

# **Current News Analysis**

**05-03-2017**

## **A. GS1 Related**

## **B. GS2 Related**

## **C. GS3 Related**

### **1. In major infrastructure push, Centre builds a civilian airport and two major bridges across Lohit river in Arunachal**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/by-air-or-road-tezu-is-now-a-vantage-point/article17409539.ece>

*Category: Indian Economy*

*Topic: Infrastructure*

#### **Key Points:**

- In an effort to firm up India's strategic space, the mountainous regions of Arunachal Pradesh are set to acquire all-weather connectivity.
- In a major infrastructure push, the Centre builds a civilian airport and two major bridges across Lohit river in Arunachal

#### **Significance of these measures**

- The improvements in connectivity is significant in view of the statements by Beijing's officials asserting China's territorial claims over Arunachal Pradesh.
- Former Special Representative of China to the border talks with India, Dai Bingguo said, "The disputed territory in the eastern sector of the China-India boundary, including Tawang, is inalienable from China's Tibet in terms of cultural background and administrative jurisdiction,"

#### **Strategic preparedness**

- The new bridges will also provide the necessary support for the strategic preparedness for the forces in the mountains, which will be critical for India where the new Mountain Strike Corps is likely to focus.
- The planned high altitude airfields in the Himalayan range would also be helped by the enhanced connectivity of Tezu.

### **2. Kaziranga in storm over policing of poaching**

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/kaziranga-in-storm-over-policing-of-poaching/article17410791.ece>

Category: Environment and Ecology

Topic: Conservation

**Key Points:**

**A brief note on Kaziranga National Park:**

- Kaziranga National Park is located about 200 km to the north-east of Guwahati and in the heart of Assam.
- It is a world heritage site.
- It is spread over 430 sq km.
- It is home to two-thirds of the entire Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) population.

**A note on the Indian Rhino**

- The Indian rhinoceros, or greater one-horned rhino, is categorised as 'vulnerable' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its 2008 red list.
- This is an improvement from its status in 1986, when it was considered 'endangered.'

**Why recently in the news?**

- The reserve has been caught in a controversy over a documentary made by the BBC.
- Titled *Killing for Conservation*, the documentary by its South Asia correspondent Justin Rowlatt talks about the "dark secrets" of conservation at the park and points out that the forest guards have been given powers "to shoot and kill" poachers. The authorities of the park have denied this allegation.

**Government's Position**

- The Government has taken strong exception to the documentary and even describing it as "grossly erroneous reporting."
- The Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change has urged the Ministry of External Affairs to revoke the visas of Mr. Rowlatt and his crew and prevent "their further entry into India for a period not less than five years."
- An official memorandum from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), on February 27, advised the wildlife wing of the Ministry to "disallow filming permission to the BBC in any protected areas of the country for a period of five years."
- According to the NTCA, the violations by the journalist involve "filming after sunset," dishonouring the undertaking provided, besides "deviating from the original synopsis submitted to the MEA and its authority."

**Concluding Remarks**

- The park has been one of the biggest success stories of conservation in India. From barely 75 in 1905, the population of the Indian rhino now stands at 2,400.

- Conservation efforts are more than a century old, since the park was declared a 'reserve forest' in 1905.
- Even before the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, was notified with its provisions for setting up national parks, the Kaziranga National Park was conceived by the Assam National Park Act of 1968.
- It was set up on February 11, 1974, and UNESCO declared it a world heritage site in 1985. It became a Tiger Reserve in 2007.
- Importantly, Forest officials, say conservation of the rhino poses a major challenge, with poachers looking for every opportunity to kill the animal for its horn, which commands a high price in China and West Asia.

### **3. Now, drones to be used for monitoring tigers**

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/now-drones-to-be-used-for-monitoring-tigers/article17408388.ece>

*Category: Environment and Ecology*

*Topic: Conservation*

#### **Key Points:**

- Conservation drones will soon hover over select tiger reserves of the country, marking the beginning of significant technological intervention in wildlife conservation.

#### **How will the drones help?**

- Though intended primarily for the monitoring of tiger population in the reserves, the unmanned aircraft would collect and transmit visual data on animal movements, poaching activities and instances of forest fire from inaccessible forest terrains on a real-time basis.
- The drones could be used for the management of habitats and species.
- Drones will also collect information about poaching activities and forest fires

#### **Recent Usage of Drones**

- Drones were recently used for conservation programmes in the forests of Assam and Madhya Pradesh.
- Drones were used in Panna Tiger Reserve.

### **4. Is TB bacterium not on deadly superbug list?**

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/crossing-a-bridge/article17403329.ece>

*Category: Science and Technology*

*Topic: Developments*

#### **Key Points:**

#### **Some important statistics**

- Of the estimated 10.4 million new tuberculosis cases globally in 2015, nearly 0.5 million were multi-drug-resistant (MDR).
- India accounted for 2.84 million new cases in 2015, of which 79,000 had MDR TB. There were 1.4 million TB deaths worldwide in 2015.
- For the first time in nearly 50 years, two new drugs, bedaquiline and delamanid, were approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for MDR-TB cases.

## **Recent Developments**

- A WHO list, released on February 27, of drug-resistant bacteria that pose the “greatest threat to human health” and for which new drugs are desperately needed, has no mention of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacterium that causes TB.
- This is the first time that the WHO has released such a list and the prime objective of listing the “priority pathogens,” in its own words, is to “guide and promote research and development of new antibiotics... and to address the growing global resistance to antimicrobial medicines.”
- The list is divided into three categories — critical, high and medium — based on the urgency of need for new drugs.

## **Why wasn't TB included?**

- According to the WHO, TB bacterium was not included in the list as it is already targeted by other “dedicated programmes.”

## **D. GS4 Related**

## **E. Important Editorials**

### **PIB**

#### **1. NDMA conducts training conference on capacity building for Disaster Management**

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=158830>

*Category: Disaster Management*

*Topic: NDMA*

##### **Key Points:**

- In its efforts to enhance disaster preparedness, mitigation and response measures by building capacity at the local level through engagement with the paramilitary and armed forces, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) conducted a training conference here today on capacity building of the various organisations of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and other stakeholders.
- Lt. Gen. N. C. Marwah (Retd.), Member, NDMA, who chaired the meeting, said it is very important for NDMA and CAPFs to work together for disaster preparedness and mitigation. Underlining the fact that the capabilities of our forces are not being optimally utilised, he urged them to proactively engage with the local administration and help in strengthening the overall capacity of the first responders.
- Sharing their experiences on Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes conducted by their respective organisations, participants highlighted the need for standardization of courses across CAPFs. They also underlined the need to upgrade training equipment and modernise training centres. Besides the need for maintaining a database of such trainers, a detailed deployment plan to fully utilise their capabilities for further trainings was also emphasised upon.

## 2. **MSTC supports the Promotion of Agri-Forest Produce of the North Eastern Region**

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=158824>

Category: Polity and Governance

Topic: Government Initiatives

### **Key Points:**

- The Minister of State (Steel) Shri Vishnu Deo Sai inaugurated the Workshop on MSTC's vision for North East Region for Promotion of Agri-Forest Produce in Guwahati.
- Speaking at the workshop, the Minister said that the North-East Region is endowed with a climate for rich agri and forest produce but the growers do not have any market access for their produce and are compelled to be exploited by middle men leading to a very pitiable situation for them.
- The situation is also aggravated due to the lack of proper logistic supports in the region.
- The Minister appreciated MSTC's vision towards developing an eco system bringing all the enabling partners such as North-Eastern Regional Agriculture and Marketing Corporation Ltd. (NERAMAC), Central Railside Warehousing Corporation (CRWC), Packaging Company and Inland Waterways Authority (IWA).
- The above ecosystem will not only improve the financial status of the growers but also prevent the crops from colossal wastage and make niche products available to the rest of the country.
- This collaborative effort may play an important role as envisaged in the Government Policy for the development of the north-east region.
- In order to provide direct market access to the growers of the North-East region and also effective co-ordination and required services amongst the above agencies, MSTC has recently opened an office at Guwahati, which will be a nodal point to cater to the needs of all the sister states of the North-East.
- MSTC, a PSU under Ministry of Steel has also been rendering services to the oil marketing companies and paramilitary forces including defence in this region since long.
- In addition, MSTC is eyeing on all the State Government Departments of North-East states to provide e-Commerce services.
- To increase its presence and services in the North East Region, the Minister of State for Steel has advised MSTC to waive off the registration fees charged to the new buyers in the North East Region to increase its buyer base and help the region in reaping the benefits of the e-commerce services.

