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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. What are the surveillance laws in India?

Context:

- ‘**Pegasus Project**’ report has brought to light the possible misuse of the Pegasus spyware for surveillance of politicians, journalists, and activists

Pegasus spyware:

- Pegasus is a **spyware tool from Israeli firm NSO Group**.
- After infecting the device, Pegasus seeks “**root privileges**”. After establishing communications with its controllers, Pegasus spyware starts transmitting data stored on the phone to its command-and-control centres.
 - Root privileges is a level of control over the phone that is beyond what a regular user has.
- It is **graded as a cyberweapon** and can be sold only to authorized government entities as per Israeli law.

Concerns:

- As per the report, over 300 verified Indian mobile telephone numbers, including those used by ministers, opposition leaders, journalists, the legal community, businessmen, government officials, scientists, rights activists and others were targeted using the spyware.
- If true this points to the **violation of the fundamental right of citizens to the exercise personal liberty and privacy** under Articles 21 of the Constitution through the **gross misuse of surveillance powers of the government**

Indian laws dealing with surveillance powers:

- Section 5(2) of **The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885**, allows for interception of message by the government subject to the condition that such an act is inevitable for the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of an offence.
- Rule 419A of the Indian Telegraph Rules, 1951 specifies **the operational process and procedures for such surveillance activities**. Under Rule 419A,

surveillance needs the sanction of the Home Secretary at the Central or State level.

- Section 69 of the **Information Technology Act, 2000 deals with electronic surveillance**. It allows for government interception or monitoring or decryption of any information through any computer resource if it is in the interest of the sovereignty or integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order or for preventing or investigating any cognizable offence.

2. Dying Declaration

Context: Recently, a special Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court awarded two policemen life sentences for the custodial death of a murder accused on the basis of the 'Dying Declaration' made by the victim prior to his death.

About Dying Declaration:

- Section-32(1) of Indian Evidence Act, 1872, defines dying declaration as a statement written or verbal of relevant facts made by a person, who is dead. It is the statement of a person who had died explaining the circumstances of his death.
- This is based on the maxim 'nemo mariturus presumuntur mentri' i.e. a man will not meet his maker with a lie on his mouth.
- The general rule under Section 60 of the Act is that all oral evidence must be direct - he heard it, saw it or perceived it.

Rules for Admission of Dying Declaration:

The grounds of admission under a dying declaration have been based on two broad rules:

- The victim being generally the only principal eye-witness to the crime.
- The sense of impending death, which creates a sanction equal to the obligation of an oath in a court.

Recording Dying Declaration:

- Anyone can record the dying declaration of the deceased as per law. However, a dying declaration recorded by a Judicial or Executive Magistrate will add an additional strength to the prosecution case.

- A dying declaration may in several cases be the “primary piece of evidence to prove the genesis of occurrence”.
- The only requirement for such a declaration to be held perfectly accountable in court is for the victim to volunteer the statement and be of conscious mind.
- The person who records the dying declaration must be satisfied that the victim is in a fit state of mind.

Situations Where Court Does Not Accept it as a Evidence:

- Though a dying declaration is entitled to great weight, the accused has no power of cross-examination.
- This is the reason the courts have always insisted that the dying declaration be of such a nature as to inspire full confidence of the court in its correctness.
- The courts are on guard to check if the statement of the deceased was a result of either tutoring, prompting or a product of imagination.

Need of Corroboration (Supporting Evidence):

- Several judgments have noted that it is neither rule of law nor of prudence that dying declaration cannot be acted upon without corroboration.
- If the court is satisfied that the dying declaration is true and voluntary it can base conviction on it, without corroboration.
- Where a dying declaration is suspicious, it should not be acted upon without corroborative evidence because a dying declaration does not contain the details as to the occurrence.
- It is not to be rejected, equally merely because it is a brief statement. On the contrary, the shortness of the statement itself guarantees truth.

