The Clat Post

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Important One Liners For OLETs

E-WASTE MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

Why in news?

The Indian Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) on August 28 released a report on 'Pathways to Circular Economy in Indian Electronics Sector,' following a government effort with NITI Aayog to explore opportunities to harness e-waste. The report talks about changing the outlook on e-waste management to build a system where discarded electronics can have a new life, either by themselves, or by reintroducing components and precious metals into new hardware.

What is e waste?

The term "e-waste" is an abbreviation of "electronic and electrical waste". A key part of the definition is the word "waste" and what it logically implies – that the item has no further use and is rejected as useless or excess to the owner in its current condition. E-waste includes almost any household or business item containing circuitry or electrical components with either power or battery supply.

Although e-waste is a general term, it can be considered to denote items such as TV appliances, computers, laptops, tablets, mobile phones, white goods - for example, fridges, washing machines, dryers - home entertainment and stereo systems, toys, toasters and kettles.

The definition of e-waste that has been agreed by StEP is:

"E-Waste is a term used to cover items of all types of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) and its parts that have been discarded by the owner as waste without the intention of re-use."

E Waste management in India

- India is currently the third-largest producer of e-waste in the world, after the US and China.
- In India, the amount of e-waste has significantly increased, reaching 1.6 million tonnes in 2021–22.
- More than 60% of the nation's e-waste is produced by 65 Indian cities, while 70% is produced by 10 states.
- The Environment and Forests Hazardous Wastes (handling and Handling) Regulations of 2008 in India addressed the handling of electronic trash.
- E-waste (Management and Handling) Regulations of 2010, which are governed by the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986, were the subject of a significant notice that was published in 2011.
- Its primary feature was extended producer responsibility (EPR).
- Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India is the nodal agency for policy, planning, promoting and coordinating the environmental programme including electronics waste.
- The management of ewaste was covered under the Environment and Forests Hazardous Wastes (Management and Handling) Rules 2008.
- An exclusive notification on E-waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2010 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 has been notified (S.O. 1035) on 12th May 2011 to address the safe and environment friendly handing, transporting, storing, recycling of e-waste and also to reduce the use of hazardous substances during manufacturing of electrical and electronic equipments.
- In Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, the nation's first e-waste clinic has been established to separate, process, and dispose of garbage from residential and business units.
- The Basel Convention (1992) did not initially address the issue of e-waste, but it did so in 2006 (COP8).
- The Basel Convention on the Control of the Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Waste's COP9 endorsed the Nairobi Declaration. Its goal was to develop ground-breaking approaches to managing electronic trash in an environmentally responsible manner.

  Challenges

- Despite the formal dismantling and recycling sector's growth, the actual waste processed in the formal sector still very low.
- Most of these formal facilities are operating below the approved capacities because of inability to source enough waste.

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- The lack of awareness regarding e-waste and the costs of returning the end-of-life equipment to formal collection centres are reducing the willingness of household and institutional consumers to return their waste to the formal sector
- . Most importantly, through the convenience of household collection and monetary incentives, the informal sector makes this attractive for customers to return their waste, relative to the formal sector, that is yet to invest in robust collection and processing systems.
- The informal e-waste sector has provided livelihoods to millions of people, often belonging to the most marginalized groups.
- On contrary, the sector's waste management practices pose serious environmental and health hazards to the workers themselves as well as the larger public.
- It presents a potential moral dilemma for public policy, and the sustained success of any e-waste management in India will hinge to resolve this dilemma.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Where does India stand in terms of generating e waste globally?
   (a) First
   (b) Second
   (c) third
   (d) Fourth

2. The report "Pathways to Circular Economy in the Indian Electronics Sector" is published by which organisation?
   (a) Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY)
   (b) India Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER)
   (c) India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA)
   (d) Niti Ayog

3. India's first e waste clinic was set up in which Indian City?
   (a) Bhopal
   (b) Indore
   (c) Ahmedabad
   (d) Delhi

4. The concept of Extended Producer Responsibility was introduced in which rules?
   (a) E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2022.
   (b) Plastic Waste Management Rules,2022
   (c) The e-Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011
   (d) Battery Waste Management Rules 2022

5. Which electronic device has contributed the most to the total electronic export from India?
   (a) Mobile Phones
   (b) Computers
   (c) Television
   (d) Refrigerator

ECOSIDE

Mexico's Maya train project has earned a contradictory reputation. Some describe it as a "Pharaonic project", the train route covers 1,525 km (about the distance from Florida to New York City), connects tourists in the Caribbean with historic Maya sites and costs $20 billion (almost four times India's Great Nicobar Project). It has also been described as a "megaproject of death" — it imperils the Yucatán peninsula's rich wilderness, ancient cave systems and indigenous communities. The Tribunal for the Rights of Nature in August said the project caused "crimes of ecocide and ethnocide".

What is ecoside?
- Ecocide, derived from Greek and Latin,translates to 'killing one's home' or 'environment'. Such 'killing' could include port expansion projects that destroy fragile marine life and local livelihoods; deforestation; illegal sandmining; polluting rivers with untreated sewage.
- Mexico joins several nations that are mulling ecocide legislations — Congresswoman Marina Marlen Barrón Perales recently proposed a Bill to criminalise any "unlawful or wanton act committed with the knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment".
- There is also a push to elevate ecocide to the ranks of an international crime, warranting similar legal scrutiny as genocide.

More about ecoside

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- Biologist Arthur Galston in 1970 is credited be the first to link environmental destruction with genocide, which is recognised as an international crime, when referring to the U.S. military's use of Agent Orange (a herbicide) during the Vietnam War.
- Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, two years later, used the term in a speech at the United Nations, warning that unchecked industrialisation could cause irreversible damage to the environment.
- British lawyer Polly Higgins became the linchpin, when in 2010, she urged the United Nations' International Criminal Court (ICC) to recognise ecocide as an international crime.

Is ecoside recognised?

- At present, the Rome Statute of the ICC deals with four atrocities: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.
- The provision on war crimes is the only statute that can hold a perpetrator responsible for environmental damage, albeit if it is intentionally caused and during wartime situations.
- Ms. Higgins proposed that the Statute should be amended to treat crimes against nature on par with crimes against people.
- Her description of ecocide was: "Extensive loss, damage to or destruction of ecosystems…such that the peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants has been or will be severely diminished." Here, "inhabitants" applies to all living creatures, not limiting crime to an anthropogenic legal view.
- There is no accepted legal definition of ecocide, but a panel of lawyers in June 2021 for Stop Ecocide Foundation prepared a 'historic' 165-word articulation that, if accepted, would locate environmental destruction in the same category as crimes against humanity.
- Ecocide, they proposed, is the "unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts."

Ecoside in India

- Some Indian judgments have affirmed the legal personhood of nature by recognising rivers as legal entities with the right to maintain their spirit, identity and integrity.
- Some Indian judgments have used the term 'ecocide' in passing, but the concept hasn't fully materialised in law.
- In Chandra CFS and Terminal Operators Pvt. Ltd. v. The Commissioner of Customs and Ors, the Madras High Court noted, "… the prohibitory activities of ecocide has been continuing unbridledly by certain section of people by removing the valuable and precious timbers…"
- The ongoing T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad vs Union Of India & Ors case in Supreme Court called attention to an "anthropogenic bias" and argued that "environmental justice could be achieved only if we drift away from the principle of anthropocentric to ecocentric."
- India's environmental regime includes the Environmental (Protection) Act of 1986, Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, and Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016 (CAMPA) as well as separate rules to prevent air and water pollution.
- The Stockholm Conference, which was held in Stockholm in June 1972 and was attended by India in order to take necessary action for the development of the human environment, served as the impetus for the EPA's passage. The Stockholm Conference's resolutions are put into effect through the Act.
- Further, the National Green Tribunal, India's apex environmental regulatory body, does not hold jurisdiction to hear matters relating to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and other State-enacted laws.

International response to climate change

Climate change was recognized as a serious problem by the First World Climate Conference in 1979. explored how climate change might affect human activities. It issued a declaration calling on the world's governments "to foresee and prevent potential man-made changes in climate that might be adverse to the well-being of humanity". It also endorsed plans to establish a World Climate Programme (WCP) under the joint responsibility of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU).

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

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6. Who among the following was the first person to draw a connection between environment devastation and genocide?
(a) Jane Goodall   (b) Carl Sagan
(c) Arthur Galsto   (d) Marie Tharp

7. Which one of the following conference led to the enactment of Environment Protection Act, 1986 in India?
(a) Stockholm conference
(b) Rio Summit
(c) Convention on biological diversity
(d) Bonn convention

8. First World climate conference was held in which year?
(a) S1979   (b) R1988
(c) C1995   (d) B1996

9. Which of the following statements with respect to United Nations Climate Change Framework Convention (UNFCCC) is incorrect?
(a) The UNFCCC was formed in 1994 to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions and to protect the earth from the threat of climate change.
(b) The participants at COPs are signatories to the UNFCCC and have been meeting every year since 1995.
(c) It is one of the three Rio Conventions – Others are Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
(d) The treaty sets limits on GHG emissions in countries, which are binding with enforcement mechanisms

10. International Criminal Court does not have jurisdiction over which of the following crimes?
(a) SThe crime of Genocide
(b) RCrimes against Humanity
(c) CWar crimes
(d) BCrime against state

EARTHQUAKE IN MOROCCO

Why in news?
Last week's earthquake in Morocco, which had a magnitude of 6.8, was unusual.The nation had not seen anything that deadly in flood than 60 years. Over 2,501 people were hurt, and there were at least 2,681 fatalities.

What caused the earthquake
- Earthquakes are commonly caused along the seam where two tectonic plates move against each other, and in Morocco, earthquakes mostly happen where the Africa and Eurasia plates meet.
- But that boundary is to the north, near Gibraltar, so tremors are usually closer to Tangiers than Marrakesh. Yet this one was in al-Haouz province in the High Atlas Mountains, 75km (47 miles) southwest of Marrakesh, the country's fourth-largest city.
- So far, the explanation is that the quake happened when a reverse fault – where the edge of the rock on one side of a fault slips under the other – occurred between the Morocco and Iberia microplates, which are both part of the larger African plate.
- Paula Marques Figueiredo, a geologist who researches active tectonics and neotectonics, said that reverse tectonic faults lay to the north of the Atlas Mountains and dipped towards them at one point.
- During the earthquake, the edge that lies towards the mountains slid over the other, pushing the mountainside up, a knock-on consequence of built-up tension between the African and Eurasia plates over time.
- "The faults can only hold the stress so much, and once in a while [thousands of years], an earthquake happens as a mechanism to release the [built-up] stress," she said.
- Seismologist Remy Bossu said the most likely scenario now is that there will be aftershocks for weeks before seismic activity levels return to normal.
- "There is a shallow decollement surface at 1 to 4km [0.6 to 2.5 miles] in the tertiary layers and a deeper decollement in the middle crust at a depth of about 10 to 20km [6.2 to 12.4 miles] in this area,"
- Given the depth of the earthquake, it was most likely that the decollements started at the deeper level and moved towards the surface.

What was the aftermath?

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A powerful earthquake struck Morocco on Friday night, killing and injuring thousands of people and devastating rural towns near the southwestern city of Marrakesh, one of the deadliest quakes in the country in decades, according to the Moroccan authorities. The disaster is the deadliest earthquake in Morocco since a 5.9-magnitude quake in 1960 devastated the coastal city of Agadir, about 150 miles southwest of Marrakesh, killing at least 12,000 people and leaving thousands homeless.

Marrakesh and its environs are a hub for tourism, which is a central pillar of the country's $134 billion economy, alongside agriculture. The quake could deal a blow to the industry, and consequently to a Moroccan economy already feeling the pain of drought and rising commodity prices.

About Morocco

- Morocco is located in the northwest corner of Africa and is bordered by the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Algeria and Western Sahara are the land borders to the south and east. Morocco is about the same size as California.
- The high Atlas Mountains separate the mild coastline from the harsh Sahara. Rainfall is unpredictable and is not enough to supply all the water needed for the people.
- Morocco is just across the Strait of Gibraltar from Spain. From 1912 to 1956 the country was divided into French and Spanish zones—two small Spanish-controlled areas, Ceuta and Melilla still remain today.
- King Mohammed VI, who has ruled since 1999, claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad.
- Morocco is one of only three kingdoms left on the continent of Africa—the others, Lesotho and Swaziland, are small, southern African countries.
- Its culture is a blend of Arab, Berber, European and African influences.
- Morocco was a French protectorate between 1912 and 1956. Since independence, Morocco has remained relatively stable and wields significant influence in both Africa and the Arab world.
- In 1975, Morocco annexed the former Spanish colony of Western Sahara. Since then it has been the subject of a long-running territorial dispute between Morocco and its indigenous Sahrawi people, led by the Polisario Front.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

11. What was the magnitude of the earthquake that occurred in Morrocco?
    (a) S6.2   (b) R6.4
    (c) C6.6   (d) B6.8

12. What was the major cause of the earthquake in Morocco?
    (a) African and Eurasian plates collided at a convoluted plate boundary.
    (b) The earthquake occurred at a relatively shallow depth beneath the Earth's surface
    (c) Both (a) and (b)
    (d) Neither (a) and (b)

13. Morocco does not share its border with which of the region?
    (a) Algeria   (b) Western Sahara
    (c) Mediterranean Sea (d) Red Sea

14. Based on scientific information on seismicity, historical earthquakes, and the tectonic structure of the area, India has been categorised into how many seismic zones ?
    (a) Three   (b) Four
    (c) Five   (d) Six

15. The largest earthquake in India, measuring 8.6 on the Richter scale, struck which region?
    (a) Bhuj Earthquake
    (b) Assam earthquake
    (c) Uttarkashi earthquake
    (d) Latur earthquake

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RAMON MAGSAYSAY AWARD

Why in news?
Surgical oncologist R. Ravi Kannan, Director of the Cachar Cancer Hospital and Research Centre (CCHRC) in Assam, is one of the Ramon Magsaysay Awardees for 2023. He is credited with revolutionising cancer treatment in Assam through people-centric and pro-poor healthcare.

Who is Dr. Kannan?
Dr. Kannan hails from Chennai, where he earlier worked at the Cancer Institute, Adyar, before moving to Silchar in 2007. He became the Director of the CCHRC in that year.

According to the citation on the website of the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, under Dr. Kannan's leadership, the CCHRC became a full-fledged comprehensive cancer hospital and research centre. From having limited facilities when he came on board, the hospital now has 28 departments covering oncology, pathology, radiology, microbiology, epidemiology, tumour registry, and palliative care. From 23 personnel, the hospital now employs 451 persons.
The hospital introduced pro-poor initiatives such as free treatment, food and lodging, *ad hoc* employment for caregivers, and a homecare programme as patients could not continue their treatment due to difficulty in travelling long distances, and cost, with the underlying reason being poverty. Hospital team members travelled long distances to train family members in pain management and palliative care, and provided free medicines. As a result, patient compliance rate in treatment rose from 28% to 70%.

What is Ramon Magsaysay award?
The Ramon Magsaysay Award is widely regarded as Asia's premier prize equivalent to Nobel Prize and highest honor. The Award, named after the seventh President of the Philippines, honors "greatness of spirit and transformative leadership in selfless service to the peoples of Asia."

The Ramon Magsaysay Award is bestowed upon organizations or persons—regardless of race, nationality, creed, or gender—who address issues of human development in Asia with courage and creativity, and in doing so have made contributions that have transformed their societies for the better.
Collectively, the Awardees' stories paint a portrait of remarkable change and achievement in areas as diverse as rural and urban development, poverty alleviation, public health, the environment, governance, education, business, human rights, culture, and the arts.

The first Ramon Magsaysay Awards were given on August 31, 1958 to five outstanding individuals working in India, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan, and Sri Lanka, and a Philippine-based organization. To date, over 300 individuals and organizations have received the Award.
The Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation (RMAF) is an international wholly independent non-profit organization based in Manila, Philippines. RMAF manages the Ramon Magsaysay Award.

Six categories, including "Government Service," "Public Service," "Community Leadership," "Journalism, Literature and Creative Communication Arts," "Peace and International Understanding," and "Emergent Leadership," were initially included in the prize. The Ramon Magsaysay Award, with the exception of Emergent Leadership, is no longer granted in established Award categories as of 2009.

More about Ramon Magsaysay award
- The Ramon Magsaysay Award, which was first given out in 1958, is a noteworthy honour that is frequently referred to as Asia's Nobel Prize.
- The recipients of this distinguished award are from Asia and are recognised for their outstanding contributions to society in a variety of fields.
- From 1953 until his tragically early demise in a plane accident in 1957, Ramon Magsaysay served as president of the Philippines.
- When Japanese forces invaded the Philippines, which was then a US colony, during World War II, he rose to fame.
- He won the Nationalist Party's presidential primary in December 1953, making it the nation's oldest political organisation.

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- In 1946, the Philippines was engulfed in post-war instability, which was followed by a widening wealth disparity that was made worse by the growth of capitalism.
- Leaders were targeted by the government, which was allied with the USA, amid allegations of communist sympathies and demands for peasant rights.
- Magsaysay's administrative and military tactics were crucial in fending off the alleged communist menace.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

16. Which of the following personalities was awarded the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award, 2023 ?
    (a) SDr. Ravi Kannan
    (b) RS Suresh Kumar
    (c) CPrakash Singh
    (d) BDr. Manjo Kumar

17. The Ramon Magsaysay award is given out every year on August 31st, which also happens to be Ramon Magsaysay's birthday who was the President of which of the following countries? ?
    (a) Philippnes   (b) Indonesia
    (c) Malaysia   (d) Samoa

18. The Ramon Magsaysay award is widely recognised throughout the world as the award equilvalent to ?
    (a) Nobel Prize   (b) Academy Awards
    (c) Russ Award   (d) Turing Award

19. Post-2009, the Ramon Magsaysay Award is no longer being given in fixed Award categories, except for which category?
    (a) Government service
    (b) emergent leadership
    (c) Peace and international understanding
    (d) Community leadership

20. The Ramon Magsasay award was established in which year?
    (a) 1950   (b) 1954
    (c) 1957   (d) 1960

INDIA-FRANCE BILATERAL NAVAL EXERCISE 'VARUNA '

Why in news?
Phase II of the 21st edition of Varuna (Varuna-23) bilateral exercise between Indian and French Navy was conducted in the Arabian Sea. The exercise witnessed participation of guided missile frigates, tanker, Maritime Patrol Aircraft and integral helicopters from the two sides. The exercise was conducted over three days and witnessed joint operations, underway replenishment and various tactical manoeuvres.

What is Varuna Exercise?
Indian & French Navy bilateral naval exercise was initiated in 1993. The exercise was later christened as 'Varuna' in 2001 and has since become a hallmark of robust India-France strategic bilateral relationship. Having grown in scope and complexity over the years, this exercise provides an opportunity to learn from each other's best practices and procedures. The exercise also facilitates operational level interaction between the two Navies to foster mutual cooperation for good order at sea, underscoring the shared commitment to ensuring security, safety and freedom of the global maritime commons.

The 21st Edition of the Bilateral Naval Exercise between India and France – Exercise Varuna commenced on the Western Seaboard today, 16 Jan 23. While the bilateral exercise between the two navies were initiated in 1993, it was christened as 'VARUNA' in 2001 and has become a hallmark of India – France strategic bilateral relationship.

This edition will witness participation of indigenous guided missile stealth destroyer INS *Chennai*, guided missile frigate INS *Teg*, maritime patrol aircraft P-8I and Dornier, integral helicopters and MiG29K fighter aircraft. The French Navy will be represented by the aircraft carrier Charles De Gaulle, frigates FS Forbin and Provence, support vessel FS Marne and maritime patrol aircraft Atlantique. The exercise will be conducted over five days from 16 to 20 January 2023.

What is the significance of this exercise?

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The French Navy ships participating in the drill to conduct numerous training sessions of increasing intensity included the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and its embarked air group, several Indian and French frigates and their embarked helicopters as well as a French command and replenishment ship.The aim of the VARUNA joint exercise was to prepare the crews of these two Indian Ocean nations to face a variety of challenges together, mobilising their anti-surface, anti-submarine and anti-aircraft assets, as well as shared control of the air-sea environment and ship control. Replenishment at sea, increasingly complex air combat manoeuvres, and firing drills completed these realistic operational scenarios. This joint deployment in the Indian Ocean contributes to ensuring stability in this region in line with France and India's shared approach of collective security based on respect for international law at sea and in the air. A major annual aero-naval event whose first edition dates back to 1983, VARUNA bears witness to the ability of the French and the Indian Navies to deploy and operate together and exemplifies the high level of trust between France and India. The 2023 edition holds special significance as France and India embark on a year of celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Indo-French strategic partnership and work towards an ambitious agenda for renewing, expanding and deepening their cooperation.

25th Anniversary of India France Partnership

- India and France are long-standing strategic partners in the Indo-Pacific.
- Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1947, and the upgrading of the partnership to the strategic level in 1998, two countries have consistently acted together, building on a high level of mutual trust.
- To mark the 25th anniversary of the Indo-French partnership, both countries agree to adopt a roadmap to set the course for the bilateral relationship up to 2047, which will celebrate the centenary of India's independence, the centenary of the diplomatic relations between the two countries and 50 years of the strategic partnership.
- Climate change is a problem for both nations, and India supported France in the Paris Agreement as a sign of its steadfast commitment to reducing the effects of climate change.
- In 2015, both nations established the International Solar Alliance as a part of their cooperative efforts to combat climate change. The secretariat of ISA is located in Gurugram, India.
- France, which has ranked as India's second-largest defence supplier from 2017 to 2021, has emerged as a significant defence partner.
- Exercises Shakti (Army), Varuna (Navy), and Garuda (Air Force) are joint exercises between the two nations.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

21. Which edition of Varuna (Varuna-23) bilateral exercise between Indian and French Navy was conducted in the Arabian Sea?
    (a) 20th   (b) 21st
    (c) 22nd   (d) 24th

22. Indian and French Navy bilateral naval exercise was initiated in which year?
    easy)
    (a) 1992   (b) 1993
    (c) 1995   (d) 1996

23. The air exercised between India and French is known as
    (a) Shakti   (b) Veer guardian
    (c) Garuda   (d) Pitch black

24. Which of the following is highest decision-making body in the Defence Ministry for deciding on new policies and capital acquisitions for the three services ?
    (a) Defence Acquisition council
    (b) Department of defence production
    (c) Department of research and development
    (d) Department of defence

25. India and France launched the International Solar Alliance (ISA) to boost solar energy in developing countries. The secretariat of ISA is located in which place?
    (a) Sonipat   (b) Tarapur
    (c) Ahmedabad   (d) Gurugram

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INDIA'S FIRST EVER UPI-ATM

Why in news?
India's first UPI ATM: The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has been the fastest-growing payment mode in the country and accounts for more than 50% of digital transaction volumes. After revolutionising India's digital payment system, now country's first UPI ATM was launched on Tuesday. Hitachi Payment Services has introduced 'the country's first-ever UPI-ATM as a White Label ATM (WLA) in association with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

What are the features of UPI ATM
- Compatible with various systems.
- -Transactions without the need for a physical card.
- -Transaction limit of up to ₹10,000 per transaction, aligned with existing UPI daily limits and issuer bank's UPI-ATM transaction limits.
- -Offers convenience by eliminating the necessity to carry an ATM card for cash withdrawals.

Working of UPI ATM
- The UPI-ATM service, also known as Interoperable Cardless Cash Withdrawal (ICCW), offers a convenient way for customers of participating banks who are using UPI to withdraw cash from any ATM that supports UPI-ATM functionality, all without the need for a physical card.
- When a customer selects the 'UPI cash withdrawal' option at the ATM, they will be prompted to enter the desired withdrawal amount.
- Once the amount is entered, a unique and secure dynamic QR code will appear on the ATM screen.
- To complete the transaction and obtain cash from the ATM, the customer simply needs to scan this QR code using any UPI app and authorize the transaction with their UPI PIN on their mobile device.
- Choose the amount you want to withdraw.
- The UPI QR code linked to your chosen amount will be shown.
- Use your UPI app to scan the QR code.
- Input your UPI PIN to confirm the transaction.

How is it different from cardless cash withdrawals offered by banks?
The current card-less cash withdrawals depend on mobile numbers and OTPs, whereas UPI-ATM functions through QR-based UPI cash withdrawals. UPI-ATM is available to individuals using UPI who have installed a UPI application on their Android or iOS smartphones. To conduct transactions, users need to have a UPI application installed on their Android or iOS mobile devices.

National Payment Corporation of India
- The National Payments Corporations of India (NPCI) is an umbrella organisation launched in 2008 by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) under the provisions of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.
- The NPCI, owned by a consortium of banks, is aimed at creating robust payments and settlement systems. NPCI is promoted by ten major banks, including the State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Citibank, Bank of Baroda, and HSBC.
- In 2016 the shareholding was broad-based to 56 member banks to include more banks representing all sectors.
- According to the NPCI website, new entities regulated by RBI were inducted in 2020, consisting of Payment Service Operators, payment banks, and Small Finance Banks. NPCI has also launched products including RuPay, Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS), Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM), and Unified Payments Interface (UPI). UPI has been termed as the revolutionary product in the payment system, the NPCI website read.
- The NPCI has recently notified a new interchange fee (1.1 per cent for transactions over ₹2,000) applicable to Pre Paid Instruments (PPI).
- "There is no charge to customers. It is further clarified that there are no charges for the bank account to bank account based UPI payments (i.e. normal UPI payments)," the NPCI added.