## **F. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn:**

### **1. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn**

Mycobacterium tuberculosis

Kaziranga National Park

### **2. BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGS IN NEWS**

BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGANISATIONS IN NEWS	Links to Refer

### 3. Tags

Mycobacterium tuberculosis

Kaziranga National Park

#### Practice Questions

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2017

Category: Environment and Ecology

Topic: Conservation

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

1] Consider the following statements regarding 'Kaziranga National Park',

1] Kaziranga National Park is located about 200 km to the north-east of Guwahati and in the heart of Assam.

2] It is a world heritage site.

3] It is home to two-thirds of the entire Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) population.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 Only
- b) 2 and 3 Only
- c) 1 and 2 Only
- d) All, 1, 2 and 3

Ans d) All, 1, 2 and 3

All the statements are correct.

Kaziranga National Park is located about 200 km to the north-east of Guwahati and in the heart of Assam. It is a world heritage site. It is home to two-thirds of the entire Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) population.

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2017  
Category: Environment and Ecology  
Topic: Conservation  
Source: The Hindu  
Difficulty level: Medium  
Type: Factual

2] 'Panna Tiger Reserve' was recently in the news. Where is it located?

- a) Madhya Pradesh
- b) Tamil Nadu
- c) Karnataka
- d) Kerala

Ans a) Madhya Pradesh

'Panna Tiger Reserve' is located in Madhya Pradesh.

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2017  
Category: Environment and Ecology  
Topic: Conservation  
Source: The Hindu  
Difficulty level: Medium  
Type: Factual

3] Consider the following statements?

1] The Indian rhinoceros, or greater one-horned rhino, is categorised as 'vulnerable' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its 2008 red list.

2] This is an improvement from its status in 1986, when it was considered 'endangered.'

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c) Both 1 and 2

The Indian rhinoceros, or greater one-horned rhino, is categorised as 'vulnerable' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its 2008 red list. This is an improvement from its status in 1986, when it was considered 'endangered.'

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2017  
Category: Geography  
Topic: Drainage  
Source: The Hindu  
Difficulty level: Medium  
Type: Factual

4] Consider the following statements,

1] Lohit River is a tributary to the Brahmaputra River.

2] Lohit River before merging into Brahmaputra River in Assam travels for about two hundred kilometers through the red laterite soils of the Lohit Basin, therefore, it is given the name “the river of blood”.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c) Both 1 and 2

Lohit River is a tributary to the Brahmaputra River. Lohit River before merging into Brahmaputra River in Assam travels for about two hundred kilometers through the red laterite soils of the Lohit Basin, therefore, it is given the name “the river of blood”.

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2017  
Category: International Relations  
Topic: Reports, Organizations  
Source: The Hindu  
Difficulty level: Medium  
Type: Factual

5] Which of the following organizations bring out the report known as ‘Southeast Asia Energy Outlook’?

- (a) International Energy Agency
- (b) The United Nations Development Programme
- (c) The World Economic Forum
- (d) The World Bank



Answer: (a) International Energy Agency brings out the report known as 'Southeast Asia Energy Outlook'.

# **Current News Analysis**

## **06-03-2017**

### **A. GS1 Related**

### **B. GS2 Related**

#### **1. India runs out of life-saving HIV drug for children**

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/india-runs-out-of-lifesaving-hiv-drug-for-children/article17413822.ece>

**Category:***Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services*

**Topic:** *Health*

- Desperate over withdrawal of a life saving drug, children living with HIV (CLHIV) have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for help.
- Cipla, sole manufacturer of Lopinavir syrup, stopped production of the drug after govt. failed to clear dues
- the pharmaceutical company Cipla has in various forums cited delay in payments by the national programme for the HIV medicines by several years and even non-payment of its dues in many cases.

#### **Concerns:**

- Profits on child doses of HIV medicines are small and delayed payments are having a chilling effect on the ability of the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) to convince the company to participate in the bids it invited annually.
- Stocks of Lopinavir syrup — a child friendly HIV drug — ran out after Cipla, the sole manufacturer of the drug, stopped manufacturing
- An emergency tender has been placed and the State AIDS Control Societies (SACS) and State Governments are instructed to purchase from local markets
- However, since the syrup has gone out of production, they are not available in retail markets
- Cipla meanwhile has asked for guarantees of payment from HIV patients and said that it will not move from its stand until either Global Fund or the Indian government settles the bills.

## **2. Attacks on Indians put MEA under pressure**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/attacks-on-indians-put-mea-under-pressure/article17413721.ece>

*Category: International Relations*

*Topic: Indian diaspora*

### **Key Points:**

- Hate crimes are allegedly on the rise because of the anti-immigration rhetoric of the Trump administration.
- The shooting of a Sikh U.S. citizen in Washington, was the third attack on a person of Indian origin in the past two weeks
- there is a suspicion of this being a hate crime, similar to the killing of an Indian engineer in a bar in Kansas in February

### **Way forward:**

- There is a need to prevent such incidents and protect Indian community.
- The problem is of intolerance and hate is not something that can be easily fixed

## **3. 'Widow has right to property'**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/widow-has-right-to-property/article17413849.ece>

*Category: Indian Constitution*

*Topic: Fundamental Rights*

- A Delhi court has held that a widow has the right to enjoy the property bought by her husband in her name in the manner she wants, and her daughter and son-in-law cannot lay claim to it.
- The court ruled in favour of a 65-year-old woman who challenged the refusal of her daughter and son-in-law to vacate a portion of the house.

## **C.GS3 Related**

### **1. Small businesses lobby for rules to increase liquidity**

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/small-businesses-lobby-for-rules-to-increase-liquidity/article17412868.ece>

**Category: Indian Economy**

**Topic: mobilization of resources**

- SEBI had framed the guidelines for the SME segment intentionally keeping the minimum trading lot at ₹1 lakh to keep out retail investors since the view was that SMEs carry higher risk compared to companies on the main board.
- Market participants are now looking at ways to increase the liquidity to attract more institutional and retail investors in the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) segment.
- One of the main issues being proposed is lowering the trading lot size post listing, which is currently pegged at ₹1 lakh.
- Investors would find it more convenient to deal in SME stocks in small lots which will also reduce pressure on market makers

*Minimum lot size refers to the minimum amount that an investor has to put in to trade in the shares of a company.*

## **2. A.P. govt. wants INS Viraat turned into luxury hotel**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/ap-govt-wants-ins-viraat-turned-into-luxury-hotel/article17413704.ece>

*Category: Defense*

*Topic: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate*

### **Key Points:**

- The fate of INS Viraat, the oldest aircraft carrier of the Indian Navy, remains unclear as to whether it will be converted into a luxury hotel or will it head to the scrapyards to be broken up.
- The Defence Ministry is yet to take a decision on the proposal from the Government of Andhra Pradesh (A.P.) to convert it into an entertainment hub in Visakhapatnam through a joint venture with the Government of India.
- The intention is to take forward the legacy of INS Viraat by making it a world-class project on the lines of other global projects like USS Alabama, USS Constellation, and HMS Belfast.
- INS Viraat is the world's oldest aircraft carrier in service.

