

Current Affairs

UPSC Prelims 2024

LECTURE-03

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Topic

- Foreign Contribution Regulation Act
- Why is Canada limiting the entry of foreign students? Will it impact Indian students?
- Suryodaya Yojana
- India-Myanmar border Free Movement Regime
- Places in News: Lake Victoria
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Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

Background

- The FCRA was enacted **during the Emergency in 1976 amid apprehensions that foreign powers were interfering in India's affairs** by pumping money into the country through independent organisations.
- These concerns were, in fact, even older — **they had been expressed in Parliament as early as in 1969.**
- The law sought **to regulate foreign donations to individuals and associations** so that they functioned “in a manner consistent with the values of a sovereign democratic republic”.
- An amended FCRA was enacted under the UPA government **in 2010 to “consolidate the law” on the utilisation of foreign funds, and “to prohibit” their use for “any activities detrimental to national interest”.**
- The law was amended again by the current government in 2020, **giving the government tighter control and scrutiny over the receipt and utilisation of foreign funds by NGOs.**

Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

Provisions of the Act

Broadly, the FCRA requires every person or NGO seeking to receive foreign donations to be

- (i) registered under the Act,
- (ii) to open a bank account for the receipt of the foreign funds in State Bank of India, Delhi, and
- (iii) to utilise those funds only for the purpose for which they have been received and as stipulated in the Act.

They are also required to file annual returns, and they must not transfer the funds to another NGO.

The Act prohibits the receipt of foreign funds by candidates for elections, journalists or newspaper and media broadcast companies, judges and government servants, members of legislature and political parties or their office-bearers, and organisations of a political nature.

Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

For how long is the approval granted?

Once granted, FCRA registration is valid for five years.

NGOs are expected to apply for renewal within six months of the date of expiry of registration.

In case of failure to apply for renewal, the registration is deemed to have expired, and the NGO is no longer entitled to receive foreign funds or utilise its existing funds without permission from the ministry.

How many cancellations?

The government has deregistered around 16,700 non-governmental organisations in the last seven years (2015-2022). In 2015, there were almost 10,000 cancellations.

Until 2011, there were more than 40,000 NGOs registered under FCRA in India. That number now stands at 16,000.

Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

Significance of NGOs:

Social Development: NGOs often work at the grassroots level, addressing issues related to poverty, education, healthcare, and social justice.

Advocacy and Awareness: NGOs act as advocates for social issues, working to raise awareness about important topics such as gender equality, human rights, and environmental sustainability.

Humanitarian Aid: NGOs are often involved in providing humanitarian aid during natural disasters, emergencies, and other crises. They contribute to relief efforts, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.

Capacity Building: NGOs work towards building the capacities of local communities by providing education, vocational training, and skill development programs.

Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

Significance of NGOs:

Healthcare Services: Many NGOs in India focus on healthcare initiatives, providing medical facilities, conducting awareness programs, and working to improve public health outcomes.

Environmental Conservation: They work towards biodiversity protection, promoting eco-friendly practices, and addressing climate change issues.

Education and Research: NGOs contribute to the education sector by establishing schools, supporting educational programs, and conducting research to improve the quality of education in India.

Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

Challenges:

Regulatory Constraints: NGOs in India face regulatory challenges due to complex registration processes and changing government regulations, which may hinder their operations. ✓

Funding Issues: Many NGOs struggle with financial sustainability. Dependency on external funding sources, uncertainties in funding, and competition for resources pose significant challenges. ✓

Government Relations: NGOs sometimes face challenges in maintaining positive relationships with government bodies.

Accountability and Transparency: Some NGOs struggle with issues related to accountability and transparency in their operations.

Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

Challenges:

Capacity and Skill Gaps: NGOs may face challenges in terms of organizational capacity and the availability of skilled personnel. This can affect the efficiency and impact of their projects.

Geographic and Cultural Diversity: India's vast geographic and cultural diversity poses challenges for NGOs in ensuring that their initiatives are culturally sensitive and applicable across different regions.

Political Sensitivities: NGOs may encounter political sensitivities that can impact their ability to work freely. Issues related to advocacy, especially on politically sensitive topics, may face resistance.

Why is Canada limiting the entry of foreign students? Will it impact Indian students?