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Digital economy

- With a strong foundation of digital infrastructure and expanded digital access through Digital India Programme of the Government, India is now poised for the next phase of growth — creation of tremendous economic value and empowerment of citizens as new digital applications permeate sector after sector.
- **India can create up to $1 trillion of economic value from the digital economy in 2025, up from around $200 billion currently**
- India's digital consumer base is the second largest in the world and growing at the second-fastest rate amongst major economies.
- India's inclusive digital model is narrowing the digital divide within the country and bringing benefits of technology to all segments of people.
- Half the potential economic value of $1 trillion in 2025 could come from new digital ecosystems in diverse sectors, including financial services, agriculture, healthcare, logistics, jobs and skills market, e-governance and other areas.
- The Digital India program, launched in July 2015, is a flagship program of the Government of India that is transforming the country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. Building on this foundation, India now has a massive opportunity to further scale up its digital economy.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

26. What is the transaction limit per transaction in the India's first ever UPI ATM ?
    (a) 5000
    (b) 10,000
    (c) 15,000
    (d) 20,000

27. In February 2023, which of the following payment bank has become the first to launch the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) enabled UPI LITE feature for multiple small-value UPI transactions? ?
    (a) India Post Payments Bank Ltd
    (b) Paytm Payments Bank Ltd
    (c) Airtel Payment Bank
    (d) NSDL Payments Bank Limited

28. National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) was established in which year?
    (a) 2015
    (b) 2010
    (c) 2009
    (d) 2008

29. India's first ever UPI ATM has been launched by which payment services?
    (a) Bajaj Finance
    (b) Hitachi payment services
    (c) ICICI Bank
    (d) Bharat pe

30. Which country has topped the list for digital payments transactions in the year 2022 according to data provided by mygovIndia?
    (a) China
    (b) Denmark
    (c) India
    (d) USA

INDIAN DRONE POLICY

Why in news?

The Ministry of Civil Aviation in India has introduced the Drone (Amendment) Rules 2023, which will come into effect from September 27, 2023. These amendments aim to liberalize, promote, and streamline drone operations across the country, with a vision to establish India as a global drone hub by 2030.

New Amendments in Drone Rules 2021

- After the government banned the import of drones in India, the civil aviation ministry has made another major change to the new drone laws in the country.
- It has, in fact, made it easier for people to fly small drones legally for non-commercial purposes. The government has now announced the Drone (Amendment) Rules, 2022 which says that remote pilot certificate (earlier it was called licence) will not be required for flying small to medium size drones of up to 2kg for non-commercial purposes.
- Now, the government has simply extended the relaxation which was meant for nano drones only to micro drones up to 2 kg, provided the same micro drone is used only for non-commercial usage.
- Now, as per the new government rule, you are not required to get a licence from DGCA separately after getting trained from a DGCA-approved drone training institute.

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- You will now get a 'Remote Pilot Certificate' from the DGCA-approved drone training institute itself after passing the course that will make you eligible to fly micro drones for commercial purposes.
- This will simply speed up the process of more drone pilots trained in India to boost drone deliveries in the country.

Drone Rules 2021:
- No person shall operate an unmanned aircraft system without first registering it on the digital sky platform and obtaining a unique identification number, unless exempted from the requirement of a unique identification number under Drone Rules, 2021.
- A registration record shall be maintained by the Director General of all such unmanned aircraft systems to which unique identification number has been issued under Drone
- It shall be the responsibility of the person operating an unmanned aircraft system to ensure that such unmanned aircraft system conforms to a valid type certificate.
- Remote Pilot License , General – No individual other than a holder of a valid remote pilot license enlisted on the digital sky platform shall operate an unmanned aircraft system.
- Classification – A remote pilot license shall specifically mention the category, sub-category and classification of the unmanned aircraft system or a combination of these, for which it is issued.
- An individual shall be eligible to obtain a remote pilot license, if he:
- is not less than eighteen years of age and not more than sixty-five years of age
- has passed class tenth examination or its equivalent from a recognized Board
- has successfully completed such training as may be specified by the Director General, from any authorized remote pilot training organization.
- Import of unmanned aircraft systems shall be regulated by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade or any other entity authorized by the Central Government.

PLI Scheme for drones
- The Central Government has notified the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for drones and drone components on September 30, 2021.
- The PLI scheme and new drone rules are intended to catalyse super-normal growth in the. The annual sales turnover of the drone manufacturing industry may grow from Rs 60 crores in 2020-21 to over Rs 900 crores in FY 2023-24.
- The drone manufacturing industry is expected to generate over 10,000 direct jobs over the next three years.
- Features of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme are:
- The total amount allocated for the PLI scheme for drones and drone components is Rs 120 crores spread over three financial years. This amount is nearly double the combined turnover of all domestic drone manufacturers in FY 2020-21.
- . The incentive for a manufacturer of drones and drone components shall be as high as 20 per cent of the value addition made by her.
- . The value addition shall be calculated as the annual sales revenue from drones and drone components (net of GST) minus the purchase cost (net of GST) of drone and drone components.
- . The Government, has agreed to keep the PLI rate constant at 20 per cent for all three years, an exceptional treatment given only to the drone industry. In PLI schemes for other sectors, the PLI rate reduces every year.
- The proposed tenure of the PLI scheme is three years starting in FY 2021- 22. The PLI scheme will be extended or redrafted after studying its impact in consultation with the industry

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

31. For drones weighing up to how many kilogrammes, a remote pilot certificate is not necessary for personal, non-commercial use?
    - (a) 1kg
    - (b) 2kg
    - (c) 3kg
    - (d) 4kg

32. The government has notified the Drone Rules 2021 that is expected to make drone operations simpler for civilian drone operators. Under the rules, Import of drones will be regulated by which agency?
    - (a) Directorate General of Foreign Trade
    - (b) Drone Council of india
    - (c) Unmanned Aircraft Council of india
    - (d) Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)

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33. First drone attack was experienced by India in which of the following places? climate conference was held in which year?
    (a) Air Force station Jammu
    (b) Amritsar Punjab
    (c) Mumbai
    (d) Balakot

34. The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) recently approved the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for drones and drone components. What is amount allocated towards the scheme?

    (a) 120 crore   (b) 130 crore
    (c) 140 crore   (d) 150 crore

35. Which of the following is collaborating with the Drone Federation of India to co-host 'Bharat Drone Shakti 2023', in Hindan, Ghaziabad?
    (a) Indian Air Force
    (b) Ministry of civil aviation
    (c) Ministry of commerce and industry
    (d) Indian Military

CAUVERY RIVER DISPUTE

Why in news

In Karnataka's Mandya, protests are underway over the sharing of Cauvery water with neighbouring Tamil Nadu following the Supreme Court's refusal last week to interfere in the enforcement of the water-sharing agreements between the states and the decisions of the Cauvery Water Management Authority and Cauvery Water Regulation Committee.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- The Cauvery River, which flows through the southern Indian states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and the Union Territory of Puducherry, has been a focal point of one of the most contentious water disputes.
- This long-standing conflict, known as the Cauvery water dispute, has its roots in historical agreements and differing demands.
- The dispute dates back to the colonial era when the British government established agreements to allocate the river's waters among the princely states of Mysore and Madras presidency (now Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, respectively).
- These pacts, known as the 1892 and 1924 agreements, laid the foundation for the dispute that would continue for over a century.
- The 1892 Agreement between the then State of Mysore and Madras was on taking up new irrigation works across the rivers. But this agreement was not as significant as the one in 1924, which went on to become the real origin of the dispute.
- In 1910, Mysore proposed constructing the Kanambadi dam on the Cauvery River. Around the same time, Madras also proposed an irrigation project on the same river. Madras raised objections to the second phase of the Kanambadi project, prompting the Indian government's intervention.
- Under Griffin's oversight, an agreement was crafted on February 18, 1924, which was intended to remain in effect for the next 50 years.
- Comprising 10 clauses, the 1924 agreement stipulated that, for at least the subsequent five decades, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry would receive 75 per cent of the Cauvery water allocation, while 23 percent would be allocated to Mysore, with the remainder flowing into Kerala or what was then known as Travancore.

Timeline

- After state reorganisation in 1956, Tamil Nadu received 75 per cent of Cauvery water and expanded its irrigated areas. But the issues persisted.
- Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) was constituted in 1990 to adjudicate the water sharing issue. The tribunal's final order was issued in 2007.
- As per this, 30 tmc (thousand million cubic feet) was alloted to Kerala, 270 tmc to Karnataka, 419 tmc to Tamil Nadu, and 7 tmc to Puducherry.
- On February 16, 2018, the Supreme Court issued a unanimous judgment which led to a decrease in Karnataka's annual water releases from 192 TMC to 177.25 TMC. It also reduced Tamil Nadu's share of water.
- On the court's direction, the Centre on June 1, 2018, established the Cauvery Water Management Authority to implement the judgement.

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- On August 14, the Tamil Nadu government approached the Supreme Court, requesting its intervention in compelling Karnataka to immediately release 24,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) of water from its reservoirs.
- Tamil Nadu urged the Court to instruct Karnataka to adhere to the release of 36.76 TMC of water, as mandated for September 2023 by the final award of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) in 2007.
- Karnataka contended that lower rainfall in the Cauvery catchment area, encompassing regions in Kerala, had led to inadequate inflow into its reservoirs.
- Chief Minister Siddaramaiah explained that historically, whenever there was excess water in the reservoirs, Karnataka willingly supplied it to Tamil Nadu. However, this year, unfavourable conditions have left Karnataka unable to do so.
- Once the matter reached the court, the Supreme Court declined to intervene with the orders of the Cauvery Water Management Authority and Cauvery Water Regulation Committee. These orders had directed Karnataka to release 5,000 cusecs of water to Tamil Nadu.
- On September 18, the Cauvery Water Management Authority reiterated the requirement for Karnataka to continue releasing 5,000 cusecs (cubic feet per second) of water to Tamil Nadu for a duration of 15 days, upholding the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's previous order issued on September 12

What are the arguments of the states?
- The Karnataka government contends that since the 1924 agreement had a 50-year expiration date, its terms should not be applicable to today's water distribution.
- Karnataka also argues that at the time the agreement was reached, Tamil Nadu was a British province, and Karnataka was a princely state, which may have limited its ability to assert its interests effectively.
- Conversely, Tamil Nadu asserts that altering the fundamental nature of 1924 agreement would be detrimental to both regions.
- Tamil Nadu claims that when the agreement was originally negotiated, it was understood that its clauses would be reviewed after 50 years, rather than entirely overhauled.
- A balancing reservoir is being built as part of the multifaceted Mekedatu project in the Karnataka district of Ramanagara, close to Kanakapura
- Tamil Nadu contends that the Mekadatu dam would have a severe impact on the state's agricultural operations and water supplies by dramatically reducing the amount of water flowing downstream.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

36. The river Kaveri does not pass through which of the following states?
    (a) Karnataka   (b) Tamil Nadu
    (c) Kerala   (d) Andhra Pradesh

37. Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) was established in which of the following year?
    (a) 1985   (b) 1974
    (c) 1990   (d) 1978

38. Which of the project in Karnataka is behind the cause of cauvery water dispute ?
    (a) Mekedatu dam projects
    (b) Bhadra dam project
    (c) Krishnasagar dam project
    (d) Tungbhadra dam project

39. The distribution, use , supply of water has been dealt with under which list of the Indian constitution?
    (a) State   (b) Union
    (c) Residuary   (d) Concurrent

40. River kaveri is known by which name in Tamil Nadu?
    (a) Vridha   (b) Gomathi
    (c) Amonni   (d) Ponni

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COUP IN GABON

Why in news:
A gang of mutinous troops claimed to have staged another coup attempt in the oil-rich but politically unstable country of Gabon. They claimed to have taken control of the government and put the president under house arrest. Allegations of election fraud and corruption against President Ali Bongo Ondimba led to a coup attempt, reflecting the rising unrest in the country.

Brief details about Gabon:
The former French colony of Gabon, which is bordered on all sides by the Atlantic Ocean, nevertheless has close ties to France and the French language and culture. Libreville is the nation's capital. Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Cameroon are its neighbors on land. There are 2.3 million people living in Gabon as of 2021, and 88% of the land is covered in forests. One of the greatest places to see wildlife in Gabon is the Loango National Park, which is frequently referred to as "Africa's last Eden." The fourth-largest oil producer in Sub-Saharan Africa is Gabon. Oil and manganese production over the previous ten years have been the key drivers of strong economic growth. Despite efforts to diversify the economy, the oil sector still made up 70.5% of exports and 38.5% of the GDP in 2020. Since Gabon gained its independence from France in 1960, there have been few presidents, with Omar Bongo serving as the country's leader for more than 40 years until his passing in 2009. Under the "Francafrique" system, Gabon maintained tight ties with France during his reign, getting financial favors in exchange for political and military support. Despite being a significant oil producer, the World Bank estimates that a third of Gabon's citizens are living in poverty. The seventh-largest oil producer in Africa is Gabon, a member of OPEC.

Details about the Gabon Coup:
The military has taken control of Gabon, a nation in West Africa, making it the seventh former French colony in the area to have a coup since 2020. Minutes after election results gave President Ali Bongo his third consecutive term in office, the coup was broadcast on national television. He requested his supporters to raise a fuss in his defense after the army overthrew him in a coup and placed him under house arrest. The throngs of people that have filled the streets, however, have celebrated the coup. For more than 55 years, Bongo's family dominated Gabon. He was accused of corruption, holding fraudulent elections, and failing to distribute more of the country's oil and mineral revenues to the poor.

Who took the leadership after the Coup:
The Central African oil-producing country of Gabon underwent a military revolution. President Ali Bongo was put under home arrest after being declared the winner of a controversial election. Since 2020, there have been seven coup attempts in West and Central Africa, continuing a regional trend of failed democratization. In addition to annulling election results and dissolving governmental institutions, military leaders announced the coup. When the officers declared President Bongo's victory to be invalid, President Bongo was placed under house arrest. General Brice Oligui Nguema was chosen as the new leader by a unanimous vote of the generals.

How is the relationships between Gabon and India:
Since Gabon's time before independence, India and Gabon have had cordial relations. India and Gabon are both NAM (non-aligned movement) members. In May 2022, the vice president of India at the time paid Gabon his first-ever high-level visit. Foreign Trade in 2021–2022, increased to USD 1.12 billion. The second-largest market for Gabonese exports is India. Gabon's energy cooperation is crucial for India's energy security. In 2021–2022, India imported crude oil from Gabon for roughly USD 670 million. Several Gabonese citizens enroll in training and scholarship programs. These initiatives are provided by India under the ITEC and ICCR programs for Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation.

Conclusion:
To protect its distinctive ecosystems and species, Gabon has created a network of protected areas, aiding in worldwide conservation efforts. Launched in 2020, the Gabon Bleu Initiative focuses on marine conservation and seeks to safeguard 26% of Gabon's seas by 2025. The Gabonese government has taken action to stop illicit logging and protect its rainforests, which are essential for maintaining biodiversity and regulating the climate.Although there are still access discrepancies, the government has worked to enhance healthcare, education, and social services for its inhabitants.

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PRACTICE QUESTIONS

41. The military has taken control of Gabon, a nation in West Africa, making it the seventh former (x) colony in the area to have a coup since 2020. Replace (x) with appropriate option:
    (a) British   (b) Dutch
    (c) French   (d) Portuguese

42. Who is appointed as the new leader as per the through a unanimous vote after the military coup that was carried out in Gabon? :
    (a) Brice Oligui Nguema
    (b) Ali Bongo
    (c) Patience Dabany
    (d) Jean Ping

43. An attempt at a coup has once again been made by a handful of mutinous troops in Gabon, a country in Central Africa that is rich in oil but also suffers from poverty and political unrest. The coup was executed against: :

(a) François Bozizé
(b) Roguy Méyé Soccer
(c) Bruno Ecuele Manga
(d) Ali Bongo

44. Recently, a military coup was executed in Gabon. Gabon is famously referred as: :
    (a) Africa's last Eden
    (b) The Emerald Oasis
    (c) The Serengeti of Central Africa
    (d) The Amazon of the Equator

45. Despite efforts to diversify the economy, the oil sector still made up 70.5% of exports and 38.5% of the GDP in 2020. Currently Gabon is Africa's (x) largest producer of oil. Replace (x) with appropriate option: :
    (a) Fourth   (b) Fifth
    (c) Sixth   (d) Seventh

ASIAN GAMES

Why in news:
The 19th Asian Games, held in Hangzhou, the People's Republic of China, from September 23 to October 8, 2023, attracted a delegation from India consisting of 655 athletes. The Asian Games 2023 were supposed to take place in 2022, but the COVID-19 epidemic forced a one-year delay. With a team of 570 competitors in the most recent Asian Games in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2018, India won a record-breaking 70 medals, including 16 gold, 23 silver, and 31 bronze.

Brief history about Asian Games:
The four-year continental multi-sport event known as the Asian Games, or Asiad, attracts competitors from all around Asia. The Asian Games Federation (AGF) oversaw the competition from the first Games in New Delhi, India, to the 1978 Games. The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) has organized the events since the 1982 dissolution of the Asian Games Federation. The Games, which are regarded as the second-largest multisport event in the world after the Olympic Games, are recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

How Asian Games came into picture:
A member of the Indian International Olympic Committee named Guru Dutt Sondhi introduced the idea of the Asian Games as an athletic event where all Asian nations might be represented after the Second World War, when many Asian countries won independence. In 1951, the inaugural Asian Games were held in New Delhi. From 1951 to 1978, the Asian Games Federation oversaw the regulation of the Asian Games. The Asian Games are governed by the Olympic Council of Asia since 1982. India hosted the first Asian Games and is a founding member of the organization. In November and December 1982, the 9th Asian Games were also held in New Delhi. The inaugural mascot for the Asian Games was Appu, an Indian elephant.

19ᵗʰ edition Asian Games:
In Hangzhou and the five co-host cities, a total of 54 competition sites will hold 61 disciplines across 40 sports. With quota seats available in those nine sports, competitions in archery, artistic swimming, boxing, breaking, hockey, modern pentathlon, sailing, tennis, and water polo will also function as Olympic qualifiers. The robots Chenchen, Congcong, and Lianlaian are the 19th Asian Games' mascots. "Eternal Flame" is the name of the torch for the 19th Asian Games. The Liangzhu Culture of ancient Chinese civilization served as an inspiration for the design. Breaking (Breakdance) and esports are expected to make their debuts as recognized and official sporting events.

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The most successful country:
China has won the most medals out of the 44 countries that have so far competed in the Asian Games, followed by Japan and South Korea. Pakistan is not among the top ten countries, but India is ranked fourth in terms of overall medals.Of the 800 entrants, India had sent the final group of 572 athletes to the 2018 Asian Games. The most Indian athletes have ever participated in the Asian Games, dating back to their establishment.China has a record of 1473 gold medals and 3187 overall medals, making them the most successful competitor in the annals of the Asian Games.

Dispute ISL and AIFF in Asian Games:
The SAFF Cup 2023 saw India's national football team achieve extraordinary success, and now the game is embroiled in a divisive club vs. country dispute. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) and Indian Super League (ISL) teams are at odds over player availability, and as a result, there is doubt about the team's makeup for the 2017 Asian Games. The 19th Asian Games, which were originally slated to take place in 2022 but were postponed because to the Covid-19 outbreak, will now be held in Hangzhou, China, from September 23 to October 8, 2023.

Conclusion:
India has a long history of success at the Asian Games in the athletics discipline, which accounts for a sizable amount of their medal haul. With 68 athletes competing in track and field events in Hangzhou 2023, India will send the greatest contingent of participants in any sport. India will enter teams in both men's and women's cricket in the Asian Games for the first time. 74 Olympic berths for Paris 2024 are available during the Asian Games in Hangzhou, giving competitors a chance to advance to the following Olympics.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

46. The 19th edition of Asian Games are going to be held in which country?
    (a) India
    (b) China
    (c) Japan
    (d) Sri Lanka

47. Who is credited as brainchild of Asian Games as a sporting event, where all Asian nations can be represented?
    (a) Shahabuddin Yaqoob Quraishi
    (b) Guru Dutt Sondhi
    (c) Birendra Prasad Baishya
    (d) Radha Govinda Baruah

48. The first Asian games was organised in New Delhi. It was held in the year:
    (a) 1948
    (b) 1951
    (c) 1955
    (d) 1950

49. What is the name of the torch used for the 19th Asian Games that was inspired by the Liangzhu Culture of ancient Chinese civilization?
    (a) Eternal Flame
    (b) Ancient Fire
    (c) Heritage Flame
    (d) Culture Beacon

50. Which country has the highest medal count in the history of Asian Games?
    (a) Japan
    (b) South Korea
    (c) Iran
    (d) China

NIPAH VIRUS

Why Nipah Virus is in news:
The Nipah Virus (NiV) infection is a recently discovered zoonosis that causes serious illness in both humans and animals, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). An RNA virus belonging to the genus Henipavirus is the Nipah virus. The infection spreads quickly and is deadly. With infected patients, the mortality rate can reach 70%. The Nipah Virus is an ailment that spreads through the air and can harm people who come into touch with infected bodies, such as those of infected pigs or bats. Bats with the virus shed it through their excretions and secretions. There is evidence of human-to-human transmission as well. Pigs and other domestic animals can contract sickness from NiV as well. The main way that the virus spreads to humans in humans is through direct contact with pigs.

What is Nipah Virus:
It is a zoonotic virus, meaning that people can contract it from animals. The Nipah virus, also known as the RNA virus or ribonucleic acid virus, is closely related to the Hendra virus and belongs to the family Paramyxoviridae. Infection

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with the rare developing zoonosis known as the Hendra virus (HeV) results in severe and frequently deadly infections in both afflicted horses and people. In 1998 and 1999, Malaysia and Singapore experienced its initial outbreak. The disease is called after the Malaysian village of Sungai Nipah, where it was discovered for the first time. Several domestic animal species, including dogs, cats, goats, horses, and sheep, have been found to have it, including domestic pigs, which are where it first appeared.

How Nipah Virus spreads:
The Nipah and Hendra viruses are naturally hosted by fruit bats, also known as "flying foxes," of the genus Pteropus. The virus can be found in bat pee, as well as perhaps in feces, saliva, and birth fluids.Over 50 viruses are hosted by the Indian Flying Fox. Around 1,200 different species of bats make up 20% of the animal variety on the planet. Bats who spend a lot of time in the air have higher body temperatures, stronger immune systems, and are better able to withstand the harmful effects of microorganisms. Because the nipah virus typically causes brain inflammation, multiple days of fever can frequently result in a state of confusion, disorientation, and even protracted sleepiness. NiV complications that can be deadly include encephalitis, which can also develop as an acute or late-onset condition. In an infected person, neurological, respiratory, and pulmonary symptoms also appear. Drowsiness, nausea, dizziness, headaches, fever, and mental health problems like disorientation are some of the typical NiV indications and symptoms.

Nipah Virus and Outbreak in India:
The first Nipah Virus outbreak occurred in Siliguri, India, in 2001, while the second one occurred in Nadia, West Bengal, in 2007. As soon as the Kerela outbreak in 2018 was contained to Kerala's Kozhikode and Malappuram districts, it was deemed to be over. In June 2019, there was another instance in Kochi.

Conclusion:
The Nipah virus can cause a patient to experience mild to severe symptoms, including acute respiratory sickness and lethal encephalitis, both of which can lead to death. The first three to fourteen days after infection are when the Nipah symptoms appear. It involves cold-like signs and symptoms include fever, sore throat, coughing, and breathing problems. In more severe situations, it can result in cerebral enlargement, which causes confusion, tiredness, a sense of disorientation, vomiting, and eventually falls into a comatose state. Consequences like convulsions and personality abnormalities might be observed in survivors even after they have overcome the Nipah symptoms over time.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

51. The Nipah Virus (NiV) infection is a recently discovered zoonosis that causes serious illness in both humans and animals, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The Nipah virus is a type of (x) virus in the genus Henipavirus. Replace (x) with appropriate option:
    (a) DNA　　　　　(b) RNA
    (c) mRNA　　　　(d) mDNA

52. In which of the following country Nipah Virus was first identified?
    (a) Malaysia　　　(b) Indonesia
    (c) Japan　　　　(d) China

53. Which among the following animals cannot spread the Nipah Virus?
    (a) Fruit bats　　　(b) Flying foxes
    (c) Pigs　　　　　(d) Cows

54. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the Nipah Virus (NiV) infection is a recently discovered zoonosis that affects both humans and animals severely. In which year WHO was established?
    (a) 1945　　　　(b) 1948
    (c) 1950　　　　(d) 1952

55. The first outbreak of Nipah Virus happened in which state of India?
    (a) Madhya Pradesh
    (b) Arunachal Pradesh
    (c) West Bengal
    (d) Haryana

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SELF-RESPECT MARRIAGES

Why in news?
The Supreme Court on Monday (August 28) observed that there is no blanket ban on advocates solemnising "self-respect" marriages under Section 7(A) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.
In doing so, a Bench of Justices S Ravindra Bhat and Aravind Kumar set aside a 2014 ruling of the Madras High Court holding that marriages performed by the advocates are not valid and that "suyamariyathai" or **"self-respect" marriages** cannot be solemnised in secrecy.

What are 'self-respect' marriages?
On January 17, 1968, the Hindu Marriage (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act, 1967, received the President's approval and became the law. This amendment modified the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, by inserting Section 7-A into it. However, it extended only to the state of Tamil Nadu.
Section 7-A deals with the special provision on "self-respect and secular marriages". It legally recognises "any marriage between any two Hindus", which can be referred to as "suyamariyathai" or "seerthiruththa marriage" or by any other name.
Such marriages are solemnised in the presence of relatives, friends, or other persons, with parties declaring each other to be husband or wife, in a language understood by them. Further, each party to the marriage garlands the other or puts a ring on the other's finger or ties a "thali" or mangal sutra. However, such marriages are also required to be registered as per the law.

