

12th Nov, 2024

1. Giving Shape to India’s Carbon Credit Mechanism GS 3 (Environment)

Why in News:

- The focus on climate finance at COP29 is intensifying and a central issue under discussion is the carbon credits framework, especially as it relates to the tensions between developed and developing countries.
- As India strengthens its climate strategies, it has placed a major emphasis on establishing a domestic carbon market, updated in its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in 2023.
- However, to genuinely align this market with its climate and economic goals, India must draw from global lessons to ensure the carbon market’s integrity, efficiency, and fairness.

Carbon Credit Mechanism and India’s Initiatives

- **Carbon Credit Mechanism**
 - Carbon credits represent a quantifiable reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, which can then be bought, sold, or traded.
 - For a carbon market to function effectively and genuinely contribute to emissions reductions, the credibility of its carbon credits is paramount.
 - However, if these credits lack integrity, meaning they do not accurately reflect real, additional emissions reductions, the carbon market risks becoming a tool for greenwashing.
- **India’s Initiatives**
 - India updated its NDCs in 2023 to underline, among other things, the establishment of a domestic carbon market as a part of its climate strategy.
 - The Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act of 2022 provided a statutory mandate for such a Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS).
 - Through this, India aims to align its climate commitments under the Paris Agreement with broader economic goals.
 - Yet, for the market to truly support these objectives, it must be meticulously designed to ensure credibility, efficiency, and fairness
 - From global experiences, India must incorporate pivotal lessons in its carbon market framework for long-term success.

Giving shape to India’s carbon credit mechanism

The Conference of Parties 29, from November 11 to 22, 2024, in Bali, Azerbaijan, is about to shift focus to the heated discussion on the aspect of climate finance again, the essential component of this discussion will be the carbon credits framework and disagreements over it between developed and developing countries. India updated its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in 2023 to underline, among other things, the establishment of a domestic carbon market as a part of its climate strategy. The Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act of 2022 provided a statutory mandate for such a Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS). Through this, India aims to align its climate commitments under the Paris Agreement with broader economic goals. It is for the market to truly support these objectives, it must be meticulously designed to ensure credibility, efficiency, and fairness. From global experiences, India must incorporate pivotal lessons in its carbon market framework for long-term success.

Upholding integrity of carbon credits At the heart of any carbon market lies the integrity of its carbon credits. The global experience has seen the repercussions of inadequate accountability in credit generation, leading to instances of greenwashing. This issue is pronounced in the voluntary carbon market (VCM), where investors have reported overstatements of project benefits, especially within the forestry sector. A similar risk is feared in India's voluntary carbon market operationalised under the Green Credit Programme (GCP). The tree plantation guidelines released by the government under the GCP were criticised for perpetrating greenwashing by encouraging non-scientific tree plantations. It is also feared that under the CCTS, projects may fail to ensure "additionality," a critical measure ensuring that emission reductions exceed those of a business-as-usual scenario. To mitigate these challenges, India must enforce rigorous protocols to verify the authenticity of generated carbon credits. A proposed national registry would be a robust mechanism to track carbon credits and address potential double-counting issues. Additionally, independent third-party verifiers can play a crucial role in assessing the additionality and permanence of carbon reduction projects. By creating international best practices from entities such as the IETA or Gold Standard that have already emphasised the generation of carbon credits, India can cultivate a high-integrity market, attracting domestic and global investors.

Alignment with global standards India's carbon market must also harmonise with international carbon trading mechanisms, notably Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. Article 6 outlines a critical aspect for participating nations: the "integrity of market." In line with the COP26 summit in Glasgow, nations have committed to engage in carbon trading while "upholding environmental integrity." For India, this means incorporating mechanisms to prevent the double counting of credits, a crucial step to maintain the credibility of global emission reduction efforts. India can align its market with domestic and international standards by integrating transparent systems for accounting emissions reductions and carbon credit transfers. Such alignment and a focus on global best practices will enable India to contribute to global emission reductions while actively safeguarding national interests.

One of the critical aspects in ensuring environmental integrity, specifically under Article 6, which establishes a framework for countries to cooperate on climate mitigation efforts through international carbon markets. The World Bank's "Ensuring Environmental Integrity under Article 6 Mechanisms" report emphasises maintaining robust environmental integrity within carbon markets, especially under the Paris Agreement's Article 6 framework. It highlights that carbon markets risk double-counting emissions reductions without stringent safeguards, which can dilute the credibility of climate commitments. The report stressed that high governance, verification, and accountability standards are necessary to avoid "low quality" carbon credits from entering the market.

