

Current Affairs of the Day

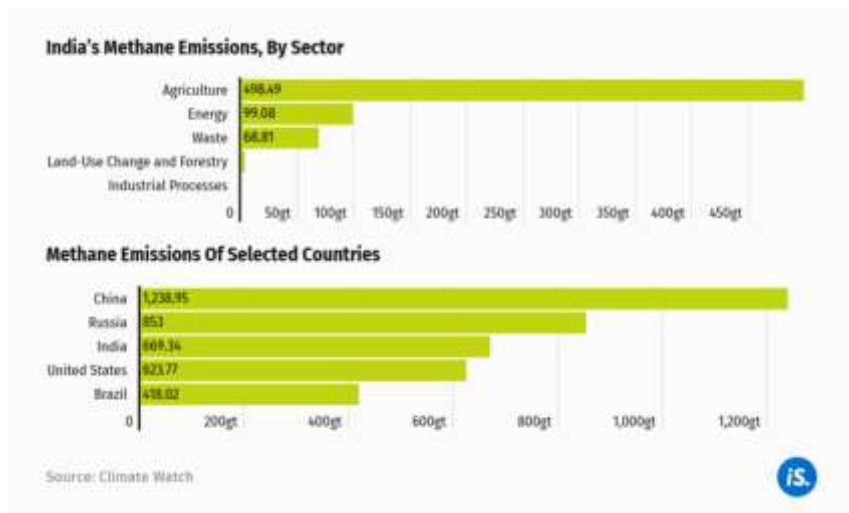
ICMR moots change in cattle rearing practices, shift from coal

1. Senior scientists at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) have recommended that India shift from “traditional animal husbandry practices” and “urgently wean away from coal as its main source of energy”.

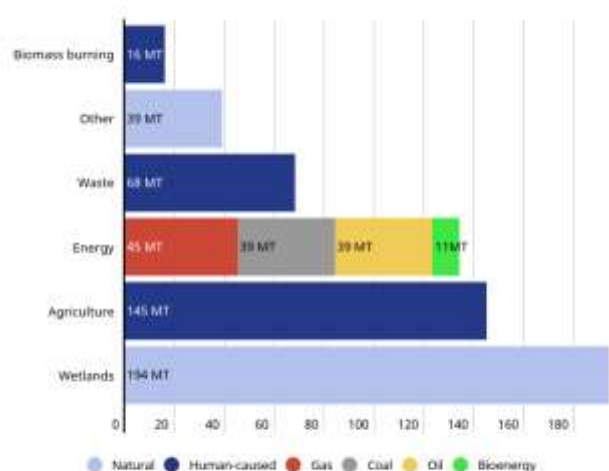
2. This is to combat the challenges of climate change that is posing a global threat, causing premature mortality due to ambient air pollution.

3. The combustion of coal, mainly in power plants followed by industrial and household settings, has resulted in an increase in premature mortality.

4. Therefore, India needs to urgently wean away from coal as its main source of energy and needs to invest more in renewable, cleaner and sustainable sources such as solar, wind or hydro energy.



SOURCES OF METHANE EMISSIONS



MT = Million metric tons

Source: International Energy Agency, Methane Tracker 2020.



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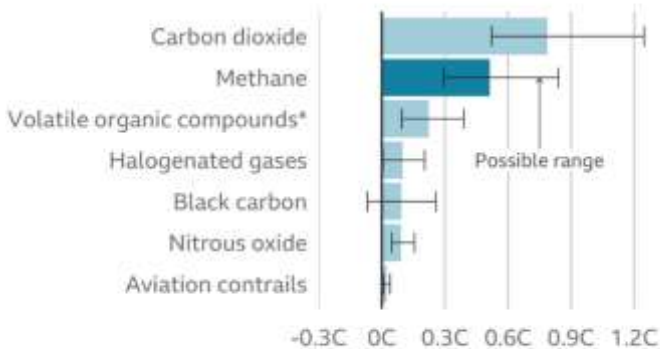
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Just After Glasgow low down:

