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1. MINAMATA CONVENTION

The report, '**Towards a pollution-free planet**', was launched during the **first Conference of Parties for the Minamata Convention**, which addresses mercury issues.

ABOUT CONVENTION:

- ✚ It is an international treaty designed to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds. The Convention is named after the Japanese city, Minamata. This naming is of symbolic importance as the city went through devastating incident of mercury poisoning.
- ✚ The convention has prohibited a myriad of products containing mercury, and their production and trade will be altogether prohibited by 2020. These products include batteries, compact fluorescent lamps, switches and relays, soaps and cosmetics, thermometers, and blood pressure devices. Furthermore, it has gone as far as prohibiting vaccines containing mercury, as well as dental fillings which use mercury amalgam. The biggest mercury release comes from coal-fired power stations and usage of mercury to separate gold from ore-bearing rock. Mercury from the factories is released into a river system.
- ✚ The Convention requires countries to come up with plans to reduce the amount of mercury used by gold miners. The treaty also organizes and support financially mercury awareness campaigns by which it gives support for mercury-free alternatives.

2. SOLID EFFORT BRINGS LAURELS TO ALAPPUZHA

- ✚ Alappuzha is among **five cities of the world** whose efforts in solid waste management have been recognized as success stories by the United Nations environment body United Nations Environment Programme (**UNEP**). Besides Alappuzha, the other cities that feature in the list are Osaka (Japan), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Penang (Malaysia) and Cajica (Colombia).
- ✚ In a report, '**Solid approach to waste: how 5 cities are beating pollution**', it notes that while many have yet to rise to the challenge, these five cities have successfully created 'a solid approach to waste. 'According to the UNEP Alappuzha addressed the problem by introducing a decentralized waste management system.

3. GREEN BUILDINGS AND RATINGS

A green building is one which uses less energy, water and natural resources, creates less waste and is healthier for the people living inside compared to a standard building.

LEED:

- ✚ **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)** is one of the most popular green building certification programs used worldwide.
- ✚ Developed by the non-profit **U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC)** it includes a set of rating systems for the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of green buildings, homes, and neighborhoods. Its aim is to help building owners and operators be environmentally responsible and use resources efficiently.
- ✚ It has **4 types of ratings**: Certified < Silver < Gold < Platinum.

Certification Standards Worldwide: 1) UK: Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (**BREEAM**) 2) Australia: **Green Star**

India:

1. Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA): Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA) is India's own rating system jointly developed by **TERI** and the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy**. It is a green building design evaluation system where buildings are rated in a three-tier process.

The GRIHA Rating System contains 34 evaluation criteria with 100 points. These criteria have been categorized into (i) Site Planning including conservation and efficient utilization of resources, health and wellbeing during building planning and construction stage (ii) Water Conservation (iii) Energy Efficiency including energy embodied & construction and renewable energy (iv) Waste Management including waste minimization, segregation, storage, disposal and recovery of energy from waste and (v) Environment for good health and wellbeing.

2. The Indian Green Building Council has adapted LEED system and has launched LEED India version for rating of new construction.

3. Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE): BEE developed its own rating system Energy Performance Index (**EPI**) for the buildings based on a **1 to 5 star scale**. More stars mean more energy efficiency.

4. INTERNET MUST BE OPEN: TRAI BACKS NET NEUTRALITY

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) recommended upholding the basic principle of net neutrality by keeping the Internet open and prohibiting any service provider from discriminating on the basis of content by either blocking, throttling, or “fast-laning” any apps, websites or web services.

