

Govt. unveils action plan to make city carbon neutral

The plan will focus on priority areas such as electrical grid and renewable energy, building energy, sustainable transport, solid waste management, urban flooding and water scarcity

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday released Chennai's first Climate Action Plan (CAP), which has been designed to serve as a roadmap for the city to become carbon neutral by 2050, two decades before the nation's target of net zero by 2070.

Released by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin at the Secretariat, the action plan will focus on six priority areas such as electrical grid and renewable energy, building energy, sustainable transport, solid waste management, urban flooding and water scarcity, vulnerable populations and health.

By 2050, the city aims to achieve electrification of 100% of the MTC bus fleet, expanding urban nature to cover 35% of the city, and retrofitting existing slum housing for heat resilience to become carbon neutral.

The CAP was released in the presence of Minister



For clean green city: Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and Minister for Environment, Climate Change Siva V. Meyyanathan releasing the Climate Action Plan, in Chennai on Tuesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

for Environment, Climate Change Siva V. Meyyanathan, Chief Secretary V. Irai Anbu, Additional Chief Secretary to Departments of Environment, Climate Change Supriya Sahu, Mayor R. Priya and C40 Cities delegates.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Ms. Sahu said: "The climate action plan is based on science and data. First thing is to know where the emissions are coming from. With an emissions inventory, we will plan de-

carbonisation pathways for specific sectors. The CAP prescribes sectoral targets and action plans."

One of the targets for the energy sector is 100% renewable power for the grid. Ms. Sahu said this would be achieved in a phased manner with detailed targets such as re-working tariff, scaling up installation on solar power, replacing coal-fired plants with biomass renewable power capacity and so on.

The approach taken for

the Chennai CAP would be applied to Coimbatore and places such as the Nilgirs, Rajapalayam and Rameswaram, Ms. Sahu said.

The CAP was developed with support from C40 Cities and the Urban Management Centre, Ahmedabad, and aligns with the Paris Climate Accords, setting emission reduction targets of 1% increase by 2030, 40% decrease by 2040 and achieve net zero by 2050, compared to 2018-19 emission levels.

Shakeel Akhter to head Information Commission

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

M. Shakeel Akhter, former Director-General of Police, has been appointed as the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) of the Tamil Nadu Information Commission. A native of Bihar, Mr. Akhter belongs to the 1989 batch of the Indian Police Service.

He recently retired as the DGP, CB-CID. He will hold the post of CIC for three years or till he reaches the age of 65, whichever is earlier, official sources said. As Deputy Commissioner of Police, Madurai, he spearheaded the operation against the dreaded Al Umma leader Imam Ali and others. In September 2002, he led a special team of the Tamil Nadu police that shot dead Imam Ali



M. Shakeel Akhter

and his supporters in Bengaluru.

The government also issued orders appointing four State Information Commissioners. They are Former Additional Director-General of Police (Law & Order) P. Thamarai Kannan, R. Priyakumar, Dr. K. Thirumalaimuthu and Dr. M. Selvaraj.

The next step

Ethnicisation and poor governance are stumbling blocks to peace in Manipur

In the aftermath of a conflict, a return to normalcy must be a necessary basis to address the grievances of the affected parties that led to the conflict in the first place. There cannot be any redress when groups engage in wanton and targeted violence against each other, use blockades to prevent the transport of supplies, and continue to prevent displaced people from getting back to their homes. Return to normalcy is the first step before grievances are heard to prevent another conflict from emerging. And in order to effect the first step, peace talks between eminent representatives – from civil society and political parties – in the conflict and tamping down any embers of violence that might continue following the conflagration are a must. The presence of paramilitary forces and the appeal for peace by Union Home Minister Amit Shah after a visit to the tribal and the Imphal valley areas have helped stem the violence to an extent even if sporadic incidents of ethnic violence and arson have continued a month after the conflagration in Churachandpur, Imphal and other areas. But in terms of setting the conditions of peace which would entail the return of looted arms and the slow and sure return of those displaced to their battered homes, there has been little progress.

The Union government's constitution of a peace committee comprising eminent public figures in the State has hit a snag with many of them refusing to join it or suggesting that they have been added to the committee without prior consultation. The success of a peace initiative requires that all groups in a conflict are represented and includes representatives with public standing or a record that transcends their identities. The withdrawal of quite a few public figures from this initiative unfortunately reveals the ethnicisation of civil society in Manipur and complicates peace building. More worryingly, Kuki-Zo representatives have expressly withdrawn their names as the committee included the Manipur Chief Minister, N. Biren Singh, while a Meitei civil society group has raked up an unwarranted generalisation of the issue as one related to "narco-terrorism" to withdraw from the committee. The government should still not give up on persuading prominent political and civil society representatives to talk with one another. The fact that it requires the aegis of the Union government to push the envelope on any further step on this issue also reveals the failure of the Biren Singh administration in retaining the confidence of all parties. It seems that it is time for the Union government and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party to think of an alternative leadership that could ease the process of peace building as Mr Singh's actions, both in the run-up to the violence and in its aftermath, have either been ineffectual or shown up an inability to govern effectively.

