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## 1. Loss and damage fund approved at COP28 summit

### Why in news?

On the opening day of the COP28 climate conference in Dubai, a loss and damage fund to help vulnerable countries cope with the impact of climate change has been officially launched. The initial funding is estimated to be \$475 million — host UAE pledged \$100 million, the European Union promised \$275 million, \$17.5 million from the US, and \$10 million from Japan.

The loss and damage fund was first announced during COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, last year. However, it was not until a few weeks before COP 28 that rich and poor countries managed to iron out some of their differences and agree on key points of the fund.

### What is the loss and damage fund?

The loss and damage fund is a global financial package to ensure the rescue and rehabilitation of countries facing the cascading effects of climate change. The term refers to the compensation that rich nations, whose industrial growth has resulted in global warming and driven the planet into a climate crisis, must pay to poor nations, whose carbon footprint is low but are facing the brunt of rising sea levels, floods, crippling droughts, and intense cyclones, among others.

### How much damage has been caused by industrialisation?

The Industrial Era started in 1850, disrupting Earth's natural mechanism for the production and absorption of greenhouse gases. Today, the US, the UK and the EU are considered to be responsible for 50% of all emissions. Bring Russia, Canada, Japan, and Australia into the picture and it jumps to 65%, i.e. two-thirds of all emissions. Compared to them, India is responsible for only 3% of historical emissions. Meanwhile China, the world's biggest emitter in the last 15 years, is responsible for 30% of global emissions every year.

Greenhouse gases comprise methane, nitrous oxide, water vapour, and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) — with CO<sub>2</sub> responsible for most of the global heating. Carbon particles are being released in extremely large quantities and they have the ability to linger in Earth's atmosphere seemingly endlessly, at least for a millennium or more, and warm it.

### **How much loss and damage is the world facing?**

Research shows that 55 vulnerable countries have suffered \$ 525 billion combined climate crisis-fuelled losses in the last 20 years. The number is estimated to reach \$ 580 billion per year by 2030. Losses and damages will increase in future as global warming continues to rise. It will be unequally distributed and impact developing nations the most and, in them, the socially and financially weaker sections.

### **How big is the fund and how will it operate?**

The World Bank will oversee the loss and damage fund in the beginning, with the source of funds being rich nations, such as the US, the UK and the EU, as well as some developing countries. The scale or the replenishment cycle of the fund remains unclear, but the need of the hour is several trillion dollars.

Previously, the developing nations were not keen to have the World Bank manage the fund as they saw this as a means by which richer nations could have more control over the finances. They have accepted this term now.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: The Indian Express

## **2. Pannun murder plot issue in India-US ties**

### **Why in news?**

India and the US are confronted with a major diplomatic challenge, as an Indian intelligence official stands accused of orchestrating a plot to kill Khalistan separatist Gurbhagat Singh Pannun in New York. The official in question has not been named in the US Justice Department's indictment, identified only as CC-1, the chief conspirator. According to the indictment, in or about May 2023, the Indian official recruited one Nikhil Gupta to kill Pannun.

This is one of the most direct charges made against an Indian government official, and has the potential to cast a shadow on the Indo-US ties.

### **Run-up to indictment**

The Indian government, obviously anticipating the indictment, released a statement suo moto hours earlier, saying it had constituted a high-level inquiry committee on November 18 to probe "all the relevant aspects of the matter". This came days after Delhi said it was examining inputs provided by the US on the alleged plot to kill Pannun.

The constitution of the committee has not been made public, but it is likely to be high-powered and packed with Indian officials from intelligence, investigative and law-enforcement agencies, apart from a nominee of the Indian ministry of external affairs. The US indictment comes after months of diplomatic and intelligence-level conversations between Washington and New Delhi.

### **India's reaction**

India's approach towards the US inputs is telling, considering the manner in which it has so far rejected similar Canadian allegations.

Canada's PM, Justin Trudeau, had alleged the hand of Indian government agencies in the killing of another Khalistan separatist, Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Delhi did not take this kindly, and even called Canada a "safe haven" for "terrorists, extremists and organised crime" — its sharpest choice of words for a Western country in recent years, a language usually reserved for Pakistan and Afghanistan.

But with the US, once the allegations became public, the approach has been much more cooperative. This shows that the government wants to contain the damage and not let it become a full-fledged diplomatic crisis. The MEA spokesperson's response to the indictment that it is a "matter of concern" and "is contrary to Indian government's policy" is an indicator of this approach.

After all, the Indian government is also keen to have Biden here for the Republic Day celebrations in January next year, along with other Quad leaders.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: The Indian Express

## **3. Halal certificate ban in U.P.**

### **Why in news?**

On November 18, the Uttar Pradesh Government's Food Security and Drug Administration banned the "manufacture, sale, storage and distribution of halal-certified products with immediate effect". Halal, an Arabic term, means 'permissible', as opposed to notions of haram (prohibited) in Islam. A halal certificate means the product is fit to be consumed by followers of the faith. It is particularly relevant for meat items and is considered essential while exporting meat to Muslim countries. Following the order, units of police raided various malls across U.P. to seize any halal products.

### **Why was it banned?**

The quick action to raid malls followed a complaint lodged in Lucknow by an office bearer of the youth wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wherein the complainant

accused several halal certifying outfits of issuing “forged” certificates to “increase their sale among a certain community”. They, in the process, violated “public trust” and created “social animosity”, it was alleged. Though many read in the government’s step, yet another action aimed at marginalising the State’s Muslim community, the government insisted it had acted according to the law and fair trade practices.

### **How are halal certificates issued?**

Halal certificates are given by the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind’s Halal Unit and the Halal Shariat Islamic Law Board, both of whom have been cleared by the National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies. While the Shariat Islamic Law Board enjoys permission for certifying food products, the Jamiat’s unit can certify only meat.

These agencies have slammed the decision to ban Halal-certified products. Leading the way, the Jamiat claimed the government had not sent “any notice or circular before the move” and dubbed it “ridiculous and unfortunate”.

### **What about export products?**

Significantly, the ban was imposed only on sales, manufacture and storage within Uttar Pradesh and not meant for export products. Meanwhile, the retailers, whose business was thrown into a chaos due to the hastily imposed ban, revealed that while many vegetarian food items carry Halal certificates when exported to Muslim countries, at times, the packages exceeded the number of export items. Those extra packages were at times used in the domestic market. The products were vegetarian anyway, and hence unlikely to hurt anyone’s sentiments.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: The Hindu