



Current Affairs of the Day

➤ **GS II**

- Govt. nod for missions in Estonia, Paraguay and Dominican Republic

➤ **GS III**

- Facial recognition technology: law yet to catch up
- Current account surplus moderates to \$15.5 bn in Q2
- Cabinet gives approval for Akash missile export

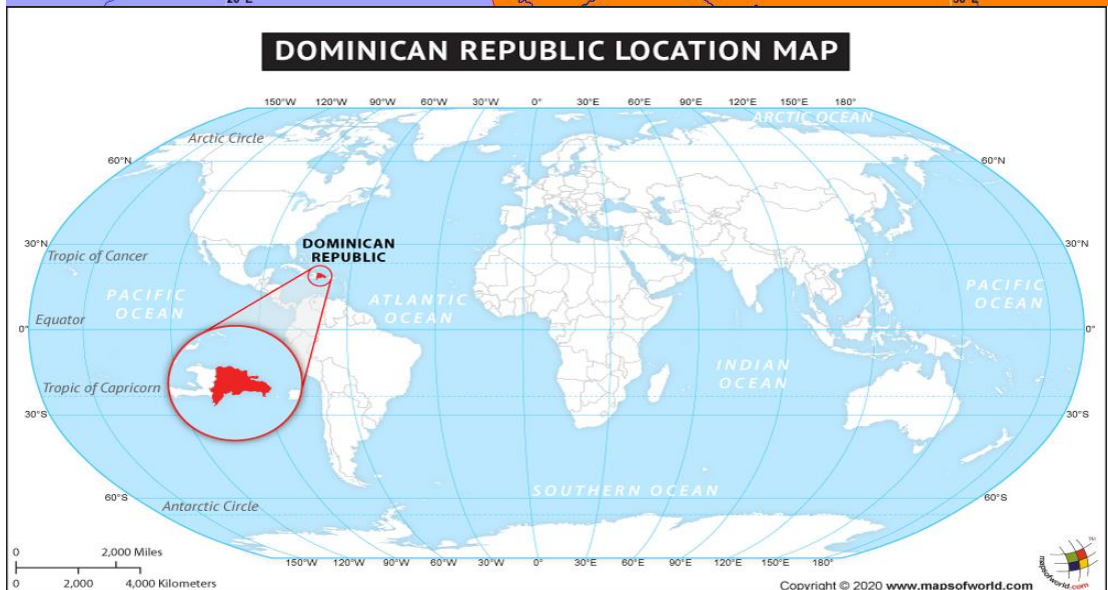


Govt. nod for missions in Estonia, Paraguay and Dominican Republic

Highlights:

1. The government on Wednesday announced that it would open three missions in Estonia, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic in 2021.
2. The opening of the missions will help expand India's diplomatic footprint, deepen political relations, enable the growth of bilateral trade, investment and economic engagements, facilitate stronger people-to-people contacts, bolster political outreach in multilateral fora and help garner support for the foreign policy objectives. The move would also help the diaspora members residing in these countries.







Facial recognition technology: law yet to catch up

Highlights:

1. There are currently 16 different facial recognition tracking (FRT) systems in active utilisation by various Central and State governments across India for surveillance, security or authentication of identity.
2. While the FRT system has seen rapid deployment by multiple government departments in recent times, there are no specific laws or guidelines to regulate the use of this potentially invasive technology.
3. This, legal experts say, poses a huge threat to the fundamental rights to privacy and freedom of speech and expression because it does not satisfy the threshold the Supreme Court had set in its landmark privacy judgment in the 'Justice K.S. Puttaswamy Vs Union of India' case.
4. In 2018, the Delhi police became one of the first law enforcement agencies in the country to start using the technology. It, however, declined to answer to a Right to Information (RTI) query on whether it had conducted "privacy impact assessment" prior to deployment of the facial recognition system (FRS).

Function creep

1. The police got permission to use the FRS by an order of the Delhi High Court for tracking missing children. Now they are using it for wider security and surveillance and investigation purpose, which is a function creep.
2. A function creep happens when someone uses information for a purpose that is not the originally specified purpose.
3. This might lead to an over-policing problem or problems where certain minorities are targeted without any legal backing or any oversight as to what is happening. Another problem that may arise is of mass surveillance, wherein the police are using the FRT system during a protest.
4. This obviously has a chilling effect on the individual's freedom of speech and expression and right to protest as well as my right to movement.

Proportionality test

1. The Supreme Court in the Puttaswamy judgment ruled that privacy is a fundamental right even in public spaces.



2. And if these rights need to be infringed, then the government has to show that such action is sanctioned by law, proportionate to the need for such interference, necessary and in pursuit of a legitimate aim.
3. The AFRS, an ambitious pan-India project under the Home Ministry which will be used by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and various States' law enforcement departments lacks legal basis, and as per the Puttaswamy judgment, it does not meet the threshold of proportionality and legality.

Questionable accuracy

1. 100% accuracy in finding matches has not been achieved under this technology.
2. In case an inaccurate system is installed, two things can happen. There can be a 'false positive' wherein somebody is recognised as somebody they are not or 'false negative' wherein the system refuses to recognise the person as themselves.
3. In case of a 'false positive', the police using the FRT system to identify and arrest somebody who is not the suspect.
4. If a 'false negative' occurs when the government is using the FRT system to provide its schemes, then this could lead to many people facing exclusion from such government schemes.

Conclusion:

Facial recognition technology has not only been invasive, inaccurate and unregulated but has also been unapologetically weaponised by law enforcement against people. Facial recognition is a perfect form of surveillance that builds tyrannical societies. It automates discriminatory policing and will exacerbate existing injustices in our criminal justice system. Without urgent action, such systems of mass surveillance will erode democratic liberties and threaten the rights of lakhs of Indians.



Current account surplus moderates to \$15.5 bn in Q2

Highlights:

1. India's current account surplus moderated to \$15.5 billion (2.4% of GDP) in the second quarter compared with a \$19.2-billion surplus (3.8% of GDP) in the April-June quarter.
2. The country had recorded a deficit of \$7.6 billion for the quarter ended June 2019, as per balance of payment data released by the RBI on Wednesday.
3. Net services receipts increased on a year-on-year basis, primarily on the back of higher net earnings from computer services. Private transfer receipts, mainly representing remittances by Indians employed overseas, declined from a year earlier but sequentially improved 12% to \$20.4 billion.
4. The net outgo from the primary income account, primarily reflecting net overseas investment income payments, increased to \$9.3 billion from \$8.8 billion a year earlier.
5. In the financial account, net foreign direct investment recorded an inflow of \$24.6 billion compared with \$7.3 billion. "Net foreign portfolio investment was \$7 billion compared with \$2.5 billion in Q2 of 2019-20, largely reflecting net purchases in the equity market," RBI said.

Cabinet gives approval for Akash missile export

Highlights:

1. As part of efforts to boost defence exports, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the export of the indigenously developed and manufactured Akash short-range Surface to Air Missile (SAM) system. It also approved the high-level committee formed to expedite clearance of such exports.
2. Besides Akash, there was interest coming in for other major platforms such as the Coastal Surveillance System, radars and air platforms, the Defence Ministry said.
3. For faster approval of export of such platforms, a committee comprising the Defence Minister, the External Affairs Minister and the National Security Advisor had been created, it stated.