One of the important claims of the self-respect movement was that all forms of customary and traditional Hindu marriages, mainly the Brahmanical ones, upheld caste supremacy and the patriarchal rights of men. The movement advocated that a man and a woman should enter a dissoluble contract to form a conjugal relationship without conforming to any religious practices. Further, in the context of widely practised bigamy among Hindu men, the movement advocated the civil registration of all marriages and upheld women's rights to dissolve the marriage, remarry, and claim their rights in property. The court, on the other hand, by denying the validity of self-respect marriage, denied Rajathi her conjugal rights. Subsequently, in 1969, after the Hindu Marriage Amendment Act in 1967 which legalised the Suyamariyathai thirumanam, Rajathi successfully claimed the restitution of her conjugal rights after a new trial. In the case of Chidambaram Chettiar vs Deivanai Achi, the Madras High Court suggested to the Congress party-led Madras legislature that it take the initiative to legitimise self-respect marriages and protect the property rights of Hindus who had adopted non-religious marriage practices. In 1953, the Madras government decided to introduce the 'Hindu Non-Conformist Marriage Registration Bill, 1954', but despite it being taken up for consideration, was withdrawn and even rejected by the same government on the ground that the Special Marriage Act 1954 would cover the provisions for self-respect marriages.

The rationale behind the Tamil Nadu government amending the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, to include "suyamariyathai" or "self-respect" marriages, was to radically simplify weddings by shunning the need for mandatory Brahmin priests, holy fire and saptapadi (seven steps). This allowed marriages to be declared in the presence of the couple's friends or family or any other persons. In a nutshell, the amendment was made to do away with the need for priests and rituals, which were otherwise required to complete wedding ceremonies.

In its recent order, the Supreme Court allowed a petition challenging a Madras High Court order dated May 5 where the court had ordered the initiation of disciplinary action against the advocates who solemnised such marriages in their offices and issued marriage certificates to consenting adults.
In the case of "Ilavarasan v. Superintendent of Police", a Bench of Justices Ravindra Bhat and Aravind Kumar was hearing an appeal of a man called Ilavarasan against a Madras High Court order passed in May 2023, rejecting his habeas corpus petition to present his wife before the court.
The petitioner had claimed that he had performed "suyamariyathai" with his wife, who was currently under her parents' "illegal custody". Refusing to accept the "self-respect" marriage certificate issued by the advocate, the Madras High Court dismissed Ilvarasan's habeas corpus plea. Thus, he was compelled to move the top court, which successfully admitted his plea.

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In doing so, the court overruled the 2014 ruling of the Madras High Court in "Balakrishna Pandian v. The Superintendent of Police", where it was held that marriages performed by the advocates are invalid and that "suyammariyathai" or "self-respect" marriages cannot be solemnised in secrecy.

The Madras High Court had held in its 2014 ruling: "We are very clear in our mind that even the protagonists of the Suyammariyathai/Seerthiruththa form of marriage did not visualize marriages being solemnised in secrecy. The very idea of performing marriages with celebration is to publicly declare the marital status of the parties. Even Thanthai Periyar used to conduct Suyamariyathai form of marriages publicly so that the world recognised the status of the couples. Hence, celebration of marriage is not antithetical to Suyammariyathai/Seerthiruththa form of marriage.

Therefore, we are of the opinion that a marriage conducted in secrecy with few strangers around, be it Suyammariyathai form, will not amount to solemnisation, as required under Section 7 & 7-A of the Hindu Marriage Act".

Further, the top court also relied on its 2001 ruling in "Nagalingam v. Sivagami", which said that there is no blanket ban on advocates to solemnise marriages under Section 7(A) of the Hindu Marriage Act (Tamil Nadu State Amendment Act).

Sources-https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/a-milestone-in-hindu-marriage-reform-in-india/article67358308.ece https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-law/self-respect-marriages-supreme-court-8914350/

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

56. In which year the self-respect marriages were legalized in India for the first time?
    (a) January 17, 1968
    (b) August 28, 2014
    (c) August 28, 1955
    (d) January 17, 1955

57. What was the main purpose of the Madras Suyamariyathai Marriage Validation Bill introduced by S.M. Annamalai in 1965?
    (a) To discourage non-ritual, consensual inter-caste marriages
    (b) To provide legal recognition for self-respect marriages under Hindu law
    (c) To promote Brahminic interpretations of Hindu marriage
    (d) To restrict women's rights to seek divorce

58. What was the outcome of the 'Hindu Non-Conformist Marriage Registration Bill, 1954' introduced in the Madras government?
    (a) It was passed by the Madras legislature and became law.
    (b) It was rejected by the Madras government.
    (c) It was passed by the Indian Parliament and received presidential assent.
    (d) It led to the registration of self-respect marriages in Tamil Nadu.

59. Who led the Self Respect Marriage Movement?
    (a) Periyar E. V. Ramasamy
    (b) B.N. Rau
    (c) S.M. Annamalai
    (d) It led to the registration of self-respect marriages in Tamil Nadu.

60. Consider the following statements regarding Self Respect Marriage and Movement:
    (1) It sought to promote gender equality within marriage. It advocated for the rights of women, including their right to dissolve a marriage, remarry, and claim their rights in property. This was aimed at challenging patriarchal norms within traditional Hindu marriages.
    (2) The Self-Respect Movement was also called the Dravidian Movement. The movement demanded equal rights for the backward castes, with a focus on women's rights.
    (3) It regards Brahminical rituals, caste endogamy, religious restrictions, and gender norms on a higher pedestal than autonomy of parties entering into marriage.
    Which of the above statements is/are correct?
    (a) 1 and 2 only   (b) 2 and 3 only
    (c) 1 and 3 only   (d) 1, 2 and 3

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LADAKH AUTONOMOUS HILL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The Supreme Court invalidated **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC)** election process from a notification recently, ordering a fresh notification within seven days.

The bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Ahsanuddin Amanulla, while imposing a cost of Rs 1 lakh on the Ladakh administration, also dismissed its appeal against an August 14 order of a division bench of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court which had upheld an interim order by a single-judge bench for grant of the Plough poll symbol to the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC).

About Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council:
- LAHDC, Leh is an autonomous district council that administers the Leh district of Ladakh.
- The council was created under the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Act of 1995.
- LAHDC-Leh has a total of 30 seats and four councillors are nominated by the government.
- The executive arm of the council consists of an executive committee composed of a Chief Executive Councillor and four other executive councillors.
- The autonomous hill council work with village panchayats to take decisions on economic development, healthcare, education, land use, taxation, and local governance which are further reviewed at the block headquarters in the presence of the chief executive councillor and executive councilors.

Constitutional Provisions
- Sixth Schedule: The Sixth Schedule under Article 244 provides for the formation of autonomous administrative divisions — Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) — that have some legislative, judicial, and administrative autonomy within a state.
- The Sixth Schedule contains special provisions for the administration of tribal areas in the four north-eastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- Autonomous Districts: The tribal areas in these four states have been constituted as autonomous districts.
- The governor is empowered to organise and re-organise the autonomous districts.
- The acts of Parliament or the state legislature do not apply to autonomous districts or apply with specified modifications and exceptions.
- The power of direction, in this regard, lies either with the President or Governor.
- District Council: Each autonomous district has a district council consisting of 30 members, of whom four are nominated by the Governor and the remaining 26 are elected on the basis of adult franchise.
- The elected members hold office for a term of five years (unless the council is dissolved earlier) and nominated members hold office during the pleasure of the governor.
- Each autonomous region also has a separate regional council.

Powers of the Council
- The district and regional councils administer the areas under their jurisdiction.
- They can make laws on certain specified matters like land, forests, canal water, shifting cultivation, village administration, and the inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, social customs and so on. But all such laws require the assent of the Governor.
- They can constitute village councils or courts for trial of suits and cases between the tribes. They hear appeals from them. The jurisdiction of the high court over these suits and cases is specified by the governor.
- The district council can establish, construct or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, ferries, fisheries, roads and so on in the district.
- They are empowered to assess and collect land revenue and to impose certain specified taxes.

Sources - https://indianexpress.com/article/india/supreme-court-ladakh-hill-council-polls-national-conference-plough-symbol-8926937/
https://iasscore.in/current-affairs/prelims/ladakh-autonomous-hill-development-council-36

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PRACTICE QUESTIONS

61. What symbol did the Supreme Court allot to the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC) for the LAHDC elections?
    (a) Hand (b) Plough
    (c) Cycle (d) Elephant

62. How many members constitute a district council in an autonomous district under the Sixth Schedule?
    (a) 15 members (b) 20 members
    (c) 26 members (d) 30 members

63. Which areas in India have autonomous administrative divisions known as Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) as per the Sixth Schedule?
    (a) All states and Union Territories
    (b) Four northeastern states
    (c) Western states of India
    (d) Southern states of India

64. Which is the biggest ethnic group in Ladakh?
    (a) Muslims (b) Hindus
    (c) Gujjars (d) Buddhists

65. When was Jammu and Kashmir Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Act, 1997 amended?
    (a) 1998 (b) 2018
    (c) 2023 (d) 2022

SPECIAL SESSION OF PARLIAMENT

On August 31, Pralhad Joshi, the Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, announced that a "special session" of Parliament would be held from September 18 to 22. The Minister was quoted as stating that "important items" were on the session's agenda, which the government would circulate shortly.

The announcement has led to speculation about the government's legislative plans for the session. Usually, a few days before a Parliament session, the government convenes an all-party meeting to share its agenda and build consensus on possible issues for discussion.

When does Parliament meet?

India's Parliament has no fixed calendar of sittings. In 1955, a <u>Lok Sabha</u> committee had proposed a timetable for parliamentary sessions. It recommended that the Budget session of Parliament begin on February 1 and go on till May 7, and the Monsoon session start on July 15 and end on September 15. The committee suggested that the Winter session, the last session of the year, commence on November 5 (or the fourth day after Diwali, whichever is later) and finish on December 22. While the government agreed to this calendar, it was never implemented.

Who decides when Parliament meets?

The government determines the date and duration of parliamentary sessions. The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs takes this decision. It currently has ten Ministers, including those for Defence, Home, Finance, Agriculture, Tribal Affairs, Parliamentary Affairs, and Information and Broadcasting. The Law Minister and the Minister of State for External Affairs are special invitees to the Committee. The President is informed about the Committee's decision, who then summons Members of Parliament to meet for the session.

What does the Constitution say?

The Constitution specifies that six months should not elapse between two parliamentary sessions. This provision is a colonial legacy. The framers of the Constitution borrowed it from the Government of India Act of 1935. It allowed the British Governor General to call a session of the central legislature at his discretion, requiring that the gap between two sessions should not be more than 12 months. Dr B R Ambedkar stated that the purpose of summoning the central assembly was only to collect taxes, and the once-a-year meeting was for the government to avoid scrutiny by the legislature. The Constituent Assembly reduced the gap between sessions to six months.

How did the Constituent Assembly reach this decision?

Some members of the Constituent Assembly wanted Parliament to meet throughout the year with breaks in between. Others wanted Parliament to sit for longer durations, and cited the examples of the British and American legislatures

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meeting for more than 100 days a year. One member wanted the presiding officers of the two Houses to be empowered to convene Parliament under certain circumstances. Dr Ambedkar did not accept these suggestions. He thought that independent India's government would hold regular parliamentary sessions.

How often do Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha meet?
Before independence, the central assembly met for a little more than 60 days a year. This number increased to 120 days a year in the first 20 years after Independence. Since then, the sitting days of the national legislature have declined. Between 2002 and 2021, Lok Sabha averaged 67 working days. The situation in state legislatures is much worse. In 2022, 28 state Assemblies met for 21 days on average. This year, Parliament has met for 42 days so far.

On multiple occasions, the conference of presiding officers has recommended that Parliament should meet for more than 100 days. The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution set up in 2000 made a similar recommendation.

Individual MPs have introduced private member Bills that stipulated increased sitting days for Parliament. Former Rajya Sabha MP Naresh Gujral, in his 2017 private member Bill, suggested that Parliament should meet for four sessions in a year, including a special session of 15 days for debating matters of urgent public importance.

If the 1955 recommendations of the Lok Sabha committee were accepted, Parliament would be in session for eight months every year. The US Congress and parliaments of Canada, Germany, and the UK are in session throughout the year, and their calendar of sitting days is fixed at the beginning of the year.
What is a special session of Parliament?
The Constitution does not use the term "special session". The term sometimes refers to sessions the government has convened for specific occasions, like commemorating parliamentary or national milestones.

For the two Houses to be in session, the presiding officers should chair their proceedings. The presiding officers can also direct that the proceedings of their respective Houses would be limited and procedural devices like question hour would not be available to MPs during the session.
However, Article 352 (Proclamation of Emergency) of the Constitution does refer to a "special sitting of the House". Parliament added the part relating to the special sitting through the Constitution (Forty-fourth Amendment) Act, 1978. Its purpose was to add safeguards to the power of proclaiming Emergency in the country. It specifies that if a Proclamation of Emergency is issued and Parliament is not in session, then one-tenth of Lok Sabha MPs can ask the President to convene a special meeting to disapprove the Emergency.

According to the legislative research organisation PRS, the Bills listed in the Lok Sabha's bulletin include the Advocates (Amendment) Bill, the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill and the Post Office Bill. The Rajya Sabha bulletin has the Repealing and Amending Bill, 2023.
Sources- https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/parliament-special-session-explainer-rules-lok-sabha-rajya-agenda-business/article67304796.ece
https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/everyday-explainers/special-session-parliament-bill-explained-8945265/

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

66. What will be missing during the special session of Parliament?
    (a) Question Hour
    (b) Zero Hour
    (c) Private member business
    (d) All of the above

67. When was the first time a Bill was discussed during a special session of the Indian Parliament?
    (a) 1977   (b) 1991
    (c) 2008   (d) 2017

68. Which article of the Indian Constitution allows the President to summon a special session of Parliament?
    (a) Article 85(1)   (b) Article 352
    (c) Article 356(4)   (d) Article 44

69. In which year was the special session of the Rajya Sabha held for the extension of President's Rule in Tamil Nadu and Nagaland?
    (a) 1977   (b) 1991
    (c) 2008   (d) 2017

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70. Which of the following statements about the Indian Parliament's sessions is true?
    (a) India's Parliament holds four sessions in a year.
    (b) The Constitution specifies that a gap of up to 12 months can elapse between two parliamentary sessions.
    (c) The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs determines the parliamentary session dates and duration.
    (d) Private member bills have recommended a special session for debating urgent matters of public importance.

DELHI HIGH COURT ORDERS ON SERVICE CHARGE

What is the Case About?

Background:

The order was passed on pleas filed by the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) and the FHRAI, challenging the July, 2022, guidelines issued by the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) .

The CCPA guidelines stipulated that service charges should not be collected from consumers under any other name, and they should be optional and voluntary.

Alternatively, they could request that the eatery remove the service charge from the bill.

A complaint against unfair trade practices could also be lodged electronically with the Consumer Commission through the eDaakhil portal for speedy redressal or otherwise.

The guidelines also prohibited the addition of service charges to the bill automatically, without informing consumers. These guidelines were introduced in response to consumer grievances, as many restaurants and hotels were imposing service charges without clearly stating that payment was voluntary.

The guidelines were issued by the CCPA under Section 18(2)(1) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Note: Under Section 18(2)(1) of the Act, CCPA has issued guidelines to prevent unfair trade practices and protection of consumer interest with regard to levy of service charge in hotels and restaurants

Court's Initial Stay:

In July 2022, the Delhi High Court had stayed the CCPA guidelines, subject to the condition that associations ensure the clear display of service charge on menus or elsewhere, along with informing customers of their obligation to pay it. This stay was initially extended.

Evolving Court Directions:

In April, 2023, the court clarified that the interim order should not mislead consumers. The court also suggested exploring alternative terminology for "service charge" to prevent confusion.

The court ordered petitioners to provide information on what percentage of their members mandatorily imposed service charges and if there were objections to renaming it.

Court's Recent Decision:

The FHRAI indicated its willingness to rename "service charge" to "staff contribution." However, the NRAI opposed this change, citing past decisions and the fact that a significant percentage of its members imposed service charges.

The court noted the lack of uniformity within the FHRAI's membership regarding the imposition of service charges.

Consequently, the court directed FHRAI members to adopt the term 'staff contribution' and cap it at **X** % of the total bill amount.

Relationship with 2017 Guidelines:

The 2022 service charge guidelines were intended to complement, not replace, the 2017 guidelines issued by the Central Government. These 2017 guidelines had prohibited the levy of service charges by hotels and restaurants without the express consent of customers, addressing concerns about unfair trade practices.

In conclusion, the Delhi High Court's recent decision to rename 'service charge' to 'staff contribution' with a **X** % cap represents a significant development in the ongoing legal battle between industry associations and consumer protection authorities.

This case highlights the importance of transparency and consumer choice in restaurant billing practices, aligning with India's consumer protection regulations.

Note:

The FHRAI, is the Apex Body of the four Regional Associations representing the Hospitality Industry.

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National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) is the voice of the Indian Restaurant Industry. Founded in 1982, NRAI aspires to promote and strengthen the Indian Food Service Sector.
What is a Service Charge?

About:
Service charge is a fee that is sometimes added to a bill or invoice by businesses, particularly in the hospitality industry such as restaurants, hotels, and banquet halls.
It is intended to cover the cost of the service provided by the staff, including waiters, servers, and other service personnel.
It also may be called a customer service fee or maintenance fee.
Restaurants and hotels generally levy a service charge of **X** % on the food bill.

Issues:
Lack of Transparency: One of the primary issues with service charges is the lack of transparency. Customers are often not informed about the inclusion of service charges until they receive the bill. This lack of upfront information can lead to confusion and dissatisfaction.
Mandatory Nature: In many cases, service charges are mandatory, meaning customers are required to pay them regardless of the quality of service they receive. This mandatory aspect can be problematic, especially if the service falls short of expectations.
Quality of Service: Since service charges are guaranteed additional income for staff, there may be less incentive for service personnel to provide exceptional service. This can lead to complacency and a decrease in the overall quality of service.
Compulsion: Customers may feel compelled or pressured to pay the service charge, even if they are dissatisfied with the service. This compulsion can result in customer discomfort and dissatisfaction.
Sources- https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/delhi-high-court-orders-on-service-charge#:~:text=In%20July%202022%2C%20the%20Delhi,This%20stay%20was%20initially%20extended.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

71. Who became the new president of the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI)?
    (a) Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo
    (b) Rajesh Bhusan
    (c) Santosh Kumar Yadav
    (d) Rahul Singh

72. What organization issued guidelines regarding service charges that were challenged in the Delhi High Court?
    (a) Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI)
    (b) National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI)
    (c) Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)
    (d) Ministry of Consumer Affairs

73. Under which section of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), 2019 does the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) have the authority to safeguard, promote, and defend consumers' rights and prevent violations of their rights under the Act?

    (a) Section 10   (b) Section 15
    (c) Section 18   (d) Section 25

74. What action can consumers take if they find that a hotel or restaurant is levying a service charge in violation of the guidelines?
    (a) Complain to the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)
    (b) Request the establishment to remove it from the bill
    (c) File a complaint with the National Consumer Helpline (NCH)
    (d) All of the above

75. What percentage limit has been set for the "staff contribution" in the court's directive, replaced by "**X**" in the passage?
    (a) Not more than 5% of the total bill amount.
    (b) Not more than 15% of the total bill amount.
    (c) Not more than 10% of the total bill amount (excluding GST).
    (d) Not more than 20% of the total bill amount.

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EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT FOR RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN INDIA

The story so far: Education is the most powerful tool for the socio-economic development of a nation, more so for minorities. Highlighting the significance of education for religious minorities in India, Niti Aayog, the government's top think tank, released a policy document in 2017 calling for measures to improve the implementation of current programmes. The Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre also announced its commitment to inclusive growth in the nation.

However, the Centre has in the past few years discontinued two key educational schemes for religious minorities, narrowed the scope of another and gradually cut down on the expenditure incurred on multiple programmes of the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

The shift in policy came despite a significant drop in beneficiaries between 2019 and 2022, even as funds remained underutilised, reveals the latest data tabled in Parliament. During the period, the government spending on six educational schemes for religious minorities dropped by around 12.5%, while the number of beneficiaries declined by 7%. This financial year, the Centre slashed the budgetary allocation for the Ministry of Minority Affairs by 38.3% from the previous year, with the budget estimate for 2023-24 seeing a drop from Rs 5,020.5 crore in 2022-23 to Rs 3,097 crore. Notably, the 2022-23 estimates were revised to Rs 2,612.66 crore, indicating an under-utilisation of nearly 48% of funds.

What is the Status of Educational Empowerment Schemes for Religious Minorities in India?

About:
Religious minorities in India, including Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Zoroastrians, constitute a substantial portion of the population, making up approximately 20%.
The Sachar Committee's report in 2006 highlighted these disparities, placing Muslims behind several other groups in development indicators.
To address the disparities, the government established the Ministry of Minority Affairs in 2006, focusing on educational empowerment, economic development, infrastructure improvement, and special needs of religious minorities.
Scholarships for minority students became a pivotal component of this initiative, aimed at providing financial assistance and access to quality education.

Curent Status of Welfare Schemes for Educational Empowerment of Minorities:
Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme: Initially awarded to minority students from class 1 to 10. Later, discontinued for classes 1 to 8, only covering class 9 and 10 in its revised form.
While discontinuing the scholarship, the government said the Right to Education Act (RTE Act) covered compulsory education up to class 8 for all students.
Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme: For students of class 11 and above (till Ph.D.). Funds increased from Rs 515 crore to Rs 1,065 crore in 2023-24.
Merit-cum-Means based Scholarship Scheme: Targeted professional and technical courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. However, it faced a significant reduction in funds in 2023-24.
Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF): Provided financial assistance to research scholars pursuing M.Phil and Ph.D. However, it was discontinued in 2022.
Padho Pardesh: Provided an interest subsidy on education loans for overseas studies. However, it was discontinued from 2022-23.

Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship: Scholarship for meritorious girls for higher secondary education. However, no funds have been allocated in 2023-24.
Naya Savera: Provided free coaching to minority students for competitive exams. However, it was discontinued in 2023-24.
Nai Udaan: Supported minority students preparing for various examinations. However, no funds have been allocated in 2023-24.
Scheme for Providing Education to Madrasas and Minorities (SPEMM): Aimed at modernizing madrasa education. Allocation reduced in 2023-24.

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Note: The budget allocation for the Ministry of Minority Affairs saw a drastic reduction, with a 38% decrease for the fiscal year 2023-24 compared to the 2022-23. This cut in funding has had a direct impact on the implementation of various programs, with underutilization of funds being a common trend.

What are the Constitutional Provisions Related to Religious Minorities?
Article 25: It guarantees freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion to all persons.
Article 26: It grants every religious denomination or section thereof the right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes, and to manage its own affairs in matters of religion.
Article 29: It provides that any section of the citizens residing in any part of India having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same.
Article 30: Under the article, all minorities shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
Note: The term "minority" is not defined in the Indian Constitution. However, the Constitution recognizes only religious and linguistic minorities.

Sources- https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/religious-minorities-muslims-india-education-scholarship-explainer/article67226138.ece
https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/state-of-educational-empowerment-for-religious-minorities-in-india

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

76. Which committee's report highlighted the socio-economic and educational status of Muslims in India in 2005?
(a) Sachar Committee
(b) Shah Commission
(c) Mandal Commission
(d) Ranganath Misra Commission

77. Which scholarship scheme aimed to provide financial assistance to research scholars pursuing M.Phil and Ph.D. degrees?
(a) Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme
(b) Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme
(c) Merit-cum-Means based Scholarship Scheme
(d) Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF)

78. Which scheme offered free coaching to minority students for entrance to technical and professional courses?
(a) Naya Savera
(b) Nai Udaan
(c) Scheme for Providing Education to Madarsas and Minorities (SPEMM)
(d) Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK)

79. Which religious minority constitutes the largest percentage of the Indian population among those mentioned?
(a) Christians   (b) Sikhs
(c) Muslims   (d) Buddhists

80. What is the current status of Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship?
(a) It has been discontinued.
(b) Its fund allocation has been reduced by 50%
(c) The scholarship has zero allocation this year.
(d) Its fund allocation has increased by 10%

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INDIA & BHARAT (CONTROVERSY)

Why in News?
Recently, invitations for the upcoming G-20 Summit in New Delhi have introduced a noteworthy alteration. Instead of the conventional "President of India," the invitations now bear the term "President of Bharat", renewing a broader conversation regarding the nation's nomenclature and its historical connotations.

What are the Historical Perspectives on the Names "India" and "Bharat"?
Constitutionality:
Article 1 of the Indian Constitution already uses both "India" and "Bharat" interchangeably, stating, "India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States."
The preamble of the Indian Constitution begins with "We the People of India," but the Hindi version uses "Bharat" instead of India, indicating interchangeability.
Additionally, some government institutions, such as the Indian Railways, already have Hindi variants that include "Bharatiya."

Origin of the Name Bharat:
The term "Bharat" has deep historical and cultural roots. It can be traced back to Puranic literature and the epic Mahabharata.
Vishnu Purana describes "Bharata" as the land between the southern sea and the northern snowy Himalayan mountain. It signifies a religious and socio-cultural entity more than a mere political or geographical one.
Bharata is also the name of a legendary ancient king, considered the ancestor of the Rig Vedic tribes of Bharatas, symbolizing the progenitor of all subcontinent's people.
Origin of the Name India:
The name India is derived from the word Indus, which is the name of a river that flows through the northwestern part of the subcontinent.

The ancient Greeks called the people living beyond the Indus as Indoi, which means "the people of Indus".
Later, the Persians and the Arabs also used the term Hind or Hindustan to refer to the land of Indus.
The Europeans adopted the name India from these sources, and it became the official name of the country after the British colonial rule.

Constitutional Assembly Deliberation Regarding India and Bharat:
The debate surrounding the country's name is not new. When the Constituent Assembly was framing the Constitution in 1949, there was a division of opinions regarding the name.
Some members felt that "India" was a reminder of colonial oppression and sought to prioritize "Bharat" in official documents.
Seth Govind Das from Jabalpur advocated for placing "Bharat" above "India," emphasizing that the latter was merely a translation of the former in English.
Hari Vishnu Kamath cited the example of the Irish Constitution, which changed the name of the country upon achieving independence, as a precedent for using "Bharat."
Hargovind Pant argued that the people wanted "Bharatvarsha" and rejected the term "India" imposed by foreign rulers.
Recent Development:
In 2015, Centre opposed a name change, stating that the issue had been extensively deliberated upon during the Constitution's drafting.

