

### CABINET OKS ENHANCED CLIMATE ACTION GOALS UNDER PARIS AGREEMENT

#### **In News:**

- The Union Cabinet recently approved India's revised climate pledge - Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) - to the Paris Agreement.
- The pledge will outline India's clean energy transition roadmap from now until 2030 and will be shared with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

#### **India's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution:**

- Countries from all over the world had pledged to arrive at a new international climate agreement (**Paris Agreement**) by the end of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (**COP21**) in **Paris in 2015**.
  - The Paris Agreement is a global treaty in which more than 200 countries pledged to work together to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and slow climate change.
  - The accord aims to keep global warming far below 2°C, preferably 1.5°C, when compared to pre-industry levels.
- Countries have agreed to publicly outline their **Intended Nationally Determined Contributions** (INDCs) for post-2020 climate action to meet Paris Agreement targets.
  - INDC is a non-binding national plan highlighting climate change mitigation, including climate-related targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions.
- In 2015, India submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the UNFCCC.

#### **India's first pledge:**

- Also known as a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), India's first pledge had 3 primary targets.
  - The first was to reduce emissions intensity of the economy (emission per unit of GDP) by 33-35% below 2005 levels.

- The second was to have 40% of installed electric power from non-fossil-based energy resources by 2030.
- The third target was to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO<sub>2</sub>e) by 2030 through additional forest and tree cover.
- According to the Paris Agreement, countries must 'update' their pledges every five years to make larger commitments to reduce GHG emissions

## Revised INDC:

### A STEP TOWARDS 'NET ZERO' BY 207.

#### Commitments under updated NDC of 2022:

- ▶ Achieve about 50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030
- ▶ Reduce emissions intensity (emission per unit of GDP) by 45% by 2030 from 2005 levels (citizen-centric approach to combat climate change)
- ▶ Propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation, including through a mass movement for 'LIFE' - 'Lifestyle for Environment' - as a key to combat climate change



#### What does earlier (first) NDC of 2015 say:

##### It has three quantitative targets up to 2030

- ▶ Cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil sources to reach 40%
- ▶ Reduce emissions intensity of GDP by 33-35% compared to 2005 levels
- ▶ Creation of additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent through additional forest and tree cover
- ▶ It was submitted to the UNFCCC on October 2, 2015

- India at the COP26 to the UNFCCC held in Glasgow, UK in 2021, expressed to intensify its climate action by presenting 5-set of new targets (Panchamrit) of India's climate action.
- These were -
  - India will increase its non-fossil fuel energy capacity to 500 gigawatts (GW) by 2030.
  - It will meet 50% of its energy requirements from renewable sources by 2030.
- The total projected carbon emissions will be reduced by 1 billion tonnes from now through 2030.
- The carbon intensity of its economy will be brought down to less than 45%.
- India will achieve its target of net zero by 2070.

## SC TO SET UP EXPERT PANEL ON FREEBIES, BLAMES EC FOR LAXITY

### In News:

- The Supreme Court has sought suggestions from petitioners and respondents, in a plea seeking directions against freebies by political parties.
- The Court said that there is a need to form a committee which can go into the issue dispassionately and make recommendations.

### Background:

- Recently, PM Modi had expressed concerns over giving free government schemes to the public on behalf of the states.
- The PM said that this culture of giving freebies is dangerous for the development of the country.
- He targeted the “culture of subsidies” in the power sector and urged the states to clear dues of power utilities amounting to **2.5 lakh crore**.
- Even the RBI in its annual report has cautioned that rising subsidy burdens have stretched state government finances already exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **About Election Freebies:**

- Provision of free electricity, free water, free public transport, waiver of pending utility bills and farm loan waivers are often regarded as freebies.
- Such waivers potentially undermine credit culture, distort prices through cross-subsidisation eroding incentives for private investment.
- It also disincentivises work at the current wage rate leading to a drop in labour force participation.
- As per estimates, expenditure on freebies range from 0.1 – 2.7 per cent of GSDP for different states.

### **Benefits of election freebies/subsidies:**

- **Food security** –
  - To ensure proper food security and the Right to Food as a fundamental right under **Article 21** of the constitution it becomes mandatory for the government to implement schemes for subsidized food.
- **Social welfare** –
  - The welfare principle of the state encourages the states to introduce schemes to promote social welfare and reduce inequality in society.
- **Farmers welfare** –
  - India faces severe cases of farmers' distress.
  - To improve the condition of the rural economy, government needs to ensure welfare schemes and freebies such as farm loan waivers.

### **RBI's report on state finances:**

- Recently RBI presented a report titled “**State Finances: A Risk Analysis**” which pointed out the gaps in Indian states’ fiscal health against the backdrop of the Sri Lankan debt crisis.
- The report highlighted that the fiscal health of states like West Bengal, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh warrant a careful assessment because of their larger focus on social welfare.
- Punjab is expected to be worst hit as its debt-GSDP ratio is projected to exceed 45% in 2026-27.
- The newly elected state government has announced 300 units of free electricity from July 1 to every household.
- For the five most indebted states – Punjab, Rajasthan, Bihar, Kerala and West Bengal – the RBI said that the debt stock is no longer sustainable as the debt growth outpaced their GSDP growth in the last five years.

