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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Sri Lanka fisher leaders meet Indian envoy

- Recently a delegation of fisher leaders from Sri Lanka's northern districts met the Indian High Commissioner in Colombo.

Background:

- Fishermen from Tamil Nadu often cross the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and fish in Sri Lankan waters of the Palk Strait, using the harmful **bottom trawling fishing method**. This has become a recurring **flashpoint in India-Sri Lanka ties**.

Details:

- The delegation voiced **concern over the "delay in India's response"** to the issue of bottom trawling by Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait. They pointed out that though the Indian side had agreed twice – in 2010 and 2016 – to phase out and end the practice of bottom trawling it had failed to implement it.
- The Indian High Commissioner in Colombo assured the delegation that he would convey their concerns to both New Delhi and Tamil Nadu and look at some immediate measures to address the problem.

2. Time for action

- The first in-person G20 meeting in two years and the re-engagement of world leaders on the biggest issues faced by the global community.

On Covid Vaccine:

- On coordinated efforts to mitigate the pandemic, the focus was on vaccine production and distribution, with assurances of support to WHO's target of inoculating 40% or more of the global population against COVID19 by 2021, and at least 70% by mid-2022.

On Climate Change:

- The Group leaders recommitted their nations to provide \$100 billion a year toward adaptation, mitigation, and green technologies, focusing on the needs of developing countries.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi committed to limiting global warming to 1.5° C and identified sustainable and responsible consumption and production as “critical enablers”.

On post-COVID economic recovery:

- Given the rising inflation, spiking energy prices, and alarming supply chain bottlenecks, G20 leaders affirmed that national stimulus policies would not be removed prematurely.
- G20 leadership agreed to slap multinationals with a minimum 15% tax to create a more stable and fairer international tax system.
 - This OECD-led reform enjoys the support of 136 countries, which account for more than 90% of global GDP, and is likely to enter into force in 2023 or after.

Conclusion:

The G20 meeting has come at a critical moment and timely, effective, coordinated action across major nations, will help in faster global political economic recovery.

3. Pentagon rattled by China's military push

- U.S. defence establishment has expressed concerns over **China's growing military capabilities.**

Details:

- Chinese military capabilities are **expanding rapidly not only in traditional domains of land, sea and air but also in the new domains of space and cyberspace.**
- China has also been **expanding its nuclear arsenal.**
- It has made rapid **advances in missile technologies.** There is available evidence of China increasing its fleet of land-based **intercontinental ballistic missiles**, or ICBMs.
- China recently tested a **hypersonic weapon** capable of partially orbiting Earth before re-entering the atmosphere and gliding on a manoeuvrable path to its target. This weapon system would be capable of **evading the most advanced missile defence systems** including that of the U.S.

Concerns for the U.S.:

- China's growing military capability could end American predominance not only in the Asia-Pacific but also lead to a **potential shift in the global balance of power** that has favoured the U.S. for decades.
- Growing Chinese military prowess could push realignment in the region more favourable to China and **complicate U.S. alliances in Asia**.

Reactions from the U.S.:

- Given the rapid gains being made by China, the U.S. administration is attempting to reorient all aspects of U.S. foreign and defence policy. The Biden administration is expected to **review the nuclear weapons policy, global troop basing and overall defence strategy**.
- There have been calls by Pentagon officials and defence hawks for rebuilding the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. Feasibility of a blanket ban on firecrackers

The Supreme Court has said **a blanket ban on firecrackers may not be possible**.

- The Court was setting aside **a Calcutta High Court order** which had ordered a complete ban on firecrackers on October 29.

What has the Supreme Court said?

1. Strengthen the mechanism to stop misuse.
2. Measures ought to be in place to prevent the use of toxic chemicals in firecrackers.
3. Chief Secretaries, top administrative and police officials would be held personally liable if banned varieties of firecrackers were found to be used in any of the States (Supreme Court's 29th October order).

The judgment (Arjun Gopal Case):

The court's October 23, 2018 judgment banned the sale and production of firecrackers in Delhi-NCR and regulated the use of firecrackers across the country.

- **Barium-based** firecrackers were specifically banned.
- Online sale of firecrackers has been completely banned.