Validity of Medical Opinion:

- Normally the court, in order to satisfy whether the deceased was in a fit mental condition to make the dying declaration, can look up the medical opinion.
- But where the eye witness has said that the deceased was in a fit and conscious state to make this dying declaration, the medical opinion cannot prevail.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

3. Moon-forming region seen around exoplanet for the first time

Context:

- Scientists for the first time have **spotted a moon-forming region around an exoplanet.**

Background:

Exoplanet:

- **An exoplanet is any planet beyond our solar system.** More than 4,400 planets have been discovered outside our solar system.
- Most orbit other stars, but free-floating exoplanets, called rogue planets, orbit the galactic center and are untethered to any star.

Details:

- The scientists have observed an **exoplanet surrounded by a disc of gas and dust.**
- The researchers used the **ALMA observatory in Chile's Atacama desert** to detect this disc of swirling material accumulating around one of two newborn planets (PDS 70c) seen orbiting a young star called PDS 70, located 370 light years from Earth.
- No circumplanetary discs had been found until now because all the known exoplanets resided in "mature" – fully developed – solar systems, except the newly identified infant gas planets orbiting PDS 70.

Formation of planets and Moons:

- The dominant mechanism thought to underpin planet formation is called "**core accretion**".
- As per this mechanism, material spinning around a newly formed star coalesces into planets. The small dust grains, coated in ice, gradually grow to larger and larger sizes through successive collisions with other grains. This continues until the grains have grown to a size of a planetary core, at which point the young planet has a strong enough gravitational potential to accrete gas which will form its atmosphere.
- The **circumplanetary discs surrounding some planets similarly yield moons.**

- The rings of Saturn represent a relic of a primordial moon-forming disc. Saturn has more than 80 moons orbiting it.

4. Cabinet approves Production-linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Specialty Steel

Union Cabinet approved the **Production Linked Incentive (PLI)** Scheme for specialty steel.

About the scheme:

- The duration of the scheme **will be five years**, from 2023-24 to 2027-28.
- The scheme is expected to bring in investment of approximately ₹40,000 crores and capacity addition of **25 MT for speciality steel**.
- The scheme will give employment to about 5,25,000 people of which 68,000 will be direct employment.
- There are **3 slabs of PLI incentives**, the lowest being 4 % and highest being 12% which has been **provided for electrical steel (CRGO)**.
- The PLI Scheme will ensure that the basic steel used is 'melted and poured' within the country which means that raw material (finished steel) used for making specialty steel will be made in India only.
 - Ensuring that Scheme promotes end to end manufacturing within the country.

The five categories of specialty steel which have been chosen in the PLI Scheme are:

- Coated/Plated Steel Products
- High Strength/Wear resistant Steel
- Specialty Rails
- Alloy Steel Products and Steel wires
- Electrical Steel

Why speciality steel?

- Out of the production of 102 million tonnes steel in India in 2020-21, only **18 million tonnes value added steel/speciality steel was produced** in the country.
- Out of 6.7 million tonnes of imports in the same year, approx. 4 million tonnes import was of specialty steel alone resulting in **FOREX outgo of Approx. Rs. 30,000 crores**.
- By becoming Aatmanirbhar in producing specialty steel, India will move up the steel value chain and come at par with advanced steel making countries like Korea and Japan.

What is Specialty Steel?

- Specialty steel is **value added steel** wherein normal finished steel is worked upon by way of **coating, plating, heat treatment**, etc. to convert it into high value-added steel..
- They are referred to as alloy steel, **contain additional alloyed materials** that deliver special properties to the final product.
- Specialty steels are engineered to provide **superior performance** under **specific conditions**.
- Various stainless-steel alloys are included among **common specialty steels**.
- Typically, standard bearings are fabricated using **chrome steel**, which can be heat-treated and ground to **deliver durability and high load capacity**, allowing the bearings to perform well in broad applications.
- It can be used in **various strategic applications** like Defence, Space, Power, apart from automobile sector, specialized capital goods etc.

Characteristics of Specialty Steels:

- - High corrosion resistance
 - Targeted resistance to high and/or low temperatures
 - Easily fabricated
 - Dimensional stability and strength
 - Non-magnetic
 - Sterile and hygienic
 - Well suited for special applications
 - Lighter weight
 - Grease-free use

5. 'Mid-century target for net zero inadequate'

Context:

- **G20 climate summit** in Naples, Italy.
 - Energy and environment ministers from the Group of 20 nations participated in the summit.