## **3. Centre launches survey on Gangetic dolphins**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/centre-launches-survey-on-gangetic-dolphins/article17414466.ece>

*Category: Environment and Ecology*

*Topic: Conservation*

### **Key Points:**

- The Centre has launched the first ever across-the-river survey in the Ganga to determine the population of aquatic life
- The first leg of the census was launched on March 1 from Narora in Uttar Pradesh to Bijnor (covering distance of nearly 165 km) to establish the number of the national aquatic animal.
- The authority is conducting the survey through Wildlife Institute of India (WII), under the Namami Gange programme
- Apart from number of dolphins, number of ghariyals and turtles in the river will also be ascertained after summer sets in fully.
- All the surveys carried out in Ganga previously were conducted in bits and pieces or were rapid. This is for the first time a comprehensive and scientific study is being conducted

## **4. Endangered barn owl rescued**

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/endangered-barn-owl-rescued/article17414412.ece>

*Category: Environment and Ecology*

*Topic: Conservation*

### **Key Points:**

- The Bhitarkanika National Park officials have rescued an endangered barn owl, a scheduled animal under the Wildlife Act, from a place of worship at a village in Odisha's Kendrapara district
- The residents thought the bird was sacred and brought luck and prosperity for the village
- The barn, owl which had whitish patches over its body, was a protected species under schedule 3 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

## **5. Dry Kolleru turns birds away**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/dried-up-kolleru-lake-makes-villagers-bird-lovers-anxious/article17413780.ece>

**Category: Environment and Ecology**  
**Topic: Conservation**

**Key Points:**

- With the onset of summer, a major portion of the Kolleru Lake has dried up
- The lake is home for thousands of birds during the wintering season, especially spot-billed pelicans and painted storks, which arrive from different places.
- Many birds are migrating to the nearby tanks, fields in search of food
- Many villages of fisherfolk and more than 50 other villages in the West Godavari and Krishna districts are likely to suffer as the lake has dried up
- As Kolleru has dried up completely, there is no fishing activity , also boating is not possible
- Water is being pumped into the sanctuary from the Polaraju drain to maintain some water for the winged visitors

## **D. GS4 Related**

## **E. Important Editorials**

### **1. Saving the Ghats**

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/saving-the-ghats/article17413010.ece>

*Category: Environment and Ecology*

*Topic: Conservation*

**Key Points:**

- The Western Ghats play an irreplaceable role in mediating the monsoon over the country and the forests harbour a rich biodiversity that has not even been fully studied
- New species continue to emerge each year in an area that has endemic plants and animals.
- Scientist Norman Myers wrote nearly two decades ago, only 6.8% of primary vegetation out of the original 182,500 sq km remains in the Western Ghats and Sri Lanka taken together.
- There is a need to urgently determine how much of the Western Ghats is ecologically sensitive
- The ecologically sensitive nature of the forests stretching 1,600 km along the western coast as a global biodiversity hotspot was emphasised by the Western Ghats Ecology

Expert Panel headed by Madhav Gadgil, while for conservation purposes, the Kasturirangan Committee identified only a third of the total area.

- Both expert groups have encountered resistance from State governments and industries, although they mutually differ in their recommendations.
- The hesitation shown by the Central government in deciding upon full legal protection for Western Ghats in their totality is a major disappointment.
- These fragile mountainous forests should be protected from unsustainable exploitation in the interests of present and future generations, while presenting sustainable ways of living to the communities that inhabit these landscapes.
- The issue is being framed as one of development-versus-conservation.
- The weak effort at forging a consensus between the centre and states

### **Way forward:**

- Speedy resolution on how much of the Western Ghats can be demarcated as ecologically sensitive
- A framework should be evolved under which scientific evidence and public concerns are debated democratically and the baseline for ESAs arrived at through wider and more open consultation with people at all levels, imbuing the process with scientific insights.
- Concerns like are other areas free to be exploited for industrial activity, including mining and deforestation should be addressed.
- Several options to spare sensitive areas such as community-led ecological tourism and agro-ecological farming should be explored

## **2. Elusive reconciliation**

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/elusive-reconciliation/article17413024.ece>

*Category: International Relations*

*Topic: India and its neighbourhood- relations*

### **Key Points:**

- United Nations report released last week on the progress of reconciliation efforts by the Sri Lankan government
- The government has made some slow progress in addressing the issue of reconciliation.
- Compared to the previous regime of Mahinda Rajapaksa, the Sirisena administration has reached out to Tamils and initiated constitutional and legal reforms.

- Reconciliation efforts undertaken include-passing enabling legislation to establish an Office of Missing Persons.

### **Concerns:**

- Delay in addressing allegations of war crimes and in meeting other promises
- The report warns the government that the lack of accountability threatens the momentum towards lasting peace
- It also alleges that cases of excessive use of force, torture and arbitrary arrests still continue in Sri Lanka
- On key issues such as establishing a hybrid judicial mechanism with domestic and foreign judges and returning the military-occupied lands to Tamil civilians in the north and east, there has been no tangible progress.
- The government may be wary of taking quick decisions for fear of giving some leeway to Sinhala nationalist factions

### **Way forward:**

- Colombo must do much more to address the concerns of the Tamil minority
- The government should start addressing the core issues, keeping reconciliation and the future of Sri Lanka in mind.

## **PIB**

### **1. Curtain Raiser Press Conference on ‘Destination North East-2017’**

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=158852>

*Category: Indian Economy*

*Topic: development and employment.*

### **Key Points:**

- Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) chaired the curtain raiser press conference on ‘Destination North East 2017’
- The objective of Destination North East, 2017 is to showcase North East as a potential destination for investment and highlight the rich cultural heritage, traditions and customs of the region.
- The main theme of this year’s festival is to highlight the use of appropriate technologies in all sectors of development for NER.
- The ‘3 H’ Mission, that is Horticulture, Handicraft and Handlooms, are the focus of Destination North East 2017.

## **F. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn:**

### **1. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn**



Srilankan 13th amendment.  
Medium and small scale industries  
Biodiversity hotspots

## 2. BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGS IN NEWS

BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGANISATIONS IN NEWS	Links to Refer
Wildlife Protection Act,1972	<a href="http://envfor.nic.in/legis/wildlife/wildlife1.html">http://envfor.nic.in/legis/wildlife/wildlife1.html</a>
-	

## 3. Tags

### Practice Questions

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2017  
Category: International Relations  
Topic: Map Based question  
Source: The Hindu  
Difficulty level: Medium  
Type: Factual

1] The palk strait is located between

- a) Srilanka and Maldives
- b) India and Srilanka
- c) Malaysia and Singapore
- d) None of the above

Ans -b

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2017  
Category: Environment and Ecology  
Topic: Conservation  
Source: The Hindu  
Difficulty level: Medium  
Type: Factual

2] Which of the following statements are true with respect to Wildlife Protection Act, 1972?

1. Schedule I and part II of Schedule II provide absolute protection .
2. Schedule VI includes the animals which may be hunted

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) None of the above

Ans a

There are six schedules under WPA, 1972 which give varying degrees of protection. Out of the six schedules, Schedule I and part II of Schedule II provide absolute protection and offences under these are prescribed the highest penalties. The penalties for Schedule III and Schedule IV are less and these animals are protected. Schedule V includes the animals which may be hunted. These are Common crow, Fruit bats, Mice & Rats only. Schedule VI contains the plants, which are prohibited from cultivation and planting.

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2017

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Sectors of economy

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

3] Which of the following industries are reserved for MSME sector?

1. Fire works
2. Agarbatties
3. Glass bangles

- a) 1 Only
- b) 1 and 2 Only
- c) All of the above
- d) None of the above

Ans c

**Industries reserved for the MSME sector include-**

Pickles & chutneys

Bread

two edible oils (without solvent extraction) - Mustard oil, Ground nut oil

Wooden furniture and fixtures

Exercise books and registers

Wax candles

Laundry soap

Safety matches

Fire works

Agarbatties

Glass bangles

Steel almirah

Rolling shutters

Steel chairs, tables, furniture

Padlocks

utensils- stainless steel, aluminum

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2017

Category: Environment and Ecology

Topic: Conservation

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

4] Which of the following animals is our national aquatic animal?

