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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Continuation of Scheme for Fast Track Courts

In news Recently, the Union Government approved the continuation of more than 1000 Fast Track Special Court (FTSCs) as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for two years (April 2021-March 2023).

- It includes 389 exclusive POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Courts.
- The Central share will be provided from the Nirbhaya Fund.

What is the Background of Fast Track Courts?

- Fast track courts (FTCs) were first recommended by the Eleventh Finance Commission in 2000 to substantially bring down pendency in the district and subordinate courts over the next five years.
- In 2011, the central government stopped funding fast-track courts.
 - The decision was challenged in the Supreme Court (SC) in 2012, but the apex court said it was up to the states to continue or shut down these courts depending on their financial situation.
 - Three states—Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala—continued running these courts while Delhi, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka had said they would continue till 2013.
 - Following the December 2012 Gangrape and murder, the Union Government set up a 'Nirbhaya Fund', amended the Juvenile Justice Act and set up fast-track Mahila Courts.

What is the Scheme for Fast Track Special Courts?

- In 2019, the government approved a scheme for setting up 1,023 fast-track special courts (FTSCs) across the country for expeditious disposal of pending rape cases under the Indian penal Code (IPC) and crimes under the POCSO Act.
- FTSCs are dedicated courts expected to ensure swift dispensation of justice. They have a better clearance rate as compared to the regular courts and hold speedy trials.
- It also strengthens the deterrence framework for sexual offenders.

How has the Performance been for Fast Track Courts?

- The Performance has been below par.
- According to NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau), at the end of 2019, rape cases had a pendency rate of 89.5% and the conviction rate of 27.8%.
- For POCSO cases, 88.8% cases were pending at the end of the year, and of those disposed of, 34.9% ended in a conviction.

What are the Issues with FTCs?

- **Lack of Infrastructure**
- **No clear Mandate:** There are no clear mandates on what kind of cases fast-track courts are supposed to hear.
- **Delay in Judgement**
- **Overburdened Judges**

2. Constitutional (127th) Amendment Bill, 2021

In news: Union Government is planning to bring a Bill to Parliament to clarify some provisions in the 102nd Constitutional amendment Act (CAA) **to restore the power of the states to identify backward classes.**

- In India, separate OBC lists are drawn up by the Centre and each state concerned. Articles 15(4), 15(5) and 16(4) expressly conferred power on a state to identify and declare the list of socially and educationally backward classes.
- The amendment was necessitated after the SC in its Maratha reservation ruling upheld the 102nd CAA but said the President, based on the recommendations of the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC), would determine which communities would be included on the state OBC list.

What is the 102nd Constitution Amendment Act of 2018?

It inserted Articles 338B and Article 342A (with two clauses) after Article 342.

- **Articles 338B** deals with the structure, duties and powers of the National Commission for Backward Classes.
- **Article 342A** says that the President, in consultation with the governor, would specify the socially and educationally backward classes.

About the Constitutional (127th) Amendment Bill, 2021:

- It will amend clauses 1 and 2 of Article 342A and also introduce a new clause 3.
- The bill will also amend Articles 366 (26c) and 338B (9).
 - It is designed to clarify that **the states can maintain the “state list” of OBCs** as was the system before the Supreme Court judgment.
 - Articles 366 (26c) defines socially and educationally backward classes.
- The “state list” will be completely taken out of the ambit of the President and will be **notified by the state assembly**.

What is the procedure for passing Constitutional Amendment Bills?

As per the procedure laid down in the Constitution, **Constitution Amendment Bills can be of three types viz.**

- requiring a **simple majority** for their passage in each House.
- requiring a **special majority** for their passage in each House i.e., a majority of the total membership of a House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting (**article 368**).
- requiring **special majority** for their passage and ratification by Legislatures of **not less than one-half of the States** by resolutions to that effect passed by those Legislatures (clause (2) of **article 368**).
- A Constitution Amendment Bill under article 368 can be introduced in either House of Parliament and has to be passed by each House by special majority.
- There is **no provision of joint sittings** on a Money Bill or a Constitution Amending Bill.

