

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 08-12-2023

Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter (OGDC)

Recently, Conference of Parties (COP28) President Dr. Sultan Al Jaber and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia announced the official launch of the Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter (OGDC).



About the Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter:

- It is a dedicated initiative for the oil and gas sector.
- It aims to induce substantial impact in addressing climate challenges.
- Currently, 50 companies, collectively responsible for over 40 percent of global oil production, have committed to the OGDCL.
- National Oil Companies have shown historic participation, constituting over 60 percent of the total signatories, marking a noteworthy shift towards decarbonization within this sector.
- It is integral to the Global Decarbonization Accelerator (GDA).

Key facts about the Global Decarbonization Accelerator:

- It was introduced at the World Climate Action Summit.
- The GDA focuses on three primary pillars:
- Scaling the energy system of the future.
- Decarbonizing the present energy system.
- addressing methane and other non-CO2 greenhouse gases.
- This strategic plan aims for a comprehensive and simultaneous transformation of both energy demand and supply.

Article 99 of the UN Charter



Amid Israel’s ongoing military attacks on the Gaza Strip United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter.

The UN Charter is the founding document of the United Nations.

- Based on the powers conferred through it, the UN can take action on a wide variety of issues.
- The Charter is **considered an international treaty**, meaning UN Member States are **“bound by it”**. However, in practice, there is little that member countries can be forced to do.



What is Article 99?

- It's a special power, and the only independent political tool given to the secretary-general in the UN Charter.
- It allows him to call a meeting of the Security Council on his initiative to issue warnings about new threats to international peace and security and matters that are not yet on the council's agenda.
- In Article 99, the charter states, "the Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security".
- Now Guterres will have the right to speak at the Security Council, without having to be invited to speak by a member state, as is usually the case.
- It is seen as a discretionary power.
- According to the UN, the President of the Security Council is under the obligation to call a meeting of the Council if the Secretary-General brings to the attention of the Council any matter under Article 99.

When has Article 99 been invoked in the past?

- The provision has been rarely invoked.
- Past examples include the upheaval in the Republic of the Congo in 1960 following the end of Belgium's colonial rule and a complaint by Tunisia in 1961 against France's naval and air forces launching an attack.

ISRAEL- GAZA WAR

What is Article 99 of the UN Charter about?

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres made a rare move on Wednesday, invoking Article 99 to formally warn the Security Council of the global threat from Israel's war on Gaza.

ARTICLE 99

“ The secretary-general may bring to the attention of the UNSC any matter which, in his opinion, may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

If in agreement

The UNSC will have additional powers to ensure that the ceasefire resolution is implemented, including

- the power to impose sanctions, and
- deployment of an international force.

WHEN WAS IT LAST INVOKED?



1960 - CONGO

Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold

The Congolese government requested the UNSC to provide UN military assistance to protect against Belgian forces.



1979 - IRAN

Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim

The UNSC called for the release of 52 Americans held hostage by Iranian militia at the US embassy in Tehran and restoring diplomatic immunity.



1989 - LEBANON

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar

It was used to call for a ceasefire in Lebanon's escalating civil war.



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So, it's only been invoked four times in the past — in the Congo (1960), East Pakistan (1971), Iran (1979) and Lebanon (1989).

1. **July 1960: Congo** — Then Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold requested an urgent meeting with the council on “a matter which, in my opinion, may threaten international peace and security”, after the Congolese government requested the UN provide military assistance to protect against Belgian forces.
2. **December 1971, East Pakistan** — On Wednesday, UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric referred to the time when then Secretary-General U Thant cited Article 99 to seek the Security Council's intervention in the war in what was then known as East Pakistan, and is now Bangladesh. It is unclear whether U Thant's reference to Article 99 represented a full invocation of the rule.



3. **December 1979, Iran** — Austrian diplomat Kurt Waldheim, as secretary-general in the late 1970s, used Article 99 on December 4, 1979 when 52 Americans were held hostage by Iranian fighters at the US Embassy in Tehran after the Islamic Revolution in Iran.
4. **August 1989, Lebanon** — Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar used it to call for a ceasefire in Lebanon’s escalating civil war.
 - The article was initially designed as a preventative tool, a bit like a warning system. Its use was meant to deter conflicts from escalating, but as in the war on Gaza, the article has also been used after conflicts had already escalated.
 - “The fact that this tool has not been used since 1989 does resonate diplomatically and symbolically here in New York,” Daniel Forti, a senior analyst on UN advocacy and research at the International Crisis Group, told Al Jazeera.