The verdict had come in response to a plea seeking a ban on manufacturing and sale of firecrackers across the country to curb air pollution.

Recent observations made by the Supreme Court on the use of firecrackers:

- The Supreme Court said it cannot infringe the right to life of other citizens "under the guise of employment of few" while considering a ban on firecrackers.
- Have to strike a balance between employment, unemployment and right to life.

How do firecrackers work?

Firecrackers use fuel and oxidisers to produce a combustion reaction, and the resulting explosion spreads the material in a superheated state. The metal salts in the explosive mix get 'excited' and emit light.

What is the controversy?

Metals in the mix, which have a varying arrangement of electrons in shells outside their nucleus, produce different wavelengths of light in this reaction, generating spectacular colours. But as many studies show, the burning of firecrackers is an unusual and peak source of pollution, made up of particles and gases.

- One study in Milan, Italy, quantified the increase in the levels of several elements in the air in one hour as 120 times for Strontium, 22 times for Magnesium, 12 times for Barium, 11 times for Potassium and six times for Copper.

- The **Central Pollution Control Board** conducted a study in Delhi in 2016, and found that the levels of Aluminium, Barium, Potassium, Sulphur, Iron and Strontium rose sharply on Deepavali night, from low to extremely high.
- Similar episodic spikes have been recorded in China and the U.K. Pollution from firecrackers affects the health of people and animals, and aggravates the already poor ambient air quality in Indian cities.

This has resulted in litigation calling for a total ban on firecrackers, and court orders to restrict the type of chemicals used as well as their volume. Many crackers also violate legal limits on sound.

Can green crackers make a difference?

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, through its National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI), Nagpur, has come out with firecrackers that have “reduced emission light and sound” and 30% less particulate matter using Potassium Nitrate as oxidant.

- These crackers are named **Safe Water Releaser**, which minimises Potassium Nitrate and Sulphur use, but matches the sound intensity of conventional crackers, **Safe Minimal Aluminium**, where **Aluminium use is low and Safe Thermite Crackers with low Sulphur and Potassium Nitrate**.

Need of the hour:

While deciding on a ban on firecrackers, it is imperative to take into account the fundamental right of livelihood of firecracker manufacturers and the right to health of over 1.3 billion people of the country.

5. Bottom trawling and associated issues

The Indian High Commissioner in Colombo has assured Sri Lanka’s northern fishermen that he would convey their concerns over **bottom trawling** by Indian fishermen in the **Palk Strait** to both New Delhi and Tamil Nadu and look at some immediate measures to address the problem.

What’s the issue now?

The Indian side had agreed twice – in 2010 and 2016 – to phase out and end the practice of bottom trawling. But it has not ended yet.

What is the issue with Bottom trawling?

Bottom trawling, an ecologically destructive practice, involves trawlers dragging weighted nets along the sea-floor, causing great depletion of aquatic resources.

- Bottom trawling captures juvenile fish, thus exhausting the ocean's resources and affecting marine conservation efforts. This practice was started by Tamil Nadu fishermen in Palk Bay and actively pursued at the peak of the civil war in Sri Lanka.

Solution to the bottom trawling- deep-sea fishing plan:

The solution to the bottom trawling issue lies in transition from trawling to deep-sea fishing.

- The activity of catching fish that live in the deep parts of the sea/ocean is called deep-sea fishing.
- The boats are designed in such a way that fishermen get access to the deeper parts of the ocean and fish species.
- It is practiced worldwide, especially in the coastal areas with no ecological damage.
- The depth of water should be at least 30 meters to be considered a deep sea fishing zone.

Efforts by Government- the Palk Bay scheme:

- Launched in July 2017 under the Blue Revolution programme.
- The scheme is financed by the Union and the State Governments with beneficiary participation.
- It had envisaged the provision of 2,000 vessels in three years to the fishermen of the State and motivate them to abandon **bottom trawling**.

6. India will achieve net zero emissions by 2070

In an effort to battle climate change, PM Modi has made the following announcements at the ongoing **COP26 summit in Glasgow**:

1. India will achieve net zero emissions latest by 2070.
2. By 2030, India will ensure 50% of its energy will be sourced from renewable sources.
3. India will also reduce its carbon emissions until 2030 by a billion tonnes.
4. It will also reduce its emissions intensity per unit of GDP by less than 45%.
5. India would also install systems to generate 500 gigawatt of renewable energy by 2030, a 50 GW increase from its existing target.

