farmers through an Appeal to use nano urea, nano DAP, and progressively shift to alternate and organic fertilizers, in place of chemical fertilizers. "Let us try to reduce use of chemical fertilizers by 20% in the coming Rabi season, and substitute this by alternate/organic fertilizers ", he stated. He stated that studies have clearly shown adverse impact on human health and wellbeing, directly or indirectly due to excessive use of chemicals, fertilisers, pesticides etc. In this context, Dr Mandaviya again highlighted PM-PRANAM (PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth) scheme launched recently. The scheme aims to reduce use of chemical fertilizers by incentivizing states to adopt alternative fertilizers.



Dr Mandaviya also cautioned retail points to desist from diverting urea and fertilisers meant for farmers and agriculture to industries for non-agriculture use. “There is zero tolerance against diversion for urea meant for farmers. We have taken strict measures towards those found responsible for these activities and coming days will see more strict action against wrong doers”.

The farmers who interacted with the Minister shared their experiences of using the services offered by Pradhan Mantri Kisam Samridhi Kendras. Pankaj Bhai from Gujarat said, “PMKSKs have really benefitted us to access inputs like seeds, fertilizers, and medicine, under one room which was previously unavailable to us. Earlier, we had to travel a long distance to access these services and facilities from various shops.” Dr. Ranganath, a radiologist from Karnataka who left his profession for farming said, “PMKSKs help provide testing facilities for soil and water, and help in connecting the farmers to those facility centres. It also helps create awareness among farmers regarding good agriculture practices.”

Shri Shravan Kumar from Bihar said, “PMKSK ensures regular capacity building of farmers. It also acts as a community for farmers from nearby areas to interact and share their experiences.”

Shri Rajat Kumar Mishra, Secretary, Deptt of Fertilizers, Ms. A Neeraja, Additional Secretary (C&F) and senior officials of Department of Fertilizers also attended the meeting.

Consumer Price Index Numbers On Base 2012=100 For Rural, Urban And Combined For The Month Of August 2023

The National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has released All India Consumer Price Index (CPI) on Base 2012=100 and corresponding Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) for Rural (R), Urban (U) and Combined (C) for the month of August 2023 (Provisional). CPIs for Sub-Groups and Groups for both All India and all States/UTs have also been released.

The price data are collected from selected 1114 urban Markets and 1181 villages covering all States/UTs through personal visits by field staff of Field Operations Division of NSO, MoSPI on a weekly roster. During the month of August 2023, NSO collected prices from 99.6%

villages and 98.3% urban markets while the market-wise prices reported therein were 88.8% for rural and 91.3% for urban.

International Conference on Dam Safety at Jaipur, Rajasthan

The Department of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation (DoWR, RD & GR), Ministry of Jal Shakti is organising an International Conference on Dam Safety (ICDS) at Rajasthan International Centre (RIC) in Jaipur from 14th to 15th September, 2023, where the world's foremost experts and leaders in the field will assemble to strengthen capacities for enhancing dam safety. The Vice President of India, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar will inaugurate the International Conference on the theme "Safe & Secure Dams Ensure Nation's Prosperity". Professionals from across the nation and about fifteen countries are expected to participate in the ground-breaking event dedicated to advancing the cause of dam safety and management.

With over 6,000 dams in India, ranked third globally in terms of large dams and approximately 80% of these dams exceeding 25 years of age while 234 surpassing the century mark, ensuring their safety is of paramount importance. With this objective in mind, the conference aims to provide a prime venue for experts from India and across the world to come together and debate cutting-edge topics in dam safety and management. Additionally, the conference will focus on highlighting the objectives of Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) Phase II and III, as well as how the project contributes to the improvement of dam safety in India. Several informative sessions will help professionals and organisations to engage in discussions centered around knowledge, experience, technologies, innovations, and safety efforts related to dams. ICDS 2023 is the first in a series of Dam Safety Conferences planned under the DRIP Phase II & III.