The Supreme Court has twice rejected pleas to rename 'India' to 'Bharat', once in 2016 and then in 2020, reaffirming that "Bharat" and "India" both find mention in the Constitution.
What is the Historical Significance of the Name "Hindustan"?
The term "Hindustan" has historical significance and was popular in Punjab. Sikh founder Guru Nanak Dev mentioned "Hindustan" in Gurbani, and Guru Teg Bahadur is known as the protector of "Hind" and religion. Shah Muhammad documented conflicts between the British and Sikhs as a war between "Hind" and Punjab. The Ghadar Party and freedom struggle activists used "Hindustan" in their movements, making it relevant in Punjab's history.

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Legal Requirements of Changing Name of the Country

Interchanging of India to Bharat on official invitations is legally permissible but removing any term such as 'India' from the Constitution would require a Constitutional amendment.

The name 'India' is mentioned in the Preamble to the Constitution, which is considered a part of the Constitution itself. The process of amending the Constitution is outlined in Article 368.

It involves passing a bill in both houses of Parliament with a special majority (two-thirds majority of the members present and voting) and ratification by at least half of the state legislatures.

Changing the name of India to Bharat will impact upon the constitutional mandate of using English language in legal proceedings and enactments.

Article 348(1) (a) of the Constitution of India provides that all proceedings in the SC and in every HC shall be in English language until Parliament by law otherwise provides.

Also, sub-clause (b) of the Article states that the authoritative texts of all bills, acts, orders, rules, regulations and bye laws issued under the Constitution or under any law made by Parliament or the Legislature of a State, shall be in the English language.

The said amendment will result into amending the existing enactments whose extent of applicability is mentioned to be within or beyond the territory of India.

Sources- https://www.drishtijudiciary.com/editorial/legal-perspectives-of-renaming-india-to-bharat
https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/india-that-is-bharat-the-ongoing-debate

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

81. Which constitutional amendment in addressed issues related to the use of Hindi and English in official documents and legal proceedings?
    (a) 42nd Amendment
    (b) 58th Amendment
    (c) 73rd Amendment
    (d) 86th Amendment

82. What was the old name of "Democratic Republic of the Congo" in before it being changed in 1997?
    (a) Zaire   (b) Zahira
    (c) Ceylon   (d) Siam

83. How many times has the Supreme Court rejected pleas to rename 'India' to 'Bharat'?
    (a) Once   (b) Twice
    (c) Three times   (d) Four times

84. In which year did the Uttar Pradesh Assembly pass a resolution that the Constitution must be amended to say "Bharat, that is India," instead of "India, that is Bharat."?
    (a) 1998   (b) 2000
    (c) 2002   (d) 2004

85. When was the name change of the state from Madras state to Tamil Nadu?
    (a) 1969   (b) 1973
    (c) 1980   (d) 1990

INHERITANCE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN BORN OUT OF VOID VOIDABLE OR INVALID MARRIAGES

The Supreme Court on September 1 held that a child born of a void or voidable marriage can inherit the parent's share in a joint Hindu family property governed by the Mitakshara law.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud however clarified that such a child would not be entitled to rights in or to the property of any other person in the family. A voidable marriage is one that is made invalid by the husband or wife through a decree. A void marriage is invalid at the very inception. Mitakashara law of succession governing Hindu Undivided Families applies to the whole of India except West Bengal and Assam. Chief Justice Chandrachud said the first step to inheritance of a child from a void or voidable marriage would be to ascertain the exact share of his parent in the ancestral property.

This could be done by means of conducting a "notional partition" of the ancestral property and calculating how much of the property the parent would have got immediately before his death.

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"For the purpose of ascertaining the interest of a deceased Hindu Mitakshara coparcener (a person who acquires a legal right to his ancestral property through birth in a Hindu Undivided Family), the law mandates the assumption of a state of affairs immediately prior to the death of the coparcener, namely, a partition of the coparcenary property between the deceased and the other members of the coparcenary," Chief Justice Chandrachud, who authored the judgment, observed.

Once the share of the deceased parent in the property is ascertained through such a notional partition, his heirs, including his children by means of void or voidable marriage, would be entitled to their portions in the share.

"When the share of the deceased in the property that would be allotted to him if a partition had taken place immediately before his death is ascertained, his heirs, including children who have been conferred with legitimacy, will be entitled to their shares in the property which would have been allotted to the deceased on the notional partition," Chief Justice Chandrachud held. Explaining the judgment, the Chief Justice told the lawyers present in the case that "you will have to first ascertain the interest of the parent in the coparcenary property, and in that the children who are granted legitimacy will have their shares". The Chief Justice said that Section 16 of the Hindu Marriage Act has statutorily conferred legitimacy to children born out of void or voidable marriages.

In fact, Chief Justice Chandrachud pointed out that Section 16(3) stipulates that children from void and voidable marriages would have a right to their parents' property. The court said the intent of granting legitimacy to such children in the Hindu Marriage Act should also be reflected in the Hindu Succession Act, which governs inheritance. Children from void or voidable marriages come within the ambit of "legitimate kinship" and cannot be regarded as illegitimate by the Hindu Succession Act when it comes to inheritance. The court also noted that after the enactment of the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005, the share of a deceased person in a joint Hindu family governed by Mitakashara law can be devolved to his heirs by testamentary or intestate succession. Prior to the amendment, the devolution was only through survivorship. Besides, the amendment gave equal rights of succession to women as well as men. The case before the three-judge Bench was focussed on an amended provision in the Hindu Marriage Act, Section 16(3). The case was referred to a larger Bench in 2011 after a Division Bench of the apex court refused to follow past precedents and championed the cause of children born out of illegitimate marriages.

"The birth of a child in such a relationship has to be viewed independently of the relationship of the parents. A child born in such a relationship is innocent and is entitled to all the rights which are given to other children born in valid marriage. This is the crux of the amendment in Section 16(3)," the Division Bench of Justices (retired) GS Singhvi and AK Ganguly had written in their 2011 judgment in the Revanasidappa versus Mallikarjun case. The Division Bench had held that such children would have a right to any property that belonged to their parents, whether they were self-acquired or ancestral. The Bench had however clarified that the children's claims would be limited to the property of their parents and no other relation. "With changing social norms of legitimacy in every society, including ours, what was illegitimate in the past may be legitimate today. The concept of legitimacy stems from social consensus, in the shaping of which various social groups play a vital role," Justice Ganguly, who authored the 2011 judgment, had observed. During the hearings on the reference, Chief Justice Chandrachud had agreed with the Division Bench's findings that children from void and voidable marriages had rights over the property, whether self-acquired or ancestral, of their parents.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

86. What does Section 16(3) of the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 specify regarding the property of children born out of void/voidable marriages?
    (a) They have full rights over ancestral property.
    (b) They have rights only in self-acquired property.
    (c) They have rights in the property of any person other than the parents.
    (d) They have no rights in any property.

    (a) Acquiring property through inheritance.
    (b) Acquiring interest in ancestral property by birth.
    (c) Acquiring property through marriage.
    (d) Acquiring property through adoption.

87. What fundamental concept is associated with being a coparcener in Hindu law?

88. Which school of Hindu law, primarily followed in Bengal and Assam, places a strong emphasis on

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property rights and deviates from the Mitakshara school?
(a) Mitakshara school
(b) Smriti school
(c) Dayabhaga school
(d) Yajnavalkya school

89. Which of the following religions fall within the ambit of the term 'Hindu' is in pursuance of the definition of the term under Article 25(2)(b) of the Indian Constitution?
(a) Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Jain
(b) Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Parsis
(c) Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Taoists

(d) None of the above

90. What does the Supreme Court ruling state regarding the rights of children born out of void or voidable marriages in ancestral property?
(a) They can claim rights in the entire Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) property.
(b) They can claim rights in their parents' share of ancestral property.
(c) They cannot claim any rights in ancestral property.
(d) They can claim rights in the property of anyone else in the HUF.

ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

The Central government set up a panel headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind to explore the feasibility of the 'one nation, one election' (ONOE) plan.

What is simultaneous election?
Article 324 constitutes Election Commission which is responsible for conducting polls to the offices of the President and Vice-President of India, Parliament, the state assemblies and the legislative councils. Simultaneous Elections refers to structuring the Indian election cycle by synchronizing the elections to Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. It means that the voters will cast their vote for electing members of the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies on a single day, at the same time or in a phased manner as the case may be. Current scenario- The elections to the state assemblies and the Lok Sabha are held separately (whenever the incumbent government's 5-year term ends or whenever it is dissolved).
What is the history behind simultaneous election?
Single party dominance- Lok Sabha and State Legislatures went to polls together in 1952 and 1957.
Article 356- In 1959, the synchronised cycle was first broken in Kerala when the Centre invoked Article 356 of the Constitution to dismiss the Kerala Government. This was followed by state elections in 1960.
Emergence of regional parties- Defections and counter-defections ultimately led to the dissolution of Assemblies, which separated the poll cycles of many states from the central one.

Revert to simultaneous election-The idea of reverting to simultaneous polls was mooted by
- Election Commission annual report in 1983
- Parliamentary Standing committee report 2015- 'Feasibility of Holding Simultaneous Elections to House of People (Lok Sabha) and State Legislative Assemblies'.
- Law Commission report in 1999 and 2018
- NITI Aayog working paper in 2017

Completion of tenures- It is mainly because of the anti-defection law of 1985 and Supreme Court judgments on invoking Article 356. The Supreme Court had held that the President can put a State Assembly in suspended animation, but cannot dissolve it without the concurrence of Parliament. Further, the validity of the proclamation of President's rule may be examined by the judiciary.
Sources- https://www.iasparliament.com/current-affairs/simultaneous-election-one-nation-one-election

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91. When were the first General Elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies held simultaneously?
    (a) 1951-52   (b) 1967
    (c) 1970   (d) 1983

92. When did the practice of simultaneous elections in India last occur before it was disrupted?
    (a) 1967   (b) 1970
    (c) 1962   (d) 1957

93. Who headed the Law Commission which advocated the idea of conducting simultaneous elections in India in 1999?
    (a) Dr. B.R. Ambedkar   (b) Jawaharlal Nehru

    (c) BP Jeevan Reddy   (d) Atal Bihari Vajpayee

94. Who headed the Law Commission and reported that simultaneous elections are not feasible within the existing framework of the Constitution?
    (a) Justice H.R. Khanna
    (b) Justice B. S. Chauhan
    (c) Justice Ranjan Gogoi
    (d) Justice Dipak Misra

95. What article was invoked to dismiss the Kerala government in 1959, leading to the disruption of simultaneous elections?
    (a) Article 356   (b) Article 370
    (c) Article 365   (d) Article 370A

BNSS BILL 2023: CHANGES TO MERCY PETITION IN DEATH SENTENCE CASES

The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) 2023, the **proposed replacement for the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC)**, contains a new provision on **mercy petitions** in death sentence cases, which makes changes to the fundamental nature of the provision, including core aspects of its justiciability, the time-limit within which such pleas must be decided, and the 14-day gap between the rejection of a mercy plea by the President and its date of execution, as mandated by the Supreme Court in Shatrughan Chauhan vs Union of India (2014).

Some of these changes to mercy petitions mark a shift from the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court in its previous rulings. We explain.

What are mercy petitions?

Under Article 72 of the Constitution, "the President shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence where the sentence is a sentence of death". Similarly, Article 161 confers pardoning powers on the governor, but these do not extend to death sentences.

In its 1981 ruling in *Maru Ram vs. Union of India*, the SC held that while deciding mercy petitions under Article 72, the President must act on the advice of the council of ministers.

Under the existing law, the President is bound by the Cabinet's advice and can only return the plea for reconsideration once under Article 74 (1). After this, if the Council of Ministers decides against the changes suggested by the President, she has no option but to accept them.

What is the new provision under the BNSS?

The provision in the proposed BNSS, however, does not include any such requirement for the President to act in tandem with the advice given by the council of ministers in death sentence cases.

Section 473(1) of the BNSS allows a convict "under the sentence of death" or his legal heir or any relative to file a mercy petition before the President of India under Article 72 or before the Governor of the State under Article 161 of the Constitution within 30 days after the date on which the Jail Superintendent (i) "informs him about the dismissal of the appeal or special leave to appeal by the Supreme Court" or (ii) "informs him about the date of confirmation of the sentence of death by the High Court and the time allowed to file an appeal or special leave in the Supreme Court has expired."

Following this, the mercy petition may be presented to the Centre or the state government's Home Department, as the case may be.

While the mercy petitions under subsection (i) may initially be made to the Governor, his rejection or disposal of the petition will result in it being forwarded to the President within 60 days from such rejection or disposal of the plea.

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In cases where there are multiple convicts, the jail superintendent or the officer-in-charge shall ensure that every convict makes a mercy petition within 60 days. If the Superintendent doesn't receive the mercy petitions from all other convicts in the case, he shall himself "send the names, addresses, copy of the record of the case and all other details of the case to the Central Government or State Government for consideration along with the said mercy petition".

On receiving the mercy petitions, the Centre will seek the state government's comments, consider the petition along with the case records, and then "make recommendations to the President in this behalf, as expeditiously as possible", within 60 days from the date on which it received the comments of the state government and records from the jail superintendent. While this 60-day time limit has been given to the Centre, no time limit has been prescribed for the President to dispose of the mercy petitions.

After this, the President may decide and dispose of the plea. However, in the case of multiple convicts in a case, the petitions "shall be decided by the President together in the interests of justice." Once the President's decision on the status of the plea is received by the Centre, it shall within 48 hours, communicate the same to the state government's Home Department and the Superintendent of the Jail or its officer in charge.

Notably, Section 473(7) states that "No appeal shall lie in any Court against the order of the President made under article 72 of the Constitution and it shall be final, and any question as to the arriving of the decision by the President shall not be enquired into in any Court."

In a nutshell, this provision aims to do away with appeals against the President's decision on mercy petitions, thereby making it final. It also means that the courts will no longer be able to go into the grounds on which the President pardons or commutes death sentences.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

96. Which constitutional provisions empower the President to grant pardons, reprieves, respites, or remissions of punishment?
    - (a) Article 72
    - (b) Article 161
    - (c) Article 74
    - (d) Article 166

97. What prompts a convict to file a mercy petition under the BNSS?
    - (a) Notification of their appeal dismissal by the Supreme Court
    - (b) Confirmation of the death sentence by the High Court
    - (c) Expiration of the time to appeal
    - (d) All of the above

98. In cases involving multiple convicts, what is the responsibility of the superintendent in the BNSS mercy petition process?
    - (a) Ensure all convicts file a mercy petition within 90 days
    - (b) Ensure all convicts file a mercy petition within 30 days
    - (c) Ensure all convicts file a mercy petition within 60 days
    - (d) Forward the case records to the Supreme Court

99. What does Section 473 of the BNSS Bill propose regarding appeals against the President's orders under Article 72 of the Constitution?
    - (a) It allows multiple appeals in different courts.
    - (b) It bars all appeals in any court.
    - (c) It limits appeals to only the Supreme Court.
    - (d) It requires a two-thirds majority in Parliament for appeals.

100. The Indian Penal Code (IPC) officially drafted for India in under which colonial act?
    - (a) Charter Act of 1833
    - (b) Regulating Act of 1773
    - (c) Charter Act of 1813
    - (d) Government of India Act 1858

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SECULARISM IN FRANCE (RECENT BAN ON WEARING ISLAMIC ROBE)

The French government's decision to ban children from wearing abayas, the full-length robes worn by some Muslim women, in state-run schools has garnered both support and criticism. The ban is part of France's strict secularism policy, "laicite," which has been a sensitive and politically tense topic in the country.

While the move was welcomed by the right-wing Les Republicans party and the SNPDEN-UNSA union of school principals, it was criticized by left-wing politicians and academics who argued that it could lead to the stigmatization of Muslims and profiling of students based on their identity. Some argued that the abaya is worn for fashion or identity reasons rather than religious ones, and the ban could hurt Muslims who will feel stigmatized. The ban follows previous restrictions on religious attire in France, including the banning of headscarves in schools in 2004 and full-face veils in public in 2010.

What is Laïcité?
- About:
  - o Laïcité is a complex and politically charged term in France. It signifies a formal separation of the State and Church, emphasising the complete removal of religious values from the public sphere, replaced by secular values such as liberty, equality, and fraternity.
  - ▪ Laïcité finds its origins in the struggle of anti-clerical Republicans against the power of the Catholic Church.
- Changing Demographics and Tensions:
  - o For the majority of the 20th century, laïcité was generally not considered a significant issue in France due to the country's relative homogeneity.
  - o However, during the 1950s and 1960s, significant decolonization efforts in North Africa resulted in a substantial migration of people from predominantly Muslim nations like Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria to France.
    - ▪ This demographic shift triggered occasional tensions and challenges related to laïcité.
- Related Controversial Legislation and Interpretations
  - o In 2004, France enacted a law prohibiting the wearing of "ostentatious" religious symbols in public spaces, including Catholic dresses, Jewish kippahs, and Muslim headscarves.

In 2011, face-covering veils were banned in public places. Each such decision stirred new interpretations of Laïcité.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

101. Who was the first French woman to serve as Minister of Education?
    (a) Najat Vallaud-Belkacem
    (b) Rachida Dati
    (c) Fleur Pellerin
    (d) Aurélie Filippetti

102. When did the concept of Laïcité begin to take concrete shape in France?
    (a) During the French Revolution of 1789
    (b) In the 19th century
    (c) With the establishment of the Third Republic
    (d) After the passage of The Law of 1905

103. What is the primary goal of Laïcité in the context of the French state?
    (a) To establish a state religion
    (b) To promote religious values in the public sphere
    (c) To separate the State and Church and promote secular values

    (d) To impose religious education in public schools

104. Who is the Minister of Higher Education and Research of France?
    (a) Yves Attal
    (b) Stéphane Séjourné
    (c) Gérald Moussa Darmanin
    (d) Gabriel Attal

105. Which of the following statements is/are true about the Indian Model of Secularism?
    (1) The term 'Secular' was added to the preamble by the forty-second constitution Amendment Act of 1976, (India is a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic, republic).
    (2) Article 25 provides 'Freedom of Conscience', that is, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion.
    (3) Article 51A obliges all the citizens to promote harmony and the spirit of common

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brotherhood and to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture, and it is enforceable in the court of law.

(a) Only 1

(a) 2 and 3

(c) 1 and 2

(d) None of the Above

69TH NATIONAL FILM AWARDS CEREMONY

Why in news
The winners of the 69th National Film Awards were announced at the National Media Center in New Delhi. The 69th National Film Awards took center stage, unveiling a constellation of talented winners.

National Film Awards
The National Film Awards, held annually, stand as a beacon of honor in the stream of Indian cinema. The National Film Awards are organized by the Directorate of Film Festivals, under the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. They celebrate films that exhibit not only aesthetic and technical excellence but also social relevance, signifying the power of cinema as a medium of both art and impact.

Aim of National Film Awards
The Awards aim at encouraging the production of films of aesthetic & technical excellence and social relevance contributing to the understanding and appreciation of cultures of different regions of the country in cinematic form, thereby also promoting unity and integrity of the nation. The winners of the awards are decided by the Jury comprising persons distinguished in the field of cinema, other allied arts and humanities.

History of National Film Awards
Since the first awards given for the films, the National Film Awards have come a long way. Over the years the number of the awards has increased. Initially called 'State Awards', with two President's Gold Medals, two certificates of merit and silver medals for a dozen regional films, for the first six years, it was the practice to give the Regional Best Award to the National Best Film itself. Over the years the number of awards increased.

National Film Awards Winners 2023
In a glittering ceremony, the winners of the 69th National Film Awards were revealed. The Allu Arjun was awarded for the Best Actor for the film Pushpa while the Best Actress Award was presented to Alia Bhatt and Kriti Sanon for their films Gangubai Kathiawadia and Mimi respectively. The Best Feature Film Award was presented to The Nambi Effect. The Kashmir Files won the Nargis Dutt Award for Best Film on National Integration.

68th National Film Awards
Tamil film Soorarai Pottru won in five categories – Best Feature Film, Best Actor for Suriya, Best Actress for Aparna Balamurali, Best Music Direction (Score) for G V Prakash Kumar, and Best Original Screenplay for Sudha Kongara, who also directed the film. Suriya shared his Best Actor win with Ajay Devgn, who won the awards for Tanhaji. Asha Parekh was honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 2022.

Categories of National Film Awards
The awards are given in three sections: Features, Non-Features and Best Writing on Cinema. While selection for the winners in Features and Non-Features is recognition of excellence in cinematic achievements in various categories, the 'Best Writing on Cinema' section focuses on encouraging the study and appreciation of cinema as an art form and dissemination of information and critical appreciation of the art form through the publication of various books, articles, reviews, newspaper coverage and studies.

Conclusion
The National Film Awards hold a rich history as a prestigious recognition in Indian cinema. The awards ceremony not only honors outstanding films but also pays tribute to industry legends.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

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106. When was the first National Film Awards given for the films?
    (a) 1947   (b) 1950
    (c) 1930   (d) 1953

107. Who was the first to win Best Actress Award?
    (a) Sargun Mehta
    (b) Hema Malini
    (c) Nargis
    (d) Jaya Bachhan

108. Who was the first actor to win Best Actor Award?
    (a) Dharmendra
    (b) Rajendra Kumar
    (c) Waheeda Rehman

    (d) Uttam Kumar

109. Who is the current Chairman of Central Board of Film Certification?
    (a) Prahlad Joshi
    (b) Prasoon Joshi
    (c) Rajendra Yadav
    (d) Dilip Joshi

110. Who got 53rd Dadasaheb Phalke Award?
    (a) Shashi Kapoor
    (b) Waheeda Rehman
    (c) Rajinikanth
    (d) Gulzar

CLIMATE AMBITION SUMMIT

Why in news:
UN Secretary-General announced that he will convene a Climate Ambition Summit in September 2023. He urged leaders from governments, business, cities and regions, civil society, and finance to come with new, tangible, and credible climate action to accelerate the pace of change.

Climate Ambition Summit
By demonstrating that tangible and ambitious action to credibly cut emissions and deliver climate justice was possible and practical, the Summit showcased a way forward: the alignment of sectoral, local, national and international plans and policies with credible and scienced-backed targets to accelerate decarbonization, advance climate justice and fairness, with unprecedented levels of coordination and cooperation, and a renewed focus on credibility and accountability.

Aim of the Climate Ambition Summit
Climate Ambition Summit aimed to showcase "first mover and doer" leaders from government, business, finance, local authorities, and civil society who came with credible actions, policies and plans – and not just pledges – to accelerate the decarbonization of the global economy and deliver climate justice in line with his Acceleration Agenda.

Three track of the summit
The design and outcomes of the Summit will be delivered on three distinct but interrelated acceleration tracks – ambition, credibility and implementation.

Ambition
Government leaders will be expected to present updated pre-2030 Nationally Determined Contributions (as agreed in Glasgow); updated net-zero targets; energy transition plans with commitments to no new coal, oil and gas; fossil fuel phase-out plans; more ambitious renewable-energy targets; Green Climate Fund pledges; and economy-wide plans on adaptation and resilience. Finally, all main emitters and notably all G20 governments will be asked to commit to presenting, by 2025, more ambitious economy-wide Nationally Determined Contributions featuring absolute emissions cuts and covering all gases.

Credibility
Leaders of businesses, cities, regions and financial institutions will be expected to present transition plans aligned with the UN-backed credibility standard presented in the "Integrity Matters" report commissioned by the UN Secretary-General. This standard for voluntary net-zero pledges is the only existing one fully aligned with limiting global warming to 1.5°C degrees. It calls for 2025 and 2030 targets, coverage of scope 3 emissions, just transition plans to stop and phase out fossil fuels, actual emissions cuts without using offsets, and a commitment to publicly advocate for science-based climate action.

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Implementation
Leaders of governments, international and regional organizations and financial institutions, the private sector and civil society will present existing or emerging implementation partnerships addressing challenges and opportunities related to accelerating the decarbonization of high-emitting sectors (energy, shipping, aviation, steel, cement) or on delivering climate justice (reform of the international financial system, early warning systems, adaptation, loss and damage).

Conclusion
The Summit showcased a way forward: the alignment of sectoral, local national and international plans policies with credible and scienced-backed targets to accelerate decarbonization, more climate justice and fairness, unprecedented levels of coordination and cooperation, a renewed focus on credibility and accountability.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

111. The Secretary- General called the Climate Ambition Summit as-
    (a) "Summit of Happiness"
    (b) "Development Summit"
    (c) "Summit of Hope"
    (d) "Summit of Expectations"

112. Who is the UN Secretary-General?
    (a) Ban Ki-moon
    (b) Kofi Annan
    (c) Boutros Boutros-Ghali
    (d) António Guterres

113. Which country hosted COP28?
    (a) New Delhi   (b) New York
    (c) Dubai   (d) Moscow

114. "Integrity Matters" is a report published by-
    (a) United Nation Higher Integrity Group
    (b) United Nations' High-Level Expert Group on the Net Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities
    (c) World Bank
    (d) International Monetary Funds

115. United Nations Climate Ambition Summit (CAS) was held in which country?
    (a) Germany   (b) France
    (c) India   (d) New York

STATUE OF ONENESS

Why in news?
Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan unveiled the 108-foot-tall 'Statue of Oneness' of Adi Shankaracharya. This 108-ft tall statue is situated on the Mandhata mountain in Omkareshwar.

