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Argasia Education PVT. Ltd. (GST NO-09AAPCA1478E1ZH)
Address: Basement C59 Noida, opposite to
Priyagold Building gate, Sector 2, Pocket I, Noida,
Uttar Pradesh 201301, CONTACT NO- 8448440231

CONTENT BY -JITHIN LAL (GENERAL STUDIES FACULTY UPSC)
DEBARUN ROY (ANALYTICS HEAD)
NEETU KUMARI (RESEARCH HEAD)

1.UN Investment Promotion award to Invest India

Context in Current Affairs: The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) recently declared “Invest India” as the winner of the United Nations Investment Promotion Award, 2020. The award recognizes outstanding achievements of investment promotion agencies spread all over the world. Around 180 such agencies were shortlisted for the award in 2020.

Background

The UNCTAD had constituted a team to monitor Investment Promotion Agencies in the world. The team was constituted in March 2020, mainly to observe the best practices adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The IPA response has become the evaluation of 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award. This proves that in spite of being the second most populous country in the world, India’s innovation helped to control the spread of COVID-19 in the country.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

The UNCTAD deals with trade, investment and development issues. The main goal of the organization is to maximize trade and investment. It was established in 1964. It releases reports such as Trade and Development Report and World Investment Report

World Investment Report, 2020

The report was released by UNCTAD in June 2020. According to the report, the FDI flows decreased by 40% in 2020 as compared to 2019. For the first time, the global FDI flows will be below 1 trillion USD since 2005. It is projected that FDI will further decrease by 5% to 10% by 2021.

According to the report, India jumped to 9th position in FDI flows in 2019. The FDI flows in to India were 51 billion USD. India was at 12th position in 2018.

Trade and Development Report

The report said that the public external debt might increase to 2 trillion USD to 3.6 trillion USD in 2020-21. Even before COVID-19 hit developing countries, many were trapped in debt spiral. The report suggested the following to improve the situation

- To adopt Automatic Temporary standstills. This will provide macroeconomic breathing space for all developing countries.
- Debt relief and restructure programmes.
- It suggested that the international developing country debt authority should lay regulatory foundations to guide the debt restructuring in the future.
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2. India Mobile Congress

PM Modi is to address the India Mobile Congress on December 8, 2020. The Department of Telecommunications and Cellular Operators Association of India are organizing the Indian Mobile Congress. It is being organized under the theme "Inclusive Innovation-Smart, Secure, Sustainable". The Congress is to be held between December 8, 2020 and December 10, 2020.

Significance

The Congress aims to drive research and development, local investments and emerging technology sectors. It will mainly focus on Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security, Block Chain, Data Analytics and Smart Cities and Internet of Things.

Artificial Intelligence in India

The CBSE board in 2019 included Artificial Intelligence as an elective subject for ninth grade students. IIT Hyderabad had launched Bachelor of Technology in Artificial Intelligence. It is the first educational institute in India to launch the programme. It is estimated that Artificial Intelligence will add 957 billion USD to the GDP of India by 2035.

Cyber Security in India

India was one among the few countries to launch "Cyber Security Policy" in 2013. In India, each state government has its own Cyber Emergency Response Team.

According to the report of Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), the cyber attacks from China contribute to 35% of total cyber attacks in the country, followed by US, Russia, Pakistan, Canada and Germany.

The Government of India has launched Cyber Swachhta Kendra (Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre) in 2017.

Blockchain Technology in India

The Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology operating under the Reserve Bank of India is developing a model platform for block chain technology.

Internet of Things in India

According to NASSCOM, the Internet of Things in India is expected to reach 15 billion USD by 2020. The Government of India has planned to leverage the Internet of Things as a part of the National Digital Communication Policy and Digital India Mission.

3.Feminisation of Red Sea Turtles

The turtle population in the Red Sea is turning female due to rise in sea temperature. A Team of researchers from the Saudi Arabia King Abdullah University of Science and Technology conducted a study. They selected five sites in the region that are favoured by Green Turtles and Hawksbill.

The researchers collected data for every fifteen minutes for five months. According to the researchers, to maintain a 50:50 ratio of males and females population, a temperature of 29.2 degrees Celsius is required. Above this temperature, the turtle hatchlings will predominantly be female. The researchers during the study found that the temperature at four out of the selected five sites exceeded 29.2 degrees Celsius.

