



## Current Affairs of the Day

### GS II

- Propose a bilateral green deal to the U.S.'

### GS III

- Winter pollution on the rise: CSE
- Cabinet approves PLI plan for pharmaceuticals, IT hardware
- 'Monetise or modernise' is Modi's mantra for the government. assets



## ‘Propose bilateral green deal to the U.S.’

**Bottom Line:** The country should ask for targets, finance and technology, says, energy expert

### Bilateral Green Deal with the USA

1. India needs to proactively negotiate a bilateral climate agreement with the U.S. He suggests that hill States such as Uttarakhand be given a concrete plan to transition from reliance on large hydropower plants for energy.
2. The U.S. and India can work more closely on climate change. It should be similar to the 2014 deal involving U.S. President Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping. The focus should be on what can be achieved in the near-term.
3. There will be pressure on India to give a plan on when it will achieve Net Zero (when a country's carbon dioxide emissions are balanced by the amount locked back in).
4. However, we must have an agreement on the use of hydrogen and form a Green Hydrogen Alliance. The U.S. will predictably try to nudge, cajole other countries into raising ambition (in the form of greater emission targets, for example) but India shouldn't be swayed by emotion.
5. India can use this opportunity to ask the U.S. to raise ambition, given that it has been out of the agreement for four years. We can ask for concrete targets, finance, technology.

## Winter pollution on the rise: CSE

**Bottom Line:** Smaller and upcoming cities emerging as hotspots, says research organisation

### Highlights:

1. The levels of PM 2.5, the most threatening of particulate matter, worsened in 43 of 99 cities whose winter air in 2020 and 2019 were compared by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), a non-governmental research organisation.
2. Only 19 registered “substantial improvement” — one of these was Chennai. The rest of the cities did not experience significant change.
3. In the aftermath of the lockdown, several cities reported improved pollution levels but by winter, when the restrictions were significantly eased, pollution levels had clawed back to pre-COVID-19 levels, the CSE notes, underlining



the significant contribution of local and regional factors to a city's pollution levels.

4. The cities with the worst pollution spikes in 2020 over 2019 include Gurugram, Lucknow, Jaipur, Visakhapatnam, Agra, Navi Mumbai, and Jodhpur. Kolkata is the only megacity in this group.
5. During winter, cool and calm weather traps and spikes daily pollution, particularly in north Indian cities located in the Indo-Gangetic Plain.

### Local factors

This bouncing back of pollution post-lockdown unmasks the high impacts of local and regional pollution. This demands quicker regional reforms to curb pollution from vehicles, industry, power plants and waste burning to curb the winter pollution and also sustain annual improvement at a regional scale with speed.

When ranked from the most to the least polluted cities, 23 of the most polluted cities are from north India. The study emphasises it was the smaller and upcoming cities that were emerging as pollution hotspots.

## Cabinet approves PLI plan for pharmaceuticals, IT hardware

**News:** The Union Cabinet approved the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for the pharmaceuticals and IT hardware sectors, entailing an outlay of ₹15,000 crores and ₹7,350 crores, respectively.

### Highlights:

1. The PLI scheme for pharmaceuticals, for nine years till 2028-29, will benefit domestic manufacturers, help create employment and is expected to contribute to the availability of a wider range of affordable medicines for consumers, the government said.
2. The scheme is expected to bring in an investment of ₹15,000 crores in the pharmaceutical sector. The growth in the sector is expected to add 20,000 direct and 80,000 indirect jobs for both skilled and unskilled personnel.
3. The scheme also aims to create global champions from India that have the potential to grow in size and scale using cutting edge technology and thereby penetrate global value chains.
4. The Cabinet also approved the PLI Scheme for IT hardware such as laptops, tablets, all-in-one PCs and servers. The scheme, under which an incentive will be given on net incremental sales of goods manufactured in India for four



years, will benefit five 'major global players' and ten domestic 'champions' in IT hardware, the government said.

5. This is an important segment to promote manufacturing under AtmaNirbhar Bharat as there is huge import reliance for these items at present. It will enhance the development of the electronics ecosystem in the country. The Centre said the scheme could generate more than 1,80,000 jobs (direct and indirect) over four years.

## 'Monetise or modernise' is Modi's mantra for the government. assets

**News:** Prime Minister Narendra urged foreign investors to tap investment opportunities thrown up by the government's decision to privatise most public sector entities and monetise 'unutilised and underutilised assets' such as airports that have an estimated investment potential of ₹2.5 lakh crore.

### Highlights:

1. The government's mantra is 'Monetise or Modernise', the PM said, stressing that the funds raised from the exercise will help empower citizens by building homes for the poor and ensuring clean water reaches all.
2. The disinvestment policy goes beyond annual disinvestment targets, to a medium-term strategic approach. This will help create new investment opportunities for the industry in every sector. These are valuable assets, have served the country well, and have many future possibilities too.
3. Mr Modi said government officials in charge of PSUs are often scared of taking decisions and there is a tendency to maintain the status quo.
4. The private sector can not only bring capital but also introduce global best practices and quality manpower and modernise enterprises, the PM pointed out.