

## Current Affairs: 11.11.2021

### Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

**Context** The Union Cabinet has restored the [Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme \(MPLADS\)](#) that was suspended in April 2020 during the remaining part of Financial Year 2021-22 and to continue MPLADS up to 2025-26, co-terminus with the period of 15th Finance Commission.

- Currently, It is a partial rollback. The MPs will get Rs. 2 crore instead of the annual approved Rs. 5 crore.
- **Criticism of suspension:** Opposition leaders had pointed out that the Government so far has not given a record of how it spent the savings from suspending the scheme for a year.

### *Impact*

- Will restart the community developmental projects / works in the field which are halted / stopped due to lack of funds under MPLADS.
- Will restart fulfilling the aspirations and developmental requirements of the local community and creation of durable assets, which is the primary objective of the MPLADS.
- Help in reviving the local economy.

### **What is MPLADS (Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) Scheme or Sansad Nidhi Yojana?**

- It is a central sector scheme for MPs to recommend works of developmental nature in their constituencies
- It was launched in December, 1993
- The emphasis is on creating durable community assets based on locally felt needs.
- **Parent Body/Ministry:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI)
- The funds – Rs. 5 crore/annum/MP – under the scheme are non-lapsable.
- Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities.
- MPs have only recommendatory role and the district authority is empowered to examine the eligibility of works, select the implementing agencies and monitor it.

### Incentives for sugar cane, cotton, jute farmers

**Context** The [Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs \(CCEA\)](#) has approved a slew of measures that will support farmers growing sugar cane, cotton and jute.

### **Key takeaways**

- The CCEA increased the price of ethanol extracted from sugar cane juice for blending in petrol. [Ethanol blending](#) with petrol is expected to reach 10% next year and 20% by 2025.

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- The rate for ethanol extracted from C-heavy molasses has also been increased.
- Oil marketing companies buy ethanol from sugar mills and distilleries at the rate set by the Government.
- **Implication of the hike:** The rate hike is expected to reduce pending arrears of the mills in payment to sugar cane farmers.
  - The ethanol blending programme also reduced the dependence on crude oil imports.

## Price support to CCI

- The CCEA also approved a committed price support of Rs. 17,408.85 crore to the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) as reimbursement for its losses in procuring crops from farmers at minimum support prices (MSP) over the past seven years.
- **Function of CCI:** The CCI is mandated to procure all Fair Average Quality grade [cotton](#) from farmers without any quantitative ceiling, as and when prices follow below the MSP rates set by the Centre, in a bid to protect farmers from distress sales.
  - Over the last two seasons during the pandemic, the CCI procured a third of the country's cotton production, paying 40 lakh farmers more than Rs. 55,000 crore.

## Reservation norms for Jute in packaging

- The CCEA also approved reservation norms for the [mandatory use of jute in packaging](#) this year, stipulating that 100% of foodgrains and 20% of sugar must compulsorily be packed in jute bags.
- Such reservation consumed two-thirds of the total raw jute production last year.
- **Support to farmers:** As the Centre itself purchases jute sacking bags worth approximately Rs. 8,000 crore a year to pack grains, it also ensures a guaranteed market for the produce of 40 lakh jute farmers, mostly in eastern India, and supports 3.7 lakh jute mill workers, largely in West Bengal.

## Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)

**Context** As part of efforts for co-production and co-development of defence equipment under the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), [India and the U.S.](#) agreed on a revised Statement of Intent (SOI) to strengthen the dialogue by “pursuing detailed planning and making measurable progress” on several specific projects.

## What is the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)?

- Created in 2012, under the Obama administration.
- **Aim:** To enhance cooperation between India and the USA in the defence production and trade sectors by overcoming impediments due to “unique national bureaucratic structures, acquisition models, and budget processes.
- It involves bilateral dialogues and engagements between senior-level representatives from India and the US.

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## Four Joint Working Groups



- Four Joint Working Groups focused on land, naval, air and aircraft carrier technologies had been established under the DTTI to promote mutually agreed projects.
- The two sides recently signed the first project agreement for Air-Launched Unmanned Aerial Vehicle under the Joint Working Group Air Systems.

