

**INTERNAL SECURITY****Pegasus Spyware Revelations**

**CONTEXT:** A year has passed since the disclosures about the Pegasus **Project** revealed the threat to India's democracy.

**What is Pegasus?**

- It was developed by the Israeli firm NSO Group that was set up in 2010.
- It can not only mop up information stored on phones such as photos and contacts, but can also activate a phone's camera and microphone and turn it into a spying device without the owner's knowledge.
- The earliest avatars of Pegasus used spear phishing to enter phones, utilising a message designed to entice the target to click on a malicious link.
  - However, it evolved into using "zero-click" attacks wherein the phones were infected without any action from the target individual.
- It can also be delivered through a nearby wireless transmitter, or manually inserted if the target phone is physically available.
- It had been used in some of the "most insidious digital attacks" on human rights activists in the world.

**Pegasus revelations in India**

- The report appeared in July 2021 from the Pegasus Project said that in India, at least 40 journalists, Cabinet Ministers, and holders of constitutional positions were possibly subjected to surveillance using Pegasus.
  - According to The Guardian, Amnesty International's Security Lab tested 67 of the phones linked to the Indian numbers in the database and found that "23 were successfully infected and 14 showed signs of attempted penetration".
- A report by The New York Times in January, 2022 stated that 'India has bought Pegasus in 2017 as part of a \$2-billion' defence package.
  - India has been aware of the existence of Pegasus since October 30, 2019 when WhatsApp confirmed that the spyware has been used to exploit a vulnerability in its platform to target activists, academics, journalists and lawyers in India.
    - Since then, NSO has been able to advance its technology, and Pegasus can now infect devices without any action on the user's part.

**Response of Government**

- In the wake of the Pegasus Project revelations, several petitions were filed with the Supreme Court alleging that the government had indulged in mass surveillance in an attempt to muzzle free speech and democratic dissent.
- The Indian government has so far neither confirmed nor denied that it has deployed Pegasus for any operation.

**Judicial response**

- The Supreme Court will be hearing the case pertaining to the alleged use of the Pegasus spyware software later this month.
- The matter first reached the apex court in October 2021 and it constituted a committee, overseen by former Supreme Court judge Justice R.V Raveendran, to look into the charges and accordingly submit a report "expeditiously".

**What do Indian laws outline?**

- Indian Telegraph Act, 1885
  - Section 5(2) of The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, states that the government can intercept a "message or class of messages" when it is "in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of an offence".
  - Rule 419A: The operational process for it appears in Rule 419A of the Indian Telegraph Rules, 1951.
    - Rule 419A was added to the Telegraph Rules after the verdict in the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) vs Union of India case, in which the Supreme Court said telephonic conversations are covered by the right to privacy, which can be breached only if there are established procedures.
- The second legislation enabling surveillance is Section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000.
  - It facilitates government "interception or monitoring or decryption of any information through any computer resource" if it is in the interest of the "sovereignty or integrity of India, defence of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign States or public order" or for preventing or investigating any cognisable offence.
  - The procedure for it is detailed in the Information Technology Rules, 2009.
    - These rules are very broad and allow even the redirection of traffic to false websites or the planting of any device to acquire information.

- The use of Pegasus is illegal as it constitutes unauthorised access under Section 66 of the Information Technology Act.
- Section 66 prescribes punishment to anyone who gains unauthorised access and “downloads, copies or extracts any data”, or “introduces or causes to be introduced any computer contaminant or computer virus,” as laid down in Section 43.

#### **Concerns /Challenges**

- Under India’s constitutional scheme, the legislature is responsible for holding the executive accountable. However, practice has failed to match principles.
- The Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Indian Telegraph Act 1885 which empower the Government to concentrate surveillance powers in the hands of the executive, and do not contain any independent oversight provisions, judicial or parliamentary.
  - These legislations are from an era before spyware such as Pegasus were developed, and, thus, do not respond to the modern-day surveillance industry.
- Unfortunately, legislative proposals by the Union Government for surveillance reform do not exist.
- The proposed data protection law does not address these concerns despite proposals from members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee
  - Instead, the proposed law provides wide exemptions to the Government relating to select agencies from the application of the law; one which might be used to exempt intelligence and other law enforcement agencies.
    - This gap in the surveillance framework has led to severe harm being caused to India’s democratic ideals.
- The Freedom House ‘Freedom in the World’ report — it tracks global trends in political rights and civil liberties — changed India’s status from ‘free’ to ‘partly free’ in 2021.
  - It has cited the alleged use of Pegasus on Indian citizens as one of the reasons for the downgrade.