Statue of Oneness
This extraordinary structure, conceptualized to honour the life and philosophy of Adi Shankaracharya, is a tribute to the great saint's masterpiece of commentary on 'Bharmasutrabhasya' (comment on Brahma Sutra), a fundamental text of the Vedanta school of Hinduism and the concept of Oneness that he preached.

Mandhata
In Buddhist literature, Mandhata is a great king. He was so majestic that other kings in the neighbourhood would approach him and ask him voluntarily to become the ruler of their lands. Thus, he became the ruler of a vast empire. More and more kings approached him and handed over their kingdom. Eventually, he became lord of all lands in the four directions. Mandhata, also called Omkareshwar or Shivapuri and ancient Mahishmati, capital of Avanti Mahajanpada is a riverine island in the Narmada river. Omkareshwar, located on the picturesque banks of the Narmada River, is around 80 km away from the city of Indore.

Adi Shankaracharya

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Adi Shankaracharya, who was born in what is now Kerala, is said to have arrived at Omkareshwar as a young monk, where he encountered his guru Govind Bhagwadpad, resided in the sacred city for four years, and received his education. In accordance with his spiritual convictions, he departed Omkareshwar at the age of 12 and embarked on a journey across the nation, disseminating the teachings of Advaita Vedanta philosophy and elucidating its principles to the people.

Advaita Vedanta

Advaita Vedanta refers to the non-dualistic school of Hindu philosophy, which is derived mostly from the Upanishads and elaborated in detail by eminent scholars like Gaudapada and Sri Adishankaracharya. Dvaita means duality, and Advaita means nonduality. In simple terms, Advaita means absence of the duality between subject and object. In our wakeful consciousness we experience duality, but in deep sleep only nonduality. Advaita school believes that Brahman is the one and only reality and everything else is a mere appearance, projection, formation or illusion.

Other major statute

Statue of oneness marks the third major statue built in India by the government. Previously, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Statue of Equality on the outskirts of Hyderabad to commemorate the 11th-century Bhakti saint Sri Ramanujacharya on his 1,000th birth anniversary. In 2018, PM Modi inaugurated the Statue of Unity in Gujarat's Kevadia.

Conclusion

This cultural project will fulfil the much-treasured vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi -- 'Vasudaiva Kutumbakam (The world is one family). With this 108 feet tall statue, Madhya Pradesh will consolidate its position as a cultural and spiritual hub of all religions.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

116. Who was the Guru of Adi Shankaracharya?
(a) Mohan Bhatt
(b) KIshan Bhatnagar
(c) Govinda Bhagavatpada
(d) Govind Arya

117. Statue of Unity commemorates-
(a) Shahid Bhagat Singh
(b) Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
(c) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel
(d) Dr. Rajendra Prasad

118. The name 'Omkareshwar' is derived from the
(a) Sign of Happiness
(b) Shape of the island
(c) Famous Temple
(d) Jyotirling Temple

119. How many Jyotirlingas are there in India?
(a) 10   (b) 24
(c) 36   (d) 12

120. Who is the current Governor of MP?
(a) Lalji Tandon
(b) Mangubhai C. Patel
(c) Balram Jakhar
(d) M.A. Khan

ALL ABOUT KHALISTAN MOVEMENT

Why in news

Khalistan Movement has become a contentious issue amid the rising tensions between Canada and India. A row between India and Canada surrounding Sikh independence, commonly referred to as the Khalistan movement, continues to cause tensions.

Khalistan movement

Khalistan is the name of the proposed state envisioned by some Sikhs, incorporating the Indian state of Punjab as well as other Punjabi-speaking areas of northern India to establish a Sikh nation. The ethno-religious liberation movement gained traction in the 1970s and early 80s in India. It later died down but has developed momentum among the Sikh diaspora in recent years.

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Khalistan

There is division among supporters of Khalistan on the boundaries of a sovereign Sikh state, but most agree that it would encompass the state of Punjab in India. The historical Punjab region is located in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent and includes modern-day eastern Pakistan and northwestern India. In India, it includes cities like Ludhiana, Amritsar, Chandigarh and Jalandhar; and Lahore, Faisalabad, Nankana Sahib, Rawalpindi and Multan in Pakistan.

Sikhs in India

According to the 2011 Indian census, the last when it was held, there are about 20.8 million Sikhs, making up 1.7 percent of the country's population. The majority of Sikhs, about 16 million at the time of the census, live in the northern state of Punjab where they make up about 58 percent of the state's population.

Sikh diaspora

There are an estimated 26 million Sikhs around the world, according to the London School of Economics (LSE). Canada has the largest Sikh community outside India, with about 770,000 people having reported their religion as Sikh in the 2021 census. According to the 2021 census in Egland and Wales, about 524,000 Sikhs are living in both countries. About 210,000 live in Australia, according to its 2021 census. While the US census does not record religion, it is estimated that there are anywhere between 200,000 to 500,000 Sikhs in the country.

Hardeep Singh Nijjar

On June 18, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, 45, was shot dead outside a Sikh gurdwara in Surrey, a Vancouver suburb with a large Sikh population, three years after India had designated him a "terrorist". Nijjar supported the demand for a Sikh homeland and was reportedly organising an unofficial referendum in India for an independent Sikh nation at the time of his death. Nijjar was born in 1977 in Punjab's Jalandhar district and he moved to Canada in 1997. He was initially associated with the Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) Sikh separatist group, according to India's counterterrorism National Investigation Agency.

Conclusion

The Khalistan movement has a long history, and during the 1980s, there was a violent military movement on Indian soil. But ever since – at least in India, in the state of Punjab, where the Sikhs are the majority – the Khalistan movement has been virtually non-existent, enjoys no political support and goes up and down depending on the attention the Indian government pays to it.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

121. Who was the first guru of sikhs?
    (a) Guru Teg Bahadur
    (b) Guru RamDas
    (c) Guru Arjun
    (d) Guru Nanak

122. Which operation was conducted to remove Sikh separatists from the buildings of the Golden Temple?
    (a) Khalistan Movement
    (b) Operation Nanak Dev ji
    (c) Operation Blue Star
    (d) Separate and Rule

123. Who was the founder of Khalistan Liberation Force?
    (a) Prakash Singh Badal
    (b) Aroor Singh
    (c) Vajiram Singh
    (d) Manmeet Singh Rathore

124. Which resolution demanded autonomy for the state of Punjab?
    (a) Golden Temple Resolution
    (b) Warrior Resolution
    (c) Democratic Resolution
    (d) Anandpur Sahib Resolution

125. Who is the current CM of Punjab?
    (a) Prakash Singh Badal
    (b) Adityanath Yogi
    (c) Arun Vajpayee
    (d) Bhagwat Mann

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FIVE EYES ALLIANCE AND CANADA- INDIA RELATIONS

Why in news
The recent allegations by Canadian Prime Minister linking the killing of Khalistani leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar on Canadian soil to the Indian government has put the spotlight on the intelligence-sharing alliance 'Five Eyes' (or FVEY), which is believed to have provided the information that "helped" Canada.

Five eyes alliance
The Five Eyes alliance is an intelligence-sharing network comprising five prominent nations: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. While these five countries are the core members, the alliance also collaborates with third-party partners who share information but do not hold formal partner status.

Formation of Five Eyes alliance
The alliance between the U.S. and the U.K. evolved around the Second World War to counter the Cold War Soviet threat. The two countries forged a collaboration to share intelligence related to signals. In the aftermath of the war in 1946, the alliance was formalised through an agreement for cooperation in signals intelligence. The treaty called the British-U.S. Communication Intelligence Agreement. Canada joined in 1948, while Australia and New Zealand became part of the alliance in 1956. No government officially acknowledged the arrangement by name until 1999 and the text of the agreement was first officially released in public after over 60 years in 2010.

Working of Five Eyes Network
The five partner countries share a broad range of information and access to their respective intelligence agencies. Initially, the partners are assigned respective SIGINT mandates. The goalpost of the Five Eyes, however, has shifted following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new global challenges like terrorism and the growing influence of China. And so, the ambit has widened over to other areas of policy and operations to become a comprehensive, all-source intelligence sharing network. The Five Eyes have become involved in ocean and maritime surveillance, scientific and defence intelligence analysis, medical intelligence, geospatial intelligence, counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and the continuous sharing of intelligence products via a secret collective database.

Five Eyes Intelligence Oversight and Review Council
To increase cooperation and maintain closeness, the Five Eyes Intelligence Oversight and Review Council (FIORC) was created in September 2016 as the "non-political intelligence oversight, review, and security entities" of the member countries to exchange views on subjects of mutual interest, compare best practices, explore areas of cooperation, and maintain contact with non-Five Eyes countries, among other aims.

Five Eyes and Nijjar case
In response to Canada's recent accusations against India in the Nijjar case, the Five Eyes alliance members have issued statements reflecting different positions, according to reports. The White House National Security Council emphasized the importance of Canada's investigation and the pursuit of justice. British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly expressed support for a Canadian inquiry. Meanwhile, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong conveyed concern over the allegations and stressed the importance of respecting the sovereignty of all nations while awaiting the results of ongoing investigations.

Conclusion
Canada's remarks have found traction with the Five Eyes Intelligence alliance, although they reportedly rejected Canada's request to jointly denounce the murder of Nijjar.

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PRACTICE QUESTIONS

126. Who is the current Prime Minister of Canada?
   (a) Justin Beiber
   (b) Jinping
   (c) John Turner
   (d) Justin Trudeau

127. In Canada, four key agencies are involved with the Five Eyes, Which of the following is not the key agencies involved with the Five Eyes
   (a) Communications Security Establishment (CSE)
   (b) The RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police)
   (c) Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS)
   (d) Army and Police Intelligence

128. British-U.S. Communication Intelligence Agreement, or BRUSA is now known as
   (a) UKUSA Agreement
   (b) Yuyutsu Agreement
   (c) Democracy Agreement
   (d) USADF Agreement

129. Who won the second world war?
   (a) Britain   (b) Russia
   (c) USA   (d) All of the above

130. Which organisation was formed after the world war II?
   (a) UN   (b) IMF
   (c) WHO   (d) League of Nations

NORMAN BORLAUG AWARD 2023 AND ALL ABOUT DIFFERENT REVOLUTIONS

Why in News
Indian agriculture scientist Dr. Swati Nayak, affectionately known as "Bihana Didi" or "Seed Lady" by local communities in Odisha, has been honored with the Norman E. Borlaug Award for 2023.

Dr. Norman E Borlaug Award
The Borlaug Award holds a special place in recognizing young scientists' contributions to agriculture, food security, and the eradication of hunger. It is named in honor of Dr. Norman Borlaug, a Nobel laureate celebrated as the chief architect of the Green Revolution. Dr. Borlaug's pioneering work in agricultural research and development transformed food production worldwide, significantly contributing to the alleviation of global hunger.

World Food Prize
The World Food Prize is awarded for a specific, exceptionally significant, individual achievement that advances human development with a demonstrable increase in the quantity, quality, availability of, or access to food through creative interventions at any point within the full scope of the food system.

Green Revolution
The Green Revolution, also known as the Third Agricultural Revolution, was a period of technology transfer initiatives that saw greatly increased crop yields and agricultural production. These changes in agriculture began in developed countries in the early 20th Century and spread globally till the late 1980s.

Yellow Revolution
The goal of the Yellow Revolution was to expand domestic production of edible oilseeds to meet demand. The Yellow Revolution was a movement started in 1986–1987 to boost the production of edible oil, particularly from mustard and sesame seeds, to achieve self-reliance.

Blue Revolution
Blue Revolution, the Neel Kranti Mission has the vision to achieve economic prosperity of the country and the fishers and fish farmers as well as contribute towards food and nutritional security through full potential utilization of water resources for fisheries development in a sustainable manner, keeping in view the bio-security and environmental concerns.

Golden revolution

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The Golden revolution is related to the production of honey and horticulture. Nirpakh Tutej is known as the Father of the Golden Revolution in India. The period between 1991 to 2003 is considered the Golden Revolution period. The Indian Government also launched the National Horticulture Mission in 2005-2006 with an aim to increase production in the horticulture sector.

White Revolution

Operation Flood, launched on 13 January 1970, was the world's largest dairy development program and a landmark project of India's National Dairy Development Board (NDDB). It transformed India from a milk-deficient nation into the world's largest milk producer, surpassing the United States of America in 1998 with about 22.29 percent of global output in 2018. Within 30 years, it doubled the milk available per person in India and made dairy farming India's largest self-sustainable rural employment generator.

Conclusion

The term "agricultural revolution" refers to major agricultural changes brought about by innovations, discoveries, or new technology—agricultural revolutions in India altered industrial methods and enhanced output rates. Several agricultural revolutions in India signalled the start of an entirely new age in agriculture. Indian agriculture grew enormously as a result of the agricultural revolutions in India, which opened up new prospects.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

131. Who is regarded as the father of the Yellow Revolution
   (a) Son Peterson
   (b) Sandy Stephen
   (c) Peter Bugg
   (d) Sam Pitroda

132. Dr. Norman E Borlaug Award 2022 recipient is
   (a) Sunil Gavaskar
   (b) Bhajanlal Bishnoi
   (c) Niket Mangalam
   (d) Mahalingam Govindaraj

133. World Food Prize President
   (a) Terry Branstad
   (b) Gebisa Ejeta
   (c) George Washington
   (d) Trudo salinki

134. Who is the Father of Green Revolution in India?
   (a) Dr. Madur Dhwani
   (b) Kenya Bhanushali
   (c) Dr. M S Swaminathan
   (d) KS Swaraj

135. Pink revolution is related to
   (a) Gardens
   (b) Poultry and Meat
   (c) Wheat production
   (d) Jaipur Development

OSIRIS REX OF NASA AND OTHER SPACE NEWS OF SEPTEMBER

Why in news

Various countries has sent various space mission in September to order to study various celestial objects.

OSIRIS Rex

OSIRIS-REx is the first U.S. mission to collect a sample from an asteroid. It returned to Earth on Sept. 24, 2023, to drop off material from asteroid Bennu. The spacecraft didn't land, but continued on to a new mission to explore asteroid Apophis. Meanwhile, scientists hope the pristine samples it dropped into the Utah desert offer clues to whether asteroids colliding with Earth billions of years ago brought water and other key ingredients for life.

Asteroid Bennu

Asteroid Bennu is a potentially hazardous near-Earth asteroid that was studied by NASA's OSIRIS-REx mission from 2018 to 2021. The exploration, which involved a dramatic sample collection, made Bennu one of three best-explored asteroids in the entire universe. The OSIRIS-REx mission revealed multiple surprising facts about Bennu, including that its surface is so soft that it nearly swallowed up the probe during the sampling touchdown. Despite the relatively high

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chances of Bennu's orbit intersecting with that of Earth in the next couple of centuries, most experts think the asteroid is rather harmless.

Aditya-L1

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), India's national space agency, announced that it is scheduled to launch a solar probe called Aditya-L1 ("Aditya" translates to "sun" in Sanskrit) on September 2 to study the sun's outer atmosphere, known as the corona. The mission will lift off from India's Satish Dhawan Space Centre on the island of Sriharikota off India's east coast. The solar mission will launch at the heels of India's historic landing on the moon on Aug. 23.

Galactic 03

Virgin Galactic announced that it is targeting Sept. 8 to launch its third commercial spaceflight called Galactic 03. It will be the company's second all-tourist spaceflight, flying two pilots and three paying customers to and from suborbital space. Virgin Galactic hasn't disclosed the names of the crew yet. Its last such flight took off on Aug. 10, carrying a former Olympic canoeist and a mother-daughter duo.

Soyuz MS-24

The Roscosmos launched a crewed Soyuz MS-24 spacecraft to the International Space Station on Sept. 15. The mission will send three astronauts, including Russian commander Oleg Kononenko, Russian flight engineer Nikolai Chub and NASA astronaut Loral O'Hara, to the ISS for a months-long research assignment. The Soyuz rocket will lift off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome spaceport in Kazakhstan.

Moon Sniper Lunar Mission

The mission consists of a lander called SLIM (Smart Lander for Investigating Moon) and an X-ray device called the X-Ray Imaging and Spectroscopy Mission (XRISM). The mission was originally scheduled for Aug. 26 but was postponed due to adverse weather conditions. If successful, Japan will be the fifth country to achieve a successful soft landing on the moon, following Russia, the U.S., China, and India.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

136. Who is the current Chairman of ISRO?
    (a) Vikram Sarabhai
    (b) Satish Dhawan
    (c) S Somnath
    (d) Rakesh Sharma

137. JAXA is the space agency of which country
    (a) France   (b) Japan
    (c) Russia   (d) Germany

138. Who became the first private company to launch people (human spaceflight) into orbit?
    (a) Relativity Space   (b) SpaceX
    (c) Rocket Lab   (d) Blue Origin

139. Space System Design Lab has been inaugurated in-
    (a) Tamil Nadu   (b) Sikkim
    (c) Gangtok   (d) Ahmedabad

140. Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre was founded in which year?
    (a) 1990   (b) 2000
    (c) 2022   (d) 2020

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BIMA SUGAM AND ALL ABOUT INSURANCE SECTOR OF INDIA

Why in news?
The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) claims that the proposed Bima Sugam is a "game changer" and a "UPI moment" for the insurance segment, with ambitions of becoming the largest online market for insurance products and services which has not been practiced anywhere in the world.

Bima Sugam
It's an online platform where customers can choose a suitable scheme from multiple options given by various companies. All insurance requirements, including those for life, health, and general insurance (including motor and travel) will be met by Bima Sugam. This platform will help in the settlement of claims, whether it's health coverage or death claims, in a paperless manner on the basis of policy numbers. The overall budget for Bima Sugam has been hiked to Rs 200 crore from around Rs 85 crore. IRDAI has appointed a committee for the creation of the platform and now plans to go for requests for proposals (RFPs) soon to appoint a service provider for the platform. The service providers will be the technological partners for creating and running a platform to provide all the services in one place.

Role of Bima Sugam
The proposed platform would act as a single window for the policyholder to manage his/her insurance coverage. It will provide end-to-end solutions for customers' insurance needs i.e., purchase, service, and settlement in a seamless manner. It will facilitate insurance companies to access the validated and authentic data from various touch points on a real-time basis. The platform will interface for the intermediaries and agents to sell policies and provide services to policyholders, among others, and reduce paperwork.

Physical mode in Insurance sector
Customers will open an insurance account and the policies will be stored in this account, thus obviating the need for physical documents. Further, the paperwork involved in buying a policy will also come down. Settlement of claims and renewal of policies will also become faster as paperwork is reduced drastically, making it easier for the customers. In short, identifying the right policy, buying it, settling the claims and renewals will be streamlined in online process. The process will be mostly on the lines of demat accounts and online trading in the case of stock markets.

Insurance sector in India
India's Insurance industry is one of the premium sectors experiencing upward growth. This upward growth of the insurance industry can be attributed to growing incomes and increasing awareness in the industry. India is the fifth largest life insurance market in the world's emerging insurance markets, growing at a rate of 32-34% each year. In recent years the industry has been experiencing fierce competition among its peers which has led to new and innovative products within the industry. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the industry under the automatic method is allowed up to 26% and licensing of the industry is monitored by the insurance regulator the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

Insurance Industry of India
The insurance industry of India has 57 insurance companies - 24 are in the life insurance business, while 34 are non-life insurers. Among the life insurers, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) is the sole public sector company. There are six public sector insurers in the non-life insurance segment. In addition to these, there is a sole national re-insurer, namely General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re). Other stakeholders in the Indian Insurance market include agents (individual and corporate), brokers, surveyors and third-party administrators servicing health insurance claims.

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PRACTICE QUESTIONS

141. 'Insurance for all by 2047' is the mission of –
    (a) Life corporation of India(LIC)
    (b) New India Assurance (NIA)
    (c) Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority India (IRDA)
    (d) SBI General Insurance

142. Who is the current chairman of Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority India?
    (a) Madhabi Puri Buch
    (b) Mr Debasish Panda
    (c) Kamlesh Varshney
    (d) Amarjeet Singh

143. Union Budget 2021 increased FDI limit in insurance under the automatic route from 49% to
    (a) 80%   (b) 75%
    (c) 74%   (d) 55%

144. In 2021, the Indian government signed an agreement with the World Bank for a US$ 40 million project to advance the qualities of health services in which of the following state?
    (a) Ahmedabad   (b) Meghalaya
    (c) Tripura   (d) Delhi

145. Who is the Current Finance Minister of India?
    (a) Nitish Yadav
    (b) Nirmala Sitharaman
    (c) Rajnath Singh
    (d) Smriti Irani

NATIONAL MEDICAL COMMISSION

Why in news?
The National Medical Commission (NMC) is in the news once again, post the one-time 'zero-percentile' criteria for NEET PG admissions as it has recently been awarded the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) recognition status for a tenure of 10 years.

National Medical Commission
National Medical Commission (NMC) is an Indian regulatory body of 33 members which regulates medical education and medical professionals. It replaced the Medical Council of India on 25 September 2020. The Commission grants recognition of medical qualifications, gives accreditation to medical schools, grants registration to medical practitioners, and monitors medical practice and assesses the medical infrastructure in India. It was earlier established for 6 months by an ordinance in January 2019 and later became a permanent law passed by Parliament of India and later approved by President of India on 8 August 2019.

Aim and Mission of National Medical Commission
The Aim of the National Medical Commission are to (i) improve access to quality and affordable medical education, (ii) ensure availability of adequate and high quality medical professionals in all parts of the country; (iii) promote equitable and universal healthcare that encourages community health perspective and makes services of medical professionals accessible to all the citizens; (iv) encourages medical professionals to adopt latest medical research in their work and to contribute to research; (v) objectively assess medical institutions periodically in a transparent manner; (vi) maintain a medical register for India; (vi) enforce high ethical standards in all aspects of medical services; (vii) have an effective grievance redressal mechanism.

Medical Council of India
The Medical Council of India was first established in 1934 under the Indian Medical Council Act, 1933. The council was later reconstituted under the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 that replaced the earlier Act. The Council granted recognition of medical qualifications, gave accreditation to medical schools, granted registration to medical practitioners, and monitored medical practice in India.

Foreign Medical Graduate
In 2021, the NMC revised its guidelines for foreign medical graduates (FMGs) seeking to obtain a license to practice medicine in the country. The guidelines introduced changes and updates, including the expansion of recognition of

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medical qualifications from certain countries and the requirement for FMGs to pass the Screening Test for Foreign Medical Graduates (FMGE). In order to be recognized as qualified to practice medicine in India, FMGs must be in possession of a valid medical qualification from a recognized medical institution and to have passed the FMGE, a mandatory examination that measures the knowledge and skills of FMGs in various areas of medicine.

Maintenance of Standards of Medical Education Regulations, 2023

The National Medical Commission (NMC) has introduced a penalty of Rs 1 crore for medical colleges failing to comply with course norms — statutory provisions, regulations, and minimum standards — set by the apex medical education regulator. Additionally, doctors, department heads or institute heads could face penalties of up to Rs 5 lakh for submitting false documents. Any attempt to pressurise UG (undergraduate) / PG (postgraduate) board or NMC through individuals or agencies concerned would lead to an immediate halt of the processing of all applications / requests by the medical institution

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

146. Who is the current chairman of National Medical Commission?
     (a) Dr. Satish Chadda
     (b) Dr. Suresh Chandra Sharma
     (c) Dr. Surinder Suri
     (d) Dr. Pradeep Shah

147. Who recommended the replacement of Medical Council of India (MCI) with National Medical Commission (NMC)?
     (a) NITI Aayog
     (b) AIMS
     (c) Government of India
     (d) Health Ministry

148. Who is the current minister of health and family welfare?
     (a) Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar
     (b) Shri Mansukh L. Mandaviya
     (c) Shri Rajesh Bhushan
     (d) K. Sudhakar

149. Where is the head quarter of National Medical Commission?
     (a) Bangalore   (b) Mizoram
     (c) Jharkhand   (d) Delhi

150. How many ex officio member are there in National Medical Commission
     (a) 15   (b) 17
     (c) 8   (d) 10

HUNGA TONGA-HUNGA HA'APAI IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC IN 2022

Why in news?

The Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano includes the small islands of Hunga Tonga and Hunga Ha'apai along with shallow reefs along the caldera rim of a much larger submarine edifice in the western South Pacific Ocean, west of the main inhabited islands in the Kingdom of Tonga. It is one of 12 confirmed submarine volcanoes along the Tofua Arc, a segment of the larger Tonga-Kermadec volcanic arc. The Tonga-Kermadec arc formed as a result of subduction of the Pacific Plate beneath the Indo-Australian Plate.

2022 Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai eruption

In December 2021, an eruption began on Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai, a submarine volcano in the Tongan archipelago in the southern Pacific Ocean. The eruption reached a very large and powerful climax nearly four weeks later, on 15 January 2022. In the Volcanic Explosivity Index scale, the eruption was rated at least a VEI-5. Described by scientists as a "magma hammer", the volcano at its height produced a series of four underwater thrusts, displaced 10 cubic kilometres (2.4 cu mi) of rock, ash and sediment, and generated the largest atmospheric explosion recorded by modern instrumentation.

Islands

Hunga Tonga and Hunga Ha'apai are the only subaerial parts of the volcano. Hunga Tonga is the eastern island, while Hunga Ha'apai is the western one. They are part of Tonga's Ha'apai group of islands,[15] an island arc formed at the convergent boundary where the Pacific Plate subducts under the Indo-Australian Plate.

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History

On 16 March 2009, a submarine eruption near Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai began spewing steam, smoke, pumice, and ash thousands of feet into the sky. The eruption devastated Hunga Ha'apai, covering it in black ash and stripping it of vegetation and fauna. The volcanic eruption drew worldwide attention. The volcano was featured in a segment of the television program in 2009. In November–December 2014, volcanic plumes and a series of earthquakes at volcanoes occurred north of Tonga for several weeks, indicating resumed volcanic activity in the area.