Background:

Impact of climate change:

- Average global temperatures have already risen by more than 1 degree compared to the pre-industrial baseline used by scientists and are **on track to exceed the 1.5-2 degree ceiling.**
- Countries around the world are feeling the effects of climate change.
 - There have been **deadly floods in Europe and China, fires in the United States and sweltering temperatures in Siberia.**

Ineffectiveness of the NDC framework:

- As per the **National Determined Contributions (NDC) submitted to the UNFCCC under the Paris Agreement**, the pledge of countries like the United States and the U.K. fall short of the fair share of emission reduction by relatively larger margins than developing countries like India.
 - The fair share represents the reductions countries must achieve to ensure that the greenhouse gas levels are below that to prevent a 1.5 average temperature rise over the globe by the turn of the century.

Carbon neutrality/net zero emissions:

- The net zero emissions refer to a situation where **a country is able to remove at least as much carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as it is emitting.**
- This can be done by **increasing forest cover** or through technologies such as **carbon capture.**
- There have been major net-zero commitments from the world's largest polluters in the past 12 months.
- However, some developing countries have resisted any such deadlines for themselves through global agreements on carbon neutrality. Reaching a global consensus on the issue of carbon neutrality would be extremely difficult to reach given the scale of the differences between the different countries.

Details:

- The key topics of discussion at the summit included: combating climate change, accelerating the ecological transition, making financial flows consistent with the Paris Agreement objectives, opportunities for sustainable and inclusive recovery enabled by innovative technological solutions of the energy sector, and building smart, resilient and sustainable cities.
- The parties **haven't been able to agree on specific actions and firm timetables needed to reach net-zero global emissions by 2050** and keep global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius.

India's stand:

- India has stated that the pledges by some countries to achieve net zero GHG emissions or 'carbon neutrality' by mid-century were inadequate, in view of the **fast depleting available carbon space**.
- India has urged G20 countries to commit to bringing down per capita emissions to Global average by 2030 considering the **rights of developing countries to economic growth**.
- Unlike some countries which have set carbon neutrality targets by 2050 or 2060, India has resisted committing to any such hard deadlines given its developmental needs and the need for climate justice.
 - **Despite being the third largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world, India has one of the lowest per capita emissions.**

Concerns:

- The environmental activists had hoped that the G20 gathering would lead to a strengthening of climate targets, new commitments on climate financing, and an increase in countries committing to net zero emissions by 2050. However, the failure to reach an understanding on several issues related to climate change in the G20 climate summit marks another **setback in the fight against rising temperatures**. This is being viewed as a setback to hopes of securing a meaningful accord in COP26 Scotland.
- COP26 marks the last chance to keep alive the chance of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Significance:

- Despite several points of difference, the G20 has put together a 58-point communique and that all the countries agreed that **decarbonisation was a necessary goal**. This is also the first time that the G20 has accepted that **climate and energy policies are closely interconnected**.

Additional information:

- 2021 is a crucial year for ecological transition and climate, with a number of global events taking place in the coming months: the **Conference of the Parties (COP) of the three Rio Conventions on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Desertification (UNFCCC COP26, CBD COP 15 and UNCCD COP 15)**, the launch of the **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration**, the **United Nations Food Systems Summit** and the **United Nations Ocean Conference**.

6. HC upholds CCI probe against Flipkart, Amazon

In news E-commerce majors Amazon and Flipkart recently lost their legal battle in the High Court of Karnataka, as a division bench upheld the Competition Commission of India's decision to conduct an investigation into whether they had entered into anti-competitive agreements in violation of the provisions of the Competition Act, 2002.

About Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- It is a statutory body established in 2003 and became fully functional in 2009.
- It is responsible for enforcing The Competition Act, 2002 throughout India.
 - The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises.
 - The Act regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and Merger and acquisition), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.
- **Composition:** CCI consists of a Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.
 - **Eligibility:** Person should be qualified to be a judge of a High Court, or, has special knowledge of, and professional experience of not less than fifteen years in international trade, economics, commerce, law, finance.
- **Functions:** It is the duty of the Commission to:
 - eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition
 - promote and sustain competition.
 - protect the interests of consumers.
 - ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.