#### **Conclusion and Way Forward**

- In the K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India verdict of 2017, the Supreme Court further reiterated the need for oversight of surveillance, stating that it should be legally valid and serve a legitimate aim of the government.
- The executive must refrain from taking steps that have arbitrary use of power.
- Government must adhere to transparency and openness, which are celebrated values under our Constitution
- An overhaul of surveillance laws is necessary to prevent the indiscriminate monitoring of people and entities by the state and private actors.
- It is critical to maintain secure communications including calls and messages that are not vulnerable to Pegasus and other malware.
  - Secure calls and messages will ensure secure communication even when spyware infiltrates phones and one is “under mobile surveillance.”

### **PRELIMS**

#### **1. OBC Reservation in Local Body Elections**

**CONTEXT:** Recently, the Supreme Court allowed 27% reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in all the upcoming local body elections in Maharashtra.

#### **More about the news**

- **About:**
  - Supreme Court bench accepted the report by the five-member Banthia commission and allowed reservation for OBCs in the Nagar Panchayat, Nagar Parishad and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections.
    - Banthia Commission report recommended that OBCs should be given 27 percent reservation in local bodies.
  - Maharashtra state government cleared the triple test formula by conducting door to door survey, as mandated by the apex court in the context of providing reservation for OBCs in local body polls.
  - In Maharashtra, OBCs include denotified tribes, nomadic tribes and the Special Backward Category.
- **Background:**
  - In 1992, in one of its landmark judgments - Indra Sawhney vs Union of India - the SC had ruled that the 50% ceiling must not be breached for reservation in any State.
  - In 2010, the SC had laid down the ‘triple test’. These triple conditions are:
    - Setting up a dedicated commission to conduct “rigorous empirical inquiry into the nature and implications of the backwardness qua local bodies, within the state”.
    - Making of recommendations by the commission on the number of seats to be reserved for OBCs “local body wise”.
    - Ensuring that, cumulatively, seats reserved for SCs, STs and OBCs do not exceed 50 percent.

- Recently, the Supreme Court also permitted Madhya Pradesh to provide reservations to Other Backward Classes (OBC) in Local Body Elections.

### Significance

- The Supreme Court has emphasised since 2010 that the OBC quota in elections should be backed by empirical data, unlike reservation for OBCs, (along with SCs and STs) in education and employment.
- Local body elections in at least three states, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh had been stalled in the absence of updated empirical data on OBC groups.
- The five-year term of around 2,486 local bodies in Maharashtra had expired and elections were required to be conducted under the provisions of the Constitution as well as the Maharashtra Municipal Corporation Act.

## **2. Central Bank Digital Currency**

**CONTEXT:** e Bank of India (RBI) is in the process of implementing the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) in a phased manner for wholesale and retail segments.

### Status of Central Bank Digital Currency in India

- The introduction of CBDC was announced in the Union Budget 2022-23.
- Amendments have also been made to the relevant section of the RBI Act, 1934 with the passage of the Finance Bill 2022.
  - The passage of the bill has enabled the RBI to conduct a pilot and subsequent issuance of CBDC.

### About Central Bank Digital Currency

- It is a legal tender and a central bank liability in digital form denominated in a sovereign currency and appearing on the central bank's balance sheet.
- It is the same as a fiat currency and is exchangeable one-to-one with the fiat currency. Only its form is different.
- It can be converted or exchanged at par with similarly denominated cash and traditional central bank deposits.
- It can be transacted using wallets backed by the blockchain and is regulated by the central bank.
- CBDCs enables the user to conduct both domestic and cross-border transactions which do not require a third party or a bank.
- CBDC and Private virtual currencies or Cryptocurrency:
  - The CBDC will be a sovereign-backed digital currency.
  - CBDC is a digital or virtual currency but it is not comparable to the private virtual currencies or cryptocurrencies that have mushroomed over the last decade.
  - Private virtual currencies do not represent any person's debt or liabilities as there is no issuer.