3. Importance of vaccine for pregnant women

In news Recently a senior member of the National COVID-19 Task Force has thrown light over the importance of Covid-19 vaccine for pregnant women.

Why is COVID-19 vaccine important for pregnant women?

- Though pregnancy and childbirth do not increase the risk of acquiring SARS-CoV-2 infection, they worsen the clinical course of COVID-19 compared with other women in the same age group.

- During the second wave, It was found that 22% of pregnant women who tested positive for COVID-19 had premature deliveries, and 48% had to undergo a caesarean delivery.
- The rate of admission to the ICU among pregnant women with COVID-19 was also higher than those of non-pregnant women.
- COVID-19 during pregnancy can lead to pre-eclampsia or eclampsia, which is an increase in the blood pressure of mother, and the risk of cardiopulmonary arrest increases, especially if the infection occurs during the third trimester.
- Since the vaccine significantly reduces the severity and mortality due to COVID-19, the government took the decision to provide vaccination to pregnant women.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. New technique to study ultrasmall particles in cells

Context:

- Researchers from IIT Madras and IISER Kolkata have developed a new method to detect minute quantities of chemicals in solution.

Background:

Absorption spectroscopy:

- Absorption spectroscopy refers to spectroscopic techniques that measure the absorption of radiation due to its interaction with a sample.
 - The sample absorbs energy, i.e., photons, from the radiating field.
- The intensity of the absorption varies as a function of frequency and also the absorbing medium.
- Dark lines are seen in the observed absorption spectrum of the light passed through the substance, which corresponds to the wavelengths of light absorbed by the intervening substance and are characteristic of the elements present in it.
- Hence, **Absorption spectroscopy is employed as an analytical tool** to determine the presence of a particular substance in a sample and also to quantify the amount of the substance present.

- Absorption spectroscopy is performed across the electromagnetic spectrum. Infrared and ultraviolet-visible spectroscopy are particularly common in analytical applications.

Details:

- The new method uses a variation of absorption spectroscopy.
- The technique exploits the **quantum emission properties of erbium-doped sodium yttrium fluoride nanoparticles**.
 - These tiny, nano-sized particles can absorb the light being shone on them and re-emit red, blue and green light.
- The emission from these nano particles would be absorbed by substances in the sample. An analysis of the absorption spectrum would reveal the nature of the absorbing material.

Significance of the new methodology:

Surpasses the limits of conventional absorption spectroscopy:

- The new method surpasses the systemic limits imposed by conventional absorption spectroscopy based on the Abbe criterion.
 - The **Abbe criterion** sets a natural limit on the size of the object being studied using absorption spectroscopy. According to this criterion, the size of the observed object has to be at least of the order of the wavelength of the light being shone on it.
- Unlike the conventional absorption spectroscopy technique which requires a minimum of about a cubic centimetre of the sample for the analysis, **the new method developed can help detect even minute amounts of dissolved substances**. Very small molecules almost ten-millionth of a mm in diameter can also be detected using this methodology.

Potential applications:

- There are many potential applications.
 - This technique can be used to study the insides of cells and **detect even minuscule quantities of substances** present there.
 - It can also be used to **measure individual molecules**, see absorption spectroscopy of a **single DNA or protein molecule**.

5. Why is retrospective tax being scrapped?

Context:

- Finance Minister has introduced the **Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha** to nullify the provision for retrospective tax.

Background:

- The **Retrospective tax clause introduced in 2012** has been criticized as being **against the principle of tax certainty and damaging to India's image as a possible foreign investment destination.**
- The affected companies like Vodafone and Cairn Energy have filed and won international arbitration rulings that held the **Indian government in breach of bilateral investment protection agreements** over the imposition of retrospective taxes.

Details:

- The Bill proposes to **do away with retrospective taxation on the sale of assets in India by foreign entities** executed before May 2012.

Reasons for the proposed amendment:

Avoid legal sanctions:

- The government has been fighting legal cases against Vodafone and Cairn Energy on this aspect.
 - Vodafone got a favourable ruling in September 2020 at the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. Also an Arbitral Tribunal ruled in favour of Cairn, awarding it a compensation.
 - Cairn has even applied in courts in the U.S., Canada, Singapore, Mauritius and the Netherlands for seizure of Indian assets.
- The **loss of the arbitration cases and Cairn's pursuit of India's assets abroad** may have forced the government to propose the amendments.