NCSC sends notice to Zomato, Delhi Police and YouTube over 'casteist' advertisement

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) has issued a notice to Zomato founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal over an "inhuman" and "casteist" advertisement that featured a Dalit character from the film *Lagaan* being used as a table, lamp, watering can and so on.

While the food-delivery platform withdrew its advertisement within days after facing a strong backlash from citizens, the commission said it had taken *suo motu* cognisance of the matter and commenced its own inquiries.

The NCSC has sent copies of the notice to the Commissioner, Delhi Police, and the Grievance Redressal Officer of YouTube India, saying that they launch their own investiga-



Vijay Sampla

tions and submit action taken reports.

Zomato launched the advertisement as a special feature for World Environment Day on June 5. In the advertisement, actor Aditya Lakhia is shown reprising his role as the Dalit character Kachra in *Lagaan*. He is shown being used as a lamp, paper, paperweight, watering can and different types of jackets, with the text below detailing how much Kachra was recycled to make each of

these items.

According to the notice, the NCSC has asked the Delhi Police if any FIR had been registered in the matter and whether provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act had been invoked in the FIR. Similarly, the commission has also asked YouTube India where the advertisement was being streamed before it was taken down, to look into how it was allowed on the platform and what action had been taken for it.

'Inhuman depictions'

A statement from the NCSC said that Chairperson Vijay Sampla had personally taken up this matter. In a video statement released on Tuesday, Mr. Sampla said, "The ad film of Zomato company portrayed inhuman depictions and has hurt sentiments of Scheduled Caste persons."

UN needs to be more democratic and representative, says Rajnath

Defence Minister says the moral legitimacy of the United Nations is undermined when India, the most populous nation, is not a permanent member of the UN Security Council; he stresses that the global organisation must reflect current realities

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Commenting on the fact that India is yet to find a place as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Tuesday that the time had come for the UN and its bodies to be "more democratic and representative of our age".

"When India, the most populous nation, does not find a seat as a permanent member of the UNSC, it tends to undermine the moral legitimacy of the United Nations. Therefore, the time has come for making the UN bodies more democratic and representative of the current realities of our age," Mr. Singh said at a seminar organised by the Army, along with the Centre for Land Warfare



Counting milestones: Rajnath Singh at the 75th anniversary of 'UN Peacekeepers Day', in New Delhi on Tuesday. ANI

Studies and Centre for UN Peacekeeping, to celebrate 75 years of UN peacekeeping.

India has been one of the top troop contributing nations to UN peacekeeping operations. It has contributed approximately 2.75 lakh troops to the missions so far. Mr. Rajnath called for innovative approaches and enhanced

cooperation among responsible nations to ensure the safety and effectiveness of UN peacekeepers who are deployed in violence-hit regions.

Better investment

Highlighting the emerging challenges being faced by the peacekeepers today, Mr. Singh stressed on the need to invest more in

training, technology and resources for their safety and productivity.

"When there is a conflict, it is harmful to the directly involved actors. Moreover, it has negative externalities for those involved indirectly. There is a plethora of negative externalities that have emanated out of the recent Russia-Ukraine conflict. It has led to a food crisis in various African and Asian countries and has fuelled an energy crisis in the world. A conflict at a particular place or region creates ripple effects, which adversely impact the whole world. So, the rest of the world becomes a stakeholder in resolving the conflict. When conflicting parties restore peace, they benefit in terms of human lives saved, higher economic growth achieved, etc. The rest of the world also benefits as

peace fosters stability and encourages economic growth," Mr. Singh stated.

In his opening remarks, Army chief General Manoj Pande said that currently there are close to 5,900 Indian peacekeepers serving around the world on various peacekeeping operations, including "female engagement teams" who work with women and children affected by conflicts. There are also women staff officers and military observers.

"Since the first deployment in 1950, Indian peacekeepers have served in almost all UN missions across four continents, making us the largest contributor to UN peacekeeping efforts, both in terms of personnel and resources," he added.

On the occasion, Mr. Singh unveiled a pictorial compilation of India's peacekeeping journey.