1. The recommendations come a day after India defended its right at Glasgow, Scotland, to use coal even as it would continue to increase its reliance on renewable sources of energy.
2. India intervened hours before the text of the agreement was finalised to insist that it read that coal would be "phased down" as opposed to "phased out".
3. India was also among the countries that did not sign on a methane pledge. The U.S. and the European Union have jointly pledged to cut emissions of the greenhouse gas methane by 2030 by 30% compared with the 2020 levels.
4. India is the third-largest emitter of methane, primarily because of the size of its rural economy and by virtue of having the largest cattle population.
5. Since 46% of all agricultural emissions in India are contributed by ruminants such as goats, sheep and cattle, India needs to move away from the traditional animal husbandry practices and invest in newer technologies that will improve animal breeding and rearing practices, use of good livestock feeds and implement proper manure management, all of which will contribute to the reduction of the GHG emissions.

Methane is a major contributor to global warming

Contribution to warming in degrees Celsius



Figures are for contributions to 2010-2019 warming relative to 1850-1900
*Volatile organic compounds and carbon monoxide

The methane pledge at COP26 is the first international agreement targeting methane emissions. Countries have pledged to cut methane by 30% by 2030, compared to 2020 levels. If successful, warming is projected to decrease by 0.2°C by 2050.



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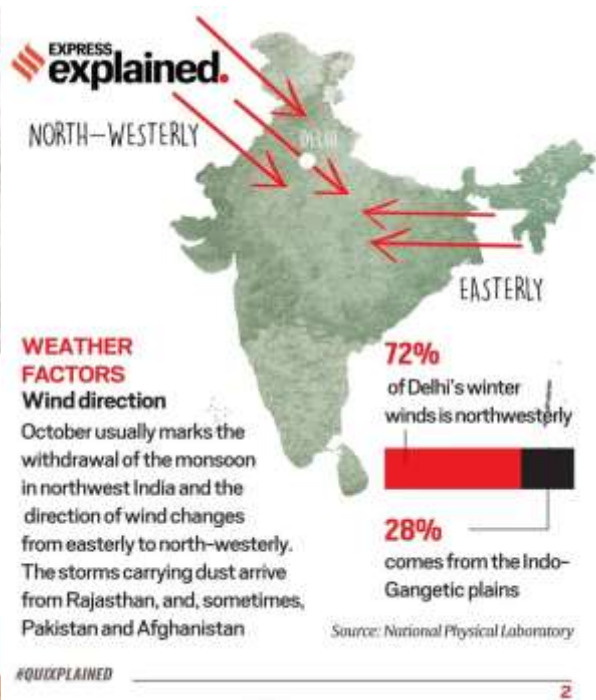
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'Urban factors, not farm fires, cause of pollution'

1. The Supreme Court the "cat is out of the bag" to prove that urban factors such as construction activities, industry, vehicular exhaust and road dust were actually the major causes of pollution in Delhi and not farmers' stubble burning.
2. Chief Justice Ramana said the court had been insisting that stubble burning was not the major cause. "Pollution is caused by city-related issues... You first take care of them and then we will come to stubble burning".
3. During the hearing, the court found that the Centre's Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region (NCR) and Adjoining Areas Act had not "precisely" chalked out a plan to immediately control pollution caused by construction, vehicles, power plants and industries.
4. In fact, the centre said, "drastic steps" like the odd-even vehicles' scheme, ban on entry and plying of trucks in the capital and a complete lockdown had been "deferred" for now. "The severest step would be a lockdown."
5. Senior advocate Vikas Singh, for the petitioners, said the Centre had made a "wrong statement in court today on stubble burning as their high-powered meeting last night has recorded that stubble burning even now is responsible for 35-40% of Delhi's air pollution".





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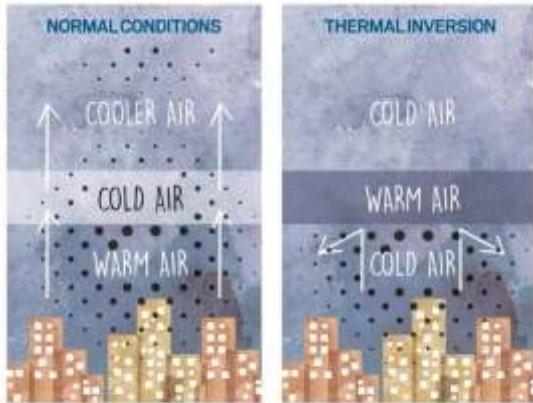
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EXPRESS explained.