Has it brought peace before?

- The use of Article 99 has had mixed results in the past, though it has never really brought peace.
- That’s because the secretary-general’s intervention does not “fundamentally change the political calculation of the Security Council’s most powerful members”.
- In 1960, for instance, the invocation of the article led to the Security Council adopting Resolution 143, calling for Belgium to begin troop withdrawal.
- It also sent UN peacekeeping forces to facilitate this. But the Congolese war continued, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba was assassinated, and the country’s crisis would deepen in the years that followed.
- The Security Council similarly called for the release of American hostages in 1979, and Waldheim was authorised to “take all appropriate measures” to make that happen. But the hostages were held for 444 days, with two killed. The rest were released only after the Algiers Accords were signed in 1981.



- The Security Council also called on all sides in Lebanon to work towards a ceasefire in 1989, after Article 99 was last used. But the conflict continued.
- In the case of the current conflict, the US has so far firmly opposed a ceasefire resolution at the Security Council, and there is little evidence that Washington's position has changed.

How has Guterres invoked Article 99 this time?

- In his letter to the UNSC President, Guterres spoke of the “appalling human suffering, physical destruction and collective trauma across Israel and the Occupied Palestine Territory.”
- Guterres said that he has repeatedly condemned the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israel that led to the deaths of more than 1,200 people, and called for the release of more than 130 people still held captive.
- He added that since the start of Israel's military operation, more than 15,000 have been killed, with nearly 40 per cent being children.
- The collapse of the healthcare system, difficulties in extending humanitarian relief, and issues of displacement have been pointed to – as a result of the “constant bombardment by the Israel Defense Forces”.
- Guterres urged the members of the Security Council to press to avert a humanitarian catastrophe.
- He appealed for a humanitarian ceasefire to be declared. This is urgent. The civilian population must be spared from greater harm.
- With a humanitarian ceasefire, the means of survival can be restored, and humanitarian assistance can be delivered in a safe and timely manner across the Gaza Strip.

Hatti community

An organisation of the Hatti community in Himachal Pradesh will organise a protest march on December 16 to press their demand for the implementation of a law giving the Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the community.

About the Hatti community:



The Hattis are a close-knit community who take their name from their traditional occupation of selling home-grown crops, vegetables, meat, and wool at small-town markets known as ‘haats’.

Hatti men traditionally don a distinctive white headgear on ceremonial occasions.

The Hatti homeland straddles the Himachal-Uttarakhand border in the basin of the Giri and Tons rivers, both tributaries of the Yamuna.

The Tons marks the border between the two states, and the Hattis living in the Trans-Giri area in today’s Himachal Pradesh and Jaunsar Bawar in Uttarakhand were once part of the royal estate of Sirmour. Jaunsar Bawar was conquered by the British in 1814.

The two Hatti clans, in Trans-Giri and Jaunsar Bawar, have similar traditions, and inter-marriages are common.

They are governed by a traditional council called ‘khumbli’ which decides community matters.

According to the 2011 census, members of the community numbered 2.5 lakh but at present population of the

Hattis are estimated at around 3 lakhs.

ELEPHANT ENDOTHELIOTROPIC HERPESVIRUS



The Haemorrhagic disease (HD) affecting the Asian elephant population, caused by the elephant endotheliotropic herpesvirus (EEHV), has raised concerns due to increased mortality among elephant calves in both captive and free-range environments in India.

Details

A study conducted by the ICAR-Indian Veterinary Research Institute (ICAR-IVRI) to investigate haemorrhagic disease (HD) among the Asian elephant population in India.

The study aimed to understand the circulation of the elephant endotheliotropic herpesvirus (EEHV) subtypes, which are believed to be responsible for the rise in the disease.



Background and Concerns

- The study is prompted by an increased mortality of elephant calves due to haemorrhagic disease, observed both in captivity and free-ranging elephants in India.
- Asian elephants are considered national heritage animals in India, constituting 55% of the total world elephant population.
- The declining population is attributed to the increasing outbreaks of EEHV-HD, making it imperative to protect these elephants from the lethal disease.

Research Conducted

- The ICAR-IVRI study characterized the genome of the virus circulating among Indian elephants and traced the molecular mechanism of endothelial cell dysfunction associated with the disease.
- The findings are published in the journal Microbial Pathogenesis.
- The research is part of a holistic approach to creating point-of-care diagnostics to confirm the lethal virus at the pre-clinical stage.