- a) Gangetic Gharial
- b) Gangetic Dolphin
- c) Olive Ridley Turtle
- d) Dugong

Ans b

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2017

Category: Environment and Ecology

Topic: Conservation  
Source: The Hindu  
Difficulty level: Medium  
Type: Factual

5] The term 'biodiversity hotspot' was coined by?

- (a) Dr.Salim Ali
- (b) Norman Myers
- (c) Norman Barlaug
- (d) None of the above

Answer: b

A biodiversity hotspot is a biogeographic region with significant levels of biodiversity that is under threat from humans. For example forests are considered as biodiversity hotspots.

# **Current News Analysis**

**07-03-2017**

## **A. GS1 Related**

## **B. GS2 Related**

### **1. N. Korea fires 4 missiles, 3 reach Japanese waters**

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-international/n-korea-fires-4-missiles-3-reach-japanese-waters/article17420141.ece>

*Category: International Relations*

*Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests*

#### **Key Points:**

- Nuclear-armed North Korea launched four ballistic missiles recently.
- Three missiles landed provocatively close to America's ally Japan.
- It is important to note that under leader Kim Jong-un, North Korea has ambitions to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capable of reaching the U.S. mainland.

#### **Reaction to these tests**

- Regional and world powers lined up to condemn the launches.
- Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said that three of the North Korean missiles came down in Tokyo's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) - these waters extend 200 nautical miles (370 km) from its coast.
- In Washington, the State Department condemned the launches, saying the U.S. was ready to "use the full range of capabilities at our disposal against this growing threat".

### **2. U.S. assures India of speedy justice**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/us-assures-india-of-speedy-justice/article17418851.ece>

*Category: International Relations*

*Topic: Indian Diaspora*

#### **Key Points:**

- In a recent development, the U.S. State Department has assured Indian Ambassador to the U.S. Navtej Sarna that it was working with all agencies concerned to ensure speedy justice following the violence that has targeted Indian Americans over the last fortnight.
- Since February 22, three incidents targeting Indian-Americans have claimed the lives of two and injured two.

## **C.GS3 Related**

### **1. NIIF in talks with two sovereign funds**

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-business/niif-in-talks-with-two-sovereign-funds/article17420100.ece>

*Category: Indian Economy*

*Topic: Infrastructure*

#### **Key Points:**

- In a recent development, the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) has begun talks with two sovereign wealth funds to become the first investors to come on board.
- The NIIF plans to leverage the Centre's financing – equivalent to \$3 billion – to invest a far higher amount in infrastructure firms and projects, in partnership with global, long-term investors eyeing infrastructure assets, and fund managers that could create dedicated infra sector funds.

### **2. Centre mulls modifying definition of start-up**

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-business/centre-mulls-modifying-definition-of-startup/article17420112.ece>

*Category: Indian Economy*

*Topic: Government Policy*

#### **Key Points:**

- The Centre is considering proposals to amend the definition of 'start-up' in the policy and looking to review applications seeking benefits of start-up policy which were rejected, according to a top official.
- Ramesh Abhishek, Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP) made important statements regarding the same.

#### **Provisions in Start-up India policy:**

- It states that for the purpose of claiming the benefits of the government schemes, 'start-up' means an entity, incorporated or registered in India: (a) not prior to five years, (b) with annual turnover not exceeding Rs. 25 crore in any preceding financial year and (c) working towards innovation, development, deployment or commercialisation of new products, processes or services driven by technology or intellectual property.

## **D. GS4 Related**

## **E. Important Editorials**

### **The Hindu**

#### **1. The Tawang test**

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/the-tawang-test/article17418786.ece>

*Category: International Relations*

*Topic: Bilateral Relations*

### **Key Points:**

- Recently, China's stated that it is "gravely concerned" over the government's decision to allow the Dalai Lama to visit Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang monastery in early April.
- China further mentioned that the Dalai Lama's visit would "seriously damage" bilateral ties.
- This statement is unwarranted.

### **History of the issue**

- The controversy over the Tawang area goes back to the Shimla meet of 1914, when the Chinese representatives just initialled, and didn't sign, a trilateral agreement with British India and Tibet.
- Later, in 1959, when the current Dalai Lama fled Tibet, he came into India through Tawang.
- He has not visited Arunachal Pradesh since 2009, when he retraced his 1959 journey.

### **Concluding Remarks**

- The Chinese government would do well to not allow tensions with India over the issue of Arunachal Pradesh to spill into other spheres of engagement.
- Beijing's objections over access for the Dalai Lama as a spiritual leader to a religious shrine obviously cannot be allowed to intimidate India into restricting his free movement.
- Pinpricks cannot substitute for policy and India should keep its focus on the major issues between the two countries.
- The bid for Nuclear Suppliers Group membership and having Masood Azhar placed on the UN terrorists' list have occupied much of the bilateral canvas, while the larger issue of the boundary resolution hasn't been addressed adequately.

## **2. Last mile concerns**

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/last-mile-concerns/article17418780.ece>

*Category: Indian Economy*

*Topic: Taxation*

### **Key Points:**

- The Centre and States have managed to find considerable common ground on the long-debated indirect tax system of Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- Recently, the GST Council approved final drafts of the Central and Integrated GST Bills, which should be placed in the public domain as soon as possible.
- With the law to compensate States already cleared, the only pending legislative negotiation left for the Council, which is expected to meet again on March 16, involves the State and Union Territories' GST bills.
- As these bills secure assent from State Assemblies and Parliament, and swiftly, the operational rules for the GST must be readied.
- Industry would need at least three months after that to prepare for the transition from the present system of myriad State, Central and local levies on goods and services.
- Moreover, switching to a new indirect tax system in the middle of a financial year will bring its own subset of accounting complications.

### **Concluding Remarks**

- Clearer communication of intent is equally essential.
- In industry circles, the introduction of a peak 40% tax rate in the GST Bills has set the cat among the pigeons.

- The GST's anti-profiteering penal provisions are far too vague and draconian, and could discourage companies from making efficiency improvements in supply chains if they are required to pass on the entire benefit to consumers.

## **Economic Times**

### **1. India needs a thriving municipal bond market, and fast**

<http://blogs.economictimes.indiatimes.com/et-editorials/india-needs-a-thriving-municipal-bond-market-and-fast/>

*Category: Indian Economy*

*Topic: Government Policy*

#### **Key Points:**

- India needs a thriving municipal bond market, and fast.

#### **The Potential:**

- The fact of the matter is that Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, the richest municipal body in India, earned as much as 33% of its revenue last fiscal from octroi, which will need to be discontinued once the goods and services tax (GST) is implemented nationwide later this year.
- There is huge potential for raising much-needed resources via municipal bonds here, as urbanisation picks up speed nationally.
- Yet, the funds garnered cumulatively by way of municipal bonds pan-India add up to a mere Rs1,750 crore or so; in sharp contrast to, for instance, South Africa, where about \$1.8 billion is raised by floating municipal bonds, and in just one quarter. In a mature market like the US, municipals raise about \$300 billion per annum.

#### **The Way Forward**

- We do need to boost the demand and supply for 'munis', and meet at least partly the massive funding requirement for our 100 smart cities, to begin with.
- The munis can well finance urban transport, public housing, solid waste disposal and umpteen other municipal projects, and also provide steady, longterm returns for investors.
- Earmarking of GST revenue would make sense.
- On the demand side, investor attractiveness for the municipals need to be policy-induced. Tax breaks could be considered.
- The 8% ceiling interest rate on such bonds needs to be revised.
- We also need an active secondary market for munis, and sound safeguard mechanism including escrow provision for the bondholders.

## **F. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn:**

### **1. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn**

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

### **2. BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGS IN NEWS**



BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGANISATIONS IN NEWS	Links to Refer
<b>Act East Policy</b>	<a href="http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=133837">http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=133837</a>

### 3. Tags

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

#### Practice Questions

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2017  
Category: Geography  
Topic: Concepts  
Source: The Hindu  
Difficulty level: Medium  
Type: Factual

1] Consider the following statements,

1] An Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is a concept whereby a coastal State assumes jurisdiction over the exploration and exploitation of marine resources in its adjacent section of the continental shelf, taken to be a band extending 200 miles from the shore.

