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'VIVAD SE VISHWAS II' SCHEME

- The central government has launched a settlement scheme called 'Vivad se Vishwas II' on 2 August 2023.
- Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance has launched the scheme "Vivad Se Vishwas II – (Contractual Disputes)" to effectively settle pending contractual disputes of Government and Public Undertakings.
- The scheme was announced by the Union Finance Minister in the Union Budget 2023-24. Its objective is to settle the ongoing disputes of the private sector with the government, end litigations and improve the ease of doing business.
- Presenting the Budget 2023-24, he had also said that a 'one-stop solution' would be set up for identity updating and reconciliation of individuals.
- During the budget speech, the Finance Minister announced that "A Voluntary Settlement Scheme with standardized terms will be launched to settle contractual disputes of Government and Public Undertakings, in which arbitration awards are being challenged in court."

- The Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance had issued an order on 29.05.2023, in which detailed guidelines of the scheme were given. The last date for submission of claim is 31.10.2023.
- The scheme will apply to all domestic contractual disputes where one of the parties is either the Government of India or any organization acting under its control.
- Under the scheme, the settlement amount to be given to the contractor for court awards passed on or before 30.04.2023 will be up to 85% of the net amount awarded/retained by the court.
- For arbitration awards passed on or before 31.01.2023, the proposed settlement amount is up to 65% of the net amount awarded.

विवाद से विश्वास ॥ स्कीम



- The central government has set a target of settling around 500 cases in which Rs 1 lakh crore is stuck under the new voluntary resolution scheme.
- In the guidelines issued by the Department of Expenditure on May 29, it has been said that this scheme will be applicable to all types of purchases, which include goods, services and works.
- Government entities such as the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) have many disputes with private contractors.
- The Department of Expenditure has said that the scheme will be applicable to all earning contracts (in which the government receives money in return for goods, services, rights, etc.) as well as contracts under public-private partnership (PPP) arrangements. Eligible parties will be able to claim this only through the e-marketplace of government.
- Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has developed a dedicated web page for the implementation of the scheme. Eligible claims will be processed through GeM only. For non-GeM contracts of the Ministry of Railways, contractors can register their claims on IREPS (www.ireps.gov.in).

VIVAD SE VISHWAS SCHEME-

- The scheme was launched by Union Finance Minister Sitharaman on 1 February 2020.
- The objective of this scheme is to resolve direct tax disputes.
- Those who are taxpayers will have to pay only the amount of disputed tax through this scheme and they will not have to pay any kind of interest on it.



'337 METRIC TONNES OF NON-DISPOSABLE TOXIC WASTE AT BHOPAL DISASTER SITE'

- The panel, headed by the environment minister, proposed ₹126 crore to the Madhya Pradesh government. For disposal of waste: CPCB report; The NGT had ordered the government in March 2022. Was asked to take action within six months.
- Despite warnings and directions from the National Green Tribunal (NGT), 337 metric tonnes (MT) of hazardous waste stored at the Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) complex – the site of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy – is yet to be disposed of. According to a report submitted to the Green Court by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).
- Official agencies have found 6 organic pollutants in groundwater, which retain their toxicity for more than 100 years.
- The Greenpeace report found mercury levels in the soil many times higher than safe levels, which are carcinogenic besides causing damage to the brain, lungs and kidneys.

- According to UCIL, there were earlier 346 metric tonnes of hazardous substances at the Bhopal gas tragedy site, of which about 10 metric tonnes of waste was burnt on a trial basis in August 2015 at a facility in Pithampur. Since then, there has been little progress.
- According to a 2009 joint study by NEE-RI and the National Geo-Physical Research Institute, the UCIL site contains about 1 million tonnes of contaminated soil, about 1 tonne of mercury spillage and about 150 tonnes of underground dumps. In 2022, a committee appointed by the NGT had found the "possibility of soil contamination" and suggested "expeditious disposal" of the waste.



Bhopal gas tragedy

- On 3 December 1984, more than 40 tons of methyl isocyanate gas leaked from a pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, killing at least 3,800 people immediately and causing significant morbidity and premature death to many thousands more. It was a terrible industrial accident.



AKIRA RANSOMWARE

- Akira ransomware is a type of ransomware that targets both Windows and Linux devices.
- It encrypts data on affected devices and associates file names with the Akira extension and deletes Windows shadow volume copies to prevent data recovery.
- The ransomware also terminates Windows services to ensure seamless encryption.
- After stealing and encrypting sensitive data, the attackers demand a ransom and threaten to release the data on the dark web if the demands are not met.
- Ransomware spreads through spear phishing emails with malicious attachments, drive-by downloads, specially crafted web links in emails, and unsecured remote desktop connections.
- It targeted various domains including education, finance, real estate, manufacturing and consulting, and once inside the corporate network, it hacked into other devices using stolen Windows domain admin credentials.

● Rescue: -

- Maintain updated offline backup
- Keep the operating system and network up to date
- Enforce strong password policies and multi-factor authentication
- Enforce data encryption
- Block attachment file types that are commonly associated with malicious code
- Regular security audit of critical systems



GREAT BARRIER REEF (GBR)

- UNESCO has recommended delaying the decision to place the Great Barrier Reef on its List of World Heritage Sites in Danger. But it has stressed that it remains under serious threat from climate change and pollution.
- According to media reports, the Australian government's management of the reef was set to come under the microscope at an upcoming World Heritage Committee meeting, where members were expected to vote on whether the reef should be listed as threatened.
- A report released by UNESCO recommended delaying that crucial decision for at least another year. Its draft recommendation states that the Australian government has taken positive steps to protect the reef over the past 12 months.
- UNESCO said urgent and sustained action is still needed to improve the long-term resilience of the world's largest coral ecosystem. The United Nations agency, which oversees World Heritage sites, was considering whether the reef should be placed on the 'in danger list'.



- However, experts have warned that the world's largest coral reef ecosystem is under serious threat from pollution and the warming of the oceans.
- The GBR extends over a large area of more than 2,300 km along the northeast coast of Australia. The place is home to over 9,000 known species.
- This place is the habitat of a quarter of the species of oceanic creatures. In addition, GBRs generate cleaner air and protect beaches from erosion, flooding, and storms.

- It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1981.
- It is the world's most extensive and rich coral reef ecosystem, consisting of more than 2,900 reefs and more than 900 islands.
- It can be seen from outer space and is the world's largest single structure made by living beings.
- Largest Coral Reef Area:
 - Indonesia has the largest coral reef area in the world.
 - India, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Chagos have the largest number of coral reefs in South Asia.
 - The Great Barrier Reef off the Queensland coast of Australia is the largest set of coral reefs.
- Areas in India:
 - The four coral reef areas in India are the Gulf of Mannar, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Lakshadweep Islands and the Gulf of Kutch.