Need for economic recovery:

- **Quick recovery of the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic** is the need of the hour and foreign investment has an important role to play in this regard.

- The proposed change will go a long way in undoing the damage done by the retrospective tax clause on India's image as a foreign investment destination and **help attract higher inward investments.**

6. Sunderbans is now drowning in plastic

Context:

- **Plastic pollution in the sunderbans**

Background:

- Sunderbans has been battered by many cyclones over the years, with Cyclone Yaas (May 2021) being the latest.
- To support the affected people, **packaged relief material** has been flowing into the Sunderbans.

Details:

- The unregulated inflow of relief materials has resulted in **accumulation of plastic waste in the Sunderbans.**
- Large amounts of plastic waste has been observed in the remote areas of the Sunderbans, like Gosaba, Mousuni, Bali, Patharpratima and Kultali.
- Several NGOs, experts, and even officials of the District Police and the Forest Department have pointed out that the **plastic accumulating on the isolated islands of the fragile ecosystem** are cause for great concern.

Concerns:

- Plastics in the sunderbans would have both short term as well as long term ecological impact on the Sunderbans ecosystem.
 - The presence of plastic in saline water increases the **toxicity of water.**
 - It could also contribute to the **eutrophication** of water.
 - The **ingestion of plastics by the local fauna** will adversely impact their health.
 - The breakdown of plastics in the water will lead to an increase in **microplastics**, which would subsequently enter the food system.
 - Given that Sunderbans is connected to the sea, the increase of plastic in the region could lead to **plastic waste entering the ocean.**

Recommendations:

- The local administration along with the support of local NGOs and locals should organise **cleanliness drives** to remove plastic from the Sunderbans.
- There should be **regulation of plastic usage in the region** and there should be clearly laid out guidelines to control the flow of plastic into the region. Any such plastic inflow should be properly disposed of with responsibility for the collection and disposal placed on appropriate authorities or the NGOs which are involved in relief material distribution.
- Proper measures need to be taken to **reduce single-use plastic usage in the region**.
- **More eco-friendly alternatives for plastic packaging** should be prioritized.

7. Ladakh glacier retreat due to warming, low winter precipitation, finds study

- A recent study has indicated that the **Pensilungpa Glacier located in Ladakh's Zaskar Valley is retreating** due to an **increase in temperature and a decrease in precipitation during winters**.
 - **Climate change** is causing variations in both temperature and snowfall.
- The study also points at the **significant influence of debris cover on the mass balance** and retreat of the glacier's endpoint, especially in summer.
 - Mass balance defined as the difference between accumulation and ablation is crucial to the survival of a glacier.
 - Debris-covered glaciers are valley glaciers that have a layer of rocks and sediment on top of the ice surface. Many of the world's alpine glaciers are covered by debris to some extent, and this debris affects the rate of ice melting. This, in turn, impacts the overall mass balance of glaciers.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Dam Rehabilitation & Improvement Project (DRIP)

The Government of India signed a \$250 million loan agreement with World Bank for the Second Phase of Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP Phase II).

- The agreement is:
 - To enhance water security in the country and support sustainable development,
 - To make existing dams and communities safe and resilient across India.
- The balanced US\$250 million external funding from **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)** is under consideration.

DRIP Phase II:

- This DRIP Phase II is the **first phase of externally aided DRIP Phase II and Phase III**, approved by Government of India in October 2020.
- The Scheme has the participation of **19 States and 3 Central Agencies**.
- The Budget Outlay for both Phases is Rs 10,211 Cr for an **implementation period of 10 years**.
- The Scheme will be **implemented in two Phases**, each of six years' duration, with two years' overlap.
- The project will be implemented in approximately **120 dams** across 10 states.

Funding pattern:

- 80:20 for Special Category States
- 70:30 for General Category States
- 50:50 for Central Agencies
- The Scheme also has provision of **Central Grant of 90% of loan** amount for special category States (Manipur, Meghalaya and Uttarakhand).