Recent Judgements of CCI

- **Cement companies:** CCI imposed a fine of ₹63.07 billion (US\$910 million) on 11 cement companies for cartelisation in June 2012.
- **BCCI:** CCI imposed a penalty of ₹522 million (US\$7.6 million) on the BCCI in 2013 for misusing its dominant position.
- **Telecos:** CCI ordered a probe into the functioning of Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) following a complaint filed by Reliance Jio against the cartelization by its rivals Bharti Airtel, Vodafone India and Idea cellular.
- **Google:** The commission ordered an antitrust probe against Google for abusing its dominant position with Android to block market rivals.

7. No imminent threat of Taliban influx in Kashmir, says official

Background:

- With the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, the **Taliban have made major advances in the past few weeks and gained new ground.**
- This has led to raising apprehensions of the impact this would have on **India's security concerns.**

Details:

Indian consulates in Afghanistan:

- In the backdrop of the rapid advances made by the Taliban in Afghanistan, the **intelligence inputs had warned of increased threat to Indian consulates** and India-aided infrastructure projects in the country.
- With intense fighting taking place around Kandahar, India evacuated all Indian staff from its consulate and has also closed some of its consulates in other Afghanistan cities.

Threat for Kashmir:

- Though the defence experts have stated that there is **no immediate threat of the Taliban moving towards Kashmir**, there is apprehension that the **Afghan situation could embolden Pakistan-based terror groups operating in Kashmir.**
- India's position along the Line of Control (LoC) continues to be strong given the robust counter insurgency mechanism in place. **India has a significant troop presence which is complemented by sensors and drone surveillance along the LoC.**

Defence co-operation between India and Afghanistan:

- In the past few years, India has gifted four **Mi-24 attack helicopters** and three **Cheetah utility helicopters** to Afghanistan, apart from **training Afghan officers** in its training academies.
- Given the rapid advances being made by the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Afghan Army chief is scheduled to visit India soon. This is being viewed as an attempt by the Afghanistan government to expedite its **long standing request for offensive military hardware like tanks and artillery guns from India**

8. Renewables Integration in India 2021

A report on “**Renewables Integration in India 2021**” was jointly launched NITI Aayog International Energy Agency (IEA).

- The joint report **provides useful suggestions for the states** to consider to best **manage their integration challenge**.

About the report:

- The report is based on the **outcome of three states workshops** held with the Governments of **Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat** to understand the specific energy transition challenges faced by these renewable-rich states.
- The report uses IEA modelling results to show the effects of different flexibility options on the power system.

Findings of the report:

- The report highlights that **India’s power system can efficiently integrate renewables** (175 GW by 2022 and 450 GW by 2030), but it would **require identification of resources** and proper planning, regulatory, policy and institutional support, energy storage and advance technology initiatives.
- Indian states need to **employ a wide range of flexibility options** – such as demand response, more flexible operation of coal-based power plants, storage, and grid improvements – to transition to cleaner electricity systems.
- Larger shares of renewables can be better managed by **shifting time of use in agriculture**.
- **Time of Use (ToU) tariffs** will be an effective tool to incentivise demand side management and encourage flexible consumption.
- State has **shifted 70% -80% agriculture load to the day time**, providing incentives to industrial consumers for consuming more electricity and increasing State share in the **Green Energy Trading** (now, approx. 50%).

India’s challenges in the energy sector:

- India faces **three principal challenges**:
 1. How to expand reliable energy access and use while maintaining affordability for consumers and financial stability for the DISCOMs.
 2. How, at the same time, **to integrate increasing shares of renewable energy in a secure and reliable manner**.