## **3. ISRO's Space Mission**

**CONTEXT:** Recently, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has set new deadlines for various major missions.

### About the recent changes/ developments made

- First solar mission and third lunar mission are set to take place in the first quarter of next year.
- **XpoSat:** this scientific mission is scheduled for next year.
  - The XpoSat will be India's second astronomical observatory in space after the Astrosat.
  - It will help in studying cosmic x-rays.
- **ISRO's Gaganyaan mission** is scheduled for later this year.
  - It will be the first abort demonstration mission.
  - The abort missions are meant to test the systems that can help the crew escape from the spacecraft mid-flight in case of a failure.
  - ISRO already conducted a pad abort test where the crew can escape from the spacecraft in case of an emergency at the launch pad in 2018.
  - Gaganyaan's escape system was designed with five "quick-acting" solid fuel motors with a high burn rate propulsion system, and fins to maintain stability.
  - The crew escape system will separate from the crew module by firing explosive nuts.
- ISRO would also carry out a '**space docking experiment**' in the third quarter of 2024.
  - Space docking is a process of joining two separately launched spacecraft and is mainly used for setting up modular space stations.
- **Aditya L1 mission:** The Aditya L1 mission will see an Indian spacecraft going 1.5 million kms away to the L1 or Lagrangian point between the Sun and Earth.
  - There are five Lagrangian points between any two celestial bodies where the gravitational pull of both the bodies on the satellite is equal to the force required to keep the satellite in orbit without expending fuel, meaning a parking spot in space.
- **Chandrayaan 3:** The Chandrayaan 3 will be a lander-rover mission that aims for a soft landing on the Moon that was planned for the second lunar mission.

- The lander-rover will use the existing orbiter around the Moon from Chandrayaan-2 to communicate with Earth.
- The orbiter has been calculated to have a mission life of seven years and was launched in 2019.

#### **Gaganyaan Mission**

- **Aim:**
  - Gaganyaan is an Indian crewed orbital spacecraft that is intended to send 3 astronauts to space for a minimum of seven days by 2022 (delayed due to COVID-19).
- **Launched by:**
  - ISRO's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle GSLV Mk III (3 stages heavy-lift vehicle)
- **Components:**
  - Consists of a service module and a crew module, collectively known as an Orbital Module (Crew Module carries astronauts & Service Modules carries propellants.)
- **LEO:**
  - It will circle Earth at a low-earth-orbit at an altitude of 300-400 km from the earth for 5-7 days.
- **Vyom Mitra:**
  - ISRO to send humanoid Vyommित्रा in unmanned Gaganyaan spacecraft ahead of human spaceflight (Monitoring module parameters).

#### **4. Left Wing Extremism(LWE) Violence**

**CONTEXT:** Recently, the Union Government answered that incidents of Naxal violence in the country have dropped by 77 percent between 2009 and 2021.

##### **About**

- Although such incidents have dropped, deaths of security force personnel due to Maoist violence have more than doubled in Chhattisgarh in the past three years.
- The resultant deaths (civilians + security forces) have reduced by 85 percent from all-time high of 1,005 in 2010 to 147 in 2021.
- **States data:**
  - In 2021, Chhattisgarh accounted for 90 percent (45 out of 50) of all security personnel deaths in the country.
  - Jharkhand is the only state that recorded security personnel deaths (5) besides Chhattisgarh in 2021. In 2019, when 52 security force personnel deaths were recorded in the country, Chhattisgarh accounted for just 42 percent (22) of those with Maharashtra accounting for 16 deaths and Jharkhand for 12 deaths.
  - Other states for which data has been provided by the government are Bihar, Odisha and Telangana. All recorded zero deaths in 2021. In 2022, Odisha recorded three deaths while Jharkhand recorded two.
- **Geographical Spread:** The geographical spread of the violence has reduced as only 46 districts reported LWE-related violence in 2021 as compared to 96 districts in 2010.
  - Decline in geographical spread is also reflected in the reduced number of districts covered under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) scheme.
  - The number of SRE districts was reduced from 126 to 90 in April 2018 and further to 70 in July 2021.
  - Similarly, the number of districts contributing approximately 90 percent of the LWE violence, categorised as 'most LWE-affected districts' came down to 30 from 35 in 2018 and further to 25 in 2021.