International Conference on Dam Safety-2023
Safe & Secure Dams Ensure Nation's Prosperity
सुरक्षित व सुदृढ़ बांध सुनिश्चित करें राष्ट्र की समृद्धि

Making Dam Management Sustainable & Resilient

Join us #ICDS2023

ORGANISER

Central water Commission | **NDSA** National Dam Safety Authority | WAPCOS Limited

ISST India | WORLD BANK GROUP | AIB Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank | Department of Water Resources, Rajasthan

14-15 SEPTEMBER 2023
THURSDAY & FRIDAY

09:30 AM ONWARDS

venue
Rajasthan International Center (RIC), Jhalana Institutional Area, Jaipur

One of the highlights of the inaugural session will be the flagging off of the Vinyl-Wrapped 'Pani Ki Rail' i.e., two prominent trains, namely, the Himsagar Express & the Kamakhya Express that will serve as a moving billboard for promoting the vital message of water conservation & management, river rejuvenation, and the importance of potable drinking water & improved sanitation. This novel initiative led by the National Water Mission under Ministry of Jal Shakti, in collaboration with the Ministry of Railways titled "Rails for Water

(पानी क रेल)," will showcase significant water conservation projects, reflecting the vision of the Prime Minister regarding community-driven water conservation & management. The primary aim of this initiative is to disseminate the crucial message of water conservation to every corner of India, as these trains will travel across extensive stretches of the nation, reaching millions of people and imprinting the significance of valuing water as a finite and invaluable resource.

Nipah kills two in Kerala

Two people have died and four others are under treatment after contracting Nipah virus in Kerala's Kozhikode district. While the Nipah virus does not spread as quickly as the Covid-19 virus, it is more deadly. Nipah is **a zoonotic disease**, which means it is transmitted to humans through infected animals or via contaminated food. First identified during an outbreak in Malaysia and Singapore, primarily affecting pigs and the people who worked closely with them. The virus is named after the Malaysian village of Sungai Nipah, where the outbreak occurred. No new outbreaks have been reported in Malaysia since 1999.

Family & Natural hosts

Nipah virus is part of the Paramyxoviridae family and is closely related to the Hendra virus.

The Paramyxoviridae family is a group of single-stranded RNA viruses that cause infections in vertebrates.

Fruit bats are the natural hosts for Nipah virus. There is no apparent disease in fruit bats.

Transmission

It is primarily transmitted to humans through contact with infected animals, particularly fruit bats (flying foxes).

Fruit bats are known to transmit this virus to other animals like pigs, and also dogs, cats, goats, horses and sheep.

The transmission from animals happens mainly through consumption of contaminated food.

Human-to-human transmission can also occur, mainly through close contact with the bodily fluids of infected individuals.

How fast does the Nipah virus spread?

The Nipah virus is known to spread **far more slowly than SARS-CoV-2**. However, it is its ability to kill that is the biggest concern.

According to WHO, the overall global case fatality rate of Nipah is estimated at 40% to 75%.

However, so far, all outbreaks of the Nipah virus have been localised and contained relatively quickly.

One of the main reasons for a relatively quick end to an outbreak is the fact that Nipah virus is not very infectious and human-to-human transmission is not very easy.

Further, the very high death rates also contribute to low transmission.

Signs and symptoms

Human infections range from asymptomatic infection to acute respiratory infection (mild, severe), and fatal encephalitis.

Infected people initially develop symptoms including fever, headaches, myalgia (muscle pain), vomiting and sore throat.

The incubation period (interval from infection to the onset of symptoms) is believed to range from 4 to 14 days.

Diagnosis

Initial signs and symptoms of Nipah virus infection are nonspecific, and the diagnosis is often not suspected at the time of presentation.

Nipah virus infection can be diagnosed with clinical history during the acute and convalescent phase of the disease.

The main tests used are real time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) from bodily fluids and antibody detection via enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA).

Treatment

There are currently no drugs or vaccines specific for Nipah virus infection although WHO has identified Nipah as a priority disease for the WHO Research and Development Blueprint.

Intensive supportive care is recommended to treat severe respiratory and neurologic complications.

Past Outbreaks

It was also recognized in Bangladesh in 2001, and nearly annual outbreaks have occurred in that country since. The disease has also been identified periodically in eastern India.

Evidence of the virus has been found in the known natural reservoir and several other bat species in a number of countries, including Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia, Madagascar, the Philippines, and Thailand.