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1. The 9th Congress of the ruling Workers' Party, the most important political event in North Korea, has begun with great anticipation in the country's capital, Pyongyang.

(i) The Congress, which is held every 5 years, will decide on North Korea's military and foreign policies.

(ii) South Korean Intelligence Agencies believe that Kim Jong-un may officially announce his 13-year-old daughter Kim Ju-ae as the future leader as part of the Congress, which will be attended by about 5,000 delegates.

(iii) In his opening speech at the important Congress, President Kim Jong-un emphasized the country's economic growth over the past 5 years:

- Since the previous 8th congress, which was held during the COVID-19 pandemic, the country has overcome stagnation and achieved major economic goals in the past 5 years.
- In addition to improving self-sufficiency and relations with the rest of the world, North Korea has brought about a major shift in the global geopolitical landscape.

2. The Niti Aayog has said in its latest report that drastic changes are needed in the transport sector to achieve the country's net zero emissions target by 2070.

(i) Accordingly, it has been recommended to gradually reduce the use of environmentally harmful diesel vehicles and instead intensify the use of CNG, hybrid and electric vehicles.

(ii) The current share of petrol vehicles, which is 76 percent, will decrease to 29 percent by 2070. Electricity use is projected to increase to 45 percent and biofuel use to 20 percent. The target has been set to increase the use of gas and hydrogen to 90 percent.

(iii) To achieve these goals, the Government will take measures such as tightening 'Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE)' standards for vehicle efficiency and phasing out old commercial vehicles.

(iv) Furthermore, the Niti Aayog has recommended further modernisation and improvement of public transport facilities like buses and trains.

3. India joins the US-led 'PAX Silica' strategic alliance.

(i) The US-led alliance was formed in December with the aim of building a seamless supply chain for rare earths, artificial intelligence (AI) technology, etc.

(ii) It includes Australia, Greece, Israel, Japan, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Singapore, United Arab Emirates and the UK. Last month, the US ambassador invited India to join the alliance. India has joined the PAX Silica alliance.

(iii) Agreement signing:

The International Summit on AI was held in Delhi. As part of it, the agreement for India to join the PAX Silica alliance was signed. The Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav, US

Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg, US Ambassador to India Sergio Gore and others were present at the event.

(iv) India joining is a major event:

US Ambassador to India Sergio Gore said, "From trade agreements to Pax Silica to defence cooperation, there is no limit to the scope of cooperation between the two countries. India joining Pax Silica is not just a casual event. It is a very important diplomatic event. It will strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries. Under this agreement, the US can provide A.I. technologies to India. India is a country rich in talent. At the same time, it also has serious competitors."

4. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake held a bilateral meeting in New Delhi. The two leaders discussed the recent progress in bilateral relations.

(i) The five-day International Artificial Intelligence (AI) Summit concluded at Bharat Mandapam in Delhi. Prime Minister Modi has been holding bilateral meetings with world leaders attending the summit for the past two days.

(ii) The Prime Minister held separate meetings with Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, Slovak President Peter Pellegrini, Crown Prince Alois of Liechtenstein and Mauritius Prime Minister Naveen Chandra Ramgoolam.

(iii) Similarly, Prime Minister Modi, who was in talks with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, discussed UN reforms, inclusive AI and He discussed issues including technology.

5. The India-US Interim Trade Agreement will be signed in March and will be operational from April, Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said.

(i) He also said that India's Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with Britain and Oman will be implemented in April. The trade agreement with New Zealand will be implemented in September.

(ii) As bilateral trade agreement negotiations between India and the US continue, the two countries finalized the action plan for the Interim Trade Agreement last week.

(iii) The two countries jointly issued an announcement in this regard on the 7th. Accordingly, both countries are going to reduce import duties on a large number of goods to promote bilateral trade.

(iv) As the US is set to reduce the 50 per cent additional duty on imports from India to 18 per cent, India is set to significantly reduce import duties on all US industrial products, as well as a wide range of US food and agricultural products, including dried and distilled grains, red corn for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruits, soybean oil, and alcoholic beverages including wine.

(v) An Indian delegation will leave for the US on the 23rd for a three-day meeting to finalise the terms and legal framework of the interim bilateral trade agreement.

6. The Union Government has announced 7 more measures, including credit support for e-commerce exporters, under the Export Promotion Scheme in the country.

(i) The Union Cabinet last year approved a 10-pronged Export Promotion Scheme worth Rs.25,060 crore. Under this scheme, which is being implemented jointly by the Union Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Ministry of Finance, Export-Import Bank of India and other regulated lending institutions, three measures were launched in January.

(ii) In this context, 7 more measures were announced by the Union Ministry of Commerce.

(iii) These measures were announced by Union Minister Piyush Goyal at an event held in New Delhi under two sub-schemes, Niryat Protsahan (Financial Support) and Niryat Disa (Non-Financial Support).