Focus on disclosure Ensuring transparency is one mechanism to ensure compliance and conformance with such standards. To enhance transparency and uphold environmental integrity within India's carbon credit system, it is imperative to have comprehensive disclosure of project details, including carbon reduction techniques, benchmarks and third-party verification reports, on a centralised, easily accessible platform. However, that project alone is not sufficient. Additional criteria guarantees that the credits reflect real, additional emissions reductions. Regular audits are essential for verifying the sustainability of these projects. Oversight by independent auditors approved by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in India is critical, alongside real-time tracking of credit transactions to boost accountability and provide insight into the types of projects and their environmental impacts.

The Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative (VCMi) framework introduces a tiered system for companies to assess carbon credit claims. This is to ensure the credibility of carbon offset claims, aiming to enhance market transparency. However, implementation faces challenges, especially within India's CCTS initiatives, due to potential transparency issues and the high costs of establishing monitoring, reporting, and verification systems. These costs could deter smaller projects initially.

India's carbon credit mechanisms, while its emissions, demands stringent enforcement and alignment with international and domestic policies to be effective. By focusing on transparency and integrity, India has the opportunity to not only provide for a more mature carbon market but also to stimulate its climate finance ecosystem, paving the way for practical, sustainable development.

- **For a project to generate carbon credits, it must prove that the emissions reductions would not have occurred without the project**—i.e., they go beyond a business-as-usual scenario.
- **Without strict additionality criteria, carbon credits may be awarded for activities that would have taken place anyway**, undermining the legitimacy of emissions reductions.
- **Key Measures to Strengthen Integrity**
 - **Stringent Verification Protocols**
 - To address these challenges, **India's carbon credit system must adopt stringent verification protocols.**
 - A **robust national registry could serve as a central repository to track carbon credits** issued in the country.
 - **This registry would help prevent issues such as double-counting**, where a single reduction is claimed by more than one entity, thus distorting the actual environmental impact.
 - **Ensuring accurate tracking of credits is essential** to maintain transparency and integrity, giving investors and other stakeholders confidence in the market.
 - **Learning from International Best Practices**
 - To further enhance the integrity of its carbon market, **India can look to international standards set by organisations such as the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA) and the Gold Standard.**
 - The **Gold Standard, for example, has stringent requirements for additionality, permanence, and sustainability**, aiming to ensure that all credits generated are credible and contribute to real climate benefits.
 - **Emulating such best practices would help India align its market with global expectations**, which is crucial for integrating its carbon credits into the broader international trading framework.
- **Some Other Necessary Measures for India in its Carbon Market Framework for Long-Term Success and Integrity**
 - **Alignment with Global Standards**
 - **Smooth Integration**
 - India's carbon market framework also **needs to integrate smoothly with international standards, particularly under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.**
 - **Article 6.2 of this agreement allows countries to reach climate targets through Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs)**, making compliance essential for participating nations.
 - The **rulebook for Article 6, finalised at COP26 in Glasgow, provides guidelines for carbon trading** while maintaining environmental integrity.
 - **Prevention of Double-Counting Mechanisms**
 - For India, **adopting mechanisms to prevent double-counting is essential** to uphold the credibility of global emissions reduction efforts.
 - **Incorporating transparent systems for tracking emissions reductions and carbon credit transfers can help India** harmonise its market with international standards.
 - By doing so, **India can not only contribute to global emissions reductions but also protect its national interests.**
 - **Transparency and Disclosure**
 - **Transparency is vital for compliance with global standards** and for instilling confidence in India's carbon market.
 - **Detailed disclosures about carbon reduction techniques**, project benchmarks, and third-party verification reports **should be readily accessible** on a centralized platform.
 - This **approach would ensure that projects meet stringent additionality criteria**, reflecting genuine emissions reductions.

- **Regular audits and oversight by independent auditors, certified by India's Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), would further verify the sustainability of these projects.**
- **Real-Time Tracking of Credit Transactions**
 - Additionally, **real-time tracking of credit transactions could improve accountability** and provide insights into the environmental impact of each project.
 - The **Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative (VCMI) framework offers a tiered system for companies to assess their carbon credit claims**, aiming to boost transparency in the market.
 - However, **implementing such a framework may pose challenges for India's CCTS initiatives due to transparency concerns** and the high costs of establishing monitoring, reporting, and verification systems, potentially discouraging smaller projects from participating initially.

● **Conclusion**

- **India's carbon credit market is in its initial stage, and its success depends on stringent enforcement and alignment with both international and domestic realities.**
- **By prioritising transparency and maintaining rigorous standards of integrity, India can lay the foundation for a robust carbon market.**
- **Such a market would not only advance India's climate finance goals but also support its broader sustainable development objectives.**

2. Aligarh Muslim University

Recent events of importance

- **Why in News:** The Supreme Court recently overruled its 1967 judgement about the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) that became the basis for denying the minority status to the institute.