Dip in temperature

When the temperature dips, it lowers the inversion height, which is the layer beyond which pollutants cannot disperse into the upper layer of the atmosphere. The concentration of pollutants in the air increases when this happens

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3

EXPRESS explained.

Wind speed

High-speed winds are very effective at dispersing pollutants, but winters bring a dip in wind speed as compared to summers



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EXPRESS explained.

THE ROLE OF FARM FIRES

Farm fires have long been an easy way to get rid of paddy stubble quickly and at low cost

17-26%*
of all particulate matter in Delhi in winters is because of biomass burning

*A study by IIT-Kanpur

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EXPRESS explained.

OTHER MAJOR SOURCES OF POOR AIR QUALITY IN WINTER:

DUST VEHICULAR POLLUTION

Cold, dry weather means dust is prevalent in the entire region

Dust pollution contributes 56% of the PM10	Vehicular pollution contributes 20% of the PM2.5

TEXT: MALLICA JOSHI; ILLUSTRATION: MITHUN CHAKRABORTY

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Will examine the validity of special courts for MPs, MLAs, says SC

1. The Supreme Court decided to examine questions regarding the legal jurisdiction of the special courts set up to exclusively prosecute Members of Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies for various offences.
2. The Madras High Court had raised the issue of the “constitutional validity” of the special courts for MPs/MLAs. The court had even said it was not “legally permissible” to create such special courts. It had said special courts “can only be offence-centric and not offender-centric”.
3. The High Court committee had flagged how a special court to try an MP/MLA could override the jurisdiction of a special court already in existence under an Act.

Right to a rung of appeal

1. The court would also examine whether these special courts deprive the accused of their right to a rung of appeal.
2. Here, the argument raised is that some of these cases are triable by magistrates. In the normal course, if an accused has failed before the magistrate, he or she could file an appeal against the decision before the sessions court.
3. In such cases, the trial judge is the magistrate. The sessions court is the first appellate court and the High Court is the second appellate court.
4. Petitioners have argued that a special court would have the powers of a sessions court. If the case of an MLA or MP whose offence can be tried by a magistrate is directly placed before a special court, the accused would lose his right to defend his case before a magistrate and also is stripped of his right to make his first appeal before a sessions court.

Charting India's path to a 'Digital Rupee'

CBDC wave

1. In late October 2021, Nigeria launched its non-interest-yielding central bank digital currency (CBDC) — the eNaira. In doing so, it joined the Bahamas and five islands in the East Caribbean as the

Digital Payments Gain Currency

CBDC: A legal tender issued by a central bank in a digital form

86% of central banks in the world are researching CBDC. 14% are in pilot testing phase

RBI EXAMINING

Scope: whether retail or wholesale

Technology: distributed ledger or centralised ledger

Validation base: token or account-based system

Distribution format: issued by central bank or by banks

Enabling legal framework amendments to RBI Act, Coinage Act, FEMA, IT Act


CBDC ADVANTAGE

Reduced dependence on cash

Savings on cost of printing currency

A more robust settlement mechanism

Elimination of time and difference in forex transactions





only economies to have introduced CBDCs.

2. In substance, the great hope for the eNaira lies in its perceived potential to address inefficiencies in Nigeria's payment, remittances, and public welfare distribution systems, while progressing financial inclusion.

The Rationale for CBDC:

1. This desire to make domestic payments systems and cross-border remittances cheaper, faster, safer and more efficient, and deepen financial inclusion, represent key areas of priority for most other emerging market and development economies (EMDEs).
2. Central banks, faced with dwindling usage of paper currency, seek to popularize a more acceptable electronic form of currency (like Sweden);
3. Jurisdictions with significant physical cash usage seeking to make issuance more efficient (like Denmark, Germany, or Japan or even the US);
4. Central banks seek to meet the public's need for digital currencies, manifested in the increasing use of private virtual currencies, and thereby avoid the more damaging consequences of such private currencies.
5. An economy that adopts an interest-bearing CBDC could make the interest rate on CBDCs the main tool of monetary policy transmission domestically (assuming a high degree of substitution of fiat and fiat-like currency).
6. In such a case, monetary policy transmission would no longer be constrained by the downward rigidity of interest rates and traditional limitations of zero-lower bound.

