

1. US-China Climate Deal Overview

Introduction

The United States and China recently announced a groundbreaking climate deal, signaling a commitment to increase clean energy, reduce fossil fuel dependency, and address global warming. This development holds significant implications, especially in the context of the upcoming COP28, a crucial UN climate conference.

Key Players and Greenhouse Gas Impact

As the two largest historical and current climate polluters, the US and China jointly contribute to 38% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping's agreement is seen as a pivotal step in shaping international climate action.

Pre-COP28 Dynamics and Historical Precedent

With representatives from almost 200 countries convening in Dubai for COP28 in two weeks, the US-China deal injects a sense of ambition into the global climate talks. Drawing parallels with the lead-up to COP21 in 2015, where a similar agreement influenced the language of the Paris Agreement, the current deal could set a template for negotiations.

Criticisms and Concerns

Despite the positive momentum, not all experts are optimistic. Critics argue that this year's conference, held in the UAE, a major oil producer, might be undermined by nonbinding commitments influenced by fossil fuel interests.

Details of the US-China Climate Deal

The agreement outlines ambitious targets, such as tripling global renewable energy capacity by 2030 and reducing reliance on coal, oil, and gas. However, some critics highlight the lack of specific enforcement mechanisms and express concerns about the ambiguous language surrounding fossil fuel displacement.

Methane Commitment and Remaining Challenges

A notable aspect of the deal is China's willingness to address methane emissions, a significant contributor to global warming. Despite this positive step, critics argue that the agreement falls short by not addressing the immediate need to phase out coal use and reduce oil and gas emissions.

Room for Improvement and Criticisms

While the US-China climate deal signifies a resumption of collaborative efforts between major polluters, criticisms persist. Some environmental researchers argue that

the agreement lacks clear commitments to phase out coal and oil, essential steps in averting catastrophic climate change.

In conclusion, while the US-China deal provides momentum for COP28, it also raises questions about the urgency and effectiveness of global efforts to combat climate change.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: The Indian Express

2. Escalation of Conflict in Myanmar

Introduction

A recent coordinated offensive by Myanmar's ethnic rebels against the junta has intensified the ongoing conflict, raising concerns about the junta's ability to maintain control.

Ethnic Rebels Gain Ground

The Three Brotherhood Alliance, a coalition of ethnic minority armed groups, claims territorial gains along Myanmar's border with China, with junta forces reportedly surrendering. Clashes have also erupted in Rakhine State and Chin State, bordering India.

Junta's Response and Civilian Casualties

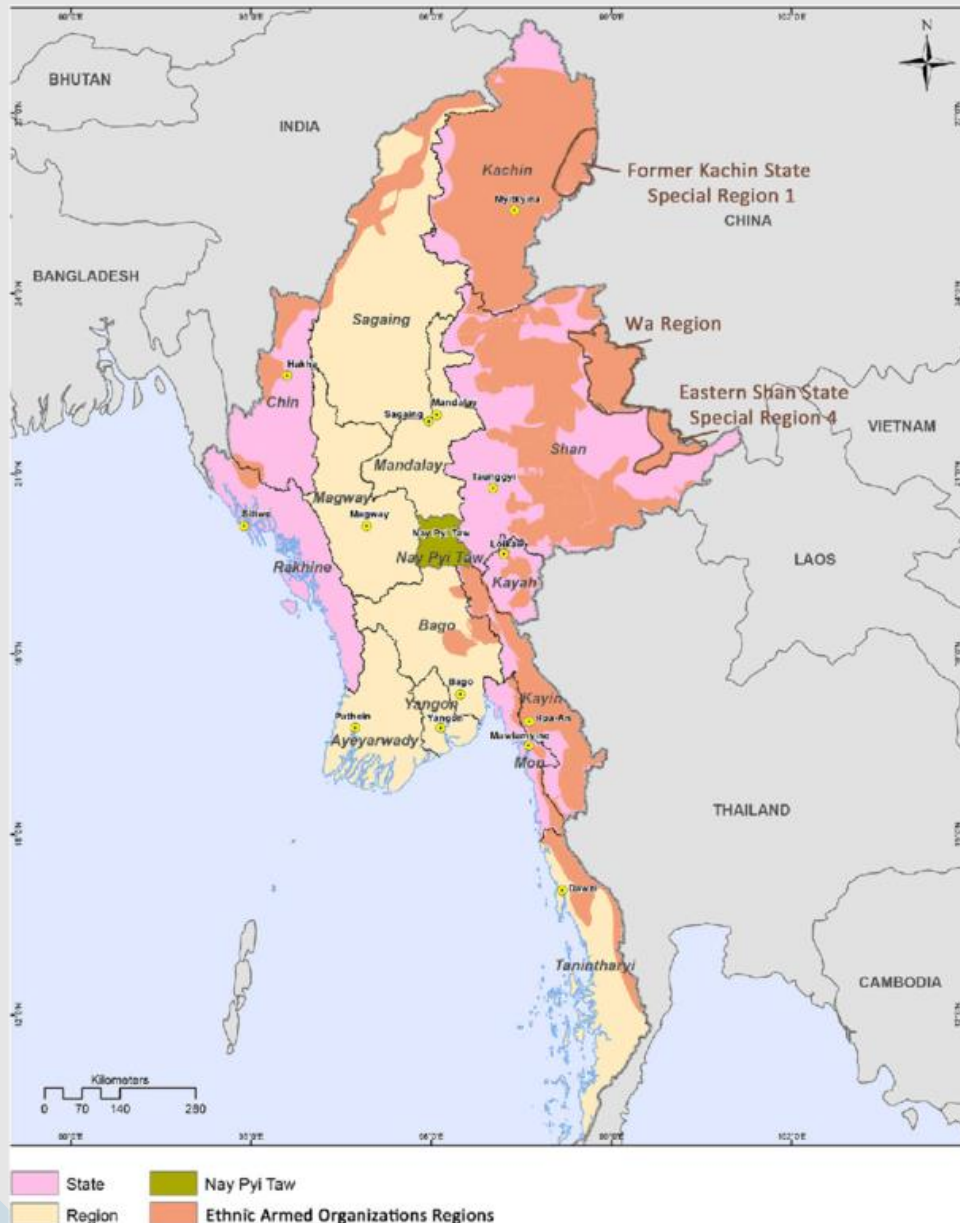
Faced with battlefield setbacks, the junta has resorted to air strikes, resulting in heavy civilian casualties. The military-appointed President, Myint Swe, acknowledges the challenges, emphasizing the need for careful control of the rebel offensive. Despite the junta's use of violence to establish order since the 2021 coup, Myanmar faces ongoing instability.