Components:

- Rehabilitation of dams and associated appurtenances to improve the safety and operational performance of selected existing dams and associated appurtenances in a sustainable manner, and


- Dam safety Institutional Strengthening to strengthen the dam safety institutional setup in participating States as well as on a Central level,
- Incidental Revenue Generation for sustainable operation and maintenance of dams, and
- Project Management.

Significance of the scheme:

- Strengthen dam safety initiatives through physical rehabilitation by addressing various concerns to improve safety and operational performance, institutional strengthening in various ways, incidental revenue generation for sustainable operation & maintenance of dams etc.
- It is designed to infuse global know-how, innovative technologies in dam safety.
- Introduction of a risk-based approach to dam asset management will help to effectively allocate financial resources towards priority dam safety needs.
- Scheme implementation will equip the Indian dam owners **to gear up their human resources** to comprehensively handle many important activities envisaged in proposed Dam Safety Legislation.

About DRIP scheme:

- DRIP is a **State sector scheme** formulated to **bridge the funding gap** and provide urgent finance to States for repair and maintenance of Dams.
- The scheme was initiated in **April 2012** with financial assistance from the World Bank.
- Phase I of the scheme is **closed on 31st March, 2021**.
- Next phase of DRIP i.e. DRIP Phase – II & III is at an advanced preparatory stage.
- It facilitated loans from World Bank to participating states when they agreed to terms and conditions of the lending agency.

ALL ABOUT DRIP	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project is in operation in Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka ● Karnataka submits detailed proposal for 116 dams in 2012 to CWC seeking Rs. 449.61 crore ● State, World Bank sign project agreement in November 2014 	
IN PHASE I Tenders called for Almatti and Narayanpur dams in February 2105	IN PHASE III Project report on 10 dams to be submitted by June-end
IN PHASE II State submits proposal on 5 dams – Amarja and Bennethora in Kalaburagi district, KRS in Mandya, and Hidkal and Malaprabha in Belagavi district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● International Development Association funding the projects ● Repayment period is 30 years. Interest rate is 1 % ● Central Water Commission is coordinating the project

Objective:

- To improve the safety and operational performance of selected existing dams along with dam safety institutional strengthening with system wide management approach.

Achievements:

- The Scheme had rehabilitation provision for 223 dams located in seven States.
- Two most important dam specific technical documents (**Emergency Action Plan (EAP), Operation and Maintenance (O&M) manual**) were developed for all DRIP dams which will ensure safety and operational performance of selected dams.

Key Facts:

- India ranks third globally after China and the United States of America, with **5334 large dams** in operation.
- Andhra Pradesh did not choose to be a part of the scheme in Phase I.

2. Pulichintala project

Pulichintala project

A hydraulic operated gate at **KL Rao Multi Purpose Irrigation project (Pulichintala)** was washed away following a massive discharge into the dam.

About Pulichintala project:

- Dr K.L.Rao Sagar Pulichintala Project is a balancing reservoir **constructed across river Krishna** near Pulichinta Village in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh.
- Pulichintala was conceived to **stabilise the Krishna delta ayacut** for raising paddy seedbeds and transplantation period.
- It is 85 km **upstream of the Prakasham barrage** and 115 km downstream of the **Nagarjunasagar dam**.
- Pulichintala was the only site where a dam **with significant storage capacity** could be built before the Krishna joins the Bay of Bengal.
- The dam is a **multipurpose in nature**, supplying irrigation water to the Krishna delta through powerhouses generating 120 MW of hydel power.

Background:

- The Pulichintala project was dropped as an entire ayacut originally proposed to be irrigated under it was covered by Nagarjunasagar.
- However, due to the rapid development of the command area under the Nagarjunasagar and other projects on the Krishna in the upper reaches, water supplies to the Prakasham barrage have been dwindling.
- The reduced inflows during the transplantation period are impacting the yields of paddy, the main crop in the Krishna delta.
- **To bridge this gap**, Pulichintala project was developed as a balancing reservoir on the Krishna.

3. Indus Water Treaty

Indus Water Treaty

Standing Committee on Water Resources has directed in its 12th report submitted to the Lok Sabha that India should renegotiate the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 with Pakistan in the light of present-day challenges.