## Defence Industry Collaboration Forum

- A virtual expo of the Defence Industry Collaboration Forum was also conducted
- This forum offers an opportunity for Indian and U.S. industries to be directly involved in DTTI and facilitates dialogue between government and industry on issues that impact industrial collaboration.

## Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) 2021: Closing remarks

**Context** The Navy demonstrated its submarine rescue capability, available with very few countries in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), to delegations of Indian Ocean countries during the [Goa Maritime Conclave \(GMC\) 2021](#).

## Closing remarks at GMC

- Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral proposed “four guiding principles for the future editions:
  - iterative and incremental gains,
  - harnessing complementarities,
  - synchronisation and focussed operations,
  - upskilling and upscaling the existing capabilities.

## Common Maritime Priorities

- India and 12 other nations have adopted a declaration on “Common Maritime Priorities” that will include surveillance, patrolling and common goals of ensuring safe seas.

## MoU between India and Singapore

- India and Singapore have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to exchange practices on submarine rescue and discussions were on with more countries to have arrangements for them to utilise this mechanism.

## Deep-submergence rescue vehicle

- The Navy has procured two DSRVs from the U.K., of which the first one was operationalised at the end of 2018 in Mumbai and the second at Visakhapatnam in early 2019.
- The system can go to a maximum depth of 650 metres and rescue 14 people in one go.

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- The DSRVs are designed to be agile and easily transportable to far-off places
- The DSRV, attached to mother ship INS Sabarmati, could be transported by heavy transport aircraft like IL-76 and C-17

## E-Amrit Portal on EVs

**In News:** India today launched ‘E-Amrit’, a web portal on electric vehicles (EVs), at the ongoing COP26 Summit in Glasgow, UK.

- E-Amrit is a one-stop destination for all information on [electric vehicles](#)—busting myths around the adoption of EVs, their purchase, investment opportunities, policies, subsidies, etc.
- E-Amrit intends to complement initiatives of the government on raising awareness on EVs and sensitizing consumers on the benefits of switching to electric vehicles.

## **Background**

- In the recent past, India has taken many initiatives to accelerate the decarbonisation of transport and adoption of electric mobility in the country.
- Schemes such as [FAME](#) and PLI are especially important in creating an ecosystem for the early adoption of EVs.
- NITI Aayog intends to add more features and introduce innovative tools to make the portal more interactive and user-friendly.
- The portal has been developed and hosted by NITI Aayog under a collaborative knowledge exchange programme with the UK government and as part of the UK–India Joint Roadmap 2030, signed by the Prime Ministers of the two countries.

## Nutrition Smart Village

**In News:** Government has launched a Nutrition Smart Village program.

**Aims** to reach out to 75 villages across India through the network of All India Coordinated Research Project on Women in Agriculture (AICRP-WIA) which is in operation at 13 centres in 12 States of India to strengthen the [Poshan Abhiyan](#) – [Malnutrition](#) free villages

- Promoting nutritional awareness, education and behavioural change in rural areas involving farm women and school children,
- Harnessing traditional knowledge through the local recipe to overcome malnutrition
- Implementing nutrition-sensitive agriculture through homestead agriculture and Nutri-garden
- Awareness among the women farmers will also be created about their legal rights in all walks of life.

101st member country of the [International Solar Alliance](#): The United States of America

**Janjatiya Gaurav Divas:** 15th November, the birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda

- Revered as Bhagwan by tribal communities across the country.
- Birsa Munda fought bravely against the country against the exploitative system of the British colonial system and spearheaded movement against British oppression giving a call for ‘Ulgulan’ (Revolution).
- The declaration acknowledges the glorious history and cultural heritage of tribal communities.
- The day will be celebrated every year and would recognize the efforts of the tribals for preservation of cultural heritage and promotion of Indian values of valour, hospitality and national pride.

**Nov 10: India’s COP26 pledges: Ambitious, but ambiguous –**

**Context:** India’s COP26 pledges are commendable, but will they be feasible in the long run?

India has surprised observers within and outside India with the following ambitious and what at this point appear to be unconditional pledges on India’s decarbonization at COP26:

1. Increase non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW (gigawatts) by 2030.
2. Meet 50 percent of energy requirements from renewable energy (RE) by 2030.
3. Reduce the total projected carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes (BT) by 2030.
4. Reduce the carbon intensity of the economy by less than 45 percent.
5. Achieve net zero carbon by 2070.