Challenges:

1. Given that a CBDC could substitute or complement cash and private e-money, there are also significant domestic economic consequences that will follow the design elements, particularly the potential of CBDCs to be interest-bearing.
2. On the other hand, as former RBI Governor D Subbarao recently warned, rendering an Indian CBDC as an interest-bearing instrument could pose an existential threat to the banking system by eroding its critical role as intermediaries in the economy.
3. The introduction of CBDCs would require central banks to maintain much larger balance sheets, even in non-crisis times.
4. They would need to replace the lost funding (because of migration of deposits) by lending potentially huge sums to financial institutions while



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purchasing correspondingly huge amounts of government and possibly private securities.

5. CBDCs could also have implications for the state from seigniorage as the cost of printing, storing, transporting and distributing currency can be reduced.

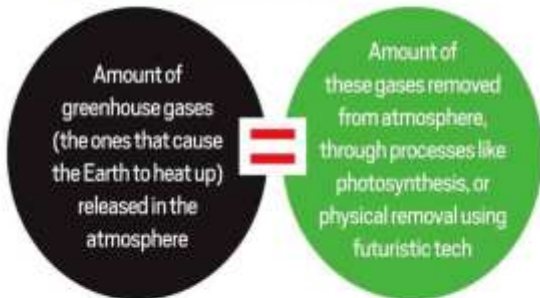
The Introduction of CBDC has the potential to provide significant benefits, such as reduced dependency on cash, higher seigniorage due to lower transaction costs, reduced settlement risk. The Introduction of CBDC would possibly lead to a more robust, efficient, trusted, regulated and legal tender-based payments option. There are associated risks, no doubt, but they need to be carefully evaluated against the potential benefits. It would be RBI's endeavour, as we move forward in the direction of India's CBDC, to take the necessary steps which would reiterate the leadership position of India in payment systems.

Quixplained: 5 terms that came up at the climate change conference in Glasgow



FIVE TERMS THAT CAME UP AT THE CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE IN GLASGOW

NET ZERO



- At Glasgow meet, PM Modi pledged Net Zero for India by 2070

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MITIGATION

Refers to the reduction of greenhouse gases — the only way the rise in global temperatures can be halted in the long term

- At Glasgow meet, one of the main discussions was to increase the ambition of mitigation actions



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EXPRESS explained.

ADAPTATION

All the ways in which human beings, and others, need to adapt to climate change and extreme weather patterns — making agriculture resilient, flood defences, etc

- At Glasgow meet, developed countries were asked to at least double their contribution for adaptation efforts in the developing world



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3

EXPRESS explained.

NDCs

Nationally Determined Contributions or targets set by individual countries to fight climate change. India's NDC: increasing proportion of renewable energy in installed electric capacity, decreasing emissions per unit of GDP, increasing forest cover.

Countries have to update their NDCs every five years

- At Glasgow meet, countries that had not submitted their NDCs for 2020 were asked to do so by 2022



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EXPRESS explained.



CLIMATE FINANCE

All the money required to fund the actions needed to fight climate change. Money is needed for mitigation, adaptation, and to monitor actions countries are taking to keep global temperatures from rising beyond 2 degree Celsius from pre-industrial times.

- At Glasgow meet, developing countries asked developed countries to mobilise at least US\$ 1.3 trillion every year from 2030 onwards

TEXT: ESHA ROY

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Electoral Funding Figures



Parties and their unknown sources of income

About 55% of the funds received by regional parties in FY20 were from unknown sources, an analysis of the Association for Democratic Reforms shows. 'Income from unknown sources' refers to those donations that are made without the details of the donors. These include donations made through electoral bonds, sale of coupons, miscellaneous income and voluntary contributions. On the other hand, when parties provide details of the donors to the Election Commission of India, such donations are referred to as 'income from known sources'. This constituted only 23% of the total funds received by regional parties in FY20. The rest of the 22% were from other known sources such as moveable and immovable assets, membership fees and bank interest. Five parties – TRS, TDP, BJD, YSRCP and DMK – received most of their funds through unknown sources, and almost all of them were through the electoral bonds route.