Importance of Research

- Understanding the path-epidemiology of the disease is crucial for developing sero-diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics.
- The study aims to contribute to the scientific knowledge regarding EEHV and its subtypes, particularly in the context of the Asian elephant population in India.
- Information gathered from the project's research has facilitated the creation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for handling disease information among mahouts and elephant conservationists.

Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus (EEHV) and EEHV Hemorrhagic Disease (EEHV-HD)

- EEHV belongs to the Herpesviridae family and specifically affects elephants.

- **It comprises several subtypes**, with EEHV 1A being the most common and associated with severe disease in young Asian elephants. EEHV1B and EEHV2 are also identified but with varying prevalence and impact.
- **Each subtype may exhibit genetic diversity**, contributing to differences in virulence and disease manifestation. Understanding these variations is crucial for developing effective control measures.

Transmission Dynamics

- EEHV spreads primarily through contact with infected bodily fluids like saliva, blood, or urine. Additionally, indirect transmission via contaminated objects, including equipment and surfaces, poses a risk.
- **Infected elephants can shed the virus intermittently**, even when not displaying clinical symptoms, making detection and prevention challenging.

Clinical Presentation and Diagnosis

- Clinical signs of EEHV-HD can vary widely, ranging from subtle indications like loss of appetite and lethargy to more severe symptoms such as trunk swelling, petechial haemorrhages, hematomas, and internal bleeding.
- **Diagnosis involves various methods, including PCR testing to detect the virus in bodily fluids**, serology to identify antibodies, and biopsies for microscopic examination. Rapid and accurate diagnosis remains critical for timely intervention.

Treatment and Management

- **Presently, there's no specific antiviral treatment for EEHV-HD.** Supportive care through intravenous fluids, blood transfusions, and other measures aims to alleviate symptoms and enhance survival chances.
- Prompt veterinary intervention upon recognizing symptoms is essential to provide immediate care and support to affected elephants.

Preventive Strategies

- Isolation and quarantine measures for new elephants, along with stringent biosecurity protocols, can prevent the introduction and spread of EEHV within elephant populations.

- **Researchers are actively exploring vaccine candidates to protect elephants from EEHV.** Vaccination could potentially mitigate the severity and incidence of the disease.

GRAM MANCHITRA



The Gram Manchitra initiative aims to empower Gram Panchayats for effective spatial planning at the grassroots level, as announced by the Union Minister of State for Panchayati Raj in Lok Sabha.

Gram Manchitra Application

The primary goal of the Gram Manchitra application is to empower Gram Panchayats with a robust platform for spatial planning, leveraging geospatial technology.

Functionalities

Unified Geo-Spatial Platform: The application serves as a centralized platform for Gram Panchayats to visualize and plan developmental works across multiple sectors. This includes infrastructure development, natural resource management, sanitation, agriculture, and more.

Decision Support System: Gram Manchitra provides various planning tools that utilize GIS technology. These tools aid Gram Panchayat officials in devising practical and achievable development plans. Some of these tools include:

Identification of Potential Sites: By utilizing geographic data, the application helps in identifying optimal locations for new development projects.



Asset Tracking: The application facilitates tracking and management of assets through geo-tagging, ensuring transparency and effective utilization of resources.

Cost Estimation: Tools are available to estimate the costs associated with different projects, aiding in budgeting and resource allocation.

Impact Assessment: Allows assessment of the potential impact of proposed projects on the local community and environment.

mActionSoft Mobile-Based Solution

Complementing Gram Manchitra, mActionSoft is a mobile-based solution designed to capture photos with geo-tags (GPS Coordinates) specifically for works where assets are created as outputs.

Geo-Tagging Process

Three-Stage Geo-Tagging: The mobile application enables the geo-tagging of assets at three crucial stages of development projects: before the commencement of work, during the work progress, and upon completion of the work.

Asset Repository: This initiative helps create a comprehensive repository of information related to various developmental works, such as natural resource management, water harvesting, sanitation, agriculture, etc. It ensures a detailed record of assets and their development stages.

Integration with Gram Manchitra

The assets geo-tagged using mActionSoft are seamlessly integrated into the Gram Manchitra application. This integration enhances the visual representation and mapping of various developmental works within Gram Panchayats.

Geo-Tagging Finance Commission Funded Assets

Assets created under the finance commission funds are geo-tagged using photographs by the respective Panchayats.

The GIS data of these geotagged assets can be visualized on the map of the Panchayat within the Gram Manchitra application.