2] Among other things, in the exclusive economic zone, the coastal State has the exclusive right to construct and to authorize and regulate the construction, operation and use of artificial islands.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c) Both 1 and 2

An Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is a concept whereby a coastal State assumes jurisdiction over the exploration and exploitation of marine resources in its adjacent section of the continental shelf, taken to

be a band extending 200 miles from the shore. Among other things, in the exclusive economic zone, the coastal State has the exclusive right to construct and to authorize and regulate the construction, operation and use of artificial islands.

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2017  
Category: Science and Technology  
Topic: Developments  
Source: The Hindu  
Difficulty level: Medium  
Type: Factual

2] 'INS Viraat' was recently in the news. What is it?

- a) An aircraft carrier
- b) A submarine
- c) An offshore patrol vessel
- d) A Frigate

Ans a) An aircraft carrier

'INS Viraat' is an aircraft carrier.

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2017  
Category: Geography  
Topic: Indian Geography  
Source: The Hindu  
Difficulty level: Medium  
Type: Factual

3] Consider the following statements?

- 1] Arunachal Pradesh borders the states of Assam and Nagaland to the south.
- 2] Arunachal Pradesh also shares international borders with Bhutan in the west, Myanmar in the east and China in the north.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c) Both 1 and 2

Arunachal Pradesh borders the states of Assam and Nagaland to the south. Arunachal Pradesh also shares international borders with Bhutan in the west, Myanmar in the east and China in the north.

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2017

Category: Geography

Topic: Various Parts of the World

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

4] The 'Senkaku Islands' dispute, often featured in the news is a dispute between which two countries?

- a) Japan and China
- b) China and Philippines
- c) Japan and Taiwan
- d) Japan and Russia

Ans a) Japan and China

The 'Senkaku Islands' dispute, often featured in the news is a dispute between Japan and China.

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2017

Category: International Relations

Topic: Reports, Organizations

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

5] Which of the following organizations bring out the report known as 'The State of the World's Children reports'?

- (a) UNICEF (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund)
- (b) The United Nations Development Programme
- (c) The World Economic Forum
- (d) The World Bank

Answer: (a) UNICEF (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund) brings out the report known as 'The State of the World's Children reports'.



## **ECONOMY**

### **1. Commonwealth card mooted**

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/commonwealth-card-mooted/article17423701.ece>

Commonwealth nations could consider a scheme similar to the **Business Travel Card scheme**, used across the **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum**, as a means of promoting intra-Commonwealth trade and investment, the chairman of the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council said.

#### **Objective:**

It allows entrepreneurs and skilled professionals greater freedom to work across the Commonwealth.

#### **Key Points:**

- Under the APEC scheme, which includes 19 fully participating countries, including Australia, Hong Kong, Russia and Singapore, business travellers are able to apply for five-year-long, short-term, multiple-entry permits to other member states, freeing them from the need to apply for visas every time they travel.
- The lack of formal mechanisms to promote trade and investment has been a challenge but the fundamentals and 'Commonwealth Factor' remain strong and the trade ministers meeting is a positive step towards unlocking the potential.
- Another focus area would be on the ease of doing business and the implementation of the WTO facilitation agreement, which came into force on February 22.
- A united Commonwealth which takes advantage of commonwealth countries' historic ties can be extremely beneficial.

### **2. Local steel may become a must for \$59-bn. infra spend**

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/local-steel-may-become-a-must-for-59bn-infra-spend/article17424337.ece>

#### **Key Points:**

- India may soon mandate the use of local steel in government infrastructure projects worth billions of dollars, sources said, pitching it as a WTO-compliant protectionist measure aimed at further cutting cheap imports, mainly from China.

- The government expects the move to boost sales of local companies such as JSW Steel and Tata Steel, and eventually attract global steelmakers such as Arcelor Mittal and POSCO to invest in the country.
- India, the world's third-largest steel consumer, has budgeted a record \$59 billion for 2017-18 for steel-intensive infrastructure projects such as ports, roads, railways and power.
- The preference in procurement will enhance demand and thus production. Definitely it is 'Make in Steel' and thus 'Make in India'.

#### **What WTO Rules says:**

- The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade of the World Trade Organisation, allows an exception to "procurement by governmental agencies of products purchased for governmental purposes and not with a view to commercial resale or with a view to use in the production of goods for commercial sale.

#### **Conclusion**

- The protectionist move would shrink foreign companies' sales in the world's fastest growing steel market.

### **3. Government has conveyed concerns on H-1B visa to the US**

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/us-h1b-visa/article9574257.ece?homepage=true>

#### **Key Points:**

- Indian IT companies are servicing more than 75% of Fortune 500 companies.
- The government has conveyed its concerns at a 'very senior level' in the US administration on the move to curb H-1B visa processing.
- Under the current system, companies submitting applications for H-1B visas for potential employees can pay an additional sum for expedited service, which is known as premium processing.
- The temporary suspension could last up to six months, according to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The H-1B visas are widely used by Indian IT companies.
- The Indian companies have created four-lakh jobs, not only in America but other parts of the world, Prasad said adding that the Indian IT companies and IT professionals are giving lot of opening to American companies in India too.
- The US said last week that it will temporarily suspend premium processing of H-1B visas from April 3, eliminating the option of shorter waiting period for the programme that helps highly skilled foreigners work at American firms.
- Premium processing costs an additional \$1,225 and ensures a response from the USCIS within 15 days or the fee is refunded. Processing of standard H-1B applications takes between three and six months.

## **SOCIAL ISSUES**

### **1. No economy for women**

**<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/no-economy-for-women/article17425044.ece>**

#### **BACKGROUND**

- Women in India are being forced out of the workforce.
- India and Pakistan have the lowest rates of women labor force participation in Asia, says International Labor Organization (ILO).
- Nepal, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia that have the highest, while richer nations like Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia falling in between.
- Moreover, labor force participation in India seems to be declining.
- The National Sample Survey found that while in 1999-2000, 25.9% of all women worked; by 2011-12 this proportion had dropped to 21.9%.
- Of the 185 nations that are part of the ILO database, since the 1990s, 114 countries have recorded an increase in the proportion of women in the workforce, and only 41 recorded declines, with India leading the pack.

#### **Access Based on Equality and its Consequences**

- **Optimistic point of view:** with rising incomes, women have the opportunity to escape harsh labor in farms and on construction sites, and focus on their families.
- **pessimistic and realistic explanation:** with declining farm sizes, increasing mechanization, and consequently waning labor demands in agriculture, women are being forced out of the workforce.
- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (**MGNREGA**) has brought more rural women into wage labor.
- Increased availability of wage work also **enhances women control** over household **decision-making**.

#### **Drawbacks**

- A solution needs to be created for inconsistency in MNREGA. **First**, in view of shrinking farm work, we need to create opportunities for women to move from agricultural to non-agricultural manual work. **Second**, we must foster a work environment that allows more women, especially urban and educated women, to take up salaried jobs. Thirdly, villages where roads can be constructed, both men and women were more likely to undertake non-agricultural work but this effect was greater for women.
- Prevalence of a **rigid work environment in India and the dearth of family-friendly work institutions** create hurdles to women access to white-collar jobs.
- **Long distances** between the home and the workplace increase both commuting time and work burdens, leaving workers with even less time for family duties
- **Skewed work-family equation** for women in India is the demand for investing in

children's education over professional achievement.

- Considering the contrast between the **reasons for fertility decline in the West**, where it was fueled by the desire for self-fulfillment among both men and women, and in India, where small families have emanated from the **desire to promote future achievements of children** by focusing on their education rather than on better employment prospects for the parents.