3. How to reduce emissions to achieve ambitious social and climate objectives while meeting economic goals.

Renewable energy penetration in India:

- Renewable energy penetration is **highly variable** by state in India.
- The share of solar and wind in India's **ten renewables-rich states** (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Punjab and Kerala) is significantly higher than the **national average of 8.2%**.
- Solar and wind account for around 29% of annual electricity generation in Karnataka, 20% in Rajasthan, 18% in Tamil Nadu and 14% in Gujarat in 2020/21.
- India's renewables-rich states already have a higher share of variable renewable energy (VRE) than most countries internationally.
- As a result, many states are already facing system integration challenges.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. The 'Right to be Forgotten' in India

Ashutosh Kaushik who won reality shows Bigg Boss in 2008 and MTV Roadies 5.0 has approached the Delhi High Court with a plea saying that his videos, photographs and articles etc. **be removed from the internet** citing his "**Right to be Forgotten**".

- The plea maintains that the "Right to be Forgotten" goes in sync with the "Right to Privacy", which is an integral part of **Article 21 of the Constitution**, which concerns the right to life.

What is the plea about?

- The posts and videos on internet related to him have caused the “**petitioner psychological pain for his diminutive acts**, which were erroneously committed a decade ago as the recorded videos, photos, articles of the same are available on various search engines/ online platforms”.
- The petitioner’s mistakes in his personal life becomes and remains in public knowledge for generations to come and therefore in the instant case, this aspect acts as an ingredient for litigation before this Hon’ble court.
- Consequently, the values enshrined under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution and the emergent jurisprudential concept of the **Right to be Forgotten becomes extremely relevant** in the present case.

What is the ‘Right to be Forgotten’ in the Indian context?

- The Right to be Forgotten falls under the purview of an **individual’s right to privacy**, which is **governed by the Personal Data Protection Bill** that is yet to be passed by Parliament.
- In 2017, the **Right to Privacy was declared a fundamental right** by the Supreme Court in its landmark verdict.
 - The right to privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty under **Article 21** and as a part of the freedoms guaranteed by Part III of the Constitution.

What does the Personal Data Protection Bill say about this?

- The Personal Data Protection Bill was **introduced in Lok Sabha on December 11, 2019** and it aims to set out provisions meant for the **protection of the personal data** of individuals.
- Clause 20 under Chapter V of this draft bill titled “**Rights of Data Principal**” mentions the “Right to be Forgotten.”
- It states that the “data principal (the person to whom the data is related) shall **have the right to restrict or prevent the continuing disclosure** of his personal data by a data fiduciary”.
- Therefore, broadly, under the Right to be forgotten, users can de-link, limit, delete or correct the disclosure of their personal information held by data fiduciaries.
 - A data fiduciary means any person, including the State, a company, any juristic entity or any individual who alone or in conjunction with others determines the purpose and means of processing of personal data.

- Even so, the sensitivity of the personal data and information cannot be determined independently by the person concerned, but will be overseen by the Data Protection Authority (DPA).
 - This means his or her rights are subject to authorisation by the Adjudicating Officer who works for the DPA.
- While assessing the data principal's request, this officer will need to **examine the sensitivity of the personal data**, the scale of disclosure, degree of accessibility sought to be restricted, **role of the data principal in public life** and the **nature of the disclosure** among some other variables.

2. Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan

In news The restructured Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan is being implemented with effect from 2018-19 across all States/UTs.

About the Abhiyan

- Launched in 2018.
- It is a centrally sponsored scheme
- **Primary aim:** Strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions for achieving Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Main thrust:** Convergence with Mission Antyodaya and emphasis on strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions in 117 Aspirational districts.
- It is an effort in the direction of achieving "Sabka Sath, Sabka Gaon, Sabka Vikas".
- The RGSA helps more than 2.55 lakh Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to **develop governance capabilities** through inclusive local governance with focus on optimum utilisation of available resources.
- Priority will be given to subjects of national importance that affect the excluded groups the most, e.g. poverty, primary health services, nutrition, immunization, etc.
- This scheme extends to all States and UTs of the country and will also include institutions of rural local government in non-Part IX areas, where Panchayats do not exist.
- It will establish the institutional structure for capacity building of PRIs at the national, state and district level with adequate human resources and infrastructure.
- Panchayats will progressively be strengthened through incentivisation on the basis of nationally important criteria which will encourage competitive spirit among them.
- The funds are not released district-wise/Panchayat-wise under the scheme.