By The Hindu Data Team

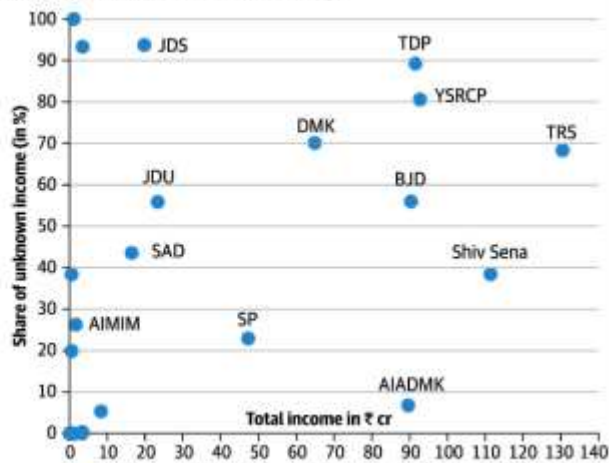
Unknown donors

The chart shows the sources of income of select regional parties in FY20. The total income for the selected regional parties in FY20 amounted to ₹803.24 crore, of which 55% was from unknown sources



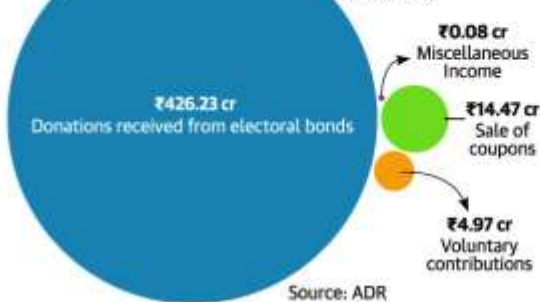
Party-wise share

The chart plots the total income of select regional parties in FY20 against the share from unknown sources. Five parties – TRS, TDP, YSRCP, DMK and BJD – received more than ₹60 crore of funds, of which more than 50% were from unknown sources. The AIADMK, too, received close to ₹90 crore. However, the share of income from unknown sources was less than 10%.



Bonds, electoral bonds

The chart depicts the share of income from unknown sources, under various routes, received by the regional parties in FY20. Nearly 96% of such funds were received through electoral bonds. Other sources such as voluntary contributions and collections from the sale of coupons comprise a very small share of 4%



Absent from the list

Not all regional parties have submitted details of their income and sources to the ECI. A list of such parties:

- About 14 regional parties submitted their total income to the ECI, but information about known sources of income was not available. These parties include the RJD, AJSU, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, All India Forward Bloc, Kerala Congress (M), People's Democratic Alliance, and Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party.

- Two parties – Maharashtra Navnirman Sena and Jammu and Kashmir

- National Conference – submitted information pertaining to income from known sources, but their total income was not available

- For nine parties, neither the total income nor the information related to income from known sources was available. Such parties include the Rashtriya Lok Samta Party, Bodoland Peoples Front, Jammu and Kashmir National Panthers Party, and People's Democratic Front



MCQs	<p>Q1. In late October 2021, Nigeria launched its central bank digital currency (CBDC) – the eNaira. Which of the following can be the advantages of digital currency?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cheaper, faster, safer and more efficient domestic payments systems and cross-border remittances2. Deepening financial inclusion3. Avoid the damaging consequences of such private virtual currencies4. Swift monetary policy transmission <p>Select the correct answer from the codes given below</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. 1 onlyb. 1, 2 and 3 onlyc. 2, 3 and 4 onlyd. 1, 2, 3 and 4
MAINS	<p>Q1. The Introduction of central bank digital currency (CBDC) has the potential to provide significant benefits but it has associated challenges. Discuss.</p>