### Way Ahead:

- As a corrective measure, it is important that the state governments must restrict their revenue expenses by cutting down expenditure on non-merit goods in the near term.
- For example, free toilets unlock social and economic progress and improve health, safety and dignity of ladies hence it can be considered as “**Merit Goods**”.
- Merit goods are commodities that the public sector provides free or cheaply because the government wishes to encourage their consumption.
- On the other hand, free distribution of electricity does not provide any social benefit thus can be contemplated as “Private Goods”.
- In this context, the Union and State governments must review the large number of welfare schemes being implemented.

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## [AFTER 5 YEARS OF WORK, GOVT RETRACTS DATA PROTECTION BILL](#)

### In News:

- The government has withdrawn the Personal Data Protection Bill from Parliament.

### The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019

- Commonly referred to as the Privacy Bill, it was introduced in Lok Sabha in December 2019.

- It intended to protect individual rights by regulating the collection, movement, and processing of personal data.
- The bill was then referred to the Joint Committee of Parliament (JCP) which submitted its recommendations towards the end of 2021.

## Key Provisions of the 2019 bill

- **Applicability**
  - The Bill governs the processing of personal data by: (i) government, (ii) companies incorporated in India, and (iii) foreign companies dealing with personal data of individuals in India.
- **Data divided into three categories**
  - **Personal Data** - Data which pertains to characteristics, traits or attributes which can be used to identify an individual.
  - **Sensitive personal data** – This includes financial data, biometric data, caste, religious or political beliefs, or any other category of data specified by the government.
  - **Critical personal data** - Certain personal data notified as critical personal data by the government can only be processed in India.
- **Obligations of data fiduciary**
  - A data fiduciary is an entity or individual who decides the means of processing personal data.
  - Such processing will be subject to certain purpose, collection and storage limitations.
- **Grounds for processing personal data**
  - The Bill allows processing of data by fiduciaries only if consent is provided by the individual.
  - However, in certain circumstances, personal data can be processed without consent. These include:
    - if required by the State for providing benefits to the individual,
    - legal proceedings,
    - to respond to a medical emergency.
- **Social media intermediaries**
  - The Bill defines these to include intermediaries which enable online interaction between users and allow for sharing of information.

- All such intermediaries which have users above a notified threshold, and whose actions can impact electoral democracy or public order, have certain obligations.
  - This include providing a voluntary user verification mechanism for users in India.
- **Data Protection Authority**
  - The Bill sets up a Data Protection Authority which may: take steps to protect interests of individuals; prevent misuse of personal data; and ensure compliance with the Bill.
  - It will consist of a chairperson and six members, with at least 10 years' expertise in the field of data protection and information technology.
  - Orders of the Authority can be appealed to an Appellate Tribunal. Appeals from the Tribunal will go to the Supreme Court.
- **Transfer of data outside India**
  - Sensitive personal data may be transferred outside India for processing if explicitly consented to by the individual, and subject to certain additional conditions.
  - However, such sensitive personal data should continue to be stored in India.
  - Certain personal data notified as critical personal data by the government can only be processed in India.
- **Sharing of non-personal data with government**
  - The central government may direct data fiduciaries to provide it with any:
    - non-personal data and
    - anonymised personal data (where it is not possible to identify data principal) for better targeting of services.

## Why the bill has been withdrawn?

- **Major changes were suggested by the Joint Committee of Parliament (JCP)**
  - The government felt that the major changes suggested by the JCP warranted a fresh Bill instead of doing a heavy patchwork on the existing one.
- **Faced pushback privacy activists**
  - Privacy activists had criticised the bill for not being in line

HAD FACED STORM OF CRITICISM	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Privacy advocates slammed bill's 'overriding powers' to central agencies to freely obtain data under certain conditions</li><li>➤ Many objected to elements of non-personal data being handled under data law on individual privacy</li><li>➤ Net giants Meta, Google and Amazon objected to provisions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>mandating local storage of data &amp; processing of some sensitive information within India</li><li>➤ Bill's proposal that independent directors and non-executive directors of social media, net or electronics hardware cos could face legal &amp; criminal proceedings for data violations was also criticised</li></ul>
<p>“ Personal Data Protection Bill has been withdrawn because the JCP recommended 81 amendments in a bill of 99 sections. Above that, it made 12 major recommendations. A new bill will be presented for public consultation</p> <p>— Ashwini Vaishnaw   Telecom minister</p>	

with the Supreme Court's landmark judgment of 2017.

- SC, in Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India, held privacy as a fundamental right.
- They claimed that the bill gave the Government power to determine what data will constitute critical personal data which will lead to abuse of power by the State.