- Under the scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan there is no provision for forming new Panchayats. Formation or reorganization of Panchayats is done by the respective States/ Union Territories as per their requirement.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

3. NITI Aayog and IEA launch 'Renewables Integration in India 2021'

In news A report on “Renewables Integration in India 2021” was jointly launched by NITI Aayog & International Energy Agency (IEA) on 22nd July, 2021.

- The joint report underscores IEA’s commitment to provide support to India with its clean energy transition agenda.
- It also provides useful suggestions for the states to consider to best manage their integration challenge.
- The report is based on the outcome of three states workshops held with the Governments of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat to understand the specific energy transition challenges faced by these renewable-rich states.
- The report uses IEA modelling results to show the effects of different flexibility options on the power system.

What are the key highlights of the report?

- The report highlights that India’s power system can efficiently integrate renewables (175 GW by 2022 and 450 GW by 2030), but it would require identification of resources and proper planning, regulatory, policy and institutional support, energy storage and advanced technology initiatives.
- Indian states need to employ a wide range of flexibility options to transition to cleaner electricity systems.
- Distributed solar will play a major role in reducing integration challenges.
- It is also emphasized that to absorb maximum RE power, State has shifted 70% -80% agriculture load to the day time, providing incentives to industrial consumers for consuming more electricity and increasing State share in the Green Energy Trading (now, approx. 50%).
- RE integration can start with proper resources planning and better implementation of technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, base power system management and smart grid intervention.

- Old regulations need to be revised and regulatory commissions need to play more proactive role.
- Smart meters, Time of the Day tariff and overall demand response program would be useful for RE load management.

4. UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation launched

The UNESCAP's latest Global Survey has said that **India's score has risen significantly in the United Nation's Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation.**

- The report is published once in two years.

Highlights of the survey:

- India has scored **90.32 per cent**.
- The survey hails this as a remarkable jump from 78.49 per cent in 2019.
- The survey noted that **India is the best performing country when compared to South and South-West Asia region** (63.12 per cent) and Asia-Pacific region (65.85 per cent).
- The Survey has highlighted India's significant improvement in the scores on all 5 key indicators, as follows:
 1. **Transparency:** 100% in 2021 (from 93.33% in 2019)
 2. **Formalities:** 95.83% in 2021 (from 87.5% in 2019)
 3. **Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation:** 88.89% in 2021 (from 66.67% in 2019)
 4. **Paperless Trade:** 96.3% in 2021 (from 81.48% in 2019)
 5. **Cross-Border Paperless Trade:** 66.67% in 2021 (from 55.56% in 2019)
- India has achieved a **100 per cent score for the transparency index** and **66 per cent in the "Women in trade" component**
- The overall score of India has also been found to be greater than many OECD countries including France, UK, Canada, Norway, Finland, etc and the **overall score is greater than the average score of EU.**
- **The customs were lauded:**
 - The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) introduced reforms under the umbrella of '**Turant' Customs** to usher in a faceless, paperless and contactless Customs.
 - This has had a direct impact in terms of the improvement in the UNESCAP rankings on digital and sustainable trade facilitation.

- Further, “during the Covid-19 pandemic, Customs formations have made all efforts to expedite Covid-related imports such as oxygen-related equipments, life-saving medicines, vaccines, etc.
- A dedicated single window **Covid-19 24/7 helpdesk for EXIM trade** was created on the CBIC website to facilitate quick resolution of issue(s) faced by importers.

About the Survey:

- The **Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation** is conducted **every two years** by **United Nation’s Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific**.
- The 2021 Survey includes an **assessment of 58 trade facilitation measures** covered by the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement.
- The Survey is keenly awaited globally as it evidences whether or not the trade facilitation measures being taken have the desired impact and helps draw comparison amongst countries.
- A higher score for a country also helps businesses in their investment decisions.

5. Monsoon revival sees rise in extreme rainfall events

A new study by scientists of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) under the Union ministry of earth sciences has released recently.

- Rainfall amid the monsoon’s revival since the second week of July has seen **significant variation across the country**.