Shift in Political Dynamics

The pro-democracy movement, once led peacefully by Aung San Suu Kyi, has shifted its approach, forming an underground government and aligning with ethnic rebels. This unexpected outcome poses new challenges for the Junta, Military regime in Myanmar.

Call for Regional Intervention

With over 4,000 civilians killed and 20,000 jailed, along with 1.7 million displaced, there is a pressing need for regional intervention. The rebels, led by a new generation of leaders, call for talks and demand a federal democratic system with autonomy for ethnic minority regions.



Urgency for Ceasefire and Dialogue

As violence continues, especially in areas bordering India and China, there are potential regional repercussions. Major players, including ASEAN, should play a proactive role in achieving a ceasefire, paving the way for meaningful dialogue to restore democracy and freedoms in Myanmar.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: The Hindu

3. First vaccine for chikungunya

Introduction

On November 9, the world's first vaccine for chikungunya was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the U.S. The vaccine has been developed by European vaccine manufacturer Valneva and will be available under the brand Ixchiq. It was approved using the Accelerated Approval pathway, which allows the FDA to clear certain products for serious or life-threatening conditions based on evidence of a product's effectiveness that is likely to provide clinical benefit.

What is chikungunya?

Chikungunya, is characterised by severe joint pain and impaired mobility, and comes with fever. It is a viral infection (CHIKV) transmitted primarily by the *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes and has been described as "an emerging global health threat."

The joint pain is often debilitating and varies in duration; it can last for a few days, but also be prolonged over months. Other symptoms include joint swelling, muscle pain, headache, nausea, fatigue and rash. While severe symptoms and deaths from chikungunya are rare and usually related to other coexisting health problems, it is believed that the numbers are generally underestimated, because chikungunya is often misdiagnosed as dengue or zika, as symptoms can seem similar.

Prevention

As of now, there is no cure, only symptomatic relief, with analgesics to help with the pain, antipyretics for the fever, rest, and adequate fluids.

Prevention includes mosquito control activities, primarily falling under public health outreach and routine civic maintenance. Individuals are also advised to use medicated mosquito nets and ensure that there is no water stagnation in any containers at home, in order to prevent the breeding of mosquitoes.

Spread

The WHO fact sheet says Chikungunya is prevalent in Africa, Asia, and the Americas; but sporadic outbreaks have been reported in other regions. Since 2004, outbreaks of CHIKV have become more frequent and widespread, partly due to viral adaptations allowing the virus to be spread more easily by the *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes.

About Vaccine

Ixchiq is administered as a single dose by injection into the muscle. It contains a live, weakened version of the chikungunya virus and may cause symptoms in the vaccine recipient similar to those experienced by people who have the disease.

Relevance: GS Prelims; S&T

Source: The Hindu