Conservation of Turtles

Different turtles are classified differently by IUCN. The classification is as follows

- The Loggerhead and Green Sea Turtles are classified as “Endangered”. Their population have declines by 50% in the last ten years
- Leatherback Turtles and Oliver Ridley Turtles have been classified as “Vulnerable”.
- The Leatherback Turtle in the Northwest Atlantic has been classified as “Endangered”.
- Green Turtle, Kemp’s Ridley Turtle and Hawksbill turtle have been classified as “Critically endangered”. According to IUCN, 80% of these turtles were lost in the last 10 years.

Conservation of Turtles in India

In India, the Green Turtle and Hawksbill turtles are listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Turtles are also protected under the Biodiversity Conservation and Ganga Rejuvenation programme. India has five species of turtles. They are Olive Ridley, Loggerhead, Leatherback, Green Turtle, Hawksbill.

World Turtle Day

Every year World Turtle Day is celebrated on May 23. In 2020, the day was celebrated under the theme “Adopt, Don’t Shop”. The World Turtle Day is organised by the

Non-Profit Organization called the American Tortoise Rescue. It is being observed by the National Mission for Clean Ganga and the Wildlife Institute of India as well.

4. Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act

Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 seeks to promote educational and cultural exchange between the US and other countries in a bid to enhance mutual understanding of the US people and the people of other countries. The US State Department has recently ended 5 cultural exchange programmes with China under this Act. These programmes include the Policymakers Educational China Trip Program, the US-China Friendship Programme, the US-China Leadership Exchange Program, the US-China Transpacific Exchange Program and the Hong Kong Educational and Cultural Programme.

Key Features of the act

- To increase the mutual understanding between the US and the people from other countries.
- To strengthen the ties that unite the US and other nations in terms of education and cultural developments.
- To promote international cooperation in educational and cultural advancement
- To assist in the development of peaceful relations between US and other countries in the world.

Powers of the President

- The Section 102 of the act authorises the president to take actions that will promote bilateralism. It authorises the president to take steps that would strengthen international cooperation. This includes providing grants, participation in international fairs and interchange of books, government publications, etc.
- Section 103 of the act authorises the president to form international agreements to advance the purpose of the act.
- Section 104 gives powers to the President to delegate his authorities as he determines to be appropriate.

The USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and the Department of State are responsible for the US sponsored exchanges made under the act.

Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)

In India, the ICCR is responsible for cultural exchanges between India and other countries. It was established by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in 1950. It operates missions internationally through established cultural centres. The headquarters of

ICCR is located in New Delhi. The council administers the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding.

5.UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs

The UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, which comes under the UN Economic and Social Council, is the apex drug policy-making body within the UN. It has vital functions in the international drug control conventions. This commission's 53 member states have recently voted to remove cannabis from Schedule IV and move it to Schedule I. Cannabis had been in Schedule IV since 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs alongside highly addictive and dangerous drugs like heroin, 3-methylfentanyl and desomorphine etc. This was done to recognise the medicinal value of the Cannabis plant.

What is 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs?

The convention categorises the drugs from the most restrictive to the least restrictive in the order Schedule IV, Schedule I, Schedule II and Schedule III. The drugs in Schedule I are allowed to be used only for medicinal and scientific purposes. The drugs under Schedule II do not need medical prescriptions and the Governments are not bound to prevent the accumulation of the drugs. The drugs under Schedule III are subjected to lesser restrictions. The drugs under Schedule IV have dangerous properties.

India is a signatory of the treaty.

Cannabis in India

The usage of Cannabis in India is governed by the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. The act has banned sale and production of cannabis flowers and resin. On the other hand, it allows the use of leaves and seeds. The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences recently announced that Cannabis is effective in cancer treatments and shall be used as a restorative drug in cancer patients.

Cannabis in the World

More than fifty countries have adopted the medicinal use of cannabis. The countries such as Canada and Uruguay have legalised the recreational use of Cannabis. Over 15 states in the United States have approved the recreational use of Cannabis and 33 states have allowed the medicinal use of Cannabis.

6.Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act

Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act is a US law that was enacted in December 2018 by the Trump Administration. This law calls for denying access to the US for Chinese officials

known to be involved in restricting visits to Tibet. The objective of this law is to push China to ensure greater access and transparency to the Himalayan region. Recently, a top American diplomat has called on other countries to implement similar laws like that of Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act.

Background

In 1959, the 85-year old Dalai Lama fled to India after a Chinese crackdown over an uprising by local population in Tibet. India had then granted political asylum to Dalai Lama. The Tibetan Government in exile is now based in Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh.