● **About Aligarh Muslim University:**

- It is a **government-run education institution** situated in **Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh.**
- **History**

- It was originally established by social reformer **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan** as the **Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875.**
- In the aftermath of the 1857 Indian War of Independence, the College was built on Khan's conviction that it was important for Muslims to gain education and become involved in public life and government services in India.
- **Raja Jai Kishan helped Sir Syed** establish the college.
- **Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College became AMU in 1920, following the Aligarh Muslim University Act.**
- From its very inception, it has kept its door **open to members of all communities** and from all corners of the country and the world.
- The university is **open to all irrespective of caste, creed, religion, or gender.**
- AMU is recognised by the University Grant Commission (UGC) and the Association of Indian Universities (AIU).
- AMU offers more than 300 courses in the **traditional and modern branches of education.**
- It draws students from all states in India and from different countries, especially Africa, West Asia, and Southeast Asia.
- In some courses, seats are reserved for students from **SAARC and Commonwealth Countries.**
- It has **three off-campus centres:** AMU Malappuram Campus (Kerala), AMU Murshidabad Centre (West Bengal), and Kishanganj Centre (Bihar).

Can AMU finally claim a 'minority' status?

What does Article 30(1) of the Constitution say? Why did the 1967 Love Rajput judgement state that Aligarh Muslim University cannot be considered a minority institution? On what grounds has the 1967 judgement been revoked by the Supreme Court now?

- **Minority Status of AMU:**

- In 1967, a five-judge Constitution bench in the **Azeez Basha vs. Union of India** case held that since AMU was a central university, it could not be considered a minority institution.
- AMU got back its minority status when Parliament passed the **AMU (Amendment) Act in 1981**.
- In January 2006, the Allahabad High Court struck down the provision of the 1981 law by which AMU was accorded the minority status.
- Later, appeals were filed in the Supreme Court challenging the high court verdict.
- On January 9, 2024, a seven-judge bench of the **Supreme Court commenced hearing arguments** on the vexed question of minority status of AMU.
- It **overruled judgement in the 1967 Azeez Basha case** and also said that a new bench would decide on the minority status of the AMU.
- The judgement underlined the importance of identifying the university's actual point of origin-its genesis- to establish its minority status.

3. **Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher** **GS 2 (Security)**

- **Why in News:** France is considering India's Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launch (MBRL) system for its requirements and is soon going to carry out a detailed evaluation of the system.
- **About Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher:**
 - It is designed by the **Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE)**, a laboratory of the DRDO.
 - It was first used during the Kargil War, where it successfully neutralised Pakistan Army positions on the mountain tops.
 - It delivers lethal and responsive fire against a variety of area targets, such as exposed enemy troops, armoured and soft-skin vehicles, communication centres, air terminal complexes, and fuel and ammunition dumps.
 - **Features:**
 - It consists of a **multi-tube launcher vehicle**, a replenishment-cum-loader vehicle, a replenishment vehicle, and a command post vehicle.
 - The rocket launcher has two pods containing six rockets each and can neutralise an area of 700 × 500 square metres within 48 seconds.
 - The launcher system is supported on four hydraulically-actuated outriggers at the time of firing.
 - **Range:** It has a range of **60 to 75 kilometers**.
 - The system is mounted on a Tatra truck for mobility.
 - Its success has already extended beyond India's borders, with countries like Armenia placing orders, and many others expressing interest in acquiring the system.
 - It is suitable for different types of military engagements, such as counter-terrorism, border defence and conventional warfare.

4. **Gluten** **GS 2 (Health)**

- **Why in News:** Gluten is infamous for the allergic reaction it induces in some people.
- **About Gluten:**
 - It is a **protein found** in the wheat plant and some other grains.
 - Many cereal grains — but in particular **barley, wheat, and rye** — contain specific proteins that, when mixed with water and kneaded, create an elastic mass.
 - Two important types of these proteins are **gliadins and glutenins**. At the microscopic level, gluten is an elastic mesh of the protein molecules.

- It is **naturally occurring, but it can be extracted**, concentrated and added to food and other products to add protein, texture and flavor.
- It also works as a binding agent to hold processed foods together and give them shape.
- It allows the dough to rise and gives it its chewy character.
- The ability of gliadins and glutenins to create gluten makes them prized ingredients in the food industry.
- **Issues of Gluten**
 - An **enzyme called protease** helps digest proteins but it cannot break down gluten. When such gluten reaches the small intestine, the body can develop gastrointestinal problems.
 - **Coeliac disease:** It's characterised by a severe allergic reaction in the small intestine, prompting the immune system to produce a large number of antibodies that attack the body's own proteins. The disease is present in around 2% of the general population.