What needs to be done ahead?- Suggestions by India:

1. In the spirit of climate justice, rich developed countries ought to be providing at least \$1 trillion in climate finance to assist developing countries and those most vulnerable.
2. Principles of Equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) and, recognition of the very different national circumstances of countries be respected.
3. Sustainable modes of living being practised in certain traditional communities ought to be made part of school curricula.
4. The lessons from India's efforts at adaptation in programmes such as Jal Jeevan mission, Swach Bharat mission and mission Ujwala ought to be popularized globally.
5. Focus should be on climate adaptation as much as mitigation.

Which countries have announced net-zero targets?

1. In 2019, **the New Zealand government** passed the Zero Carbon Act, which committed the country to zero carbon emissions by 2050.
2. **The UK's** parliament passed legislation requiring the government to reduce the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100 per cent.
3. **US** president Joe Biden announced that the country will cut its **greenhouse gas emissions** by at least 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.
4. **World War Zero** was launched in 2019 to bring together unlikely allies on climate change and with the goal of reaching net-zero carbon emissions in the country by 2050.
5. **The European Union plan "Fit for 55"**, the European Commission has asked all of its 27 member countries to cut emissions by 55 per cent below 1990 levels by 2030.
6. **China** announced that it would become net-zero by the year 2060 and that it would not allow its emissions to peak beyond what they are in 2030.

What does net-zero mean?

Net-zero, which is also referred to as **carbon-neutrality**, does not mean that a country would bring down its emissions to zero. That would be **gross-zero**, which means **reaching a state where there are no emissions at all, a scenario hard to comprehend.**

- Basically, net-zero is a state in which a country's emissions are compensated by absorption and removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

7. Guidelines released for safe rescue, release of Ganges River Dolphins (GRDs)

The Jal Shakti Ministry has released a guide for the safe rescue and release of stranded Ganges River Dolphins.

Gangetic Dolphin

- The Gangetic river system is home to a vast variety of aquatic life, including the Gangetic dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*).
- The species, whose global population is estimated at 4,000, are (nearly 80%) found in the Indian subcontinent.
- It is found mainly in the Indian subcontinent, particularly in Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems.
- It is one of five species of river dolphin found around the world.
- Only three species of freshwater dolphins are remaining on the earth after the functional extinction of the Chinese river Dolphin (Baiji) in 2006.

Conservation status

1. The GRDs have been designated the National Aquatic Animal of India since 2010.
- It is listed as:
 1. **Endangered** under IUCN Red List
 2. **Schedule I** of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act (1972)
 3. **Appendix I** of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

About the guidelines

- The document has been prepared by the Turtle Survival Alliance, India Program and Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department (EFCCD), Uttar Pradesh.
- The guide has been drawn from years of experience of the organization while rescuing 25 Ganges River Dolphins (GRDs) stranded in irrigation canals.

Various threats

- They often accidentally enter canal channels in northern India and are often entrapped, and die as they are unable to swim up against the gradient.
- They are eventually harassed by the locals.
- Opportunistic poaching for meat and oil in certain pockets of the country is another big threat.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. The Supreme Court is walking the talk on citizens' rights

When the bench of the Chief Justice of India passed an order appointing a committee in the Pegasus matter, it served the interest of every Indian.

What led to the appointment of committee by the Supreme Court

- Pegasus has allegedly been used against politicians and individuals across the globe, including against politicians, journalists and other private individuals in India.
- The issue rocked Parliament, but **the government was not willing to share any information** pertaining to the software or its use, citing national security as a reason.
- The alleged victims of the software turned to the Supreme Court, and prayed for setting up of an independent enquiry.
- The government, on being called upon by the Supreme Court, cited national security, contending that any information it let out would become a matter of

public debate, which could be used by terror groups to hamper national security.

- Its unrelenting stand left the court with no option but to take a call on whether to blindly accept the government's refusal to share no information whatsoever, or **lean in favour of a citizen's right to privacy**, a fundamental right guaranteed under the Constitution.
- The Supreme Court chose the latter course.

