



Daily Current Affairs Dated On 16-May-2019

COP meetings of Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions:

Why in News?

The joint meetings of three conventions on chemicals and waste that is the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to **Basel Convention** on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (COP 14) was held along with the ninth meeting of the COP to **Rotterdam Convention** on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the ninth meeting of the COP to **Stockholm Convention** on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

The theme of the meetings this year was:

“Clean Planet, Healthy People: Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste”.

Outcome of Meeting:

- In Basel Convention, two important issues were discussed and decided, i.e. technical guidelines on e-waste and inclusion of plastic waste in the PIC procedure.
- The draft technical guidelines stipulated the conditions when used electrical and electronic equipment destined for direct reuse, repair, refurbishment or failure analysis should be considered as non-waste.
- India had major reservations regarding these provisions as in the name of re-use, repair, refurbishment and failure analysis there was a possibility of dumping from the developed world to the developing countries including India in view of the growing consumption of electronic equipment and waste across the world.
- Under the Basel Convention, another major achievement of COP 14 was the decision to amend the convention to include unsorted, mixed and contaminated plastic waste under PIC (Prior Informed Consent) procedure and improve the regulation of its transboundary movement.
- This is a significant step taken towards addressing plastic pollution which has become a major environmental concern across the globe.
- Further, Basel Convention has also adopted partnership on plastic which was welcomed by the Indian delegation.
- These steps will help prevent the illegal dumping of plastic wastes in developing countries.
- Under the Stockholm Convention the COP decided to list “Dicofol” in Annex A without any exemption.



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- The "PFOA" was also listed with some exemptions in the Annex A of the Stockholm Convention.
- Under the Rotterdam Convention, two new chemicals (Phorate and HBCD) were added in the list for mandatory PIC procedure in international trade.

['Christchurch Call to Action'](#)

Why in News?

India on Wednesday signed the '[Christchurch Call to Action](#)'. The agreement came in the backdrop of the attacks on mosques on March 15 and is aimed at stopping abuse of the Internet by extremists.

The meeting held in Paris was attended by representatives of online giants like Microsoft, Google, Twitter, Facebook and Amazon. India was represented by Ajay Prakash Sawhney, Secretary.

What does it say?

- The call is still an unprecedented agreement between governments and all the major tech companies for ongoing collaboration to make the internet safer.
- While it is a voluntary framework, it has been given additional heft after an endorsement from 55 investor funds that will use its \$5 trillion in assets to push the tech companies to follow through on their pledges.
- And five major tech companies have released a series of commitments, including regular publishing of transparency reports about detecting and removing terrorist or violent extremist content on their online platforms, to strengthen the Call to Action.
- They also agree to establish incident management teams to urgently respond to objectionable content.
- Governments and tech companies have agreed to develop technology preventing the upload of such content, counter the roots of violent extremism, increase transparency around the detection and removal of such content, and review the business models that can lead social media users down a dark path to radicalisation.



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- Significantly, tech companies have pledged to review their business models and take action to stop users being funnelled into extremist online rabbit holes that could lead to radicalisation.

Nuclear Dome Leakage:

Why in News?

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres raised concerns on Thursday that a concrete dome built last century to contain waste from atomic bomb tests is leaking radioactive material into the Pacific.

What is Nuclear coffin?

- The “coffin” is a concrete dome, built in the late 1970s, as a dumping ground for waste from the nuclear tests.
- It is built on Runit island, part of Enewetak atoll, as a dumping ground for waste from the nuclear tests.
- Radioactive soil and ash from the explosions was tipped into a crater and capped with a concrete dome 45 centimetres thick.
- However, it was only envisaged as a temporary fix and the bottom of the crater was never lined leading to fears the waste is leaching into the Pacific.
- Cracks have also developed in the concrete after decades of exposure and there are concerns it could break apart if hit by a tropical cyclone.

Background:

- The Pacific was victimised in the past as we all know,” he said, referring to nuclear explosions carried out by the United States and France in the region.
- In the Marshalls, numerous islanders were forcibly evacuated from ancestral lands and resettled, while thousands more were exposed to radioactive fallout.



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- The island nation was ground zero for 67 American nuclear weapons tests from 1946-58 at Bikini and Enewetak atolls, when it was under U.S. administration.
- The tests included the 1954 "Bravo" hydrogen bomb, the most powerful ever detonated by the United States, about 1,000 times bigger than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

Asian summer monsoon:

Why in News?

Rainfall from the Asian summer monsoon, which influences water availability, ecosystems and agriculture in India, has been decreasing over the past 80 years, according to a study.

Details of Study:

- Man-made atmospheric pollutants are likely the reason for the decline unprecedented in the last 448 years, said researchers from the University of Arizona in the U.S.
- The study found the monsoon has been weakening since the 1940s, resulting in regional droughts and hardships.
- The 80-year decline in the monsoon coincides with the ongoing boom in industrial development and aerosol emissions in China and the northern hemisphere that began around the end of World War II, according to the study.

How was study done?

- The study, published in the journal Geophysical Research Letters, used tree ring records to reconstruct the Asian summer monsoon back to 1566.
- Researchers were able to gather nearly 450 years worth of tree ring data with clear annual resolution from an area where tree ring growth correlates very strongly with rainfall.



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- Nearly half of the world's population is affected by the Asian summer monsoon, which dumps the majority of the continent's rainfall in a few short, torrential months.
- The study uses an ensemble of 10 tree ring chronologies collected from the western Loess Plateau in north central China to track precipitation trends over the last 448 years.
- In wetter years, trees tend to grow thicker rings and precipitation records can be gleaned by measuring the thickness and density of the individual layers.
- One of the primary advantages of using tree rings to study precipitation is the annual resolution and the exact dating.

Causative factors:

- Several factors are thought to affect the strength of the Asian Summer Monsoon, including solar variability, volcanic eruptions and anthropogenic aerosols.
- The researchers used climate models to show sulphate aerosols — atmospheric pollutants that cause haze — are likely the dominant forcing agent controlling the decline of the Asian Summer Monsoon over the past 80 years.