5. NGOs to Lose FCRA License over Conversions, Anti-Development Acts: MHA GS 2 (Governance)

- **Why in News:** Central Government announced that any NGO involved in anti-developmental activities and forced religious conversions will face cancellation of their registration under Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010.
- **About Foreign Contribution Regulation Act:**
 - The FCRA was first enacted in 1976 in order to maintain strict control over voluntary organisations and political associations that received foreign fundings.
 - **In 2010, the Act was repealed and a new Act with strict provisions was enacted.**
 - **Objective:** To regulate foreign donations and ensure that such contributions do not adversely affect internal security of India.
 - **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs
 - It is applicable to all associations, groups and NGOs which intend to receive foreign donations.
- **Major Provisions Under the FCRA, 2010:**
 - It is **mandatory for all such NGOs to register themselves under the FCRA.**
 - The registration is initially valid for five years and it can be renewed subsequently if they comply with all norms.
 - For such NGOs, **filing of annual returns**, on the lines of Income Tax, is compulsory.
 - In 2015, the MHA notified new rules, which required NGOs to give an undertaking that the acceptance of foreign funds:
 - Does not affect the sovereignty and integrity of India
 - Does not impact the friendly relations with any foreign state
 - Does not disrupt communal harmony
 - All such NGOs would have to operate accounts in either nationalised or private banks which have core banking facilities to allow security agencies access on a real time basis.
- **For What Purpose a Registered NGO can Receive Foreign Contributions?**
 - A registered NGO can receive foreign contributions for the following five purposes:
 - Social
 - Educational
 - Religious
 - Economic
 - Cultural

Govt: NGOs to lose FCRA licence over conversions, anti-development acts

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 11

THE CENTRE on Monday announced that any NGO involved in anti-developmental activities and forced religious conversions will face cancellation of their registration under Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010.

A notice issued on November 8 by Director (FCRA) K Sanjayan said that any NGO whose acceptance of foreign funding may affect social or religious harmony will face cancellation of its FCRA registration. "...If an NGO has diverted foreign contribution for carrying out anti-development activities or inciting malicious protests, field inquiry has revealed the likelihood of personal gain by the organisation or by the office-

bearers, or the foreign contribution is likely to have been utilised for undesirable activities, linkage with terrorist organisations or anti-national organisations, key functionaries have links with terrorist or radical organisations, their FCRA registration would be cancelled," the notice said.

"If any field agency has reported adverse inputs against the NGO and its acceptance of foreign funding is likely to affect social, religious harmony or is involved in induced, forceful religious conversion or proselytisation or its office-bearers have linkage with radical organisations, the organisation will also face action under the FCRA," it added.

According to the notice, not utilising any foreign funding for projects as per the aims and objectives of the NGO would also invite FCRA cancellation.

- **Who Cannot Receive Foreign Funding?**
 - Following individuals/organizations cannot receive foreign funding:
 - A candidate contesting elections
 - Media persons
 - Judges
 - Government employees
 - Political parties
- **Foreign Contribution Regulation Amendment Act, 2020:**
 - The Amendment adds Public Servants to the list of people who cannot accept foreign contributions.
 - It **prohibits the transfer of foreign contribution to any other person.**
 - The term 'person' under the Act includes an individual, an association, or a registered company
 - It makes it **mandatory to provide Aadhar number** for any person seeking prior permission, registration or renewal of registration.
 - It provides that the government may conduct an inquiry before renewing the certificate.
 - It adds a provision allowing the central government to permit a person to surrender their registration certificate.
 - It makes it mandatory for all NGOs receiving foreign aid to **open an account in State Bank of India's New Delhi branch.**
- **News Summary:**
 - The Indian government announced that NGOs involved in anti-development activities, forced religious conversions, or actions affecting social or religious harmony may have their Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration cancelled.
 - The notice states that NGOs using foreign funds for personal gain, undesirable activities, or with links to terrorist or radical groups will also face cancellation.
 - Additionally, NGOs not using foreign funds according to their stated objectives may lose their FCRA registration.

MCQ Current Affairs
12th Nov, 2024

1. Consider the following statements regarding Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT):

- A. It is an intergovernmental organization established with the aim of promoting ICT development in the Asia-Pacific region.
- B. It was founded on the joint initiatives of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

2. The Sirpur Lake, recently seen in the news, is located in which one of the following cities?

- a) Bhopal
- b) Nagpur
- c) Udaipur
- d) Indore

3. With reference to Aligarh Muslim University, consider the following statements:

- A. It is government-run education institution situated in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh.
- B. It was originally established by social reformer Sir Syed Ahmad Khan as the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College.
- C. The university is open to all, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, or gender.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

4. The Subansiri Lower Hydro Electric Project is located on the border of which of the following states?

- a) Assam and Manipur
- b) Arunachal Pradesh and Assam
- c) West Bengal and Sikkim
- d) Meghalaya and Nagaland

5. Consider the following statements regarding the Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher:

- A. It consists of a multi-tube launcher vehicle and has a range of 60 to 75 kilometers.
- B. It is developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

MCQ Current Affairs
12th Nov, 2024

1. c
2. d
3. c
4. b
5. c