#### **Left-wing extremism in India**

- Left-wing extremists, popularly known as Maoists worldwide and as Naxalites/Naxalism in India, has been a major threat to India since the 1960s.
- **Genesis:**
  - The term Naxalism derives from the name of the Naxalbari village in West Bengal where a peasant revolt took place against local landlords over a land dispute in 1967.
  - The origins of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in India goes back to the Telangana peasant rebellion (1946-51), the movement was at its peak in 1967, when the peasants, landless labourers, and Adivasis raided the granaries of a landlord in the Naxalbari village in West Bengal.
  - The Naxal rebellion was led by Charu Majumdar and his close associates, Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santhal.
  - These rebels not only were assisted by the people from nearby villages but also from the People's Republic of China. The Chinese Media had called this movement the "Spring Thunder".
  - The movement initially took inspiration from China's founding father, Mao Zedong, but had later become radically different from Maoism.



## 5. Tele Law Service

**CONTEXT:** The Union Minister of Law and Justice announced that from this year, Tele-law service was being made free of cost for the citizens in the country.

### About Tele-law service

- It is a service that uses video conferencing facilities and telephone services to connect lawyers to litigants who need legal advice.
- This service aims to reach out to the needy, especially the marginalised and disadvantaged.
- The service is provided through Common Service Centres or CSCs located at gram panchayat level.
- It enables anyone to seek legal advice without wasting precious time and money.
- The service is free for those who are eligible for free legal Aid as mentioned under Section 12 of Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
  - For all others a nominal fee of Rs. 30 is charged.
- It is available in 22 official languages.
- Legal matters in which advice can be taken through Tele-Law service :-
- Dowry, family dispute, divorce, protection from domestic violence.
- Sexual harassment, sexual abuse, eve teasing at the workplace.
- Maintenance of women, children and senior citizens.
- Rights regarding property and land.
- Equal wages for males and females.
- Maternity benefits and prevention of foeticide.
- Prohibition of child marriage, protection of children from sexual assault, prevention of child labour and implementing right to education.
- Arrest – (F.I.R)/ process of registering the First Information Report.
- Atrocities against scheduled castes/ scheduled tribes and their rehabilitation.

### ANSWER WRITING

**Q. "Religion is a personal matter which should have no place in politics." Elaborate. (150 words)**

#### Introduction

Sociologist Emile Durkheim defined religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, while max weber defines politics as the activity of striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within a state.

#### Body

The resurgence of religion, as well as politics, has become key to world affairs. Initially few sociologists like max weber believed that modernity would eventually lead to a general decline of religious faith and the role of religion in the public/political sphere. However, the word 'twin tolerations' has been used often to define the relationship between religion and politics. Modern states brought the concept of secularism to avoid the influence of religion in politics. Arguments in favor of the separation of politics and religion are as follows:

- The idea of religion concerns the private sphere what pertains to individual faith and believe, in contrast politics in the public sphere pertains to a wider community e.g. nation at large.
- The intrusion of religion into politics can monopolize some specific ideology which in turn will cause a rift in the society. E.g. the foundation of partition was laid on the name of religion itself.
- Religious ideologies when perpetuates deeper into the political sphere may turn into mass hysteria leading to the indoctrination of the people. For e.g. Anti Semitism of Nazi in Germany prior to the second world war for jews
- In politics it promotes vote bank politics on the name of religion and diminishes the ideals of secularism.
- Intermixing of religion with politics may promote favoritism for a particular community.