- ✚ TRAI recommended that the use of Internet should be facilitated in such a manner that it advances the free speech rights of citizens, by ensuring plurality and diversity of views, opinions and ideas.
- ✚ TRAI also recommended that “specialised services” and content delivery networks (CDNs) be excluded from the scope of “any rules on net neutrality”. While the regulator has not laid down a clear definition of specialised services, it said the DoT may identify these services, and the status should only be given if a service follows two broad principles. First, “such services are not usable or offered as a replacement for Internet access services”; and second, “the provision of such services should not be detrimental to the availability and overall quality of Internet access services”.
- ✚ The recommendations also call for keeping Internet of Things (IoT) within the purview of non-discriminatory restriction, with the exception of critical services.
- ✚ The regulator has also suggested exempting CDNs from the scope of net neutrality rules, arguing that CDNs add efficiency to the network by reducing latency, mitigating congestion and freeing up network capacity for other purposes. CDNs are a layer in Internet networks (outside public Internet), used by content generators to store their data at suitable geographical locations. TRAI has added a rider calling for more transparency relating to arrangements between telecom companies and CDNs.
- ✚ TRAI has also suggested allowing telecom and Internet service providers to deploy “reasonable” traffic management practices from time to time, given that such interventions are “proportionate, transient and transparent in nature”. To monitor and investigate whether service providers are adhering to the rules, the regulator also suggested that a multi-stakeholder body be set up, led by industry, and comprising members representing different telecom and Internet service providers, large and small content providers, representatives from research, academia, civil society organizations and consumer bodies.

5. UN PARTITION PLAN - RESOLUTION 181 (ISRAEL-PALESTINE)

- ✚ Following Britain's announcement in February 1947 of its intention to terminate its Mandate government, the UN General Assembly appointed a special committee - the United Nations Special

Committee on Palestine - to make recommendations on the land's future government. UNSCOP **recommended the establishment of two separate states**, Jewish and Arab, to be joined by economic union, with the Jerusalem-Bethlehem region as an enclave under international administration.

- ✚ On 29 November 1947 the UN General Assembly voted on the partition plan, adopted by 33 votes to 13 with 10 abstentions. The Jewish side accepted the UN plan for the establishment of two states. The Arabs rejected it and launched a war of annihilation against the Jewish state.

6. INDIA LOSES BILLIONS TO AIR POLLUTION: UN

India had the **highest share of welfare costs** (loss of income from labour), of about \$220 billion in South and South-East Asia of a combined total of \$380 billion from mortality due to air pollution, according to a report by the United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP).

- ✚ The global mortality costs from outdoor air pollution are projected to rise to about \$25 trillion by 2060 in the absence of more stringent measures. At regional and national scale, China's welfare costs from mortality were the highest at nearly \$1 trillion followed by the Organization for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) countries with a combined total of \$730 billion.
- ✚ Although certain forms of pollution have been reduced as "technologies and management strategies have advanced," approximately 19 million premature deaths are estimated to occur annually as a result of the way societies use natural resources and impact the environment to support production and consumption.
- ✚ If consumption and production patterns continue as they are, the linear economic model of '**take-make-dispose**' will seriously burden an already-polluted planet, affecting current and future generations.
- ✚ To curb pollution in various forms, the UNEP called for strong high-level political commitment and engagement of the local government, civil society and other stakeholders. To achieve high level political commitment in key economic sectors, there is a need to go beyond the environmental ministries and include other relevant ministries such as finance, agriculture, industry, urban, transport, energy and health.
- ✚ There is also a need to engage the local government, civil society organizations, business leaders, industries, trade unions and citizens at large. Reporting on the progress that comes from acting on pollution – whether through voluntary measures or formal laws – is a crucial step in this transition.

7. FIRST PHASE OF CHABAHAR PORT WORK OVER

Iran has conveyed to India that it has completed the first phase of work on Chabahar port.

Chabahar port

- ✚ It is located on the Makran coast, Chabahar in southeastern Iran. Its location lies in the Gulf of Oman.
- ✚ This coast is a relatively underdeveloped free trade and industrial zone, especially when compared to the sprawling port of Bandar Abbas further west. Also, it is the only Iranian port with direct access to the ocean.

Delaram-Zaranj Highway

- ✚ Route 606, also known as Delaram-Zaranj Highway is a roadway in the Nimruz Province of Afghanistan connecting the Delaram District in Afghanistan to the border of Iran. The opposite way goes towards the south near Zaranj, Afghanistan. It is one of the busiest roads in Afghanistan and provides an important trade route between Iran and the rest of Asia. Route 606 reduces travel time between Delaram and Zaranj from the earlier 12–14 hours to just 2 hours.
- ✚ India helped build the road to bypass Pakistan during commercial trade. The Delaram-Zaranj Highway was financed fully **by development grants** from the Government of India. The highway was designed and constructed by the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** of India. The highway was opened to the public on 22 January 2009.