Highlights of the report:

- Present-day pressing issues such as climate change, global warming and environmental impact assessment were not taken into account by the treaty.
- There is a need to **re-negotiate the Treaty** so as to establish some kind of institutional structure or legislative framework **to address the impact of climate change** on water availability in the Indus basin.
- Various impacts of climate change on the Indus basin are:
 - **Change in rainfall pattern:** There are instances of more high-intensity rainfall as well as long stretches where there is low rainfall.
 - **Glacial melt:** The contribution of glaciers in the Indus basin is higher than in the Ganges or Brahmaputra basins.
 - **Fragile Himalayan region:** Greater frequency of landslides and flash floods.
- Canal systems in Punjab and Rajasthan be repaired to increase their water carrying capacity.
 - These canals had **become old and were not maintained properly**, lowering of their water carrying capacity.
 - Thus, the water from the Harike Barrage on the confluence of the Beas and Satluj in Punjab was usually released downstream into Pakistan.
 - New projects should be initiated to exploit the full potential of the rivers for irrigation and other purposes.

Indus Water Treaty (IWT):

- The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) is a **water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan**, mediated by the World Bank to use the water available in the Indus System of Rivers.
- IWT was **signed in Karachi on September 19, 1960** by the first Prime Minister of India and then President of Pakistan.
- The agreement awarded control over the water flowing in:
 - **Three eastern rivers of India**, i.e. the Beas, the Ravi and the Sutlej was given to India.
 - **Three western rivers of India** i.e. the Indus, the Chenab and the Jhelum was given to **Pakistan**.
- India has unrestricted usage rights over the eastern rivers, and India should allow unrestricted flow of the western rivers into Pakistan.
- India can use **20% of Indus water for irrigation**, transport and power generation since it originates in India and Chenab and Jhelum for consumption purposes.
- The treaty provided for the **creation of a Permanent Indus Commission**, with a commissioner from each country to maintain a channel for communication and to resolve questions about implementation of the treaty.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. Despite a normal monsoon so far, sowing worries persist

Context: Two out of the four months (June-September) of India's official monsoon season are now over.

- However, progress of sowing for India's winter crop or Kharif season is still short of normal sown area at this point of time.

Some of the issues which determines the agricultural season of this year are:

1. A revival in July rainfall after June's dry patch

- The first 62 days of this year's monsoon season can be divided into three phases –
 - a bumper rainfall in the first 20 days,
 - a dry patch between June 21 to July 11
 - a recovery in the period thereafter.

- Monsoon performance is measured by comparing current period's rainfall with what is called the Long Period Average (LPA). The current LPA mark is the average rainfall between 1961 and 2010
- July revival has brought cumulative rainfall above LPA

2. Excess rain in peninsula, normal/deficient rain elsewhere

- All regions in the country have not had adequate rains this year.
- A state-wise analysis of the rainfall data shows that cumulative rainfall in 14 states and union territories is lower than the LPA figure so far. Among the major states, Gujarat, Kerala and Assam feature on this list.
- Seven states have had excess rainfall (20% above the LPA figure) so far. This list includes Maharashtra, Haryana, Delhi, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu
- Also, there are significant differences in rainfall even within states.
 - Of the 614 districts, the number of districts with excess rainfall has increased from 162 on July 15 to 205 on August 1, while those with normal rainfall has increased from 229 to 269.
 - The number of districts with deficient rainfall has decreased from 223 to 140.

3. Storage of Water in reservoirs

- The live storage status of 130 main reservoirs in the country is monitored by the Central Water Commission.
- These reservoirs had 85.36 billion cubic metres (BCM) of water available as on July 29, higher than both the 70.77 BCM available at this time last year. This is a testimony to the revival in monsoon.
- However, the storage in several Northeastern, northern, eastern, and central states is less than the average of the last 10 years.
- It is in the southern, states, which have received abundant rainfall, where current storage is exceeding the historical average significantly.

4. Despite monsoon revival, kharif sowing continues to lag

- As of July 30, 79.04% of the area normally sown during the kharif season was covered (less than the 83.45% area covered by this time last year)
- Progress of sowing is slower than last year for all major crops except sugarcane and arhar.

