Banning short-haul domestic flights

Why in news?

France became the first country in the world to impose a ban on short-haul domestic flights.

Why did the French ban short-haul domestic flights?

- **Short-haul flights -** Short-haul is a flight lasting anywhere from 30 minutes to 3 hours.
- Medium-haul is defined by flights lasting between 3-6 hours.
- Long-haul flights are those that extend beyond 6 hours.
- France brought in a new law that bans air travel to destinations that can be covered by up to two-and-a-half hour journey by train.
- France banned short domestic flights in favour of train services and to reduce aviation emissions.

What is the emission status of the aviation industry?

- Air transport, globally, accounts for just about 2% of global carbon dioxide emissions every year, and less than 2% of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Even though aviation contributes a minuscule part of the total emissions, they are still considered a big worry mainly due to 2 reasons.
    - It is generated by a very small fraction of global population.
    - It is projected to grow at a very fast pace.
- Airplanes also produce non-CO2 emissions and their impact on global warming is equally significant.

> *According to the UN Climate Change, if the non-CO2 emissions, like water vapour, are also accounted for, the airline industry would be responsible for causing almost 5% of historical global warming.*

What is the situation with private jets?

- The trend of using private planes has been increasing rapidly in the Europe.
- At the same time, there is a growing demand for a wider crackdown on private aviation.
- France, the Netherlands, Austria and Ireland are urging the European Union to strengthen regulations to discourage travel by private jets.

> *Transport and Environment, a European transport campaign group, estimated that private jets were 5 to 14 times more polluting, per passenger, than*

commercial planes, and 50 times more polluting than trains.

What are the issues with aviation emissions?

- The emissions from planes flying within the boundaries of a country are attributed to that country.
- But emissions from airlines making international flights are not attributable to any country.
- No country has any responsibility to curtail these emissions.
- These emissions are not covered under the Paris Agreement.

Is there any offset mechanism so far?

- In 2016, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) introduced an offset mechanism called Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA).
- The offset plan CORSIA is supposed to run from 2021 to 2035.
- CORSIA does not deal with total emissions and only seeks to offset emissions that are over and above 2020 levels.
- The mechanism ensures that the excess emission is compensated for by the airline industry through investment in carbon saving projects elsewhere.

What are the other methods to reduce carbon emissions?

- Biofuels and hydrogen fuel cells have been tried as alternate fuels.
- Solar powered planes have also made trips.
- Unlike road or rail travel, aviation does not have viable technology alternatives for shifting to cleaner fuels.
- These alternative fuels for flying large commercial airliners is still unviable.

References

1. IE - France bans short-haul domestic flights?
2. IE - France bans short domestic flights to cut down on emissions

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