India, U.S. to diversify semi-conductor supply chain: Sullivan

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

India's National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval and the U.S. NSA Jake Sullivan met in New Delhi on Tuesday and discussed regional and global issues of mutual relevance, a press note issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) informed.

Later, Mr. Sullivan, who is on a two-day India visit, attended a round table on "Advancing India-U.S. initiative on critical and emerging technologies (iCET)" organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), where he said that India and the U.S. will "diversify global semi-conductor supply chains".

"The U.S. and India are poised to lead in clean energy transformation, shore up and diversify global semi-conductor supply chains and supply chains in other critical goods and

Strategic Trade Dialogue will address issues relating to export control, says India's NSA Doval

lead the revolution in AI (Artificial Intelligence), advanced computing, biotech, and quantum computing," Mr. Sullivan said.

Presenting his ideas at the event organised by the CII, Mr. Doval recollected his visit to Washington D.C. in January.

"We have established a Strategic Trade Dialogue. It will serve as a platform to address regulatory barriers and issues relating to export control. It will be a very important element in this entire matter. iCET is going to be a very important pillar of our bilateral strategic partnership," Mr. Doval said, expressing the commitment of the governments in the iCET.

No CERT-in update yet on CoWIN data leak; experts demand transparency

The cybersecurity agency for India has not issued any statement or security alert directly on the leak of personal information; govt. had said data put out by Telegram bot was stolen previously

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Indian Computer Emergency Team (CERT-in), the nodal cybersecurity agency that deals with breaches and vulnerabilities in cyberspace, has not directly put out any update on its assessment of the leak of personal information of people who received COVID-19 vaccinations, registered on the CoWIN platform. CERT-in has not put out any alert to citizens that their Aadhaar or passport numbers, along with other personal details, may be hacked.

Additionally, a senior police official told *The Hindu* on Tuesday that no first information report has been filed following the breach. CERT-in was not immediately available for comment on Tuesday. While privacy, including informational privacy, was upheld as a fundamental right in the Constitution by the Supreme Court in 2017,



Big breach: A report said that the data is not from CoWIN directly, but from a 'threat actor database'. VIJAY SONEJI

the government has not passed a data protection Bill yet.

The only information from CERT-in so far comes from Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar, who said that the cybersecurity agency had found that "data being accessed by [the Telegram messaging app] bot from a threat actor da-

tabase... seems to have been populated with previously stolen data." It is unclear when this data was stolen and from where.

A report by private cybersecurity firm CloudSEK said the data appears to be not from CoWIN directly, but from a health worker who had inadequately protected vaccination beneficiary data. Commentators also pointed out that the

data appeared slightly richer than what CoWIN possessed: namely, precise dates of birth were available for vaccine beneficiaries, though the CoWIN portal only collected the year of birth.

'Need probe'

Prasanth Sugathan, Legal Director at the Software Freedom Law Centre, said that CERT-in's investigation "should be a transparent process" that "should inspire confidence in citizens in their infrastructure".

CERT-in may soon be exempt from responding to the Right to Information requests as well, as a proposal for its inclusion in the Second Schedule of the RTI Act is pending.

The Department of Personnel and Training declined, in response to an RTI request, to provide *The Hindu* a copy of the proposal to exempt the body, and copies of inputs received from government agencies in response to the proposal.

CERT-In is the national nodal agency for responding to computer security incidents as and when they occur. The constituency of CERT-In is the Indian Cyber Community.

- CERT-In was established in 2004 as a functional organization of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.
- **Functions:** The Information Technology (Amendment) Act 2008 designated CERT-In to serve as the national agency to perform the following functions in the area of cyber security:
 - Collection, analysis and dissemination of information on cyber incidents.
 - Forecast and alerts of cyber security incidents
 - Emergency measures for handling cyber security incidents
 - Coordination of cyber incident response activities.
 - Issue guidelines, advisories, vulnerability notes and whitepapers relating to information
 - security practices, procedures, prevention, response and reporting of cyber incidents.
 - Such other functions relating to cyber security as may be prescribed.

Cancel culture: speaking truth to power or a form of mob vigilantism?

Many people have come to believe that cancel culture is no longer about holding people accountable, and has instead become an online form of vicious mob intimidation. They believe that it first and foremost affects free speech

Radhika Santhanam

In June 2020, author J.K. Rowling posted some controversial tweets about the transgender community. There was a swift and fierce backlash against her online, especially from trans activists and fans of Harry Potter. Rowling was then promptly "cancelled". The number of calls online to stop buying her books has only grown since then, as the author has refused to change her stance. However, Rowling herself has said in interviews that she does not consider herself "cancelled," as her book sales have only shot up since the controversy erupted.