Context:-Canada imposes a two-year cap on foreign student intake due to housing shortage.

What is the aim:-Crackdown aims to address housing crisis and concerns about education quality.

Data/facts:-

Last year, study permits issued tripled to nearly 1 million.

New plan cuts intake by almost a third, issuing about 364,000 visas in 2024.

International students, comprising 4.6% of 1.1 million food service workers in 2023, contribute to the issue.

Canadian banks benefit from students needing Guaranteed Investment Certificates (GICs).

India sends the majority of foreign students (40%), with China following at 12%.

Why is Canada limiting the entry of foreign students? Will it impact Indian students?

Impacts on Canada's economy:-

International students contribute \$16.4 billion annually to the Canadian economy.

Impact on educational institutions, particularly in Ontario, and warnings of a temporary worker shortage in various sectors.

Canadian restaurants face a labor shortage with nearly 100,000 vacancies.



Why is Canada limiting the entry of foreign students? Will it impact Indian students?

Impact on India:-

Many Indian students in Ottawa, especially from Punjab, impacted by diplomatic tensions and new measures.

Ongoing challenges may affect Indian students pursuing further studies abroad in Canada.

Limits on post-graduate work permits may impact permanent residency prospects.

Spouses of international students in lower-level programs lose eligibility.



Suryodaya Yojana

Prime Minister recently announced the 'Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana', a government scheme under which one crore households will get rooftop solar power systems.

In 2014, the government launched the Rooftop Solar Programme that aimed to achieve a cumulative installed capacity of 40,000 megawatts (MW) or 40 gigawatts (GW) by 2022

Owing to the scheme, the country's rooftop solar has increased from 1.8 GW as of March 2019 to 10.4 GW as of November 2023.

However, this target couldn't be achieved. As a result, the government extended the deadline from 2022 to 2026.

The Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana seems to be a new attempt to help reach the target of 40 GW rooftop solar capacity.

Suryodaya Yojana

What is India's current solar capacity?

According to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy's website, **solar power installed capacity in India has reached around 73.31 GW as of December 2023.**

Meanwhile, **rooftop solar installed capacity is around 11.08 GW as of December 2023.**

In terms of total solar capacity, **Rajasthan is at the top with 18.7 GW.**

Gujarat is at the second position with **10.5 GW**. When it comes to rooftop solar capacity, Gujarat tops the list with **2.8 GW**, followed by Maharashtra by **1.7 GW**.

Notably, solar power has a major share in the country's current renewable energy capacity, which stands at around 180 GW.

Suryodaya Yojana

Do you think India will meet 50 percent of its energy needs from renewable energy by 2030? Justify your answer. How will the shift of subsidies from fossil fuels to renewables help achieve the above objective? Explain. 2022

Feasibility of Achieving 50% Renewable Energy by 2030:

1. Current Progress:

- Nearly 41% of installed energy capacity in India is from the Renewable sector.
- The country's total renewable energy capacity had surpassed 100 GW, with solar and wind energy leading the way.

Suryodaya Yojana

→ Suryodaya

2. Government Efforts:

- The government has launched a Green Hydrogen Mission to facilitate the transition of the economy to low carbon intensity, reduce dependence on fossil fuel imports
- The government has made provisions for the Green Credit Programme under the Environment (Protection) Act to encourage behavioural change
- 500 new 'waste to wealth' plants to be established under the new *GOBARdhan* (*Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan*)
- Introduction of Sovereign green bonds in public sector projects
- 59 solar parks of aggregate capacity of 40GW has been approved in India
- Production Linked incentive scheme has been launched for local manufacturing of PV modules

Suryodaya Yojana

3. Technological Developments:

- Innovations such as solar tracking systems, thin-film solar cells, and concentrated solar power (CSP) have increased the efficiency of solar energy generation.
- Advances in battery technology, such as lithium-ion batteries, are making it possible to store and dispatch renewable energy when it's needed most.
- Smart grid technologies enable better integration of renewable energy sources into the existing power grid
- Energy management systems, including IoT devices and sensors, help consumers and industries optimize energy usage.

