



Ratification of 7 Persistent Organic Pollutants

Why in News

The **Union Cabinet** has approved the **ratification of seven chemicals** listed under [Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants \(POPs\)](#).

- The **Cabinet further delegated its powers** to ratify chemicals under the Stockholm Convention to Union Ministries of External Affairs (**MEA**) and Environment, Forest and Climate Change (**MEFCC**) in respect of POPs for streamlining the procedure.

Key Points

- **Persistent Organic Pollutants: POPs** are identified chemical substances that are characterised by:
 - **Persistence in the environment.**
 - **Bio-accumulation** in the fatty acids in living organisms.
 - **Less soluble in water.**
 - Adverse **effect on human health/ environment.**
 - Exposure to POPs can lead to cancer, damage to central & peripheral nervous systems, diseases of the immune system, reproductive disorders and interference with normal infant and child development.
 - The property of **long-range environmental transport (LRET)** makes them spread widely in the atmosphere.
- **The Stockholm Convention:**
 - It is a **global treaty** to protect **human health and the environment** from POPs.
 - It was opened for signature in 2001 in Stockholm (Sweden) and became effective in **2004**.
 - POPs are listed in various Annexes to the Stockholm Convention after thorough scientific research, deliberations and negotiations among member countries.
 - **Objectives:**
 - Support the transition to safer alternatives.
 - Target additional POPs for action.
 - Cleanup old stockpiles and equipment containing POPs.
 - Work together for a POPs-free future.
 - **India ratified the Stockholm Convention in 2006** as per **Article 25(4)**, which enabled it to keep itself in a default "opt-out" position such that amendments in various Annexes of the convention cannot be enforced on it unless an instrument of ratification/ acceptance/ approval or accession is explicitly deposited with UN depositary.
 - The convention calls to **ban nine of the dirty dozen chemicals** (key POPs), limit the use of DDT to malaria control, and curtail inadvertent production of dioxins and furans. The convention **listed twelve distinct chemicals** in three categories:
 - **Eight pesticides** (aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, mirex and toxaphene)

- **Two industrial chemicals** (poly chlorinated biphenyls and hexachlorobenzene)
- **Two unintended by-products of many industrial processes involving chlorine** such as waste incineration, chemical and pesticide manufacturing and pulp and paper bleaching (poly chlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and dibenzofurans, commonly referred to as dioxins and furans).
- **Recent Cabinet Decision:** The Union Cabinet has approved the ratification of seven chemicals listed under [Stockholm Convention](#). These chemicals are regulated under the following domestic provision for POPs:
 - **Regulation of Persistent Organic Pollutants Rules:**
 - Considering its commitment towards providing a safe environment and addressing human health risks, the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** had notified the 'Regulation of Persistent Organic Pollutants Rules, in 2018 under the provisions of **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.
 - The regulation inter alia prohibits the manufacture, trade, use, import and export of seven chemicals, namely:
 - Chlordecone,
 - Hexabromobiphenyl,
 - Hexabromodiphenyl ether and Hepta Bromodiphenyl Ether (Commercial octa-BDE),
 - Tetrabromodiphenyl ether and Pentabromodiphenyl ether (Commercial penta-BDE),
 - Pentachlorobenzene,
 - Hexabromocyclododecane, and
 - Hexachlorobutadiene.
- **Significance of Decision:**
 - The Cabinet's approval for ratification of POPs demonstrates **India's commitment to meet its international obligations** with regard to protection of environment and human health.
 - It also indicates the **resolve of the Government to take action on POPs** by implementing control measures, develop and implement action plans for unintentionally produced chemicals, develop inventories of the chemicals' stockpiles and review.
 - The ratification process would enable India to access the **Global Environment Facility (GEF)** financial resources.

Global Environment Facility

- GEF was established with the [Rio Earth Summit](#) of 1992.
- **Headquarter:** Washington, D.C., USA.
- The GEF is jointly managed by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, the [World Bank](#), and the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**.
- The financial mechanism was established to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems.
- It provides **funds to the developing countries and transition economies** for projects related to climate change, biodiversity, the ozone layer, etc.
- It is a **financial mechanism for 5 major international environmental conventions:**
 - The [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC),
 - [The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (UNCBD),
 - The [Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants](#) (POPs),
 - The [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#) (UNCCD), and
 - The [Minamata Convention on Mercury](#).

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