Many environmentalists hailed these five pledges (“Panchamrit”)

- It is expected to put India on a **firm path towards decarbonisation**.
- For commercial entities betting on green investments to pay-off handsomely, the announcements offer the comfort of certainty that government policy will protect their returns.

**Ambiguities**

1. **Increase non-fossil energy (electricity?) capacity to 500 GW (gigawatts) by 2030:** The term energy is used in the translation of the PM’s speech, but it is very likely that the reference was made to electricity. This pledge is probably linked to the existing pledge to increase RE installed capacity for power generation to 450 GW by 2030. If so, India has pledged to more than triple current non-fossil fuel capacity of about 154 GW to 500 GW in the next 9 years.
2. **Meet 50 percent of energy (electrical?) requirements from renewable energy (RE) by 2030:** This pledge is difficult to interpret but again if the reference is to electricity rather than primary energy, then India must increase the consumption of RE

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(currently about 10 percent of power generation) by five times in the next nine years to meet this goal. If the reference is to primary energy, then the challenge is almost unachievable because the current share of RE in primary energy consumption is less than 2 percent.

3. **Reduce the total projected carbon emissions (in the business-as-usual scenario for 2030?) by 1 BT by 2030:** This is a radical pledge as it promises an absolute reduction in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions by 2030. CO<sub>2</sub> emission from India is expected to increase from about 3 BT to about 2.9 BT by 2030 under current policies. If India were to reduce this by 1 BT, India will effectively return to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2007. This would mean a reduction in overall energy consumption or a spectacular increase in consumption of RE.
4. **Reduce the carbon intensity of the economy by less (at least?) than 45 percent (compared to carbon intensity in 2005?):** This is probably the least ambiguous of the five pledges made. One of India's ongoing NDC commitment is to reduce India's CO<sub>2</sub> intensity by 33-35 percent from 2005 levels by 2030. According to government statements, India's CO<sub>2</sub> intensity has fallen by 28 percent compared to 2005 levels in 2020. If the drivers behind India's reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the last three decades such as the shift towards less energy intensive service sector, shift in household cooking fuel from inefficient biomass to efficient petroleum and natural gas-based fuels, increase in industrial energy efficiency continue, India can achieve this goal. However, if India's current industrial policy that is oriented towards increasing domestic manufacturing succeeds, meeting this goal will also become somewhat difficult. Manufacturing is energy intensive and consequently also carbon intensive.
5. **Achieve net zero carbon by 2070:** This is probably the only pledge that was expected from India at COP26 because many top CO<sub>2</sub> emitters, especially China and the USA the largest and second largest emitter of CO<sub>2</sub> have made net zero pledges (China by 2060 and USA by 2050).

## Issues

- **India committing to “net-zero” at COP26** was unavoidable from a geo-political perspective but the offer of far more radical pledges with no “quid pro quo” is puzzling. The quick answer is probably that it is in India's interest to protect itself against the impact of climate change by limiting carbon emissions deeply and quickly. But climate change is a global commons problem and unless all large polluting nations reciprocate with radical pledges to limit carbon emissions, the climate will change for the worse. Ideally, India's pledges should have been hedged with the condition that other large polluters achieve net zero before 2050 and make the necessary funds available to India.
- **A complete switch from coal to natural gas** will pose serious economic challenges to India as imported natural gas is the most expensive fuel (for power generation) at the margin. Imported gas will also mean geo-political and external trade related risks to India's energy security.

*India's COP26 pledges are ambitious and ambiguous, and hopefully also aspirational (non-binding), in which case there is nothing wrong in aiming high.*

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NOTE: Net Zero –



- The idea of “net zero” was promoted in a 2018 special report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which demanded that countries bring greenhouse gas emissions to “net-zero” by 2050 to keep global warming to within 1.5 °C of pre-industrial levels.
- Though net-zero was the universal language for policymakers’ intent on sealing a deal at COP26, net zero is also seen as the means to perpetuate a belief in technological salvation to diminish the sense of urgency over climate calamity.
- As the concept of “net zero” has built-in ambiguities, it was the safest promise a country or company could make.