Understanding the phenomenon

'Cancel culture' is a widely used contemporary term, but without a clear-cut definition. Broadly, when any perceived wrong, whether from two minutes ago or half a century ago, suddenly comes under scrutiny from a group of people online and results in public shaming, censorship, loss of friends and connections or even a job, it means that the person who has aired such a view has been "cancelled." Demanding accountability from people holding such problematic views is central to cancel culture.

Those who are "cancelled" for not ascribing to a particular view or value or norm are often public figures such as Rowling. However, we are also increasingly seeing online mob attacks on those without power. For instance, in May 2020, a woman, Amy Cooper, was walking her dog in Central Park in New York when she ran into a Black man and birdwatcher, Christian Cooper. Christian asked Amy to put her dog on leash, as was the rule in Central Park. When she refused, he tried to give the dog a treat.

Amy panicked, called the police, and complained that an African-American man was threatening her. Christian recorded this on video, a part of which went viral. The public backlash for calling the police on a Black man for no reason resulted in Amy getting fired from her job at an investment company. Later, Christian said in an interview that even though what Amy did was racist, she did not deserve to get laid off. His opinion, however, did not really matter: their inter-personal interaction in the park had, through the virality of the video, become a matter of scrutiny for society as a whole. Therefore, what a group of people believed was the right consequence to her actions took precedence over what Christian himself thought.

It is also significant that this incident happened at the same time as the death of George Floyd, when emotions were high on social media.

Proponents and opponents

For many people, such swift collective action has come to signify a form of social justice. The idea of cancel culture began as a tool for marginalised communities to assert their values and norms against public figures who continued to cling on to power despite wrongdoing. Since changing the inherent structural inequality of society itself is not possible for such communities, cancel culture emerged as a way to change public sentiment. Proponents of cancel culture believe that people with enormous power and clout (such as Rowling) cannot be made to get away with statements or acts that affect individuals and communities who do not enjoy such power (such as trans people).

However, many also believe that cancel culture is no longer about speaking truth to power and has become an online form

of vicious mob intimidation. They believe that it first and foremost affects free speech. Second, as the goalposts of cancel culture keep changing, individuals and organisations are selectively targeted and face different degrees of outrage. While some are made to feel embarrassed for a while, others are at risk of losing their careers. Also, instead of focusing on those who discriminate against others or propagate injustice of some kind, cancel culture has become a way of shaming anyone who does not agree perfectly with a view that a person or group holds.

Third, cancel culture often signifies the lack of ability to forgive and move on. The views that people held 20 years ago may not necessarily be the views that they hold today. Fourth, cancel culture has the tendency to club all kinds of people together – a common man who did something wrong has, thanks to social media activism, sometimes been "cancelled" in the same way that a politician making a hate speech has been "cancelled." And finally, cancel culture has led to people being constantly aggravated and frustrated with each other. They can't seem to move beyond that, to actually initiate change of the kind they actually want to see, for public sentiment is constantly changing.

Former U.S. President Barack Obama referred to cancel culture once saying, "This idea of purity and you're never compromised... you should get over that quickly." In a letter published in *Harper's Magazine* in 2020, a group of public figures including Margaret Atwood, David Brooks, Noam Chomsky, Francis Fukuyama, Atul Gawande, Gloria Steinem and Rowling wrote a public letter expressing concern about the trend but without referring to the term 'cancel culture'. They said: "The democratic inclusion that we want can be achieved

only if we speak out against the intolerant climate that has set in on all sides. The free exchange of information and ideas, the lifeblood of a liberal society, is daily becoming more constricted. While we have come to expect this on the radical right, censoriousness is also spreading more widely in our culture: an intolerance of opposing views, a vogue for public shaming and ostracism, and the tendency to dissolve complex policy issues in a blinding moral certainty."

Predictably, this letter garnered criticism, with many defenders of 'cancel culture' saying it is simply a way of demanding accountability for statements and actions, and that the very same people who wrote this letter are perhaps afraid of their powers being increasingly questioned and their statements coming under scrutiny.

Conservatives in the U.S. have now latched onto the term 'cancel culture' as a cudgel to use against liberals whenever they face political adversity. Former President Donald Trump even called it a form of "totalitarianism." While cancel culture began as a way to correct power imbalances, it is also now being used by those holding positions of power against those it intended to help.

A nebulous term

Thus, today, the meaning of cancel culture may change depending on who you ask. For some, it is a form of harassment, for some a form of justice; for some a consequence of public misdemeanour; for some a form of mob vigilantism; for some a way to demand accountability and for some an act of censorship.

The truth is that it could be any of these. It often depends on your political prism, background, and importantly, the case at hand.