China-Tibet

Tibet is now a province level autonomous region in South West China. It is now the second largest province level division of China. In 1950, the Chinese army marched into Tibet and defeated the Tibetan Army in the Chamdo area. In 1951, China and Tibet signed a 17-point agreement affirming the incorporation of Tibet.

Dalai Lama

It is the title provided to the spiritual leader of Tibet. The 14th and the current Dalai Lama is Tenzin Gyatso. The Chinese insist that the next Dalai Lama should be chosen within China.

India-Tibet

The Special Frontier Force formed in 1962 consists of Tibet refugees in India. During the 2020 India-China standoff, Nyima Tenzin, the leader of the Special Frontier Force was killed in the banks of Pangong Tso lake. His body was covered with both India and Tibetan flags.

Tibet

Tibet is the highest region in the world. It is located in the Himalayas. The world's highest peak Mt Everest is located in Tibet. The Tibetan Plateau called the "Roof of the World" is located in the autonomous region of Tibet.

7.Trace Bribery Risk Matrix

The TRACE Bribery Risk Matrix is an annual listing that measures the likelihood of bribe demands in 194 countries. It was first published in 2014 to meet the needs of the business communities demanding for more reliable information regarding the risks of commercial bribery worldwide. In the 2020 listing, India is ranked 77th position, a spot better than last year, in terms of bribery risks. China and Pakistan have been ranked 126th and 153rd spots respectively.

Key findings of the Index

India scored 45 in the Business Bribery Risk, 2020 and stood at rank 77. In 2019, India ranked 78th. India in 2020 has performed better than Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and China. Bhutan stood at 48th rank.

Denmark topped the list. It was followed by Norway, Finland, Sweden and New Zealand. The countries at the bottom most of the list were Turkmenistan, North Korea, Venezuela, South Sudan and Eritrea.

TRACE Matrix

It is released by TRACE International. It is an anti-bribery standard setting organization. It measures the business bribery risk in more than 194 countries, semi-autonomous regions, territories and autonomous regions. It aggregates data from the leading international organizations such as the World Bank, United Nations and World Economic Forum.

Individual Scores of India

India scored 50 in the domain Interactions with Government. The scores are calculated based on the four parameters namely business interactions with the Government, civil service transparency, capacity for civil society oversight and anti-bribery deterrents. Apart from these parameters, the role of media is also considered while formulating the scores.

In the domain of anti-bribery deterrence, India scored 53. In the domain civil service transparency, India scored 36. In the domain capacity for civil oversight India scored 40.

Out of all the parameters, India performed well in the civil services domain. In India, the civil services are considered as the backbone of governance. It is the civil servants who reach government schemes to the citizens.

8.Akash Missiles

Akash is a medium-range mobile surface-to-air missile defence system. It was developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and produced by Bharat Electronics Limited. 10 of these missiles were recently test fired by the Indian Air Force as a part of the Combined Guided Weapons Firing 2020 exercise in the Suryalanka test firing range Andhra Pradesh. Most of these missiles scored a direct hit at the target. This exercise comes amid the threat posed by the Chinese Air Force along the LAC.

About Akash Missile

It was produced by the Bharat dynamics Limited, Tata Power strategic engineering division, Larsen and Toubro, Bharat Electronics Limited and developed by Defence research and development organisation. It can target aircraft up to 30 km. The Missile

has capabilities to neutralize aerial targets such as Cruise missiles, air to surface missiles, fighter jets and ballistic missiles.

The first test flight of the Akash missile was conducted in 1990. Akash missiles are developed with the cost of thousand crores or 200 million USD. The cost is 8 to 10 times slower than the cost of development of similar systems in other countries.

Unique features of Akash missile

The unique features of Akash missile are digitally coded command guidance, all the way powered flight till target in perception, fully automatic operation and multiple target handling capacity.

Batteries of Akash missile

The batteries of Akash missile is comprised of four launches with three missiles each. Every battery in the Akash missile can track up to 64 targets and can attack 12 of them. The Akash missile carries 60 kilograms of high explosive warheads.

Every battery of Akash missile consists of a battery level radar called Rajendra.

Rajendra Radar

Rajendra is a passive electronically scanned array radar. It was developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation. Electronically scanned array is an antenna that can be electronically steered to different directions. The Rajendra radar is a ground surveillance radar and has an operating frequency of 20 gigahertz. It is mainly used to track enemy installation.