Suryodaya Yojana

Renewable Energy Potential of India

- About 5,000 trillion kWh per year energy is incident over India's land area with most parts receiving 4-7 kWh per sq. m per day.
- An estimated wind power potential of approximately 695.5 GW at 120 meters and 1,164 GW at 150 meters above ground level across the nation.
- Estimates from the Indian government place the nation's tidal energy potential at 8,000 MW.
- India's geothermal energy potential is about 10 GW and its spread across the country.

Suryodaya Yojana

Challenges and Hurdles:

- The future of renewables is linked to **the health of electricity distribution companies and Discoms are deep in debt**
- Storage tricky and expensive for RE-based intermittent sources of power supply
- Tech challenge: Need to enhance grid management (e.g. forecasting & scheduling, grid flexibility, etc.)
- State governments (e.g. AP, Punjab) want to renegotiate or cancel power purchase tariffs. This will make many first- generation projects face an uncertain future, and spooks investors
- Land Acquisition remains a major challenge for setting up of Renewable Energy capacity.

Suryodaya Yojana

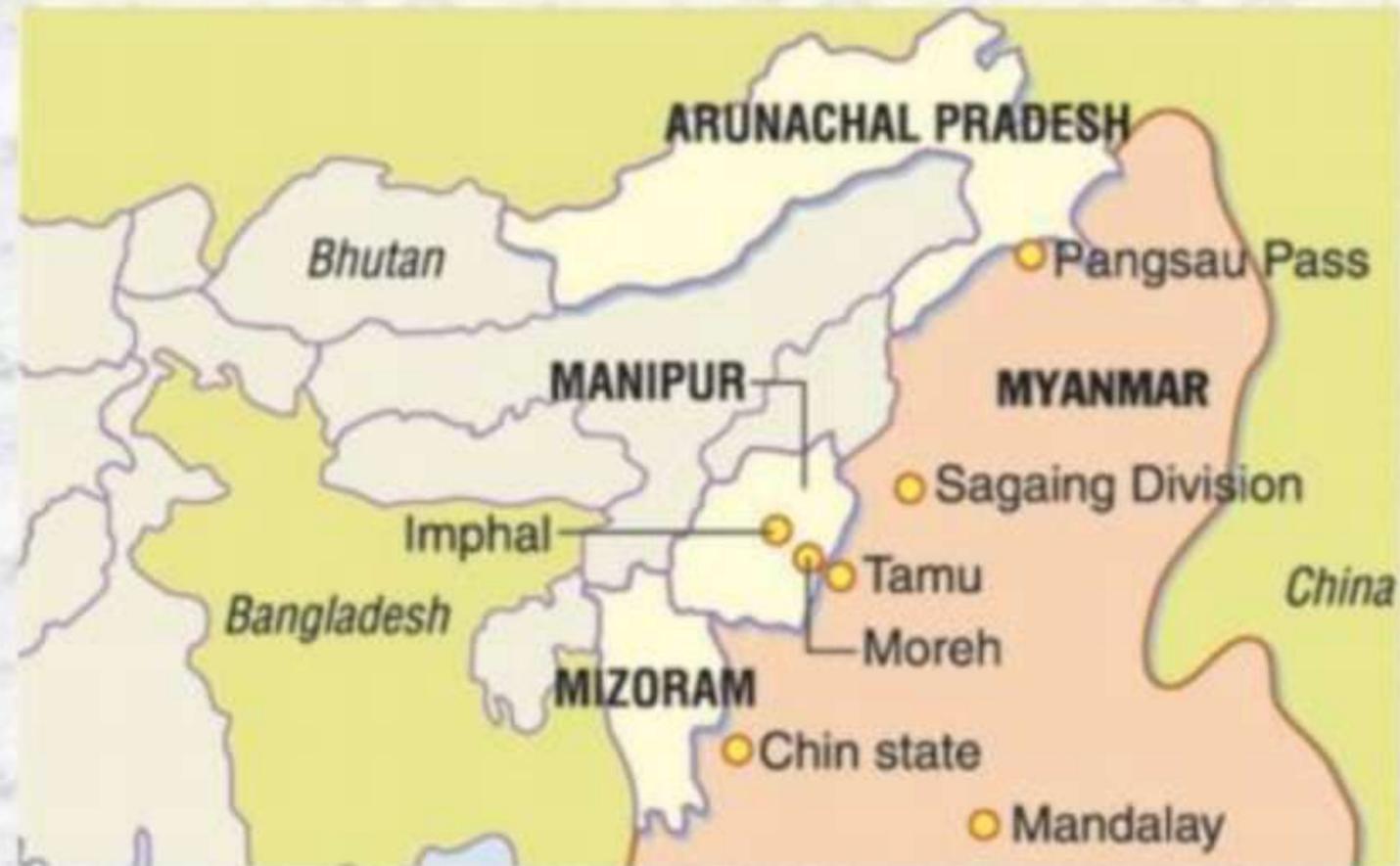
Shift of Subsidies from Fossil Fuels to Renewables:

- 1. Subsidies in Fossil Fuels:** The elimination of subsidies on fossil fuels will deter the consumers to go for fossil based energy.
- 2. Shift to Renewable Energy Subsidies:** Redirecting subsidies from fossil fuels to renewables can help level the playing field. Subsidies for renewable energy projects can reduce their initial costs, making them more competitive with fossil fuels.
- 3. Positive Outcomes:** Shifting subsidies can encourage investment in renewable energy infrastructure, driving job creation and economic growth. It aligns with India's climate commitments, as outlined in the Paris Agreement.

India-Myanmar border Free Movement Regime

Union Home Minister announced that the Centre has decided to fence the entire length of the India-Myanmar border to stop the free movement of people.

The two countries share a largely unfenced 1,643 km border, which goes through the states of Manipur, Mizoram, Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.



India-Myanmar border Free Movement Regime

What is FMR?

The FMR agreement was implemented in 2018.

The FMR is a mutually agreed arrangement between the two countries **that allows tribes living along the border on either side to travel up to 16 km inside the other country without a visa.**

It was implemented in 2018 as part of **the government's Act East policy, at a time when diplomatic relations between India and Myanmar were on the upswing**

Apart from facilitating people-to-people contact, the FMR was supposed to provide impetus to local trade and business

For border people in Myanmar too, **Indian towns are closer for business, education, and healthcare than those in their own country.**

India-Myanmar border Free Movement Regime

What was the need of FMR?

The border between India and Myanmar was demarcated by the British in 1826, without seeking the opinion of the people living in the region.

The border effectively divided people of the same ethnicity and culture into two **nations** without their consent.

People in the region have **strong ethnic and familial ties across the border.**

In Manipur's Moreh region, **there are villages where some homes are in Myanmar.**

In Nagaland's Mon district, the border actually passes through the **house of the chief of Longwa village, splitting his home into two.**

India-Myanmar border Free Movement Regime

What are the challenges of this FMR?

The illegal migration of tribal Kuki-Chin peoples into India from Myanmar is one of the key issues in the ongoing Manipur conflict.

Meiteis blame these illegal migrants for narco-terror-network and Kukis blame the govt for using this a pretext for ethnic cleansing.

It has been criticised in the past for unintentionally aiding illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and gun running.

Several insurgent groups such as the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), People's Liberation Army (PLA), the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), and small groups of Kukis and Zomis have built camps in Sagaing Division, Kachin State, and Chin State (in Myanmar).