(iv) Support for Alternative Trade Instruments:

- In a bid to promote export factoring as an affordable working capital solution for MSMEs, an interest subvention of 2.75 per cent will be provided on factoring costs for eligible transactions undertaken through RBI or IFSCA-recognised entities. Assistance will be capped at Rs 50 lakh per MSME annually.

(v) Credit Assistance for E-Commerce Exporters:

- The Direct E-Commerce Credit Facility will provide support up to ₹50 lakh with 90% guarantee coverage. The Overseas Inventory Credit Facility will extend support up to ₹5 crore with 75% guarantee coverage

(vi) Support for Emerging Export Opportunities:

- Government support will be provided to exporters to access new or high-risk markets through various shared-risk and credit instruments.

(vii) Trade Regulations, Accreditation & Compliance Enablement (TRACE)-:

- TRACE supports exporters in meeting international Testing, Inspections, Certifications and other conformity requirements. Partial reimbursement of 60% under the Positive List and 75% under the Priority Positive List will be provided for eligible testing, inspection and certification expenses, subject to an annual ceiling of ₹25 lakh per IEC.

(viii) Facilitating Logistics, Overseas Warehousing & Fulfilment (FLOW):-

- Support for access to foreign logistics and warehousing will be provided up to 30% of the costs for three years.

(ix) Logistics Interventions for Freight & Transport (LIFT) :-

- LIFT mitigates geographical disadvantages faced by exporters in low export intensity districts. Partial reimbursement of up to 30% of eligible freight expenditure will be provided, subject to a ceiling of ₹20 lakh per IEC per financial year.

(x) Integrated Support for Trade Intelligence & Facilitation (INSIGHT): -

- Financial assistance is upto 50% of the project cost, with upto 100% support for proposals from Central and State Government institutions and Indian Missions abroad, subject to notified ceilings.

(xi) The Union Minister Piyush Goyal said about the 7 measures of the Central Government, 'Market access for Indian exporters has expanded tremendously through Free Trade Agreements with 38 countries including the US.

(xii) India has access to about 70 percent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), i.e. two-thirds of world trade. The objective of the Central Government is to ensure that the benefits of global trade reach our small, micro and medium enterprises. Through the current measures, Indian companies will get access to new markets.'

(xiii) During the April-January period of the current financial year, the country's exports increased by 2.22 percent to $366.63 billion and imports increased by 7.21 percent to $649.86 billion.

7. Women's land and property rights in India and globally.

(i) From Equality to Subjugation

- In ancient Tamil society, evidence suggests women owned land, jewelry, and cattle, leading economically independent lives.
- During the Sangam period, dowry (Sridhanam) was treated as a woman's separate and exclusive property.
- During the Pallava and Chola periods, the principle of "primogeniture" (eldest son's right) gained prominence, and women lost equal status in family property.
- Post-Vedic texts like Manusmriti shifted the view of women from co-owners to individuals requiring protection by male relatives, denying them independent property status.

(ii) Legal Landmarks in India

- Hindu Succession Act, 1956: This was the first major post-independence legislation to recognize Hindu women's right to property. In 2005, the act was amended which declared daughters as coparceners (equal sharers) in ancestral property and agricultural land, regardless of their marital status.
- In certain Tamil families living on the Kerala border, the matrilineal (Marumakkathayam) system of inheritance is still practiced today.

(iii) Global Benchmarking: The Rwanda Model

- Post-Genocide Reform: Following the 1994 genocide, Rwanda became a global leader in protecting women's land rights.
- Legislative Action: Their 1999 Succession Law gave equal rights to sons and daughters, and the 2005 Land Law made joint land ownership between husbands and wives mandatory.

(iv) Statistical Reality and Ownership Trends

- Land Registration: Between 2008 and 2013, under the National Land Records Modernization Program, 99% of India's land was registered. Over 56 lakh parcels were registered in joint names and 21 lakh in individual women's names.
- NFHS Data: According to the United Nations Population Fund (comparing NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 data), women's individual land ownership in India rose from 7% to 8%, while joint ownership increased from 21% to 23%.

(v) The "Feminization of Agriculture" without Ownership

- Women contribute over 75% of the labor in the agricultural sector, yet they are rarely the legal owners of the land they toil upon.
- Practice vs. Law: In reality, the number of widows inheriting land through tradition is higher than daughters receiving land through legal property rights.
- Economic Barriers: Out of 8.7 crore farmers eligible for the PM-Kisan scheme, fewer than 2 crore are women.
- Collateral Issues: Without land titles, women cannot access institutional loans, crop insurance, or government subsidies, and are often excluded from adopting new agricultural technologies.

(vi) Social and Economic Impact

- GDP Growth: Economic experts predict that increasing women's land ownership will lead to a direct increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and national agricultural productivity.
- Child Nutrition: A study in Kerala indicates that children's nutritional status is most significantly influenced by the mother's income and assets.
- Policy Recommendation: Just as women are registered as heads of households on Ration Cards, land should be mandatorily registered in women's names to ensure food security and social dignity.

While laws exist on paper, they will remain a "dream" until a proper social and administrative infrastructure is built to implement these rights effectively.