Balancing the fundamental rights nad judicial review with national security

- The Supreme Court has observed that "the state cannot get a free pass every time the spectre of national security is raised".
- It goes on to say that national security "cannot be the bugbear that the judiciary shies away from, by virtue of its mere mentioning. Although this court should be **circumspect in encroaching upon the domain of national security**, no omnibus prohibition can be called for against judicial review".

Conclusion

The Pegasus order upholding the individual's right to a life of dignity and privacy, is music to the ears of those who believe in constitutional values and rule of law.

2. India offers 'Panchamrita' Strategy for Climate Conundrum at Glasgow

PM Modi has proposed a five-fold strategy called the 'Panchamrita' for India to play its part in helping the world get closer to 1.5 degrees Celsius on the first day of the global climate meeting in Glasgow.

What is Panchamrita?

- 'Panchamrita' is a traditional method of mixing five natural foods – milk, ghee, curd, honey and jaggery. These are used in Hindu and Jain worship rituals. It is also used as a technique in Ayurveda.
- The PM euphemistically termed his scheme as 'Panchamrita' meaning the '**five ambrosia**'.
- Under Panchamrita', India will:
 1. Get its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 gigawatts by 2030
 2. Meet 50 per cent of its energy requirements till 2030 with renewable energy
 3. Reduce its projected carbon emission by one billion tonnes by 2030
 4. Reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by 45 per cent by 2030

5. Achieve net zero by 2070

Key takeaways of PM's speech

(a) Commitment for climate action

- India consists of **17 per cent of the world's population** but **contribute only five per cent of emissions**.
- Yet, it has left no stone unturned in doing our bit to fight climate change.
- At Paris, India was making promises not to the world but to itself and 1.3 billion Indians, PM said.

(b) Climate finance

- The 2015 Paris CoP where the **Paris Agreement** was signed was **not a summit but a sentiment**.
- The **promises made till now on climate finance were useless**.
- When we all are increasing our ambitions on climate action, the **world's ambition could not stay the same on climate finance** as was agreed at the time of Paris.

(c) India's track record

- India was **fourth** as far as **installed renewable energy capacity** was concerned.
- The **Indian Railways** has pledged to make itself **net-zero by 2030**. This will result in an annual 60 million tonnes **reduction in emissions**.
- India initiated the **International Solar Alliance** for solar energy.
- It has also set up the **coalition for disaster resilient infrastructure** for climate adaptation.

3. BASIC Countries

The Union Environment Minister has delivered the statement on behalf of the BASIC group of countries at the UN Climate Change Conference underway at Glasgow.

Who are the BASIC Countries?

- The BASIC countries (also Basic countries or BASIC) are a bloc of four **large newly industrialized countries** – Brazil, South Africa, India and China.
- It was formed by an agreement on 28 November **2009**.

- The four committed to act jointly at the Copenhagen climate summit, including a possible united walk-out if their common minimum position was not met by the developed nations.
- This emerging geopolitical alliance, initiated and led by China, then brokered the final Copenhagen Accord with the United States.

What is the Copenhagen Accord?

- The Copenhagen Accord is a document signed at COP 15 to the UNFCCC on 18 December 2009.
- The Accord states that global warming should be limited to below 2.0 °C (3.6 °F).
- It does not specify what the baseline is for these temperature targets (e.g., relative to pre-industrial or 1990 temperatures).
- In January 2010, the Accord was described merely as a political agreement and not legally binding, as is argued by the US and Europe.
- It is not legally binding and does not commit countries to agree to a binding successor to the Kyoto Protocol, whose round ended in 2012.
- According to the UNFCCC, these targets are relative to pre-industrial temperatures.

4. China's New Border Law

China has recently enacted a new law related to its border security management.

This comes amid

- A tense stand-off with India in the Himalayas, which sparked a deadly clash last year;
- Sporadic armed conflict between junta troops and ethnic armed groups in Myanmar, on China's southwestern border
- Risks of terror spillover from a chaotic Afghanistan following US troop withdrawal and a Taliban takeover.