Analysis: How does Sowing impact the economy?

- **Crucial three weeks:** The Kharif sowing should get completed by mid-August, so the rainfall in the first half of August becomes crucial, which determines the agricultural output of the season.

- **Economic Revival dependent on agriculture:** Sowing numbers are important because India is banking a lot on Kharif crop to provide support to GDP. It was the rural sector which was the saviour in the aftermath of first wave of COVID-19 Pandemic. Whether it will play the same role this year depends on rainfall & sowing.
- **Aggregate Demand:** Sowing also determined the rural income that will be available for spending during the festival season as part of the rural demand.
- **Regional Inequality:** Presence of adequate quantity of waters in reservoirs of South would mean less disruption to the agricultural activities in Southern region. This may lead to region differentiation of farm incomes between North & South thus perpetuating the existing regional divide.

5. Global food systems are not thinking about women: UN

Global food systems are not thinking about women: UN

The United Nations in its 'Action Track' reports flagged that the **global food systems** are heavily afflicted by power imbalances and inequality.

- - The **Food Systems Summit** is to be held in New York in September 2021.

Major Highlights:

- The report flagged the **urgency to protect the livelihoods of women** living in times of vulnerability.
- It called for **social protection systems** to go beyond poverty-reduction rhetoric to **enhance opportunities** that helps build assets and create wealth for them.

Imbalance faced by Women farmers:

- **Indigenous women** play a crucial role in **eradicating hunger and malnutrition**.
 - The limitations in the recognition and exercise of rights have hampered access to **equitable systems** of food.
- **Women farmers** are disproportionately more affected by climate change and land degradation.

- They face **high levels of obesity** and are more susceptible to **chronic disease**.
- The impacts of COVID-19 pandemic **have not been gender-neutral**.
 - More women have been at the **receiving end of increased poverty**, food insecurity, malnutrition, and disease prevalence.
 - Epidemics can significantly **reduce women's economic and livelihood activities**, increasing poverty rates and exacerbating food insecurity.
- **Rural women** account for nearly **half the agricultural workforce** in developing countries, face discrimination.
 - They were amongst the worst affected **food insecure population** of 821 million (as of 2017).
- They have **very little land rights**, face difficulties attaining **ownership**, do not have access to **credit** and are engaged in **unpaid** work.
 - This reflects in their **dietary patterns** as they eat least, last and least well.
 - Women farmers who **control resources** generally have better-quality diets.

Need for inclusive systems:

- Systems must **adopt policies** that **eliminate barriers** in access to fundamental services. **For Example:** Right to food, shelter and health.
- An inspiration could be the **German dual training system**.
 - The institutional infrastructure integrates **school-based learning** with **work-based practice**.
 - This is done by providing **theoretical training** for aspiring farmers as well as **short-term courses** on specific skills.
- The **inequitable systems** that worsen inequalities for food systems workers and consumers should be dismantled and governments.
- Businesses, and organizations be held accountable for ensuring **equitable livelihoods** & promote **inclusive** decision making.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. With reference to Abanindranath Tagore, consider the following statements:

1. He was associated with the Bengal School of Painting.
2. He was the creator of the iconic 'Bharat Mata' painting.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C Both 1 and 2
- D Neither 1 and 2

Answer : C

Explanation

- **Bengal School of Painting** is also called the **Renaissance School** or the **Revivalist School**, as it represented the first modern movement of Indian art.
 - It **rediscovered the glories of Indian art** and consciously tried to produce what is considered truly Indian art inspired by the creations of the past.
 - Its leading artist was **Abanindranath Tagore** and its **theoretician was E.B. Havell**, the principal of the Calcutta School of Art. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Many of his paintings focused on themes of **Indian mythology and cultural heritage**, they are important sources for **studying the modern art movement in India** and for art historians.
 - His unique interpretation of swadeshi themes created a new awakening and heralded a revival of Indian art. He was the creator of the **iconic 'Bharat Mata' painting**. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

2. The “Tigray Region” recently in news, borders which of these countries?

1. Eritrea
2. South Sudan
3. Sudan
4. Djibouti

Options:

- a. 1, 2 and 4 only
- b. 3 and 4 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1 and 4 only

Answer: c

Explanation:

The Tigray Region in Ethiopia borders Sudan and Eritrea.