### **Sharing the burden**

- Before the influx of global firms in India, work structures in Indian companies and even the government were highly inflexible.
- Indian firms have chosen to follow the **American model** with demands for extended work hours as well as attendance on Saturdays and Sundays. This creates a time bind for both men and women where something must give.
- **Work-family balance** requires increased **participation by men** in household chores and caring for children. Now it is the self-motivation required as the American model of work facilitates the quality time.

### **Government Reports**

- The **Economic Survey 2016-17** expressed concern that the demographic dividend is already receding.
- **Reducing the opportunity** for the Indian economy to catch up with its East Asian counterparts.
- The consequences of reducing obstacles to women full economic participation far exceed the demographic advantages of having a larger pool of young workers.
- Thus talk of the **gender dividend** rather than the **demographic dividend** is the need of the hour.

## **2. India first in bribery rate, says global NGO**

**<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-first-in-bribery-rate-says-global-ngo/article17424579.ece>**

- Survey conducted among 16 Asia-Pacific nations by **Transparency International** between July 2015 and January 2017.
- **India had the highest bribery rate (69%)**, Vietnam follows with 65%, Thailand 41% and Pakistan 40%. China reported a much lower 26%.
- Japan had the lowest incidence of bribery at 0.2 per cent. South Korea and Australia recorded 3% each, Hong Kong 2% and Taiwan 6%.
- Bribes for various public services range from services in public schools and hospitals and for getting IDs, voter cards and permits and accessing utilities to the police.
- 31% to 45% said they paid bribes for court services as well.
- "More than one in four people paid bribe, when accessing basic services like medicine, education or water," the survey said.
- Over a third said that their legislative representatives, officials and local councilors were highly corrupt (from 35 to 37 per cent).



### **3. Supreme Court opens surrogacy window for singles**

**<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/sc-opens-surrogacy-window-for-singles/article17424011.ece>**

#### **Present Scenario**

- Draft Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill 2016, allows **only infertile, legally-wedded Indian couples to avail this option.**

#### **Current considerations**

- Supreme Court Bench led by Justice Ranjan Gogoi allowed a representation to be made before the parliamentary committee to consider including a “specific provision” in the Bill so as to **facilitate single persons** also to embrace parenthood through surrogacy.
- The new Bill is to constitute a **National Surrogacy Board, State Surrogacy Board and appointment of authorities for regulation of practice and process of surrogacy.**

#### **Objective of the Bill**

- The law is meant to **end commercial surrogacy** or, as the Supreme Court had once in 2009, termed “**fertility tourism**” in the country.

#### **Ethical Issues Involved**

- **Commercial surrogacy** and the treatment of babies as a “**commodity**” is the biggest fear prevailing.
- **Abandonment of the infants** (Unplanned couplets, girl child) as seen earlier with respect to Australian couple.
- Issues with respect to **citizenship of the child.**

#### **Cautious Steps to be taken**

- There should be a **separate register** maintained for surrogate children.
- Sensitized staff should conduct **inspections on the ground** to prevent exploitation.

#### **Way forward**

- The draft Bill should also consider the categories other than married Indian couples, like single women or men, gay or lesbian couples and such others.
- The Bill does not allow married couple, who have children, adopted or surrogate or biological, to have children via surrogacy. Such consideration can strengthen the genetic pool.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

### **1. Law to regulate use of air conditioners**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/law-to-regulate-use-of-air-conditioners/article17419348.ece>

**What's in news?**

- The Union Environment Ministry is coming up with a law that will require-commercial spaces, airports, offices-to ensure that air conditioners function at pre-set temperatures.

**Why in news?**

- At several places, air conditioners are set to extremely low temperatures-irrespective of whether the weather required it to be so- and thereby consuming an excess of electricity.

**Advantages**

- Saving electricity, which in a way lead to saving environment since electricity generated using thermal station requires mining of coal.
- Helps in attaining global standards of curtailing HCFC's (Hydrochlorofluorocarbon) use.

**Practice elsewhere**

- In Japan, there are regulations that require air-conditioners be set at a specific temperature depending on the season.
- Regulations' which allows employees to wear casuals instead of formal business-wear.

**Facts review**

- India is under progress to phase out hydrochlorofluorocarbons which are widely used in refrigerants and air conditioners and has agreed to stop the use of HCFCs by 2030
- India is one of the largest consumers of HCFC's after china.

**2. Need to make people aware about the negative impact of Arsenic**

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=158916>

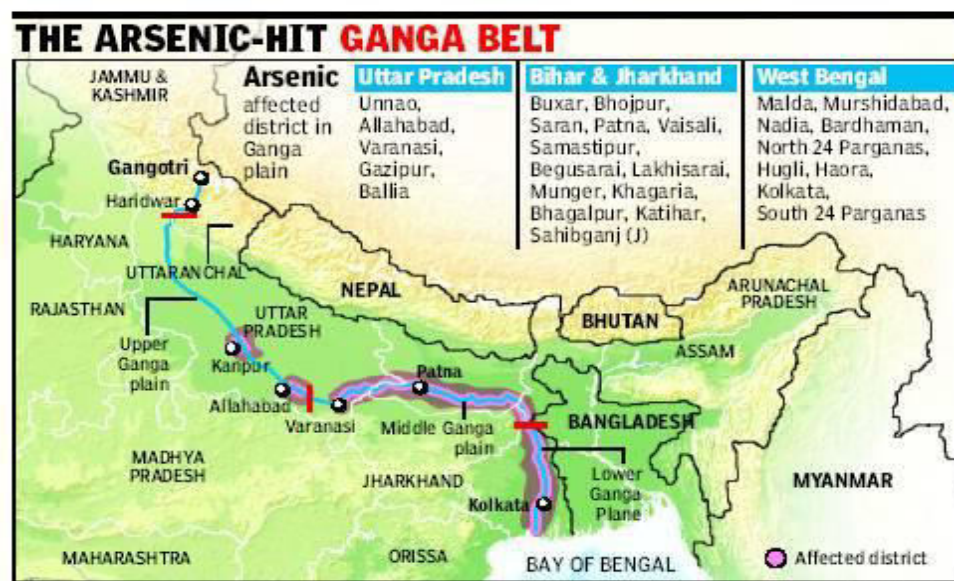
**What's in news?**

- Union Minister of Water Resource Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, has underlined the need to make people aware about the negative impact of Arsenic in Ganga basin area.
- High value of arsenic in groundwater is geogenic in nature, but as a large population is dependent on groundwater resources for drinking purposes in Ganga basin and is under the risk of health hazards, it becomes emergent to go for mitigation measures as well as alternate sources of water so that locals can be protected from negative impact of arsenic in groundwater.
- Awareness of public on water quality especially about poisonous arsenic

contamination need to be done and making available alternate source of water with efforts of central and state governments as well as organizations and NGOs working in the field of groundwater.

### Facts review

- Arsenic in ground water is a geogenic contaminant i.e. caused by natural geologic processes.
- Arsenic-containing groundwater in Ganga River basin is hosted by the sediments deposited by the rivers during the late Quaternary or Holocene age (<12 thousand years).
- Incidence of high arsenic in groundwater reported from various parts of the country, particularly in the Ganga- plains is a serious threat to the health of human being. Over the last three decades, numerous measures have been initiated which includes alternate arrangement for supply of arsenic free water to the affected populace and providing arsenic removal plants.
- Arsenic occurrences in ground water in these areas are highly sporadic in nature and all the sources in these areas are not necessarily contaminated.



### Mitigation measure

- Technological options to combat arsenic menace, in groundwater, to ensure supply of arsenic free water, in the affected areas can be **in-situ** remediation of arsenic from aquifer system, **ex-situ** remediation of arsenic from tapped groundwater by arsenic removal technologies.
- Use of surface water source as an alternative to the contaminated groundwater source, tapping alternate safe aquifers for supply of arsenic free groundwater or combination of above techniques.
- Out of the above options, arsenic removal technologies and ex-situ treatment technique are being practiced widely to provide potable water to the people in the arsenic affected areas after treatment of contaminated groundwater. Their large

scale use in West Bengal, based on different operating principles, with various degrees of success and failure, has been reported.