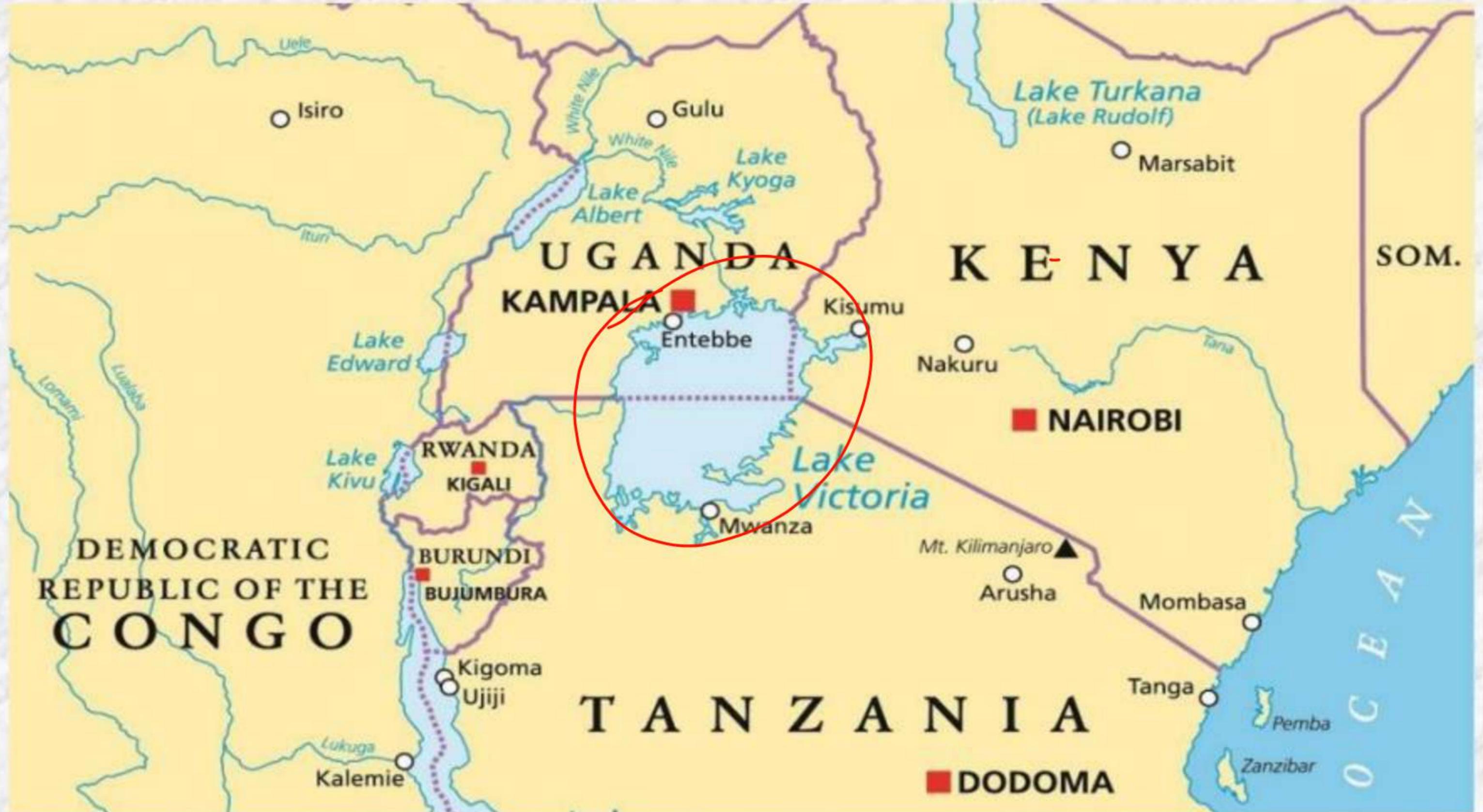
Places in News: Lake Victoria

Lake Victoria, the largest freshwater lake in Africa and world's second-largest, faces numerous environmental challenges that demand collective efforts for restoration and conservation.

India-based think tank Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and National Environment Management Council (NEMC), Tanzania conducted a multination stakeholder consultation in Dar es Salaam to decide on strategies to restore the lake.

Lake Victoria and its flora and fauna support the livelihoods of about 45 million people. The fragile ecosystem of the heavily polluted lake could be damaged irreversibly in the absence of appropriate interventions.

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Species in News: Lantana Camara

Lantana camara is a flowering shrub native to the Americas and Africa.

It has invaded more than 40 per cent of India's tiger habitats, threatening them through a causal chain that ultimately depletes the tiger's prey base.

The shrub's presence was most prominent in the Shivalik hills, central India, and the southern Western Ghats.





Species in News: *Senna Spectabilis*



Species in News: Senna Spectabilis

Senna is a medium-to-large tree indigenous to tropical America

It is introduced in areas outside its native range for various purposes such as to providing shade, making fences, and as an ornamental plant.

It has been introduced in around 20 countries across the globe, including India, where it can be found in the forests of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka.

It has affected wild ginger, turmeric, tubers, and all medicinal plants which were common in the forest.

It grows at an astonishing speed, and animals don't eat its leaves because they give off a foul smell when crushed

Elephants and other animals avoid areas that have an abundance of Senna.



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