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1. Union Cabinet approves 100% FDI in space sector

Why in news?

Union Cabinet took a series of key decisions, which included the approval for amendments to the existing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy on space sector. The satellites sub-sector has been divided into three different activities with defined limits for foreign investment in each such sector.

Three different set of activities

1. The amended policy extends the facility of up to 74% FDI under the automatic route for satellite manufacturing and operation, satellite data products and ground/user segment. Beyond 74%, these activities are under government route.
2. Up to 49% FDI under the automatic route will be allowed for launch vehicles and associated systems or subsystems, and creation of spaceports for launching and receiving spacecraft. Beyond 49%, these activities will be under government route.
3. Moreover, 100% FDI under the automatic route would be permitted for manufacturing of components and systems/sub-systems for satellites, ground segment and user segment.

Existing Policy

As per the existing FDI policy, foreign investment is allowed in establishment and operation of satellites via government-approval route only.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: The Hindu

2. To bypass Red Sea, new trade route to Israel involving Mundra port

Why in news?

As Houthis continue to attack Israel-linked ships in the Red Sea, Israeli transport minister Miri Regev recently announced an alternative route for trade, involving the Mundra port in Gujarat.

What is happening in the Red Sea?

Yemen's Houthi rebels have been attacking ships linked to Israel in the Red Sea, in solidarity with Gaza, suffering under a relentless Israeli military campaign. This has disrupted global trade, some 12% of which passes through the Red Sea. The Red Sea links the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean Sea via the Suez Canal. To avoid the danger zone, ships are going all the way to the south of Africa and crossing the Cape of Good Hope, increasing both costs and the time taken.

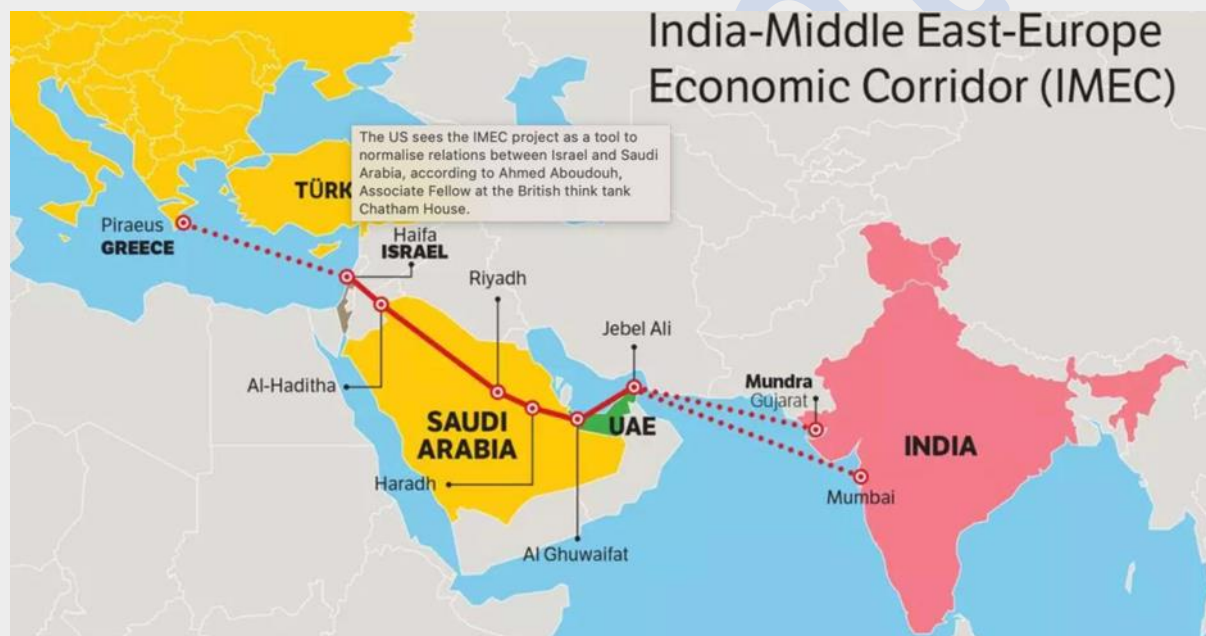
In fact, seafarers now have the right to refuse to sail on ships passing through the Red Sea, in a new industry agreement signed last week.

What is the new route?

In this scenario, Israel has been looking for ways to carry out trade bypassing the Red Sea. On February 13, Transport minister Regev posted a video on X, in which she is standing at the Mundra port and describing the new route.

Under this, goods move from Mundra to ports in the UAE, such as Dubai's Jebel Ali Port, by sea, and then via land through Saudi Arabia and Jordan to Israel. A major part of the land transport will be carried out on trucks. According to reports in Israeli and Arab media, these trucks will be operated by two shipping companies, Israel's Trucknet and the UAE's PureTrans.

Crucially, a similar route might be used in the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) too. The ambitious project aims to link India to Europe via the Middle East, but its final shape is yet to be decided and the Gaza war has thrown a spanner in its progress.



What are the benefits, costs of the new route?

This land route has not been thought of suddenly, but had been in the works for some time. Infact, the land corridor had first been proposed at the time of the Abraham Accords (aimed at normalising ties between Israel and some Arab states) in 2020.

The land route will significantly cut travel time and costs for Israel, and will generate revenue for Saudi Arabia and Jordan in terms of transport fee and duties.

However, trucks can carry far fewer goods than a ship can, and to that extent, trade will be limited. Also, the route depends on Israel maintaining friendly ties with the two countries, in a rapidly fluctuating situation in the Middle East.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: The Indian Express

3. Upholding Equality in the Workplace

Why in news?

In a recent landmark decision, the Supreme Court of India has taken a strong stand against discriminatory practices towards women employees. The court's ruling highlights the need for workplaces to ensure fair treatment and equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of gender or marital status.

The Case for Equality

The Supreme Court has unequivocally declared that penalizing women employees for getting married is a form of gender discrimination and inequality. Such patriarchal rules undermine human dignity, the right to non-discrimination, and fair treatment. The case of Selina John, a former lieutenant and Permanent Commissioner Officer in the Military Nursing Service, serves as a poignant example. Despite facing termination from service in 1988 for getting married, Ms. John's rights were upheld by the Court, which directed the Union Government to pay her ₹60 lakh in compensation.

Challenging Discriminatory Norms

The Court's decision underscores the persistent struggle for gender parity within the military and civilian sectors alike. Discriminatory practices, such as asking women uncomfortable personal questions during job interviews and imposing barriers to education and employment opportunities, continue to hinder women's participation in the workforce. To address this, societal mindsets must evolve, and institutional barriers must be dismantled.

A Call for Action

Efforts to promote gender equality must extend beyond rhetoric to tangible action. The low labor participation rate of women, as highlighted in the latest data, underscores the urgent need for change. Government initiatives aimed at empowering women will only yield results if they are accompanied by measures to challenge restrictive social and cultural norms.

Creating Inclusive Workplaces

The Supreme Court's condemnation of rules that discriminate against women based on marital status should serve as a wake-up call for all organizations. Workplaces must become enablers of equality, fostering an environment where all employees can thrive regardless of gender. By heeding the Court's words, organizations can contribute to building a more inclusive and equitable society.

In conclusion, ending discrimination in the workplace requires collective action and a commitment to upholding the principles of equality and fairness. It is imperative that organizations heed the Court's ruling and strive to create environments where every individual is valued and respected, regardless of gender or personal circumstances.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

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