While terror spillover from Afghanistan or violence on the Myanmar border are concerns, the timing of the law suggests pressure on India is the aim.

China's land borders

- China shares its 22,457-km land boundary with 14 countries including India, the third longest after the borders with Mongolia and Russia.

- Unlike the Indian border, however, China's borders with these two countries are not disputed.
- The only other country with which China has disputed land borders is Bhutan (477 km).

The New Border Law

- The Land Border Law aims to standardise how China patrols its massive 22,100 km land boundaries and borders with 14 countries including India.
- Sets forth that China will handle border-related issues with neighbours through negotiations, to properly resolve disputes and long-standing issues.
- Chinese military should carry out border defence duties, management and control to prevent intrusions, infiltration and provocations.
- Infrastructure projects along the land border should be approved by the State Council and the Central Military Commission.
- The law was needed as there was no specific legislation for coordinating China's border controls.
- This law was first proposed in March 2021 and will now come into effect by January 1, 2022.

India has expressed concern over this issue-

- China's unilateral decision to bring about a legislation can have implication on existing bilateral arrangements on border management as well as on the boundary question.
- Such unilateral move will have no bearing on the arrangements that both sides have already reached earlier, whether it is on the Boundary Question or for maintaining peace and tranquillity along the LAC in India-China Border areas.
- India expects China will avoid undertaking action under the pretext of this law which could unilaterally alter the situation in the India-China border areas.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. Mixed signals on growth-inflation dynamics

We are now at that point in the cycle where all central banks – the RBI, the US Fed, the European Central Bank, Bank of England and others – have begun to signal, a process of normalisation from the unprecedented loose monetary policy stimulus post the onset of the pandemic in early 2020.

Recovery momentum

- Surveys and data prints are now signalling that the recovery momentum in the first half of 2021 is decelerating in many countries, although the direction and momentum may vary.
- The RBI Governor notes that “the external environment, which had been supportive of aggregate demand over the past few months, **may lose momentum** for a variety of reasons”.
- China – its policy and economy – is the most salient risk for a sustained global recovery.
- The Chinese authorities’ seeming determination to push ahead with structural reforms, de-carbonising initiatives, and curbs on real estate appear designed to **sacrifice some short-term growth for medium-term efficiencies**, and reduce financial risks and inequality.
- **Inflation** in almost all major economies continues to remain high.
- The US Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) survey measure of core inflation is running over 4 per cent.
- The story is similar in Europe.

Assessing India’s growth recovery

- India’s **growth-inflation dynamics** are also becoming favourable, but are still subject to multiple risks.
- In assessing India’s growth recovery, a risk of the global economy going into “stagflation”, going by US signals seems to be that if at all, it is likely to be mild.
- The **recovery of economic activity continues**, although the high-frequency indicators we track suggest that the momentum observed in July and August has moderated.
- **Electricity consumption growth** is also down from August levels, but part of this can be explained by both cooler, rainy weather, as well as coal shortage related cutbacks in many electricity-intensive manufacturing.

- The residential **real estate is reportedly doing exceptionally well**, with low-interest rates on home loans, cuts in stamp duty and registration charges, and indeed behavioural shifts towards own home ownerships with hybrid and work from home shifts.
- Even the commercial real estate sector is reviving.
- The Union government also has large **unspent cash balances**, which can be judiciously deployed to boost both capex and consumption.
- The overall inflation trajectory suggests a gradual glide path towards the 4 per cent target by March 2023 or a bit beyond.
- There are risks of overshooting this forecast trajectory, despite a benign outlook on food prices.
- This emanates from global metals, minerals, crude oil prices, and from supply bottlenecks persisting till well into 2022.

Conclusion

In summary, the growth-inflation signals remain mixed. Multiple episodes of global spillovers in the past couple of decades have taught us that imminent normalisation will have implications for all emerging markets.

6. The Crypto Conundrum

Context: Since 2020, when the Supreme Court overturned an order by the Reserve Bank of India dated April 6, 2018, restricting the use of cryptocurrencies, traffic in domestic cryptocurrency exchanges in India has grown many-fold.

Bitcoin and other private cryptocurrencies have been on a bull run recently. Unlike previous rallies, the current rally in bitcoin has witnessed the increasing participation of retail investors in India.