Highlights of the report:

- Several parts of the western Konkan coast and the southern peninsula were seeing instances of extreme rainfall.
- The ‘South Peninsula’ has seen **29% more rain** than normal for the period from June 1-July 23.
- For the same duration, northwest and central India have seen a 10% and 2% deficit respectively and the **northeast India a 14% deficit**, though this region has a higher base rainfall than other regions.
- July and August are the most important monsoon months contributing over **two-third of the seasonal rainfall** and central India as well as the south Peninsula are expected to see most of the rainfall during this interim.
- The **frequency and strength of cyclones over the Arabian Sea has increased** in the last two decades.

- There is a 52% increase in the frequency of cyclones over Arabian Sea from 2001-2019 and 8% decrease over Bay of Bengal compared to 1982-2002.
- Even the duration of these cyclones has increased by 80%. More cyclones were bringing in more moisture from the Arabian Sea and contributing to extreme rainfall events.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. With reference to Secrecy of Vote, consider the following statements:

1. It is a part of the freedom of expression.
2. It is an integral part of a free and fair election.
3. It is also mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C 1 and 3 only
- D 1, 2 and 3

Answer : D

Explanation

- Recently, the Supreme Court of India held that in any election, be it to Parliament or State legislature, the **maintenance of secrecy of voting is “a must”**.
 - It reiterated its 2013 judgement in the **People's Union for Civil Liberties case**.
 - The court held that it is a part of Fundamental Right, as any arbitrary distinction between the voter who casts his vote and the voter who does not cast his vote is violative of **Article 14, Article 19(1)(a) and Article 21 of the Indian Constitution**.
 - The secrecy is a part of the **fundamental right of freedom of expression. Hence, statement 1 is correct**.
- The Supreme Court in **People's Union for Civil Liberties case, 2013**, held that, there are the two main key components of right to secrecy of vote:
 - Right to vote also includes a **right not to vote i.e right to reject**.
 - Right to secrecy is an **integral part of a free and fair election**.

- Further, the confidentiality of choice **strengthened democracy. Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- **Article 21(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 25(b) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** deals with the “Right to secrecy”. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

2. The Kanal Project was recently launched by the Kerala’s Department of Women and Child Development. Its main objective is?

- a. To end all domestic and dowry abuse against women
- b. To act against substance abuse prevalent among Children
- c. To replace non-renewable energy production with solar power generation
- d. None of the above

Answer : a

- *Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has recently inaugurated ‘Kanal’ project.*
- It is an initiative of Kerala’s Department of Women and Child Development.
- The project has been formulated with an aim to end all domestic and dowry abuse, to empower women and to create awareness among the entire population.
- As part of the launching of ‘Kanal’, Integrated Child Development Services supervisors and anganwadi workers have been provided training.
- Awareness campaigns are being organised in colleges.
- Over a lakh awareness posters will be displayed in various parts of the State.

3. With reference to Madhubani Paintings, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It has its origins in the Maithili village of Bihar.
2. Madhubani paintings bear the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Madhubani painting has its origins in the Maithili village of Bihar.
- Madhubani paintings bear the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

4. Consider the following statements regarding Special Economic Zones (SEZs):

1. SEZs are exempted from the Income Tax and Minimum Alternate Tax.
2. SEZs were established in India in 2000 under its Foreign Trade Policy.
3. Asia's first Export Processing Zone (EPZ) was established in Gujarat.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 1 and 2 only
- B 2 only
- C 3 only
- D 1, 2 and 3

Answer : D

Explanation

- A Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is a territory within a country that is typically duty-free (Fiscal Concession) and has different business and commercial laws chiefly to encourage investment and create employment.
 - Asia's first EPZ (Export Processing Zones) was established in 1965 at Kandla, Gujarat. Hence, statement 3 is correct.
 - EPZ is a type of SEZ.
 - It is an area set up to enhance commercial and industrial exports by encouraging economic growth through investment from foreign entities.
- The Government of India began to **establish SEZs in 2000 under the Foreign Trade Policy** to redress the infrastructural and bureaucratic challenges that were seen to have limited the success of EPZs. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
 - The Special Economic Zones Act was passed in 2005. The Act came into force along with the SEZ Rules in 2006.
 - However, SEZs were operational in India from 2000 to 2006 (under the Foreign Trade Policy).
 - India's SEZs were structured closely with China's successful model.
- **Major Incentives and Facilities Available to SEZ:**