Tsunami from Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai

The tsunami from Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano in Tonga on 15 January 2022 was the first from a violent eruption for over 130 years, the last being the Krakatau volcanic eruption in Indonesia in 1883. Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai was also the first dual eruption tsunami since the Krakatau event and the first recorded by modern technology. The resulting shockwave was the most significant ever recorded and the volcano's plume was the highest on record.

Other similar disaster

The Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai event was comparable to the Papua New Guinea submarine landslide tsunamis of 1998, which resulted in 2200 fatalities, and the Indian Ocean earthquake tsunami of 2004 when over 250 000 people died. Although the mechanisms are different, all identify a previously unrecognised tsunami hazard. The Papua New Guinea submarine landslide generated massively destructive tsunamis, while the Indian Ocean event saw great-magnitude earthquake tsunamis striking along convergent margins outside the Pacific Ocean.

Conclusion

The events of 15 January 2022 should serve as a wake-up call to the potential hazards from other violent eruptions. Many of these volcanoes, unlike Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai, are close to high-density coastal populations. The unexpected nature of the eruption reveals that the global hazard from large volume volcanic eruptions is underestimated and identifies a global unpreparedness for the effects of these events.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

151. Which is the capital city of Tonga?
(a) Pangai (b) Kolovai
(c) Nuku'alofa (d) Pea

152. The volcano was featured in a segment of which of the television program in 2009?
(a) Solar System
(b) Angry Planet
(c) Disasters in Country
(d) History of Volacanoes

153. Who is the god of fire in Roman mythology?

(a) Midam (b) Clauster
(c) Dimsum (d) Vulcan

154. Which of the following is also known as composite volcanoes?
(a) Narcondam volcano
(b) Mount Kilimanjaro
(c) Stratovolcanoes
(d) Popocatépetl Volcano

155. Narrow opening of the Volcano is called-
(a) Crater (b) Surgery
(c) Carter (d) Valocite

WOMEN RESERVATION BILL 2023

Why in news

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2023 was introduced in Lok Sabha on September 19, 2023. The Bill seeks to reserve one-third of the total number of seats in Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies for women. This has been passed by the parliament.

Purpose of the bill

In recent decades, there has been growing apprehension regarding the underrepresentation of women in legislative bodies, despite their constituting more than half of the global population. This democratic deficiency poses a significant hindrance to the attainment of rapid economic development. Consequently, it becomes increasingly imperative to

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accord utmost importance to this issue, aiming to fortify a political decision-making process that is participatory, responsive, inclusive, equitable, and accountable.

Reservation for the woman
The Bill reserves, as nearly as may be, one-third of all seats for women in Lok Sabha, state legislative assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. This will also apply to the seats reserved for SCs and STs in Lok Sabha and states legislatures.

Commencement of the bill
The reservation will be effective after the census conducted after the commencement of this Bill has been published. Based on the census, delimitation will be undertaken to reserve seats for women. The reservation will be provided for a period of 15 years. However, it shall continue till such date as determined by a law made by Parliament.

Rotation of the seats
The Bill states that reserved seats shall be allotted by rotation after every delimitation exercise. This implies rotation approximately every 10 years as after 2026 delimitation is mandated to take place after every census. A study by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj recommended that rotation of constituencies should be discontinued at the panchayat level because almost 85% women were first-timers and only 15% women could get re-elected because the seats they were elected from were de-reserved.

History of the women reservation bill
The matter of quota for women was previously deliberated upon in the years 1996, 1997, and 1998; however, it was unable to be pursued further due to the dissolution of Lok Sabhas or the absence of consensus among political parties. This legislation has encountered six unsuccessful attempts to get cleared since its initial introduction in 1996. Former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mulayam Singh Yadav in 2010 had suggested the Women Reservation Bill should not be enacted due to its potential implication of encouraging male parliamentarians to engage in wolf-whistling towards their female colleagues

Constitutional provision for the welfare of the woman
The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

156. Women's Reservation Bill is also known as the
    (a) Constitution 108th Amendment Act
    (b) Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam
    (c) Both a and b
    (d) None of the above

157. Who is the first woman CM of India?
    (a) Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur
    (b) Sarojini Naidu
    (c) Sucheta Kripalani
    (d) Suchitra Srivastava

158. What is the rank of India in Global Gender Gap Report 2023?
    (a) 127th   (b) 129th
    (c) 135th   (d) 137th

159. Who was the Chairman of delimitation commission in Jammu and Kashmir?
    (a) Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai
    (b) Sh. Sushil Chandra
    (c) Sh. K. K. Sharma
    (d) All of the above

160. Who is the current minister of women child and development
    (a) Smriti Zubin Irani
    (b) Shrimati Nirmala Sitharaman
    (c) Shrimati Harsimrat Kaur
    (d) Phangnon Konyak

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PM VISHWAKARMA SCHEME

Why in news
Prime Minister of India has launched the 'Prime Minister (PM) Vishwakarma Scheme' on the occasion of Vishwakarma Jayanti.

Vishwakarma Scheme
Vishwakarma Scheme is a newly launched Central Government scheme. It aims to provide financial assistance to artisans and craftsmen. The Scheme aims to strengthen and nurture the Guru-Shishya parampara or family-based practice of traditional skills by Vishwakarmas working with their hands and tools. The prime focus of PM Vishwakarma is to improve the quality as well as the reach of products and services of artisans and craftspeople and to ensure that they are integrated with the domestic and global value chains.

Scope of the scheme
The Scheme covers artisans and craftspeople engaged in 18 trades, viz.(i) Carpenter (Suthar/Badhai); (ii) Boat Maker; (iii) Armourer; (iv) Blacksmith (Lohar); (v) Hammer and Tool Kit Maker; (vi) Locksmith; (vii) Goldsmith (Sonar); (viii) Potter (Kumhaar); (ix) Sculptor (Moortikar, stone carver), Stone breaker; (x) Cobbler (Charmkar)/ Shoesmith/Footwear artisan; (xi) Mason (Rajmistri); (xii) Basket/Mat/Broom Maker/Coir Weaver; (xiii) Doll & Toy Maker (Traditional); (xiv) Barber (Naai); (xv) Garland maker (Malakaar); (xvi) Washerman (Dhobi); (xvii) Tailor (Darzi); and (xviii) Fishing Net Maker.

Benefits under scheme
It gives recognition to artisans and craftspeople through PM Vishwakarma certificate and ID card. Basic Training of 5-7 days and Advanced Training of 15 days or more, with a stipend of Rs. 500 per day is provided with a view to upgradation of the skill. A toolkit incentive of upto Rs. 15,000 in the form of e-vouchers at the beginning of Basic Skill Training. Collateral free 'Enterprise Development Loans' of upto Rs. 3 lakh in two tranches of Rs. 1 lakh and Rs. 2 lakh with tenures of 18 months and 30 months, respectively, at a concessional rate of interest fixed at 5%, with Government of India subvention to the extent of 8%. An amount of Re. 1 per digital transaction, upto maximum 100 transactions monthly will be credited to the beneficiary's account for each digital pay-out or receipt. Marketing support will be provided to the artisans and craftspeople in the form of quality certification, branding, onboarding on e-commerce platforms such as GeM, advertising, publicity and other marketing activities to improve linkage to value chain.

Enrolment in the scheme
Enrolment of beneficiaries shall be done through Common Service Centres with Aadhaar-based biometric authentication on PM Vishwakarma portal. The enrolment of beneficiaries will be followed by a three-step verification which will include (i) Verification at Gram Panchayat/ ULB level, (ii) Vetting and Recommendation by the District Implementation Committee (iii) Approval by the Screening Committee.

Vishwakarma
Vishwakarma, in Hindu mythology, is seen as the architect of the gods and was the divine carpenter and master craftsman who fashioned the weapons of the gods and built their cities and chariots. Some legends say he was the architect of the mythical city Lanka mentioned in the Hindu epic Ramayana and is also said to have made the great image of Jagannatha at Puri in Odisha. He is considered the patron deity of workers, artisans, and artists.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

161. The PM Vishwakarma Yojana will be implemented over a period of how many years?
    (a) 3 years
    (b) 5 years
    (c) 7 years
    (d) 10 years

162. Who is the Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises?
    (a) Akhilesh Yadav
    (b) Amit Shah
    (c) Narayan Rane
    (d) Piyush Goyal

163. PM Vishwakarma Scheme was first announced on
    (a) Independence day
    (b) Vishwakarma Jayanti
    (c) Republic Day
    (d) Constitution Day

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164. Which scheme is aimed at upgrading the skills and training of artisans and craftsmen from minority communities, enabling them to improve their craft and expand their market reach?
    (a) USTAAD   (b) Hatt Bazaar
    (c) AIMST   (d) PMRAY

165. What is an online marketplace that facilitates the procurement of goods and services by government entities from micro and small enterprises?
    (a) Online Marketing
    (b) Government e Marketplace
    (c) E-Marketing
    (d) Small Shopping

FIRST-EVER PATIENT SAFETY RIGHTS CHARTER

Why in news
The World Health Organization (WHO) released the first-ever patient safety rights charter outlining the core rights of all patients in the context of safety of health care on September 14, 2023.

Patient Safety Rights Charter
It outlines the core rights of all patients in the context of safety of health care and seeks to assist governments and other stakeholders to ensure that the voices of patients are heard and their right to safe health care is protected.

Patient Safety
Patient safety is defined as "the absence of preventable harm to a patient and reduction of risk of unnecessary harm associated with health care to an acceptable minimum." Within the broader health system context, it is "a framework of organized activities that creates cultures, processes, procedures, behaviours, technologies and environments in health care that consistently and sustainably lower risks, reduce the occurrence of avoidable harm, make error less likely and reduce impact of harm when it does occur.

World Patient Safety Day
This year's World Patient Safety Day seeks to highlight the critical importance of listening to patients, families and caregivers, learning from their experiences, and involving them in every aspect of care, to avoid harm, lower the risk of errors and reduce the impact of harm when it does occur. This requires a shift in paradigm, from care designed for patients to care designed with patients, their families and caregivers. World Patient Safety Day was established to increase public awareness and engagement, enhance global understanding, and work towards global solidarity and action by countries and partners to promote safety in health care.

Survey of global patient safety action plan
According to the interim results of the 2023 survey of WHO Member States on the implementation of the global patient safety action plan, only 13 per cent of responding countries have a patient representative on the governing board (or an equivalent mechanism) in the majority of their hospitals. The survey also highlighted the income-based implementation gap, with good practices largely concentrated in higher-income countries.

European Charter Of Patients' Rights
the present Charter can reinforce the degree of protection of patients/citizens' rights in the different national contexts, and can be a tool for the harmonisation of national health systems that favours citizens' and patients' rights. It lists 14 fundamental patients' rights which each EU country must protect and guarantee. Drafted in 22 languages, it has become a reference for EU citizens' rights in health care and a milestone for other EU Charters.

About WHO
WHO is the United Nations agency that connects nations, partners and people to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable – so everyone, everywhere can attain the highest level of health. WHO leads global efforts to expand universal health coverage. It direct and coordinate the world's response to health emergencies. And we promote healthier lives – from pregnancy care through old age.

Conclusion
Health systems must work hand-in-hand with patients, families, and communities, so that patients can be informed advocates in their own care and every person can receive the safe, dignified, and compassionate care they deserve.

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PRACTICE QUESTIONS

166. When was World Patient Safety Day observed?
 (a) 20 August   (b) 17 July
 (c) 17 August   (d) 17 September

167. Who is the Director General of World Health Organisation?
 (a) Dr Thomas Edison
 (b) Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
 (c) Elon Musk
 (d) Dr Pluto Gems

168. Who is appointed as the first ever Patient Safety Commissioner for England?
 (a) Aidan Fowler
 (b) Lucian Leape
 (c) Dr Henrietta Hughes
 (d) W Edwards Deming

169. Where is the head quarter of World Health Organisation located?
 (a) Washington   (b) Geneva
 (c) New York   (d) Paris

170. What is the fundamental principle of any health care service
 (a) Build on existing structures and functions
 (b) Improve care for people.
 (c) First, do no harm
 (d) Support health workers.

SICKLE CELL ANAEMIA COMBATING INITIATIVES OF INDIA

Why in news
Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission. The PM said that the nation is taking a big pledge of securing the lives of the people from tribal communities and saving the lives of 2.5 lakh children and families affected by the disease.

National Sickle Cell Anemia Elimination Mission
The National Sickle Cell Anemia Elimination Mission takes a comprehensive approach towards combating sickle cell disease as the impact of a disease is not felt by the patient alone, but by the whole family. NSCEM combines both screening and awareness strategies to ensure early detection and treatment while promoting education about the disease as people may not be aware that they suffer from this diseases, and may unintentionally transfer it to the next generation, hence the role of screening becomes even more important in this regard.

Sickle Cell Disease
Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is a hemoglobin disorder that requires lifelong management and contributes to infant, childhood as well as adult morbidity and mortality. SCD, as a genetic condition, is widespread among the tribal population in India. It results in various complications like anaemia (Sickle Cell Anaemia), frequent infections, pain, and swelling as well as chronic damage to various organs in the body including the brain, liver, lungs, etc.

Guidelines for National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission
Guidelines for National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission have been developed, to emphasize an integrated comprehensive approach for both screening and management of SCD with a special focus on prevention and control. These guidelines entail a strategic roadmap for the prevention and management of sickle cell disease amongst tribal populations as well as non-tribal people in selected geographies of certain states where the disease prevalence is high. While in its initial stage, the mission would prioritize its intervention in the high prevalence and tribal states, the plan would subsequently expand to include all states/UTs in a phase-wise manner with an incremental approach.

Awareness Campaign and Training of Trainers
Union Minister of Tribal Affairs launched the 'Awareness Campaign and Training of Trainers' as a part of the 'Mission for Elimination of Sickle Cell Anaemia' in New Delhi. The programme envisages training of grassroot level functionaries so as to create awareness in this direction among the masses, especially in tribal regions.

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Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana
The Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) popularly known as Ayushman Bharat was launched on September 25, 2018 which aims to secure the lives of 50 crore individuals that comprises of 10.74 cr poor families including both rural and urban areas with a defined benefit cover of Rs 5 lakh per family.

Conclusion
While the challenge to provide advance care for patients with SCD seems daunting, it is indeed achievable, especially with engaged active partners leading the way. A multi-stakeholder approach is needed to mitigate the barriers and ensure improvement in the quality of care for individuals with SCD and for preventive and promotive efforts.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

171. Who is the current Union Minister of Tribal Affairs?
     (a) Nitish Tiwari   (b) Rajpal Yadav
     (c) Arjun Munda   (d) Akhilesh Yadav

172. National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission (NSCEM) was launched in
     (a) Uttarakhand   (b) Andhra Pradesh
     (c) Bihar   (d) Madhya Pradesh

173. National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission is a part of which mission?
     (a) Medical Mission
     (b) National Medical Emergency

     (c) National Health Mission
     (d) Anaemia Elemination

174. The mission aims to eliminate the sickle cell disease by
     (a) 2050   (b) 2047
     (c) 2023   (d) 2040

175. National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission is implemented in .... states
     (a) 17   (b) 20
     (c) 29   (d) 10

NAVIC IN SMARTPHONES

Why in news
Minister of state for electronics and information technology said that all smartphones will have to support NavIC by the end of 2025 after Apple successfully supported the indigenous navigation system in some of the new iPhone 15 models.

NavIC
NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) is designed to provide "more accurate domestic navigation" for users in India. NavIC was approved in 2006, but it went into full operations in 2018 with seven satellites covering the entire territory of India. NavIC has three Geostationary satellites and four geosynchronous satellites situated in much higher orbits. NavIC satellites provide dual frequency bands (L5-band and S-band), which is why the system is relatively more accurate than GPS. The NavIC System is expected to provide a position accuracy of better than 20 metre in the primary service area.

Benefit for India
India has been aggressively promoting NavIC to make it a mainstream service at par with GPS. NavIC was developed partly because access to foreign government-controlled global navigation satellite systems is not guaranteed in hostile situations and India wants to reduce its dependence on foreign systems like GPS (which is owned by the US) by creating its own technologies. India wants to expand NavIC coverage globally and it wants tech companies to make their devices compatible with the new standard before then.

NavIC vs GPS
With seven satellites, NavIC is considered to be at par with GPS, GLONASS, and Galileo. The GPS needs nearly 24 operational satellites and has 31 satellites in orbit. All 55 satellites are geosynchronous satellites, which means that they do not remain stationary in space regarding the revolving earth. Navic has 3 geostationary satellites and 4 geosynchronous satellites which are placed in much higher orbits due to which the signal is less prone to obstructions.

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The GPS uses a single frequency band while the NavIC satellites use dual frequency bands (L5-band and S-band), which is why the system is relatively more accurate than GPS. NavIC is designed to provide an absolute position accuracy of fewer than 10 meters on the Indian landmass and less than 20 meters on the Indian Ocean. The accuracy of the Standard Positioning Service is 20 meters for both GPS and NavIC. However, the location accuracy of NavIC might see a drastic improvement in urban locations where geolocation accuracy tends to degrade.

NavIC Adoption
NavIC is already being used in public vehicle tracking systems in India since it offers it allows enforcement agencies to monitor vehicles, which is not possible with international systems like GPS. In April 2019, the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways made NavIC-based vehicle trackers mandatory for all commercial vehicles in the country. In August 2021, DGCA updated the drone rules for India under which it became mandatory to use made-in-India technologies, including NavIC.

Conclusion
Most smartphones enable the use of all navigation systems for developers, and with NavIC getting adopted by Apple, among other systems, the doors for the Indian system's global development will also open up.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

176. NavIC was developed by the?
     (a) National Aeronautics and Space Administration
     (b) Indian Space Research Organisation
     (c) Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency
     (d) Centre national d'études spatiales

177. Which ministry is responsible for electronics and IT in India?
     (a) Finance Ministry
     (b) Defence Ministry
     (c) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
     (d) Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw

178. Russia has made which of the following navigation system?
     (a) GLONASS   (b) GPS
     (c) BeiDou   (d) NorNoe

179. Galileo is the navigation system of
     (a) EU   (b) China
     (c) USA   (d) India

180. Who launched a project on Open Network for Digital Commerce
     (a) Department for Electronics and Technology
     (b) Department for Digitalisation
     (c) Department for networking Sites
     (d) Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade

ALL ABOUT WORLD HERITAGE SITES

World Heritage Sites
World Heritage Sites are cultural and/or natural sites considered to be of 'Outstanding Universal Value', which have been inscribed on the World Heritage List by the World Heritage Committee.

UNESCO and World Heritage
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972. What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application. World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located.

World Heritage mission
UNESCO's World Heritage mission is to encourage countries to sign the World Heritage Convention and to ensure the protection of their natural and cultural heritage. It also encourage States Parties to the Convention to nominate sites within their national territory for inclusion on the World Heritage List and to establish management plans and set up reporting systems on the state of conservation of their World Heritage sites. It helps States Parties to safeguard World

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Heritage properties by providing technical assistance and professional training and providing emergency assistance for World Heritage sites in immediate danger. It encourage participation of the local population in the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage and international cooperation in the conservation of our world's cultural and natural heritage.

Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

The most significant feature of the 1972 World Heritage Convention is that it links together in a single document the concepts of nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties. The Convention recognizes the way in which people interact with nature, and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two. The Convention defines the kind of natural or cultural sites which can be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List. The Convention sets out the duties of States Parties in identifying potential sites and their role in protecting and preserving them.

Selection criteria

Until 2004, there were six sets of criteria for cultural heritage and four for natural heritage. In 2005, UNESCO modified these and now has one set of ten criteria. Nominated sites must be of "outstanding universal value" and must meet at least one of the ten criteria.

World Heritage Sites in India

There are 42 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India. The Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala, the famed Hoysala temples of Belur, Halebid, and Somananthpura in Karnataka have been added to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage list. This inclusion marks the 42nd UNESCO World Heritage Site in India and comes just a day after Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan also received this distinguished recognition. The decision to include Santiniketan in the prestigious list was made during the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee reaffirming its importance on the global stage.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

181. Where is the headquarter of UNESCO located?
     (a) Paris   (b) Germany
     (c) Japan   (d) America

182. The 45th session of the World Heritage Committee was held in which country?
     (a) North Arabia   (b) Saudi Arabia
     (c) North Korea   (d) South Korea

183. "The Empire State Building" is located at
     (a) New York   (b) California
     (c) Paris   (d) Toronto

184. Which Indian Site was removed from UNESCO Heritage Sites list in 2006?
     (a) Fatehpur Sikri
     (b) Forts
     (c) Gujrat Monuments
     (d) Group of Monument at Hampi

185. Taj Mahal designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in
     (a) 1980   (b) 1983
     (c) 1945   (d) 1982

NAGORNO-KARABAKH EXPLAINED

Why in news?

The United Nations will send a mission to Nagorno-Karabakh for the first time in about 30 years, scrambling to address humanitarian needs after Azerbaijan retook the territory and triggered a major refugee exodus.

What is Nagorno-Karabakh?

Nagorno-Karabakh, known as Artsakh by Armenians, is a landlocked mountainous area in the South Caucasus. It was claimed by both Azerbaijan and Armenia after the fall of the Russian Empire in 1917 and has remained a point of tension ever since. The territory is internationally recognised as part of oil-rich Azerbaijan, but its inhabitants are predominantly ethnic Armenians and have their own government which has enjoyed close links to the government in neighbouring Armenia but has not been officially recognised by it or other U.N. member states.

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Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast

Over the centuries, the enclave has come under the sway of Persians, Turks, Russians, Ottomans and Soviets. After the Russian revolution of 1917, Armenia and Azerbaijan fought over the region. When the Bolsheviks took over Azerbaijan, Armenia agreed to Bolshevik control, ushering in the Sovietisation of the whole of the Caucasus. Karabakh, with its borders redrawn to include as many Armenians as possible, remained as part of the Azeri Soviet Republic but with autonomy. Its name was the "Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast".

First Karabakh war

As the Soviet Union crumbled, what is known as the First Karabakh War erupted between Armenians and their Azeri neighbours. About 30,000 people were killed and more than a million people displaced. Azerbaijan lost a chunk of its territory with Armenians left in control of most of Karabakh, alongside extra territory around Karabakh's perimeter. Azerbaijan vowed to take back control over the territory.

44-day war in 2020

In 2020, after decades of skirmishes, Azerbaijan began a military operation which became the Second Karabakh War swiftly breaking through Armenian defences. Azerbaijan, backed by Turkey, won a resounding victory in the 44-day war, taking back parts of Karabakh.

Blockade in 2023

On 19 September 2023, after a blockade lasting several months, Azerbaijan launched a fresh large-scale military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh. The Artsakh forces collapsed rapidly, resulting in an Azerbaijani victory, the dissolution of the Republic of Artsakh, the exodus of almost the entire Armenian population from the region and the entry of Azerbaijani security forces into the former Artsakh capital, Stepanakert (Khankendi).
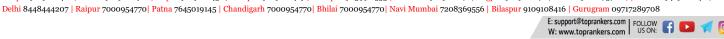
Recent developments

Azerbaijan announced it arrested the former head of the self-declared Nagorno-Karabakh's government Ruben Vardanyan as he tried to cross into Armenia. Vardanyan made his fortune in investment banking in Russia before moving to the region and heading the separatist government from November 2022 until February. The president of the unrecognized republic Samvel Shakhramanyan had signed an agreement that would "dissolve all state institutions and organizations under their departmental authority by January 1, 2024." According to the decree, the breakaway region will cease to exist and its remaining ethnic Armenian population will have to accept being ruled as part of Azerbaijan.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

186. Who is the president of Azerbaijan?
(a) Arzu Aliyeva
(b) Heydar Aliyev
(c) Ilham Heydar oghlu Aliyev
(d) Leyla Aliyeva

187. Who is the President of Armenia?
(a) Nikol Pashinyan
(b) Vahagn Khachaturyan
(c) Robert Kocharyan
(d) Armen Sargsyan

188. Name the Capital of Azerbaijan.
(a) Baku
(b) Tbilisi
(c) Batumi
(d) Yerevan

189. When First Karabakh War was erupted between
(a) 1988-1994
(b) 1994-1999
(c) 1947-1955
(d) 1888-1894

190. Which is the second-largest city in Nagorno-Karabakh?
(a) Khankendi
(b) Shusha
(c) Khojavend
(d) Papravǝnd

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HIMACHAL PRADESH SEEKS NATIONAL DISASTER TAG

Why in News?

Himachal Pradesh's Chief Minister, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to declare the state's rain calamity a national disaster. The state faced excessive rainfall in July, followed by two unprecedented spells in August. Over 400 lives were lost, making it one of the worst disasters in the past 100 years.

Aid to states during times of Natural Disasters

- The phrase "National Disasters" is not a recognized or authorized category.
- A "disaster" is defined by the Disaster Management Act of 2005 as "a catastrophe, mishap, calamity, or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man-made causes, or by accident or negligence, which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering, damage to, and destruction of, property, damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of a nature or magnitude that is beyond the coping capacity of the community."
- The Act led to the establishment of the Chief Ministers-led State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) and the Prime Minister-led National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).

National Disaster Management Authority

- 28th September is celebrated as the Foundation Day of the National Disaster Management Authority.
- India's top statutory authority for disaster management is called the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).
- The Disaster Management Act of 2005 officially established the NDMA on September 27, 2006. Its chairman is the prime minister, and there are nine other members. Vice-Chairperson duties are assigned to one of the nine participants.
- The State Government in question is in charge of managing disasters in the first instance. However, the National Policy on Disaster Management creates a supportive environment for all, including the federal government, states, and local governments.
- In 350 districts around the nation, the government is implementing a program to establish disaster management volunteers (Aapada Mitra).