Are Crypto Currencies on speculative run?

- The most important feature of cryptocurrencies is their **limited supply**.
- In a world where central banks create a lot of money out of thin air, it is natural for investors who are looking to protect their wealth to seek alternative assets (like cryptocurrencies) whose supply cannot be increased up as easily.
- Scarcity alone is not sufficient to facilitate the adoption of cryptocurrencies as money.
- Any asset must have either use value or exchange value in order for it to possess any fundamental value. This fundamental value, in turn, is reflected in the price of these assets in the long run.

- Stocks and bonds, for instance, possess **exchange value** that is based on the expected future cash flow from these assets.
- Commodities such as oil and steel possess **use value** because these assets are used to run vehicles and build real estate
- Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies may be scarce but it is questionable whether they possess any **use value or exchange value**.
- We can say that cryptocurrencies possess no significant fundamental value to sustain their current high prices. Yet, many believe that the rising prices of cryptocurrencies reflect their **likely future value as a currency**.
- It is possible that investors are bidding up the price of bitcoin because they foresee a future in which private currency is widely accepted as money.
- One may also grant that the extreme volatility seen in the price of cryptocurrencies. may be due to the **nascent, illiquid nature of the cryptocurrency market**.

What is the possibility of governments cracking down on Crypto Currencies?

- The more cryptocurrencies are accepted in exchange for goods and services, the greater the chances of governments cracking down on them.
- The monopoly that governments (and central banks) possess over the issuance of money is at the root of their power and influence.
- It allows central banks to **control the money supply** under the mandate of managing aggregate demand in the economy.
- In essence, monopoly control over money allows governments to indirectly tax citizens by increasing the supply of currencies, thus devaluing them.
- If cryptocurrencies like bitcoin are going to challenge fiat currencies like the U.S. dollar or INR as a medium of exchange, they would **essentially be challenging the authority of the government** to print and spend. This will not be tolerated by governments for long.
- Governments will allow cryptocurrencies to exist only as long as these currencies remain a speculative asset and not a medium of exchange.
- This doesn't mean that governments are justified in their crackdown against cryptocurrencies. There are obvious benefits of free market competition. Private alternatives to fiat currencies offer people greater choice in what currencies they choose to use as a medium of exchange.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Consider the following statements:

1. India is not a party to the UN Refugee Conventions.
2. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution encompasses the right of refugees from refoulement.

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 : C

Explanation

- Recently, the High Court of Manipur has ordered safe passage to seven Myanmar nationals, stranded at a border town in Manipur, to travel to the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** in New Delhi.
 - Although India has no clear refugee protection policy or framework, it does grant asylum to a large number of refugees from the neighbouring country.
 - India usually respects UNHCR's recognition of the status of such asylum seekers, mainly from Afghanistan and Myanmar.
- India is **not a party to the UN Refugee Conventions** but it is a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- **Article 21 of the Constitution encompasses the right of non-refoulement.**
 - Non-refoulement is the principle under international law which states that a person fleeing persecution from his own country should not be forced to return to his own country. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

2. Consider the following statements regarding the Sundarban National Park?

1. The Sundarbans are mangrove forest, on the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers on the Bay of Bengal.

2. The Sundarban National Park is listed under the World Heritage Marine Programme.

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 : C

Explanation

- **Sundarban National Park is located in the south-east of Kolkata in the District of West Bengal** and forms part of the Gangetic Delta.
 - The Sundarbans are **mangrove forest**, on the delta of the **Ganges, Brahmaputra** and Meghna rivers on the Bay of Bengal. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The area is **known for its wide range of fauna**. It is **home to many rare and globally threatened wildlife species** such as the estuarine crocodile, Royal Bengal **Tiger**, Water monitor lizard, **Gangetic dolphin**, and **olive ridley turtles**.
- **India's Sundarban National Park is the only listed site under this World Heritage Marine Programme. Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
 - It is a global collection of unique ocean places stretching from the tropics to the poles.
 - Today, **the List includes 50 unique ocean places across 37 countries** - recognized for their **unique marine biodiversity, singular ecosystem, unique geological processes or incomparable beauty.**

3. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 23 of Indian Constitution prohibits human trafficking and begar.
2. India has ratified the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organised Crime.