## INDIA'S CLIMATE PLEDGES

India ratified pledges made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Glasgow in November 2021 to accelerate the country's reliance on renewable energy to power the economy and be effectively free from use of fossil fuels by 2070. However, the approved pledges were fewer than those Mr. Modi committed to.

### PM Modi's 5 Big Goals for India:

1. Achieving net-zero by 2070
2. Reducing total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes starting now till 2030
3. Increasing renewable energy component to 50% of our total energy requirements by 2030
4. Reducing carbon intensity by 45% by 2030
5. Increasing non-fossil energy capacity to reach 500 GW by 2030



### About:

- The Union Cabinet approved an update to India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).
- Modi had laid out five commitments, or Panchamrit, as the government references it, namely:
  - India will increase its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW (gigawatt) by 2030;
  - will meet 50% of its energy requirements from "renewable energy" by 2030;
  - will reduce the total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes from now till 2030;
  - will reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by more than 45%; and
  - will achieve the target of "net zero" by the year 2070, when there will be no net carbon dioxide emitted from energy sources.
- A press statement, following the Cabinet approval, only mentions two of these promises, namely that
  - India is committed to reduce emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030, from the 2005 level and

- o achieving 50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.

## CENTRAL VIGILANCE COMMISSIONER (CVC)

Vigilance Commissioner Suresh N. Patel was sworn in as the Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) by President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

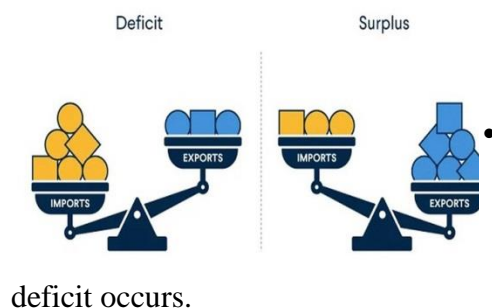


### About:

- Patel was officiating as the Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) since June this year after Sanjay Kothari, former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, completed his term.
- With these appointments, the Central Vigilance Commission is in its full strength now.
- The Commission is headed by a central vigilance commissioner and it can have two Vigilance Commissioners.
- Mr Patel, former managing director and chief executive officer of Andhra Bank, was in April 2020 appointed as the vigilance commissioner. Mr Patel's elevation was approved by a selection panel headed by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition (LoP).

## TRADE DEFICIT

India's trade deficit has widened to a record \$31.02 billion in July thanks to contracting merchandise exports and a rise in imports. This is a three-times increase from the \$10.63 billion trade deficit reported in July last year.



### What is trade deficit?

Trade deficit or negative balance of trade (BOT) is the gap between exports and imports. When money spent on imports exceeds that spent on exports in a country, trade



- It can be calculated for different goods and services and also for international transactions. The opposite of trade deficit is trade surplus.

### What causes it?

- There are multiple factors that can be responsible.
- One of them is some goods not being produced domestically. In that case, they have to be imported. This leads to an imbalance in their trade. A weak currency can also be a cause as it makes trade expensive.

### Is it bad for a country's economy?

- If trade deficit increases, a country's GDP decreases. A higher trade deficit can decrease the local currency's value.
- More imports than exports, according to economists, impact the jobs market and lead to an increase in unemployment. If more mobiles are imported and less produced locally, then there will be less local jobs in that sector.

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## YUAN WANG 5

**India is closely monitoring the movement of a Chinese “spy ship” that is on its way to Sri Lanka and will dock at its Hambantota port around August 11.**



### About:

- The vessel's visit to the Lankan port comes at a time when the country is battling a severe economic crisis, and India is learnt to have already lodged a verbal protest against the ship's visit.
- The 'Yuan Wang 5', a Chinese research and survey vessel, is en route to Hambantota, a strategically important deep-sea port developed mostly using loans from Beijing.
- 'Yuan Wang'-class ships are used to track satellite, rocket and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launches.
- China has around seven of these tracking ships that are capable of operating throughout the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian oceans. The ships supplement Beijing's land-based tracking stations.

## HARYANA'S CHEERAG SCHEME

Senior politicians and teachers' bodies in Haryana have raised questions on the government's CHEERAG scheme, which was recently launched to offer "free education" to Economically Weaker Section (EWS) students of government schools in "budget" private schools.



### What is Haryana's CHEERAG scheme?

- Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar's government recently launched the "Chief Minister Equal Education Relief, Assistance and Grant (CHEERAG)" scheme.
- It was introduced in place of a similar scheme launched by previous government in 2007 under Rule 134 A of the Haryana School Education Rules, 2003.
- Under the CHEERAG scheme, government school students whose parents have an annual verified income of less than Rs 1.8 lakh can enroll in private schools from Class II to XII.
- The government will reimburse Rs 700 per student from Classes II to V, Rs 900 per student from Classes VI to VIII, and Rs 1,100 per student from Classes IX to XII.