

UN's new rules for ships in the Arctic Region

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Recently the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the shipping agency of the United Nations, issued new rules aiming to reduce sulphur emissions, due to which ships are opting for newer blends of fuels.

What are the new rules of IMO?

- It has **banned ships from using fuels with a sulphur content above 0.5 per cent**, compared with 3.5 per cent previously. Because sulphur oxides (SO_x), which are formed after combustion in engines, are known to cause respiratory symptoms and lung disease, while also leading to acid rain.
- The new limits are **monitored and enforced by national authorities of countries that are members of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) Annex VI**.
- As per the new policy, **only ships fitted with sulphur-cleaning devices, known as scrubbers, are allowed to continue burning high-sulphur fuel**.
- Alternatively, **they can opt for cleaner fuels, such as marine gas oil (MGO) and very low-sulfur fuel oil (VLSFO)**.

Impact of the move

The new regulations, called IMO 2020, have been regarded as the biggest shake-up for the oil and shipping industries in decades. It affects more than 50,000 merchant ships worldwide.

A brief note on The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL)

- MARPOL is the main international convention covering prevention of pollution of the marine environment by ships from operational or accidental causes.
- The MARPOL Convention was adopted on 2 November 1973 at IMO.
- The Convention includes regulations aimed at preventing and minimizing pollution from ships – both accidental pollution and that from routine operations – and currently includes six technical Annexes. Special Areas with strict controls on operational discharges are included in most Annexes.
- **Annex VI of the Convention:** Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships (entered into force 19 May 2005)
 - It sets limits on sulphur oxide and nitrogen oxide emissions from ship exhausts and prohibits deliberate emissions of ozone-depleting substances; designated emission control areas set more stringent standards for SO_x, NO_x and particulate matter.
 - A chapter adopted in 2011 covers mandatory technical and operational energy efficiency measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from ships.