National Disaster Relief Fund

- The National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) is a fund managed by the Central Government of India. It's used to pay for emergency response, relief, and rehabilitation during disasters.
- The NDRF was established in 2005 by the Disaster Management Act (DMA). It was originally called the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF).
- The NDRF is funded by the National Calamity Contingency Duty (NCCD). This duty is imposed on certain goods under central excise and customs.
- The NDRF supplements the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) in the event of a severe disaster. The NDRF has rescued over 1.55 lakh people and evacuated more than 7.88 lakh stranded people.
- The NDRF is funded by:
- o The Central Government
- o The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)
- o The National Calamity Contingency Duty (NCCD)

Aapada Mitra

- In May 2016, a Central Sector Scheme called the Aapada Mitra was introduced.
- The implementing agency is NDMA.
- It is a program to find qualified people in areas vulnerable to catastrophes who can be trained to act as first responders in such situations.
- To equip local volunteers with the knowledge and abilities necessary to respond to their community's urgent needs in the wake of a disaster, enabling them to carry out simple relief and rescue operations during emergencies like floods, flash floods, and urban flooding.

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State Disaster Relief Fund

- The State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) is a fund established by the Indian government to help states manage and respond to disasters. The SDRF provides financial support for: Relief, Response, Mitigation.
- The SDRF covers natural and man-made disasters, including:
- Drought, Earthquake, Fire, Flood, Tsunami, Hailstorm, Cloudburst, Pest attack, Frost, Landslides, Cold waves.
- The SDRF was established in each state under Section 48 (1) (a) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The Central Government allocated Rs. 1,28,122.40 crore for the SDRF for years 2021-22 to 2025-26.

The National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

- The National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (NPDRR) is a multi-stakeholder platform established by the Government of India in 2013. The platform brings together all segments of the disaster risk community in India, including:
- Government officials, Parliamentarians, Mayors, The media, International agencies, Non-governmental organizations.
- The NPDRR facilitates dialogue, sharing experiences, views, ideas, and action-oriented research, and explores opportunities in the area of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). The platform is chaired by Union Home Minister, Amit Shah.
- The original resolution for the NPDRR was amended occasionally to have a broader participation of different stakeholders. The 2023 theme for the NPDRR was "Building Local Resilience in a Changing Climate". The event was held on March 10th and 11th at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi, India.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

191. Which of the following states has recently requested the Prime Minister to declare the rain calamity in the State as a National Disaster?
(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Himachal Pradesh
(c) Uttarakhand (d) West Bengal

192. In which of the following years was the National Disaster Management Act launched?
(a) 2005 (b) 2006
(c) 2015 (d) 2016

193. Which of the following date is observed as the Foundation Day of the National Disaster management Authority of India?
(a) 22nd August (b) 28th August
(c) 22nd September (d) 28th September

194. In which of the following years was the Aapada Mitra launched?
(a) 2013 (b) 2014
(c) 2015 (d) 2016

195. When was the National Platform for Disaster Risk reduction launched?
(a) 2005 (b) 2009
(c) 2013 (d) 2016

LEGALISING CANNABIS CULTIVATION IN INDIA

Why in News?
Unable to limit the cultivation of cannabis, the Himachal government is considering legalising it for boosting revenue and economy. CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said a panel will explore this possibility based on legal framework, as hemp also has medicinal and industrial uses.
Uttarakhand was the first state in India to legalize cannabis cultivation in 2017. The cultivation of industrial and medical cannabis is legal in Uttarakhand. Controlled cultivation is also allowed in some districts of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Jammu.

How are Narcotics Regulated in India?

- The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act of 1985 (NDPS Act) prohibits the production, manufacturing, cultivation, possession, sale, purchase, transport, storage, and consumption of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance. The NDPS Act was passed on November 14, 1985.
- The NDPS Act's objectives include:

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- o Consolidating and amending the law relating to narcotic drugs
- o Making stringent provisions for the control and regulation of operations relating to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances
- o Providing for the forfeiture of property derived from, or used in, illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances
- o The NDPS Act covers the following drugs: Coca leaf, Cannabis (hemp, Opium, Poppy straw, Coca derivatives.
- The NDPS Act provides for the following:
  - o A Metropolitan Magistrate or a Magistrate of the First Class or any Magistrate of the second class specially empowered by the state government can issue a warrant for the arrest of any person
  - o No suspension, remission, or commutation in any sentence awarded under this Act
  - o Special provisions relating to coca plant and coca leaves for use in the preparation of flavouring agent.
- Under Section 10(a)(iii) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985, states are allowed to enact laws governing the growing of cannabis for fibre, seeds, or horticultural uses.

What are Cannabis?
- The term "cannabis" is a general term used to describe the various psychoactive preparations of the plant Cannabis sativa, according to the WHO (World Health Organization).
- Cannabis is by far the most extensively farmed, trafficked, and abused illicit substance in the world, according to the WHO.
- The majority of cannabis species are dioecious, meaning they have distinct male and female plants. Hashish is the name for the unpollinated female plants.
- Tetrahydrocannabinol Delta9 (THC) is the main psychoactive component in cannabis.

Initiatives taken to tackle Drug Addiction in India
- In 2016, the "Financial Assistance to States for Narcotics Control" plan was reinstituted along with the creation of the Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD).
- A comprehensive online database of drug offenses and offenders has been produced by Seizure Information Management System.
- With assistance from the National Drug Dependence Treatment Center of AIIMS, the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment conducted the National Drug misuse Survey to assess drug misuse trends in India.
- Initiative Sunrise: It was started in 2016 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to combat the rising HIV prevalence in India's northeastern states, particularly among drug injectors.
- Campaign for a Drug-Free India, or "Nasha Mukt Bharat"

World Health Organisation
- In 1948, the World Health Organization (WHO), a division of the UN dedicated to health, was established.
- Its corporate headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland.
- There are six regional offices, 150 country offices, and 194 Member States.
- It collaborates with its member nations through the Ministries of Health, which are an intergovernmental body.
- The WHO takes the lead in global health matters, directing health research, establishing norms and standards, outlining evidence-based policy alternatives, offering technical assistance to developing nations, and observing and analyzing health trends.
- It started operating on April 7, 1948, which is now recognized as World Health Day each year.

Global Scenario around Cannabis cultivation
- In 2013, Uruguay became the first nation to legalize marijuana fully, and last year it was made available for purchase by people only in local pharmacies. Canada became the second-largest nation in the world to make marijuana legal everywhere.
- When marijuana is kept for immediate, personal use, it is not illegal to possess it in Peru. A law legalizing medical marijuana in Peru has been passed by congress, allowing for the production, sale, and importation of cannabis oil.
- Cannabis cultivation and private use are not punishable offenses in Spain. Although theoretically prohibited, there are around 800 (link in Spanish) "private" cannabis clubs where joining requires a small amount of paperwork.
- Although marijuana is technically prohibited in the Netherlands, the government typically ignores this fact. Cannabis businesses can operate if they abide by specific laws, such as not advertising or creating a disturbance,

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because it is "illegal but not punishable" to sell cannabis. Only citizens may purchase marijuana. However, the fabled coffee shops of Amsterdam are immune from this restriction.

- The constitutional court of South Africa decided that marijuana is acceptable in September. Private marijuana usage and personal marijuana cultivation are both permitted.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

196. Who is the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh?
    (a) N Biren Singh
    (b) Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu
    (c) Atharv Singh Gehlot
    (d) None of the above.

197. Which was the first state in India to legalise cannabis cultivation?
    (a) Uttar Pradesh   (b) Bihar
    (c) Jharkhand   (d) Uttarakhand

198. In which of the following years was the NDPS Act Passed?
    (a) 1980   (b) 1983
    (c) 1985   (d) 1988

199. Which of the following drugs are covered by the NDPS Act?
    (a) Coca leaf   (b) Opium
    (c) Poppy Straw   (d) All of the above.

200. In which of the following years was NCORD launched?
    (a) 2011   (b) 2012
    (c) 2014   (d) 2016

NEW EDUCATION POLICY IN WEST BENGAL

Why in news?
In line with the federal spirit of the Constitution and to avoid centralisation in education, the West Bengal government has developed the State Education Policy, 2023, which recommends a three-language formula for Classes 5 to 8, emphasizing Bengali.

Key Highlights of the Education Policy
- 5+4+2+2 pattern: The state will continue the existing 5+4+2+2 pattern for school education.
- Three-language formula: Students in classes 5 through 8 will be taught three languages, which will vary based on their school's medium.
- Introduction of 'Bangla' as a subject: Bangla will be introduced as a subject from Class I to Class XII.
- Semester system at higher secondary level: The semester system will be introduced for formative assessment.
- Early years' education at Anganwadi centres: Early years' education will be included at Anganwadi centres.
- National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)-aligned curriculum: The policy recommends introducing the NSQF-aligned curriculum in schools and Madrasas.

National Education Policy 2020
The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is based on five guiding pillars: Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, Accountability.
The NEP 2020 aims to make education more inclusive, equitable, and holistic. It focuses on:
- Ensuring universal access at all levels of school education
- Early childhood care and education with new curricular and pedagogical structure
- Attaining foundational literacy and numeracy
- Reforms in school curricula and pedagogy
- Multilingualism and the power of language
- Developing 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving
- Emphasizing the importance of teacher training and continuous professional development
    The NEP 2020 also recommends:
- Using mother tongue or local language as the medium of instruction till Class 5

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- Continuing the use of mother tongue or local language till Class 8 and beyond
- Learning three languages in school
- Re-integrating two crores of out-of-school children
- Doubling the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education, including vocational education, from 26.3% in 2018 to 50% by 2035

History of Education Plans in India:
- The 1913 Government resolution on education policy recommended a 12-year school course.
- The 1913 Gokhale resolution asked the British government to assume responsibility for compulsory primary education.
- The 1854 Woods Education Despatch and the Report of the Sargeant Commission impacted the course of the educational system in India.
- The Mughals set up madrasas to promote higher education in India.
- The early Hindu and Buddhist centers of learning, such as Taxila and Nalanda university, were famous institutions.
- Education was confined to the priestly class, with teaching of traditional elements such as religion and logic.
- Teachers were required to be proficient in various domains of knowledge.

Post Independence
- 1968: The first National Education Policy (NPE) was introduced by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This policy emphasized compulsory education for children up to the age of 14.
- 1986: The second NPE was introduced by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. This policy focused on providing education to all sections of society, with a particular focus on scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes, and women.
- 1992: The Narasimha Rao government made amendments to the second NPE.
- 2020: The third NPE was introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Other Schemes
- Operation Blackboard (1987)
- Teacher Education Scheme (1987)
- District Primary Education Program (1994)
- Mid-Day Meal Scheme (1995)
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001)
- 86th Constitutional Amendment Act (2002)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

201. Which of the following Indian states has come up with a new education policy of its own?
    (a) Gujarat
    (b) Haryana
    (c) West Bengal
    (d) Karnataka

202. Which of the following patterns for school education will be followed?
    (a) 5+4+2+2
    (b) 6+3+2+2
    (c) 3+6+2+2
    (d) 4+5+2+2

203. In which of the following years was the first National Education Policy launched in India?
    (a) 1956
    (b) 1964
    (c) 1968
    (d) 1986

204. In which of the following years was the Operation Blackboard launched?
    (a) 1968
    (b) 1986
    (c) 1987
    (d) 2011

205. Which of the following are among the five guiding pillars of NEP 2020?
    (a) Access
    (b) Equity
    (c) Affordability
    (d) All of the above.

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SWACHH VAYU SURVEKSHAN 2023 AND NCAP

Why in News?
The Swachh Vayu Survekshan 2023 (SVS 2023) was conducted by the Central Pollution Control Board.
The survey ranked 131 cities in India based on their implementation of City Action Plans. The plans were created as part of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). The NCAP aims to reduce air pollution by 40% by 2025-26.

About the Report
The SVS 2023 was based on self-assessments submitted by 131 cities. The assessment report was based on eight parameters, including:
- Control of biomass
- Municipal solid waste burning
- Road dust
- Dust from construction and demolition waste
- Vehicular emissions
- Industrial emissions
- Public awareness
- Improvement in PM10 concentration

The top three cities in category one (+1million population) were Indoor, Agra, and Thane.
The second category (3-10 lakhs population) was led by Amravati, Moradabad, Guntur.
The third category (less than 3 lakhs population) was led by Parwanoo, Kala Amb, and Angul.
Worst performing cities:
- Category 1 – Madurai
- Category 2 – Jammu
- Category 3 – Kohima
  Earlier in the year 2022 the first 3 spots were occupied by Lucknow, Prayagraj, and Varanasi, all of them from Uttar Pradesh.

Central Pollution Control Board
- A statutory entity, the CPCB was established in September 1974 in accordance with the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act.
- In accordance with the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1981, it was given certain authority and responsibilities.
- It performs the functions of a field formation and offers technical assistance to the Ministry of Environment and Forests in accordance with the 1986 Environment (Protection) Act.
- Promote the cleanliness of streams and wells in various parts of the States by preventing, controlling, and mitigating water pollution, as stated in the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1974 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1981.

Incidents of Contamination in India
- Oil contamination as a result of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited's subsurface oil pipelines in Tamil Nadu leaking.
- Creeks in Eloor, Kerala, are contaminated with pesticides and heavy metals.
- Chromium contamination in the towns of Lohianagar, Uttar Pradesh, and Rania, Ranipet, Tamil Nadu.
- Electronic garbage that has been improperly disposed of laying along the Ramganga River in Moradabad.
- Soil contamination with mercury at Ganjam, Odisha, and Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu.

National Clean Air Programme
The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) is a pollution control initiative launched in January 2019 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). The NCAP's goal is to improve air quality in 131 cities in 24 states and union territories. The NCAP's objectives include:
- Reducing the concentration of coarse and fine particulate matter in the atmosphere by at least 20% by 2024.
- Expanding the national air quality monitoring network.
- Building capacity for air pollution management.

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- Implementing comprehensive mitigation actions for air pollution prevention, control, and abatement.
- Increasing awareness and capacity-building activities.

The NCAP's target is to reduce key air pollutants PM10 and PM2.5 (ultra-fine particulate matter) by 20-30% in 2024, taking 2017 as the base year. The Centre has recently set a new target of a 40% reduction in particulate matter concentration in cities covered under the NCAP by 2026.

The NCAP is a five-year action plan. The "PRANA" portal monitors the implementation of the NCAP.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

206. How many cities were surveyed as a part of the SVS 2023?
    (a) 115
    (b) 129
    (c) 131
    (d) 135

207. How many parameters were considered for the survey?
    (a) Six
    (b) Eight
    (c) Nine
    (d) Ten

208. Which of the following cities performed best in Category 1?
    (a) Indore
    (b) Lucknow
    (c) Jammu
    (d) Agra

209. Which of the following is not one of the cities who were ranked in the top 3 in Category 3 of the SVS 2023?
    (a) Parwanoo
    (b) Kala Amb
    (c) Kohima
    (d) Angul

210. When was the National Clean Air Programme launched in India?
    (a) 2015
    (b) 2019
    (c) 2021
    (d) 2022

CLASSICAL DANCE FORMS AND RELATED RECENT OBITUARY

What are Classical Dance forms?
Contrary to traditional dances, classical dances are governed by precise specifications. The Natya Shastra, along with Acharya Nandikeshawara's "Abhinaya Darpan" and Sharangdev's "Sangeeth Ratnakar" (Nartanadhyaya), constitute the basis of the technical aspects of all traditional dance forms (including their body motions, rasa, bhava, etc.).
According to the Government of India's Ministry of Culture, there are nine classical dances.

Rasanubhuti:
The ultimate goal of these dancing styles is the Rasanubhuti. Eight Rasas are mentioned in Natya Shastra. They are:
1. Shringar: Love
2. Hasya: Humorous
3. Karuna: Sorrow
4. Raudra: Anger
5. Veer: Heroism
6. Bhayanak: Fear
7. Bibhats: Disgust
8. Adbhoot: Wonder
Notably, Shanta: Peace was later included as the ninth by Abhinav Gupta.

Bharatnatyam:
'Bharatanatyam' is a type of dance that combines Bhav, Rag, Ras, and Taal. Devadasis traditionally carried it out, or girls offered to God in temples, in South Indian Hindu temples. It is also known as "Sadir." Hence, it is also known as "Dasiattam." This may be India's oldest classical dance style and was created in Tanjore and other South Indian regions, particularly Tamil Nadu (around 2000 years old). It genuinely adheres to Natya Shastra conventions. Sangeet Ratnakar and Abhinaya Darpan specify the mechanics and syntax of bodily movements.

Kathak:

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'Kathaa' 'Kahe' or 'Kathak' 'Kahave' is the graceful dance with North Indian origins; Kathakaar or Kathak is the storyteller. also referred to as "Natwari Nrutya." One of India's most endearing dance styles is kathak. The Ramayan, Mahabharat, and Krishna stories are central to Kathak's themes. Kathak also includes talks on a variety of topics. Braj's Raslila is quite similar to Kathak. A solo dance form exists, but perfectly timed ensemble compositions on themes win the audience over.

Odissi

The well-known dance style known as "Odissi" is performed in the tranquil environs of Shri Jagannath Temple in Odisha. The Natya Shastra, the oldest Sanskrit text, refers to it as Audramagdhi. This Bhakti-inspired dancing style was once performed at Jagannath temples as a means of worship to God. Thus, inside the temple, we discover numerous sculptures in various dance poses.

It contains both Lasya and Tandav. It has a graceful and captivating appearance that resembles ocean waves. Odissi is renowned for its performances of the amazing poetry of Jayadev.

Kuchipudi

The Kuchipudi is a well-known dance-drama style that has its roots in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh, where it was first performed in the third century BCE.

The current iteration of Kuchipudi was established and founded by Tirtha Narayana Yati and his student Siddhendra Yogi. Over time, Kuchipudi evolved into a solo dance style that is now performed by both men and women. Vaishnavism, Lord Krishna, Rukmini, Satyabhama, and other mythology are all themes found in kuchipudi. There are also several Bharatnatyam and Odissi specializations in Kuchipudi.

Kathakali

Kathakali is a stunning kind of Keralan traditional dance. Story or fable; performance and art; Kali. Its roots can be found in the classical Sanskrit dance drama "Kutiyattam" and the dance drama "Krishnattam," which tells the stories of the Hindu god Krishna. Ancient martial arts and athletic tradition have an impact on Kathakali's movements. Essentially, it is a dance-drama. Women are now welcome to participate in the male-dominated dancing style known as kathakali. The Kathakali dance form is renowned for its enormous, extravagant costumes, incredible makeup, face masks, and ornaments.

Kathakali is a classical dance that originated in Hindu principalities' theaters and palaces, unlike other classical dances. The duration of the customary performances was extensive, lasting from dusk till daybreak. The length of modern presentations is dictated by the program's time limit.

The Kerala Kalamandalam is the main center for Kathakali Artists. Kathakali has similarities with other dance forms like that of the Japanese ' Noh' and 'Kabuki' dance forms have similarities with Kathakali.

Mohiniattam

Mohiniattam is a sweet, serene, and delicate classical dance from Kerala that is inspired by Lasya. seen as Feminine, typically performed by women. The name "Mohini" refers to the alluring female manifestation of Lord Vishnu who ends evil forces. Mohiniattam is also associated with lovely dancers. Mohiniattam, the most elegant and stunning, is captivating. For hand motions and facial expressions, the text "Hastha Lakshanadeepika" is referenced, which contains a detailed description of mudras.

Manipuri

The Manipuri dance form named after its region of origin, 'Manipur' is also known as 'Jogai'. It was traditionally performed as a dance – drama on devotional songs, Manipuri showcases the love between Radha- Krishna through Raaslila. Manipuri is a combination of two culture- Indian and South-East Asian. The Manipuri dance form is categorized as Tandav or Lasya.

The beautifully soft and graceful dance form, Manipuri has significant movements of hands and upper body. A curvy body structure with a pleasant smile, decorative, shiny costumes, and ornaments, Manipuri is indeed a mesmerizing dance form. Another uniqueness of this dance form is that, while Ghunghroos (Bells) glorify the classical dances of India, they are not worn in Manipuri.

Sattriya

The national dance-drama of Assam is called Sattriya. Sangeet Natak Akademi designated Sattriya as Classical Dance in 2000. The present form of Sattriya is credited to Srimanta Sankaradev, a saint and scholar of the Bhakti Movement who lived in the 15th century. It is influenced by Vaishnavism. In Hindu monasteries known as "Sattra," the Vaishnav Bhakti

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Movement has been growing since the 15th century. The dance community halls (namghar) of monastery temples are known as sattras. Today, it is well-liked everywhere.

Recent Obituaries

1. Dr. Kanak Rele: A world-renowned Mohiniyattam dancer who died on February 22, 2023 at the age of 85 in Mumbai. Dr. Kanak Rele (1937 - 2023) was an Indian dancer, choreographer, and academic. She was best known as an exponent of Mohiniyattam. She was the founder-director of the Nalanda Dance Research Centre and the founder-principal of the Nalanda Nritya Kala Mahavidyalaya in Mumbai.
    Rele was born in Gujarat. She was introduced to Kathakali at a young age by the renowned Kathakali guru Panchali Karunakara Panikkar. She later took lessons in Mohiniyattam from Kalamandalam Rajalakshmi.

2. V Hari Moorthy: A talented dance costume designer and tailor who died on July 18, 2023 in Chennai at the age of 37.

3. Valmiki Banerjee: Veteran dancer-choreographer nonagenarian guru VALMIKI BANERJEE passed away on June 25, 2023 at his home in Delhi at 11.20am. He was 97. He taught nearly every early dancer of Delhi in the 1950s-1970s. He was a pioneer who loved dance and went to Kerala to learn from Guru Gopinath and hailing from Bengal, he taught ballet and tried long and hard to establish Rabindra Natyam, as a classical form. He was possessed with this cause. He tried very hard to get it recognition and acceptance as a 9th classical form but none of the agencies or institutions helped his cause. He leaves behind his daughters Nupur and Jhumur, sons Partho and Tanmoy and many students in three generations. His principal disciple and right hand, Nancy Sahu served him like a daughter in his end years.

4. Ramchandra Manjhi: A folk dance exponent who passed away on 7 September 2022. Ramchandra Manjhi was an Indian Bhojpuri folk dancer and theatre artist who is famous as a Launda Naach performer. He was one of the members of Bhikhari Thakur's drama team and was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2017 and was awarded India's fourth highest civilian award the Padma Shri in 2021.

5. Ron Smedley: A folk dance contributor who died at the age of 92.

6. Manipuri dancer and teacher RAJKUMAR ACHOUBA SINGH, also known as Achoubisana (born on 5 December 1936) passed away on August 19, 2023 at his Loklaobung residence. Singh, who is credited with several books and articles on Manipuri culture, was a former Principal of the Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy, Imphal, and Shree Shree Govindajee Temple Board 'Bor Senapati.' A holder of post graduate degrees in Raas and Lai Haraoba, he was also a visiting teacher at the Government Dance College, Imphal. He was honoured with the Padma Shri (2010) and the Manipur State Award.

7. Bharatanatyam dancer RATHI KARTHIGESU passed away on August 7, 2023 in Singapore, at the age of 87. Considered to be an early pioneer in the establishment of the Indian fine arts scene in Singapore, her legacy spans over more than three decades from the late 1950s. She briefly served as the Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society's vice-president. Known for her philanthropy, she donated a collection of rare Indian sculptures in dancing poses to the National Heritage Board of Singapore following which she received a Patron of Heritage award. She was a great support to emerging artistes and she shared her talent through benefit dances across countries.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

211. How many Classical dance forms are there in India as per the records of the Ministry of Culture?
     (a) Six   (b) Seven
     (c) Eight   (d) Nine

212. Which of the following Rasanubhuti stands for disgust?
     (a) Adbhoot   (b) Bhayanak
     (c) Bhibhats   (d) Hasya

213. Which of the following dance forms originated in Andhra Pradesh?
     (a) Kuchipudi   (b) Bharatnatyam
     (c) Sattriya   (d) Kathakali

214. Dr. Kanak Rele practiced which of the following dance forms?
     (a) Odissi   (b) Bharatnatyam
     (c) Kathakali   (d) Kathak

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215. Who among the following was a Bharatnatyam dancer?
   (a) Rajkumar Achouba Singh
   (b) Kanak Rele
   (c) Rathi Karthigesu
   (d) None of the above.

SOUTH CHINA SEA ISSUE-PHILIPPINES

Why in News?
The Philippines has accused China of several actions in the South China Sea, including:
- Installing a "floating barrier" that prevents Filipinos from fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- Blocking the Philippines from resupplying marines on the BRP Sierra Madre, a military outpost in the South China Sea.
- Using a water cannon to block a Philippine vessel.
- Carrying out "dangerous maneuvers" in a disputed area.

The South China Sea Dispute
Contesting Island Claims:
- China, Taiwan, and Vietnam each have a claim to the Paracel Islands.
- China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, and the Philippines all assert their ownership over the Spratly Islands.
- Philippines, China, and Taiwan all claim ownership of the Scarborough Shoal.
   China claims that since 2010, it has created artificial islets out of uninhabited islets in order to bring them under UNCLOS (examples include Haven Reef, Johnson South Reef, and Fiery Cross Reef).
   By altering their physical land features, China has been altering the size and structure of the reefs. Additionally, it has built airstrips on Parcel and Spratly.
   Chinese fishing fleets work for the government as paramilitaries rather than as commercial fishing companies.
   The US strongly condemns China's construction of artificial islands and refer to it as erecting a "great wall of sand." Other problems include:
- The South China Sea's unclear geographic boundaries.
- Disagreement over the methods of resolving disputes.
- The issue is intricate and multifaceted due to the various histories of remote, largely deserted oceanic archipelagoes.