3) The Pensilungpa Glacier, sometimes seen in the news recently, is located in?

- a. Alaska, USA
- b. Ladakh, India
- c. Santa Cruz, Argentina
- d. Southern Alps, New Zealand

Answer : b

Pensilungpa Glacier

- It is located in Zaskar, Ladakh.
- Researchers have recently found that it is being retreating, and attributed the retreat to an increase in the temperature and decrease in precipitation during winters.
- The study also suggests that due to continuous rise in the air temperature in line with the global trend, the melting would increase, and it is possible that the precipitation of summer periods at higher altitudes will change from snow to rain, and that may influence the summer and winter pattern.

4. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 14 of the Indian Constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of “race”.
2. India has ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 1 only
B 2 only
C Both 1 and 2
D Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : B

Explanation

- Racism, also called racialism, is the belief that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called “races”; and that some races are innately superior to others.
 - Xenophobia and Racism mostly overlap, but the stark difference is racism is discrimination based on physical characteristics whereas xenophobia is discrimination based on the perception that someone is foreign or originating from another community or nation.
- **India’s Initiatives Against Racism:**
 - **Article 15, Article 16 and Article 29** of the Constitution of India **prohibit discrimination on grounds of “race”. Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
 - Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) also refers to “race”.
 - **India also ratified** the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (**ICERD**) in 1968. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

5. Consider the following statements:

1. India, till now has been elected for eight terms as a non-permanent member of UNSC.
2. India is a member of the Uniting for Consensus (UFC) group, which supports India’s permanent membership at UNSC.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C Both 1 and 2
- D Neither 1 and 2

Answer : A

Explanation

- India is **currently (in 2021 and 2022) a non-permanent member of the UNSC** and is president for the month of August. Before this, India has served seven times in the UN Security Council. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- **Uniting for Consensus or informally called "coffee club",** comprising 40-odd member states, has been **instrumental in holding back reforms to the United Nations Security Council.**
 - Most members of the club are **middle-sized states who oppose bigger regional powers grabbing permanent seats** in the UN Security Council.
 - The prime movers of the club include **Italy, Spain, Australia, Canada, South Korea, Argentina and Pakistan.**
 - While Italy and Spain are opposed to Germany's bid for Security Council's permanent membership, **Pakistan is opposed to India's bid.**
 - **G-4 is a group of four countries** i.e. Brazil, Germany, India and Japan which support each other's bids for permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
 - **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

6. Agarose is a natural polymer derived from seaweed agar. It is used for which of the following purposes?

- a. It is an oil-eating polymer that act as a natural remedy for oil spills
- b. It is a wound dressing material used for treatment of diabetic wounds
- c. It is a polymer modified bitumen material widely used for road construction
- d. It is referred as a floating gold and used for traditional medicine and in the perfume markets

Answer : b

Agarose

- An Indian scientist has recently developed an advanced wound dressing based on agarose.
- Agarose is a natural polymer derived from seaweed agar.
- It is used for the treatment of infected diabetic wounds and patients suffering from chronic wounds.
- This indigenous dressing will allow cost-effective dressings for chronic wound patients and will also pave the way for business incubation.
- The advanced wound dressing market in India is largely monopolized by foreign companies.
- This indigenous dressing will not only allow cost-effective dressings for chronic wound patients but also will pave way for business incubation.

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. Account for the present location of iron and steel industries away from the source of raw material, by giving examples.

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing major location factors for the iron and steel industries.
- Discuss the present location factors of iron and steel industries away from the source of raw material
- Conclude suitably.

2Q. "A governor should be discharging his/her duty in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution, not just be an agent of the centre". Discuss the statement in the light of the role of governor in the Indian polity.

Approach

- Introduce by defining the constitutional position of governor.
- Briefly mention the role and responsibility of the governor.
- Discuss various issues related to the governor's role as merely an agent of the centre.
- Suggest what should be the way ahead.
- Conclude suitably.