## **TERMS OF THE DAY**

### **1. Alternaria disease**

- Alternaria is a genus of ascomycete fungi.
- Alternaria species are known as major plant pathogens.
- They are also common allergens in humans, growing indoors and causing hay fever or hypersensitivity reactions that sometimes lead to asthma.
- At least 20% of agricultural spoilage is caused by Alternaria species; most severe losses may reach up to 80% of yield, though. Many human health disorders can be caused by these fungi, which grow on skin and mucous membranes, including on the eyeballs and within the respiratory tract.

### **2. Botrytis disease**

- Botrytis cinerea is a necrotrophic fungus that affects many plant species, although its most notable hosts may be wine grapes. In viticulture, it is commonly known as botrytis bunch rot; In horticulture, it is usually called grey mould or gray mold.

## **PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

1. Which among the following is a greenhouse gas?

1. Water Vapor
2. Carbon Dioxide
3. Ozone
4. Hydrofluorocarbons

Choose the correct answer

- a) 1,2 and 3.
- b) 1 and 2
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All are correct.

Correct answer option (A)

### **Explanation**

A greenhouse gas is a gas in an atmosphere that absorbs and emits radiation within the thermal infrared range. This process is the fundamental cause of the greenhouse effect. The primary greenhouse gases in Earth's atmosphere are water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone.

2. Consider the following statement with respect to Hydro fluorocarbon (HFC's)

1. HFC's pose no harm to Ozone.
2. HFC's global warming potential is very high compared to that of Chlorofluorocabons and Hydro fluorocarbon.

Choose the correct answer

- a) Both A and B are correct.
- b) Only B
- c) Neither A nor B
- d) Only A

**Correct answer (A)**

### **Explanation**

HFCs are produced mostly in developed countries, hydro fluorocarbons (HFCs) replaced CFCs and HCFCs. HFCs pose no harm to the ozone layer because, unlike CFCs and HCFCs, they do not contain chlorine. They are however greenhouse gases, with a high global warming potential (GWP), comparable to that of CFCs and HCFCs.

3. Which among the following gas falls under the six basket of Green House gas that is mentioned in Kyoto Protocol?

- a) Carbon Dioxide, Methane, Nitrous oxide, Sulphur hexafluoride, Hydrofluorocarbon, Perfluorocarbons.
- b) Carbon Dioxide, Methane, Nitrous oxide, Sulfur hexafluoride, Hydro chlorofluorocarbon, Perfluorocarbons.
- c) Carbon Dioxide, Methane, Nitrous oxide, Sulfur hexafluoride, Chlorofluorocarbons, Perfluorocarbons.
- d) None of the above.

**Correct answer (A)**

### **Explanation**

The targets apply to the four greenhouse gases carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, Sulphur hexafluoride, and two groups of gases, hydro fluorocarbons (HFCs) and perfluorocarbons (PFCs). The six GHG are translated into CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents in determining reductions in emissions.

4. Drinking Arsenic contaminated ground water leads to?

1. Skin Cancer and Skin lesions
2. Lungs cancer
3. Kidney cancer

4. Brain tumor

Choose the correct answer

- a) 1 and 3
- b) 1 and 4
- c) 1,2 and 3
- d) All are correct

Correct answer:- option (C)

**Explanation:-**

Long-term exposure to inorganic **arsenic**, mainly through drinking of contaminated water, eating of food prepared with this water and eating food irrigated with **arsenic**-rich water, can lead to chronic **arsenic** poisoning. Skin lesions and skin cancer are the most characteristic **effects**.

Long-term exposure to **arsenic** in drinking water can cause cancer in the skin, lungs, bladder and kidney.

5. Kigali amendment is up-gradation of

- a) Kyoto Protocol
- b) Montreal Protocol
- c) Rwanda Agreement
- d) Bali Agreement

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- Kigali Amendment which amends the 1987 Montreal Protocol aims to phase out Hydro fluorocarbons (HFCs).
- India has agreed to a time-line to reduce the use of HFCs by roughly 85% of their baselines by 2045.  
This move will help to prevent a potential 0.5 degree Celsius rise in global temperature by the end of the century.
- The Kigali Agreement or amended Montreal Protocol for HFCs reduction will be binding on countries from 2019.
- Under it, developed countries will also provide enhanced funding support estimated at billions of dollars globally.

6. Consider the following statements with respect to Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994

1. The main purpose of enacting the act is to ban the use of sex selection techniques after conception and prevent the misuse of prenatal diagnostic technique for sex selective abortion.
2. Parliament of India enacted to stop female foeticides and arrest the declining sex ratio in India.

Identify the **incorrect** statements

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) None of the above

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The Act provides for the prohibition of sex selection, before or after conception.
- It regulates the use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques, like ultrasound and amniocentesis by allowing them their use only to detect:
  - i. genetic abnormalities
  - ii. metabolic disorders
  - iii. chromosomal abnormalities
  - iv. certain congenital malformations
  - v. haemoglobinopathies
  - vi. Sex linked disorders.
- No laboratory or centre or clinic will conduct any test including ultra-sonography for the purpose of determining the sex of the foetus.
- No person, including the one who is conducting the procedure as per the law, will communicate the sex of the foetus to the pregnant woman or her relatives by words, signs or any other method.
- Any person who puts an advertisement for pre-natal and pre-conception sex determination facilities in the form of a notice, circular, label, wrapper or any document, or advertises through interior or other media in electronic or print form or engages in any visible representation made by means of hoarding, wall painting, signal, light, sound, smoke or gas, can be imprisoned for up to three years and fined Rs. 10,000.

## **A. GS 1 RELATED**

### **GEOGRAPHY**

#### **1. NIO finds a new canyon system close to Kovvada coast**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/nio-finds-a-new-canyon-system-close-to-kovvada-coast/article17437756.ece>

##### **What's in news?**

- Scientists of CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) in Visakhapatnam have found three new canyons forming a **major canyon system** in the depths of Bay of Bengal close to **Kovvada** in Srikakulam district.
- The finding has been evading them since the last 50 years, and for the first time they have clearly mapped the ocean floor between Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam by sending over 32 high density beams to the depths of the sea.
- The new canyon system is very huge and probably formed by the **river Kandivalasa**. The depth of the canyon varies from about 90 metres from the starting point to about 2,500 metres at the deepest point, and it extends to about 50 to 70 km deep into
- The depth is more than the Grand Canyon, which is about 1,857 metres.
- The discovery of the canyon is not only a major breakthrough in underwater geological formations, but also gives us immense scope to study and explore new **benthic ecosystem**.
- The study of ecology and fauna and microorganisms will not only tell us about our past but also throw light on new science. The study of how organisms live and flourish at low oxygen level and high current system can lead us to understand human heart diseases better and help us develop new treatment system



##### **Canyon system:**

- Canyon systems are generally formed by flow of river water into the sea and they could be as old as the river system, which is close to 23 million years
- The new canyon system is very huge and probably formed by the river Kandivalasa. The depth of the canyon varies from about 90 metres
- Most of the canyons in the ocean system across the world act as channels for depositing sediments in the shelf region. **The more the deposit, the more are the chances of finding hydro-carbons.**

#### **2. Ostriches lived in India once**

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/ostriches-lived-in-india-once/article17437581.ece>

##### **What's in news?**

- Clues found in DNA extracted from 25,000-year-old fossilised eggshells.
- Based on a DNA analysis of a fossilised eggshell fragment of ostrich, Indian researchers have for the first time found molecular evidence to confirm the presence of these birds in India more than 25,000 years ago.
- Scientists found 92% genetic similarity between the fossil eggshell samples and *Struthiocamelus*, an ostrich species found in Africa.
- Eggshell fragments of ostrich discovered from India before have been studied using



morphological features, which is insufficient to confirm that ostriches may have lived in India. This is the first time that molecular evidence indicating their presence has been obtained.

- The ostrich sample analysed has close proximity to the African ostrich species and underlines the **movement of these birds between Africa and India (supportive evidence for continental drift theory)** before the Indian landmass drifted away from Africa.