- Duty free import/domestic procurement of goods for development, operation and maintenance of SEZ units.
- **Exemption from various taxes like Income Tax, minimum alternate tax, etc. Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- External commercial borrowing by SEZ units upto US \$ 500 million in a year without any maturity restriction through recognized banking channels.
- Single window clearance for Central and State level approvals.

5. The 'Mission Purvodaya' initiative is related to the development of which of the following sectors?

- A Steel Industry
- B Defence Industry
- C Space Industry
- D Dairy Industry

Answer : A

Explanation

- **Mission Purvodaya** was launched in 2020 for the accelerated development of eastern India through the **establishment of an integrated steel hub in Kolkata, West Bengal.**
 - The focus will be on eastern states of India (Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal) and northern part of Andhra Pradesh which collectively hold ~80% of the country's iron ore, ~100% of coking coal and significant portion of chromite, bauxite and dolomite reserves.
- The Integrated Steel Hub would focus on 3 key elements:
 - Capacity addition through easing the setup of Greenfield steel plants.
 - Development of steel clusters near integrated steel plants as well as demand centres.
 - Transformation of logistics and utilities infrastructure which would change the socio-economic landscape in the East.
- The objective of this hub would be to enable swift capacity addition and improve overall competitiveness of steel producers both in terms of cost and quality.
- **Hence, option A is correct.**

6. The 'Baba Kalyani Committee', often seen in the news, is related to?

- A Long Term Food Policy

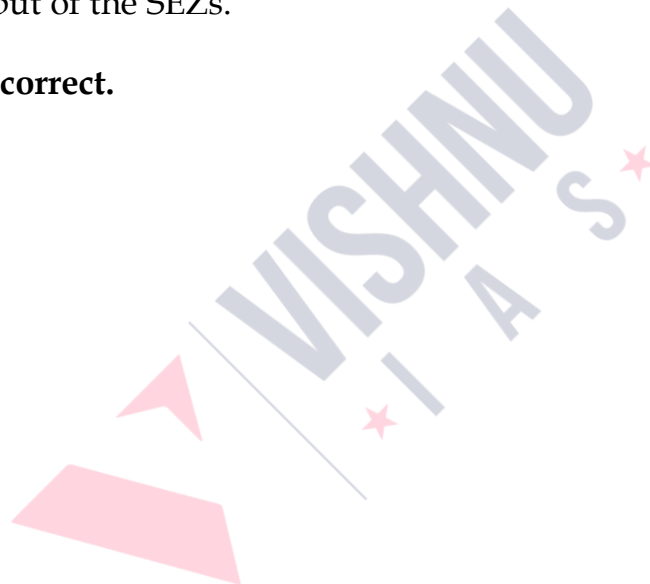
- B Banking Supervision
- C Small Scale Industries Reforms
- D Special Economic Zones Policy

Answer :D

Explanation

- The **Baba Kalyani led committee** was constituted by the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** to study the existing **Special Economic Zones (SEZ) policy of India** and had submitted its recommendations in November 2018.
- It was set up with a broad objective to evaluate the SEZ policy towards making it WTO (World Trade Organisation) -compatible and to bring in global best practices to maximise capacity utilisation and to maximise potential output of the SEZs.

Hence, option D is correct.



Mains Practice Questions

1Q. The Champaran Satyagraha was the first intersection of peasant unrest and the national movement. Comment. (250 words)

Approach

- Explain how Champaran Satyagraha was more inclusive as a mass movement than the previous movement.
- Explain the issues with the previous movements.
- Conclude suitably.

2Q. Mathura school was a great centre of art and sculptures during the early historic period. How did it differ from the Gandhara school? (150 words)

Approach

- Start with writing a few introductory lines about Mathura and Gandhara school of art.
- Differentiate between the two schools of art.
- Conclude by summarising your answer.