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 : C

Explanation

- Human trafficking involves recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, for the purpose of exploitation.
 - Exploitation include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs.
- **Relevant Laws in India:**
 - **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act 1956** is the premier legislation to deal with this issue.
 - **Article 23 and 24** (Right Against Exploitation) of the Constitution of India.
 - **Article 23** prohibits human trafficking and begar (forced labour without payment). **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
 - Article 24 forbids employment of children below the age of 14 years in dangerous jobs like factories and mines.
 - **25 sections in IPC** such as 366A, 366B, 370 and 374.
 - The **Juvenile Justice Act** and the **Information Technology (IT) Act** and also the **Prevention of Child Labour Act**, the **Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act**, among others.
- In July 2021, the Ministry of Women and Child Development released **Draft anti-trafficking Bill**, the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021.
- India has ratified the **United Nations Convention on Transnational Organised Crime (the Palermo Convention)** which among others has a Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- India has ratified the **SAARC Convention** on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.

4. With reference to the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), consider the following statements:

1. It is a statutory body under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
2. It is mandated to assign a 16-digit unique identification number (Aadhaar) to all the residents of India.

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 : A

Explanation

- **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)** is a statutory authority established on 12th July 2016 by the Government of India under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, following the provisions of the Aadhaar Act 2016. Hence statement 1 is correct.
- The UIDAI is mandated to assign a **12-digit unique identification (UID) number (Aadhaar)** to all the residents of India. Hence, statement 2 is not correct.
- The UIDAI was initially set up by the Government of India in January 2009, as an attached office under the aegis of the Planning Commission.

5. The 'Health Insurance for India's Missing Middle' report is released by which of the following?

- A NITI Aayog
- B Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
- C Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
- D Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)

Answer : A

Explanation

- Recently, **NITI Aayog** has released a comprehensive **report titled Health Insurance for India's Missing Middle**.
 - The report brings out the gaps in the health insurance coverage across the Indian population and offers solutions to address the situation.
- According to the report, **at least 30% of the population**, or 40 crore individuals (referred as the missing middle in this report) **are devoid of any financial protection for health**.
 - The Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) and various State Government extension schemes, provide

comprehensive hospitalization cover to the bottom 50% of the population.

- Around the top 20% of the population – 25 crore individuals – are covered through social health insurance, and private voluntary health insurance.
- **Hence, option A is correct.**

6. With reference to the Personal Data Protection Law, 2019, consider the following statements:

1. It derives its inspiration from the landmark K.S. Puttaswamy judgement of 2017.
2. The Right to be Forgotten is also a part of this law.

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

- The **Personal Data Protection (PDP) Law**, commonly referred to as the “**Privacy Bill**” and intends to protect individual rights by regulating the collection, movement, and processing of data that is personal, or which can identify the individual.
 - It **derives its inspiration** from a previous draft version prepared by a committee headed by retired **Justice B N Srikrishna**. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
 - The Supreme Court in the Puttaswamy judgement (2017) held that the right to privacy is a fundamental right.
- The Bill gives the government powers to authorise the transfer of certain types of personal data overseas and has given exceptions allowing government agencies to collect personal data of citizens.
 - A Data Protection Authority has been envisaged for ensuring the compliance of the law.
 - **It also mentions ‘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". Hence, statement 2 is correct.

Mains Practice Questions

1. Domestic abuse is one among many other social challenges posed by the conditions created by the pandemic. Discuss

Approach:

- Define the term violence against women with an emphasis on domestic abuse.
- Establish the link between the recent surge in domestic violence cases and COVID-19.
- Briefly explain the causes behind domestic violence and challenges associated.
- Discuss various steps need to be taken.
- Conclude suitably.

2. "Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there is also a love of humanity." Analyse this statement in light of India's pharmaceutical capabilities and responsibilities amid the novel coronavirus pandemic across the world.

Approach:

- Discuss India's position in the global pharmaceuticals sector.
- Mention the issues involved like rising demand for medicines, the moral obligation of India and challenges.
- Mention India's response to the global crisis.
- Conclude the answer with advantages associated.