



EUs Support to Southeast Asia: Climate Change

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Why in News

The **European Union (EU)** has earmarked millions of euros for supporting climate friendly development in Southeast Asia.

After the EU became a “strategic partner” of the **Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** bloc in December 2020, both blocs **pledged to make climate change policy a key area of cooperation.**

Key Points

- **EUs Assistance to Southeast Asia:**
 - **Multilateral Assistance:**
 - The EU is the largest provider of development assistance to the ASEAN region, and has committed millions of euros to various environmental programs.
 - This includes 5 million Euros to the ASEAN **Smart Green Cities initiative** and another 5 million Euros towards a new means of **preventing deforestation, called the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade in ASEAN.**
 - **Individual Help:**

Along with multilateral assistance, the EU also works with individual ASEAN member states on eco-friendly policies like **Thailand’s Bio-Circular-Green Economic Model** and **Singapore’s Green Plan 2030.**
- **Problems Faced by the EU in Southeast Asia:**
 - Region’s **environmental policy** as Southeast Asia is going in the wrong direction in many areas on **climate change.**
 - Five ASEAN states were among the **fifteen countries most affected** by climate change between 1999–2018, according to the **Climate Risk Index 2020.**

- **Coal Consumption in Southeast Asia:**
 - **Southeast Asia's energy demand is projected to grow 60% by 2040.**
 - Coal-fired energy will overtake natural gas as the main power source in the ASEAN region by 2030. And by 2040 it could account for almost 50% of the region's projected CO₂ emissions.
 - In 2019, the region consumed around 332 million tons of coal, nearly double the consumption from a decade earlier, according to the **International Energy Agency (IEA)**.
 - This will contribute to a two-thirds rise in CO₂ emissions to almost 2.4 gigatons, according to the **Southeast Asia Energy Outlook 2019**.
- **Risks for the EU in Southeast Asia:**
 - **Could Face Exporters Anger:**
 - If the EU takes a strong forceful stance on coal consumption in the region, it could spark **anger from the main exporters of the commodity, China, India and Australia**.
 - **Policy Resistance:**
 - The EU's climate change policy in the region has already been met with resistance.
 - Indonesia last year initiated proceedings at the **World Trade Organization** against the EU's phased ban on palm-oil imports.
 - The EU contends the ban is to protect the environment, but Indonesia, the world's largest palm oil producer, says it is mere **protectionism**.
 - Malaysia, the world's second-largest palm oil producer, supports Indonesia in its battle against the EU.
 - **Accusations of Hypocrisy:**
 - The other problem for the EU is that it risks **accusations of hypocrisy** if it takes too forceful a stance on coal-fired energy production in Southeast Asia.
 - **Poland** and the **Czech Republic** of the EU remain dependent on coal-fired energy production.
 - Southeast Asia and Europe each accounted for around 11% of the world's thermal coal imports in 2019.
- **India's Coordination with Asean on Climate Change:**
 - In 2012 Both adopted a '**New Delhi Declaration on ASEAN-India Cooperation in Renewable Energy**'.
 - **ASEAN-India Green Fund** was established in **2007** with USD 5 million for funding pilot projects to promote adaptation and mitigation technologies in the field of climate change.
 - ASEAN and India are **collaborating on several projection Climate Change and biodiversity** through partnership with IISc, Bangalore.