History of the Dispute
Despite historical records showing that France had control over some of those islands before their colonial possessions fell into the hands of the Japanese, the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy claimed that these islands were unclaimed when they had used several of them for military purposes at the height of World War II. The 1951 Treaty of San Francisco required Imperial Japan to cede all land it had seized as a result of the war. Throughout the 1951 treaty negotiations, the People's Republic of China raised a number of claims about the islands.
Chinese claims in the South China sea are described in part by the nine-dash line. Originally an "eleven-dashed-line," this line was first indicated by the Kuomintang government of the Republic of China in 1947, for its claims to the South China Sea. When the Communist Party of China took over mainland China and formed the People's Republic of China in 1949, the line was adopted and revised to nine dashes/dots, as endorsed by Zhou Enlai. China's 1958 declaration described China's claims in the South China Sea islands based on the nine-dotted line map. The legacy of the nine-dash line is viewed by some PRC government officials, and by the PRC military, as providing historical support for their claims to the South China Sea.
The Geneva Accords of 1954, which ended the First Indo-China War, gave South Vietnam control of the Vietnamese territories south of the 17th Parallel, which included the islands in the Paracels and Spratlys. Two years later the North Vietnamese government claimed that the People's Republic of China is the lawful claimant of the islands, while South Vietnam took control of the Paracel Islands.

The Position of India
- India has insisted that it is not a party to the SCS dispute and that its presence there is not intended to restrain China but rather to protect its own economic interests, particularly its demands for energy security.
- India has had to reconsider its stance on the matter as a result of China's growing power to make decisions and increase its influence in the South China Sea.

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- India has begun internationalizing issues in the Indo-Pacific region as a crucial component of the Act East Policy to counter China's threatening strategies in SCS.
- In addition, India is forging close ties with Southeast Asia by drawing on its Buddhist heritage.
- In order to secure maritime lines of communication (SLOC), India has also stationed its fleet alongside Vietnam in the South China maritime, denying China any room for assertiveness.
- Additionally, India is a key player in the Indo-Pacific storyline and a member of the Quad initiative (US, Japan, Australia, and India). China sees these activities as part of its containment plan.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

216. Which of the following countries has recently entered into a dispute with China concerning the artificial barrier created by China that prevents the natives of that country from fishing into the EEZ?
    (a) Vietnam   (b) India
    (c) Brunei   (d) Philippines

217. Which of the following is not a claimant to the Parcel Islands in the South China Sea?
    (a) Vietnam   (b) China
    (c) Philippines   (d) Taiwan

218. When was the Treaty of San Francisco signed?
    (a) 1947   (b) 1949
    (c) 1950   (d) 1951

219. What is the term used by the US to describe the assertion of China in the SCS by way of creation of Artificial Islands?
    (a) Great wall of sand
    (b) Giant wall of sand
    (c) Giant wall of reef
    (d) Great wall of China

220. Which of the following countries is a member of the QUAD initiative?
    (a) Japan   (b) China
    (c) US   (d) India

RBI TO DISCONTINUE I-CRR

Why in News?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) discontinued the Incremental Cash Reserve Ratio (I-CRR) in three stages, beginning September 9, 2023. The RBI released 25% of the I-CRR on September 9 and September 23, with the entire I-CRR removed by October 7.

The RBI prescribed the I-CRR as a temporary measure last month to impound banks' surplus liquidity. The decision to discontinue the I-CRR came after a careful assessment of current and evolving liquidity conditions in the financial market.

Schedule for releasing amount under I-CRR

- 25% of funds maintained by lenders under the I-CRR on September 9, 2023.
- Another 25% on September 23, 2023.
- The balance of 50% on October 7, 2023.

What is I-CRR?

Incremental Cash Reserve Ratio (ICRR) is a mechanism that central banks use to regulate cash reserves when there is excess liquidity in the financial system. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) implemented ICRR in August 2023.

ICRR is an additional measure to the standard Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR). CRR is a minimum fraction of customer deposits that commercial banks must hold as reserves in cash or as deposits with the central bank.

The RBI required all scheduled banks to maintain an ICRR of 10% on the increase in their Net Demand and Time Liabilities (NDTL) between May 19 and July 28, 2023. The RBI discontinued ICRR in a phased manner.

The RBI previously used ICRR in 2016 when the system was flooded with higher liquidity due to demonetization.

What is CRR?

- The CRR is the ratio of the amount of money that must be retained in reserves to all deposits made to the bank.

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- All banks in India must deposit CRR funds with the RBI, with the exception of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and Local Area Banks (LABs).
- According to the RBI Act of 1934, RRBs and LABs are exempt from keeping CRR with the RBI. They must, however, keep CRR on hand for themselves in the form of cash, gold, or unencumbered authorized securities.
- Banks cannot utilize the CRR funds for investment reasons, they cannot lend the funds to businesses or private borrowers, and they cannot get interest on the funds.

Current CRR in India
- The Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) in India in 2023 is 4.5%.
- The CRR is a key part of the RBI's monetary policy.
- It's the portion of deposits that banks must keep with the RBI.
- The CRR has been 4.5% since May 21, 2022.
- The CRR averaged 5.18% from 1999 to 2023. It reached an all-time high of 10.50% in March 1999 and a record low of 3.00% in April 2020.

How does ICRR affect the banks?
CRR can tie up bank resources and put upward pressure on market rates. The RBI Governor said that the ICRR measure would absorb over Rs 1 lakh crore of excess liquidity from the banking system.
ICRR can affect banks in the following ways:
- Lending capacity - A higher CRR means banks must maintain more cash with the central bank, which reduces their lending capacity.
- Money supply - An increased CRR decreases money supply and increases interest rates on home loans and car loans.
- Liquidity - The banking system's liquidity temporarily turned into a deficit on August 21, 2023, as a result of the ICRR mandate.

About the Reserve Bank of India
In compliance with the guidelines of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, the Reserve Bank of India was founded on April 1st, 1935.
The Reserve Bank's Central Office was initially built in Calcutta but was eventually relocated permanently to Mumbai in 1937. The Governor sits at the Central Office, which is also where policies are created.
The Reserve Bank was initially privately owned, but since being nationalized in 1949, the Indian government has full ownership of the institution.
- Current governor of RBI – Shaktikanta Das
- First Governor of RBI – Sir Osborne Smith
- First Indian Governor of RBI – CD Deshmukh

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

221. In how many stages has the RBI decided to discontinue the I-CRR?
    (a) Two
    (b) Three
    (c) Five
    (d) Six

222. When was the I-CRR last used by the Reserve Bank of India?
    (a) 2012
    (b) 2014
    (c) 2016
    (d) 2019

223. What is the CRR in India for the year 2023?
    (a) 2%
    (b) 3.7%
    (c) 4.1%
    (d) 4.5%

224. When was the Reserve Bank of India founded?
    (a) 1919
    (b) 1934
    (c) 1935
    (d) 1947

225. Who is the current governor of the RBI?
    (a) Amitabh Kant
    (b) Shaktikanta Das
    (c) CD Deskhmukh
    (d) None of the above.

INDIA'S FISCAL DEFICIT

Why in News?

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India's fiscal deficit was 6.06 lakh crore rupees in April-July 2023, which is 33.9% of annual estimates. This is a 78% increase from the previous year. The government's target is to reduce the deficit to 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26.

In 2022-23, the deficit was expected to be 6.4% of GDP. In 2021-22, it was 6.7% of GDP. The government's goal is to narrow the deficit to 5.9% of GDP in the current fiscal year.

What is Fiscal Deficit?
- The difference between the government's total outlays and its total receipts (excluding of borrowings) is known as the fiscal deficit.
- It is stated as a percentage of the nation's GDP and serves as a measure of how much the government must borrow to fund its activities.
  The government's deficit for April-July 2023 was 34% of the budget estimate.

Advantages and Disadvantages
- Encouraging the government to use underused resources, which can create jobs and increase earnings.
- Helping a slow economy, especially if the money is spent on productive assets that create investment and job opportunities.
- Stabilizing the economy during economic downturns.
  However, long-term deficits can harm the economy's overall expansion. Other disadvantages of deficits include:
- Lower economic growth rates
- Devaluation of the domestic currency
- Reduced company share value
- Putting a company out of business

Types of Fiscal Deficit
1. Budgetary deficit: The difference between all receipts and expenses in both revenue and capital account of the government.
2. Budget deficit: The excess of total expenditure over total revenues.
3. Revenue deficit: When revenue expenditure is reduced by revenue receipts.
4. Primary deficit: When the fiscal deficit is reduced by the payment of interest.
5. Cyclical deficits: When an economy is not performing well because of a down business cycle.

Ways of Financing a Fiscal Deficit
- Borrowing from the public and foreign governments
- Withdrawing cash balances from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- Borrowing from the RBI

India's Forex Reserves
India's foreign exchange (forex) reserves were $590.702 billion on September 29, 2023. This was a decrease of $2.335 billion from the previous week.

India's forex reserves reached an all-time high of $642.453 billion on September 8, 2021. In June 2021, India's forex reserves crossed the $600 billion mark for the first time.

India's forex reserves are made up of:
- Foreign currency assets
- Gold
- Special drawing rights (SDRs)
- Reserve tranche position

The tea industry is India's largest foreign exchange earner.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

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226. What has been India's Fiscal deficit in the month of April-Juli 2023 as a percentage of the annual estimates?
(a) 21.3%   (b) 33.9%
(c) 48.6%   (d) 64.2%

227. What is the term used for 'The excess of total expenditure over total revenues'?.
(a) Budgetary Deficit
(b) Budget Deficit
(c) Revenue Deficit
(d) Cyclic Defict

228. In which of the following years did India's forex reserves reach at an all-time high?
(a) 2016   (b) 2019
(c) 2021   (d) 2022

229. Which Industry is India's largest foreign exchange earner?
(a) Spices   (b) Cotton
(c) Coal   (d) Tea

230. To what extent does the government plan on decreasing the fiscal deficit for the current year?
(a) 5.9%   (b) 6.4%
(c) 6.7%   (d) 7.8%

18TH G20 SUMMIT IN NEW DELHI

Why in News?
The 18th G20 Summit was held in New Delhi, India on September 9–10, 2023. It was the first time India hosted the G20 Leaders' Summit. The summit's theme was "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", which means "The world is one family".

About the Summit
- "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," which translates to "The world is one family," served as the summit's theme.
- The Global Biofuel Alliance was established, and the G20 Leaders' New Delhi Declaration addressed a wide range of global challenges, including the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, sustainable development, food security, and these tensions.

Key Outcomes of the Summit
- Admitting the African Union as a permanent member of the G20
- Committing to mainstream Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)
- Implementing sustainable energy transitions
- Providing sustainable finance
- Reaffirming the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Addressing plastic pollution
- Preserving the ocean-based economy
- Emphasizing digital infrastructure
- Highlighting the human suffering and negative impacts of the war in Ukraine

Central Agenda included
- Economic and financial sectors.
- Climate action and energy transitions.
- Technological transformation through Digital Public Infrastructure.
- Reform of international financial institutions, trade, and taxation.
- Securing gender equality and empowerment of "all".

The summit was hosted by the Indian G20 presidency. Prime Minister Narendra Modi handed over the G20 Presidency gavel to Lula da Silva, the President of Brazil.

Global Biofuel Alliance
The Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA) is an initiative by India as the G20 Chair. The GBA's goal is to accelerate the global adoption of biofuels. The GBA aims to do this by:
- Facilitating technology advancements
- Intensifying the use of sustainable biofuels
- Shaping robust standard setting and certification.

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- Facilitating collaboration.
- Supporting sustainable biofuel development
- Sharing policy insights
- Building capacity
- Reshaping perception
- Boosting global trade

The GBA was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 9. It gathered support from 19 countries and international organizations.

The GBA brings together biofuel producers and consumers to strengthen global biofuels trade. The GBA was first proposed at India Energy Week in February.

IMEC corridor

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is a planned economic corridor that connects India with markets in the Middle East and Europe. The IMEC was announced at the 2023 G20 Summit. It represents half the global economy and 40% of the world's population.

The IMEC comprises two distinct routes:

- East Corridor: Connects India to the Arabian Gulf
- Northern Corridor: Connects the Arabian Gulf to Europe

The IMEC is significant from an infrastructure and connectivity perspective, as well as from a geopolitical angle.

The IMEC was established by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Governments of:

India, The US, Saudi Arabia, The European Union, The UAE, France, Germany, Italy.

Some say that the IMEC is not close to being a "rival" to China's Belt and Road.

About G20

- The European Union (EU), and 19 other nations make up the G20, sometimes known as the Group of Twenty.
- Most of the world's main economies, both industrialized and developing countries, are represented by the G20, which also comprises 75-80% of global trade, two-thirds of the world's population, and nearly half of its land area.
- In 1999, the G20 was established in response to various global economic crises.
- It has met at least once a year since 2008, with summits attended by the heads of state or government, the finance minister, the foreign minister, and other top officials from each member; the European Union is represented by the European Commission and the European Central Bank.
- The G20 doesn't have a permanent staff or secretariat.
- For the duration of their term, the current chair creates a temporary secretariat to oversee the group's activities and plan meetings.
- India and Brazil will host the summits in 2023 and 2024, respectively.
- The heads of a number of other international organizations and forums attend G20 meetings in addition to these 20 members.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

231. How many times has India hosted the G20 summit before 2023?
(a) None
(b) Two
(c) Three
(d) Five

232. Which of the following entity has been admitted as the permanent member in the G20 in its 18th Summit?
(a) European Union
(b) Australia
(c) Brazil
(d) African Union

233. Which of the following nations took over the Presidency of the next G20 summit from India?

(a) France
(b) United Kingdom
(c) Brazil
(d) None of the above

234. Which of the following countries initiated the Global Bio-fuel alliance?
(a) India
(b) US
(c) Germany
(d) Brazil

235. The G20 was established in which of the following years?
(a) 1995
(b) 1999
(c) 2001
(d) 2008

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20TH ASEAN-INDIA SUMMIT AND THE 18TH EAST ASIA SUMMIT

Why in News?

The 20th ASEAN-India Summit and the 18th East Asia Summit (EAS) were both held in Jakarta on September 7, 2023. The Indian Prime Minister attended both summits.

About the Summit

- The summit was chaired by Joko Widodo, the President of Indonesia.
- The summit was attended by ASEAN member states.
- The summit's key highlights included:

Establishing a multi-modal connectivity and economic corridor that links South-East Asia-India-West Asia-Europe.

Offering to share India's Digital Public Infrastructure Stack with ASEAN partners.

Key Highlights of the Summit

- Establishing a multi-modal connectivity and economic corridor that links South-East Asia, India, West Asia, and Europe
- Offering to share India's Digital Public Infrastructure Stack with ASEAN partners
- The Prime Minister of India presented a 12-point proposal to enhance India-ASEAN collaboration
- Encouraging innovation in Blue Economy through activities such as holding hackathons, start-up festivals, and joint research
- Encouraging sustainable and eco-tourism while promoting cruise and sea-based tourism
- The Prime Minister highlighted the significance of a free and open Indo-Pacific and the importance of amplifying the voices of the Global South
- The 18th East Asia Summit
- The summit was attended by eighteen participating countries, including ten ASEAN member states.
- The summit is the only leaders-led mechanism for dialogue and cooperation on strategic matters in the Indo-Pacific.

The 18 members of the East Asean Summit include:

ASEAN countries

Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Dialogue partners

Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia, and the United States.

The United States and the Russian Federation joined the EAS at the 6th summit in 2011.

India and EAS

- India was a founding member of the EAS in 2005.
- The first EAS was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on December 14, 2005.
- India has participated in all EAS meetings and activities.
- The Indian Prime Minister has attended all EAS summits.

About EAS

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) led the creation of the EAS in 2005.
- In the Indo-Pacific, the EAS is the sole leader-led conference that brings together all significant partners to talk about crucial political, security, and economic concerns.
- The openness, inclusivity, respect for international law, ASEAN centrality, and ASEAN's function as the driving force are the guiding principles of the EAS.
- Mahathir Mohamad, the prime minister of Malaysia at the time, first suggested an East Asia Grouping in 1991.
- On December 14, 2005, the first summit took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

About ASEAN

- In response to escalating tensions among the post-colonial states of the Asia-Pacific, a regional organization called the Association of Southeast Asian Nations was founded to advance political and social stability.

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- "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" is the ASEAN motto.
- ASEAN Day is observed on August 8.
- Jakarta, Indonesia hosts the ASEAN Secretariat.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

236. Where was the 20th ASEAN summit and 18th EAS Summit hosted?
    (a) Bali   (b) Jakarta
    (c) Paris   (d) New Delhi

237. How many members are there in the ASEAN?
    (a) 8   (b) 9
    (c) 10   (d) 11

238. Which of the following is not a dialogue partner in the East Asia Summit?
    (a) Australia
    (b) New Zealand
    (c) Malaysia
    (d) The Republic of Korea

239. When is the ASEAN Day observed?
    (a) August 8   (b) August 22
    (c) September 9   (d) October 10

240. In which of the years did the first East Asia Summit take place?
    (a) 2002   (b) 2005
    (c) 2007   (d) 2010

ADITYA L1

Why in news?
Aditya-L1 is the first Indian space based observatory to study the Sun from a halo orbit around first Sun-Earth Lagrangian point (L1), which is located roughly 1.5 million km from earth.

What is Aditya L1 mission?
- Aditya-L1 is a satellite dedicated to the comprehensive study of the Sun.
- It has 7 distinct payloads developed, all developed indigenously. Five by ISRO and two by Indian academic institutes in collaboration with ISRO.
- Aditya in Sanskrit means the Sun. L1 here refers to Lagrange Point 1 of the Sun-Earth system. For common understanding, L1 is a location in space where the gravitational forces of two celestial bodies, such as the Sun and Earth, are in equilibrium.
- This allows an object placed there to remain relatively stable with respect to both celestial bodies. The spacecraft shall be placed in a halo orbit around the Lagrange point 1 (L1) of the Sun-Earth system, which is about 1.5 million km from the Earth.
- A satellite placed in the halo orbit around the L1 point has the major advantage of continuously viewing the Sun without any occultation/eclipses. This will provide a greater advantage of observing the solar activities and its effect on space weather in real time.
- The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C57) successfully launched the Aditya-L1 spacecraft, from the Second Launch Pad of Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota.
- After a flight duration of 63 minutes and 20 seconds, Aditya-L1 spacecraft was successfully injected into an elliptical orbit of 235x19500 km around the Earth.

Objectives
The major science objectives of Aditya-L1 mission are:
- Study of Solar upper atmospheric (chromosphere and corona) dynamics.
- Study of chromospheric and coronal heating, physics of the partially ionized plasma, initiation of the coronal mass ejections, and flares
- Observe the in-situ particle and plasma environment providing data for the study of particle dynamics from the Sun.

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- Physics of solar corona and its heating mechanism.
- Diagnostics of the coronal and coronal loops plasma: Temperature, velocity and density.
- Development, dynamics and origin of CMEs.
- Identify the sequence of processes that occur at multiple layers (chromosphere, base and extended corona) which eventually leads to solar eruptive events.
- Magnetic field topology and magnetic field measurements in the solar corona .
- Drivers for space weather (origin, composition and dynamics of solar wind .

Aditya L1 Payloads
- The Aditya-L1 mission carries a suit of seven scientific payloads to carry out systematic study of the Sun.
- The Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC) studies the solar corona and dynamics of Coronal Mass Ejections.
- The Solar Ultra-violet Imaging Telescope (SUIT) payload images the Solar Photosphere and Chromosphere in near Ultra-violet (UV) and also measures the solar irradiance variations in near UV.
- The Aditya Solar wind Particle EXperiment (ASPEX) and Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA) payloads study the solar wind and energetic ions, as well as their energy distribution.
- The Solar Low Energy X-ray Spectrometer (SoLEXS) and The High Energy L1 Orbiting X-ray Spectrometer (HEL1OS) studies the X-ray flares from the Sun over a wide X-ray energy range.
- The Magnetometer payload is capable of measuring interplanetary magnetic fields at the L1 point.
- The science payloads of Aditya-L1 are indigenously developed by different laboratories in the country.
- The VELC instrument is developed at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore;
- SUIT instrument at Inter University Centre for Astronomy & Astrophysics , Pune; ASPEX instrument at Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad;
- PAPA payload at Space Physics Laboratory, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Thiruvananthapuram;
- SoLEXS and HEL1OS payloads at U R Rao Satellite Centre, Bangalore, and the Magnetometer payload at the Laboratory for Electro Optics Systems, Bangalore.
- All the payloads are developed with the close collaboration of various centres of ISRO.

Recent mission by ISRO
- Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-on mission to Chandrayaan-2 to demonstrate end-to-end capability in safe landing and roving on the lunar surface.
- It consists of Lander and Rover configuration. It will be launched by LVM3 from SDSC SHAR, Sriharikota.
- The propulsion module will carry the lander and rover configuration till 100 km lunar orbit.
- The propulsion module has Spectro-polarimetry of Habitable Planet Earth (SHAPE) payload to study the spectral and Polari metric measurements of Earth from the lunar orbit.
- Chandrayaan-3 is India's third lunar mission and second attempt at achieving a soft landing on the moon's surface.
- Being the first mission to soft-land on the lunar south pole, an area that has never been explored, Chandrayaan-3 has made history.
- The mission's objectives were to show off rover mobility, a gentle and secure lunar landing, and in-situ scientific research.
- India is now one of just a handful of nations to have successfully landed on the moon, joining the US, Russia, and China.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

241. Which of the following was ISRO's first space based astronomy mission ?
(a) Chandrayaan 1 (b) Mangalyaan
(c) Aditya L1 (d) Astrosat

242. The spacecraft in Aditya L1 mission carries how many payloads?
(a) two (b) three
(c) Seven (d) Six

243. The spacecraft of the Aditya L1 mission is to be placed in a halo orbit around which point of the Sun-Earth system, which is about 1.5 million km from the Earth?
(a) Lagrange point (b) stellar point
(c) Lengrage point (d) cosmic point

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244. Which of the following launch vehicle was used to launch the Aditya L1 mission?
    (a) PSLV C- 57
    (b) PSLV C- 43
    (c) GSLV MK III
    (d) GSLV-F11

245. Which of the following countries has not successfully landed on the moon?
    (a) India
    (b) B.USA
    (c) Russia
    (d) Japan

GLOBAL STOCKTAKE REPORT

Why in news?
Ahead of the just concluded G-20 summit, that saw several world leaders converge in New Delhi, the United Nations climate secretariat made public a 'synthesis report' on the results of three meetings held so far to discuss progress achieved by countries in achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement of 2015.

What is Global Stocktake report?
- The Paris Agreement's Global Stocktake process is designed to assess the global response to the climate crisis every five years, with the first-ever Stocktake slated to conclude during this year's UN climate conference (COP28) in December.
- The report released by Intergovernmental panel on climate change evaluates the world's progress on slashing greenhouse gas emissions, building resilience to climate impacts, and securing finance and support to address the climate crisis.
- The synthesis report ties into a larger exercise called the 'global stocktake,' that is expected to take place once in five years.
- In 2015, when countries committed in Paris to keep global temperatures from rising beyond 2 degrees Celsius by the end of the century and "as far as possible" below 1.5 degrees Celsius, they also agreed to periodically review, or take stock of efforts, made by individual countries in containing greenhouse gases and transitioning their fossil-fuel dependent energy systems to renewable sources.
- The first report this year is expected to significantly influence discussions in November when country representatives converge in Dubai for the 28th edition of the UN climate Conference of Parties (COP) in November.
- While countries have laid out their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), they are expected to — but not obliged to — increase their ambitions every five years.
- While the latest NDC were submitted in 2020, a stocktake also aims to push countries to set higher targets before the next NDCs are publicised in 2025.

What are the findings of the report?
- The 45-page report lays out 17 'key findings' that overall suggests that the world is not on track to achieve Paris Agreement targets, though there was still a "rapidly narrowing" window for countries to get their act together
- In terms of new information, the synthesis report isn't a significant update on the UN synthesis report of 2022, released ahead of COP 27 in Egypt, where the NDCs of 166 countries were analysed to conclude that they were inadequate to meet Paris-agreed targets.
- The United Nations Emissions Gap Report, also released last year, reported that 23 billion tonnes of CO_2 were required to be cut to keep emissions in line with Paris agreements, This too has been highlighted in the latest synthesis report.
- These 17 headline statements say that the Paris Agreement has galvanised countries into setting goals and signalling the urgency of the climate crisis.
- It stated that much more ambition was needed to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 43% by 2030 and further by 60% in 2035 and reach net zero CO_2 emissions by 2050 globally.

India and climate change
- India at the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Glasgow, United Kingdom, expressed to intensify its climate action by presenting to the world five nectar elements (Panchamrit) of India's climate action.

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- This update to India's existing NDC translates the 'Panchamrit' announced at COP 26 into enhanced climate targets. The update is also a step towards achieving India's long term goal of reaching net-zero by 2070.
- Earlier, India submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to UNFCCC on October 2, 2015.
- The 2015 NDC comprised eight goals; three of these have quantitative targets upto 2030 namely, cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil sources to reach 40%; reduce the emissions intensity of GDP by 33 to 35 percent compared to 2005 levels and creation of additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO_2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover.

As per the updated NDC, India now stands committed to reduce Emissions Intensity of its GDP by 45 percent by 2030, from 2005 level and achieve about 50 percent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

246. Conference of Parties 28 which is to take place in December in which city?
    (a) Dubai
    (b) Geneva
    (c) Stockholm
    (d) Budapest

247. Nationally Determined Contributions were last submitted by the countries in which year?
    (a) 2018
    (b) 2019
    (c) 2020
    (d) 2021

248. The Global Staketake Report is released by which environmental organisation? (current affairs, environment – climate change, reports, easy)
    (a) Intergovernmental panel on climate change
    (b) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
    (c) Climate Action Network
    (d) Greenpeace

249. Which of the following is the not one of the top four emitters of green house gases according to the Emission gap report 2022?
    (a) China
    (b) Russia
    (c) India
    (d) European Union

250. Which protocol/ convention has been superseded by the Paris Agreement that was signed in the year 2015?
    (a) Montreal Protocol
    (b) Kyoto Protocol
    (c) Stockholm convention
    (d) Vienna convention

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