#### Conclusion

Religion in politics needs to be value-oriented not power-oriented as we can learn from the legacy of Ashoka policy of dhamma and Akbar's Din-e-Ilahi. Further, In India secularism was defined in a comprehensive manner which meant the separation of religion from politics and the state, the treatment of religion as a private matter for the individual, state neutrality towards or equal respect for all religions, absence of discrimination between followers of different religions, and active opposition to communalism.

### MCQs

- 1) Consider the following statements about Reservation of Seats in Local Body Election in India:
  1. The 73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 provides for the reservation of seats for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in every panchayat/municipality
  2. The act provides for the reservation of not less than one-third of the total number of seats for women
  3. Kalelkar Commission, set up in 1953, was the first to identify backward classes other than the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) at the national level.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

a. 1 and 2 only      b. 2 and 3 only      c. 1 and 3 only      **d. 1, 2 and 3**

- 2) Consider the following statements regarding Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO):
1. Antrix Corporation Limited (ACL) is a Marketing arm of ISRO
  2. ISRO is headquartered in the city of Delhi.
- Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
- a. **1 only**                      b. 2 only                      c. Both 1 and 2                      d. Neither 1 nor 2
- 3) Consider the following statements regarding Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) :
1. The introduction of CBDC was announced in the Union Budget 2022-23.
  2. It is a legal tender and a central bank liability in digital form denominated in a sovereign currency and appearing on the central bank's balance sheet.
  3. It can be transacted using wallets backed by the blockchain and is regulated by the central bank.
- Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
- a. 1 and 2 only                      b. 2 and 3 only                      c. 1 and 3 only                      d. **1, 2 and 3**
- 4) Consider the following statements about Left Wing Extremism(LWE):
1. The origins of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in India goes back to the Telangana peasant rebellion.
  2. SAMADHAN doctrine is the one-stop solution for the LWE problem.
  3. Chhattisgarh accounted for 90 percent of all security personnel deaths in the country due to LWE.
- Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
- a. 1 and 2 only                      b. 1 and 3 only                      c. 3 only                      d. **All are correct.**
- 5) Consider the following statements about Tele law service:
1. It is a service that uses video conferencing facilities and telephone services to connect lawyers to litigants who need legal advice.
  2. It is available in 20 official languages.
- Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
- a. **1 only**                      b. 2 only                      c. Both 1 and 2                      d. Neither 1 nor 2
- 6) Consider the following statements:
1. Insider trading involves trading in a public company's stock by someone who has non-public, material information about that stock.
  2. Material non-public information is any information that could substantially impact an investor's decision to buy or sell the security.
- Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
- a. 1 only                      b. 2 only                      c. **Both 1 and 2**                      d. Neither 1 nor 2
- 7) Consider the following statements:
1. If there is no gravity our universe will bend and traveling from one end to another will be simple.
  2. When there is a strong gravitational field the universe will be flat like a sheet.
  3. Wormholes act as a shortcut between two points in curved space-time which are well separated in practical terms from the inhabitants of the universe.
- Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
- a. 1 and 2 only                      b. 2 only                      c. 1 and 3 only                      d. **3 only**
- 8) Consider the following statements:
1. If there is no gravity our universe will bend and traveling from one end to another will be simple.
  2. When there is a strong gravitational field the universe will be flat like a sheet.
  3. Wormholes act as a shortcut between two points in curved space-time which are well separated in practical terms from the inhabitants of the universe.
- Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
- a. **1 and 2 only**                      b. 2 only                      c. 1 and 3 only                      d. 3 only
- 9) Consider the following statements:
1. The Andromeda galaxy is composed of dust clouds which are mostly made up of large molecules called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH).
  2. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons are a big component in the smoke from cigarettes and only reflect specific wavelengths of light.
- Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
- a. 1 only                      b. **2 only**                      c. Both 1 and 2                      d. Neither 1 nor 2
- 10) Consider the following statements:
1. The Trans-Giri region of Himachal Pradesh is part of the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
  2. The Giri and Tons rivers flow in the North-Western part of Himachal Pradesh and finally into the Yamuna.
  3. The Tons form the border between Himachal and Jammu Kashmir.
- Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect?
- a. 1 and 2 only                      b. 1 and 3 only                      c. **2 and 3 only**                      d. 1, 2 and 3