## **B. GS 2 RELATED**

### **POLITY**

#### **1. Multi-phase polls are here to stay: Nasim Zaidi**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/multiphase-polls-here-to-stay-nasim-zaidi/article17436538.ece>

##### **What's in news?**

- Chief Election Commissioner of India (CEC) Nasim Zaidi has said that long-drawn-out, multiple-phase elections are here to stay because of the use of Central police forces for the conduct of free and fair polls.
- According to CEC, our elections have become heavily dependent on Central forces as people have their own reservations about the State police. The Commission, therefore, over the years, has come to depend on Central police forces. Our anxiety and the anxiety of political parties that all polling stations should be covered by Central police has led to this situation. There have been examples in the past that voters too feel that **to truly ensure an unafraid exercise of franchise, Central forces are required.** Keeping all that in mind, there is no way out but to conduct polls in phases. Our voters have shown unprecedented enthusiasm, so they are, at least, not fatigued by the length of the poll.

##### **Inference:**

- People are having more trust on Central forces than the state police forces.
- To conduct fair polls, Central force has to be deployed at the polling booths, so if elections are held simultaneously, deployment of the force at the polling station will be a herculean task. In order to avoid this situation, multi-phase polling method is adopted.

#### **2. Voting with our feet**

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/voting-with-our-feet/article17436364.ece>

##### **what's in news?**

- Current round of Assembly elections has witnessed deepened participation.
- Tripura's Assembly election turnout of 90-plus.
- The 2014 Lok Sabha election turnout indicated, it has also **bridged the gender gap**, with the EC reckoning it has **come down to 1.46 percentage points, from 4.42 in 2009.**

##### **Inference**

- In India there is enthusiasm among voters which cuts across **class and age**, where as

in the so called mature democracies there is **lack of participation by the younger generation-millennial's**.

- Ethnographic studies suggest that the Indian voter perceives voting day to be a special one, with a **celebratory camaraderie** at the polling booth reflecting a determination to make her vote count.
- Voter turnouts generally rising as one goes from parliamentary to State to local polls, it is clear **that personally felt outcomes matter most to voters**. Nonetheless, the old thumb rule about higher turnout meaning an anti-incumbent vote is a thing of the past
- The **decreasing gender gap** is one to particularly celebrate. From the first election in 1951-52, when millions of women did not figure in the electoral rolls as they would not share their names, to the conversations on the sidelines of these elections, with women asserting they'd vote differently from their husbands, India has come a long way.

### **3. Leaders must tell voters not to take bribes, says CEC Nasim Zaidi**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/leaders-must-tell-voters-not-to-take-bribes-says-cec-nasim-zaidi/article17436809.ece>

#### **Highlights of Interview**

- **Facts proving voter inducement:**

Seized total cash, liquor, drugs, bullion- ₹350 crore, a three-fold increase over 2012 seize was around ₹100 crore worth of stuff. Liquor worth ₹86 crore has been seized during present polls.

- **Bribery – a cognisable offence:**

The Commission is seeking to make bribery a cognisable offence. Cognisability is required because when you lodge an FIR today and under the current laws, police cannot take action, it will have to go back to the courts to do that. In this regard, the Ministry of Home Affairs, on our pursuance has circulated a Bill seeking to amend certain sections of the IPC relating to making bribing a cognisable offence. As a part of that note, they have proposed the enhancement of punishment for the offence as well. The EC will continue to pursue an earlier proposal of ours about **countermanding elections** if there is a widespread bribing of voters, based on material evidence and reports of returning officers.

- **State funding of elections**

State funding can come only subject to certain deep reforms in the entire system. It cannot be a stand-alone proposal.

**Internal democracy** -There is a need to reform the functioning of political parties.

Complete transparency of the funding of political parties and any other means of black money getting into the political system or in the hands of candidates.

- **Nationwide simultaneous election**

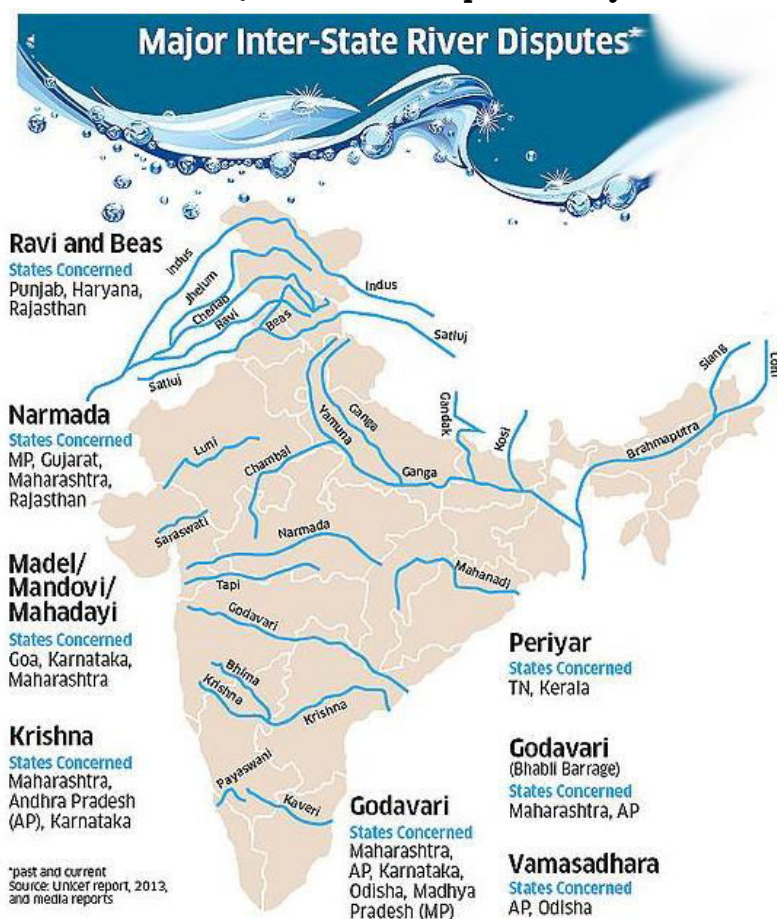
The first condition is to amend the Constitution, for which there are recommendations that debate should be held among the political parties. Time consuming requires around two months for entire process, huge logistical exercise and involves lot of expenditure.

### **4. Inter-State River Water sharing Disputes**

- **What's in news**

On the complaint made by the State Governments, the Central Government has, so far, set up **eight tribunals** to settle water disputes among the States under the **Inter-State River Water Disputes (ISRWD) Act, 1956**.

Supply of water to concerned States varies on year to year **basis depending mainly on availability of water in the basin/reservoirs in a particular year** and other relevant



factors and is monitored by the concerned Board/Authority/regulatory body functioning in a particular river basin project.

The mechanism for settlement of water disputes is already available in the form of ISRWD Act, 1956. The ISRWD Act, 1956 has been last amended in 2002 whereby adjudication of the water disputes by tribunals has been made time bound after consultation with all State Governments.

Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation adopted a revised National Water Policy (NWP) in 2012. As per Clause 12.2 of the Policy, a **permanent Water Disputes Tribunal** at the Centre should be established to resolve the disputes expeditiously in an equitable manner. The proposal to set up a standing tribunal to adjudicate interstate river water disputes has been approved by the Cabinet and Notice for introduction of Bill for the same has been sent.

## 5. The Government has enacted various laws and implemented large number of schemes to ensure safety of women

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx>

### Laws enacted by Parliament:

- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013
- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA).
- The Criminal Law (Amendment), Act 2013 has been enacted making the punishment more stringent for offences like rape.

### Schemes being implemented by various ministries

#### Implemented by **The Ministry of Women and Child Development**

- **One Stop Centre** scheme- Provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence
- **Scheme for Universalisation of Women Helpline**—Provides 24 hours immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence.
- **Ujjawala scheme**- A comprehensive scheme to combat trafficking, is being implemented in all over the country.
- **The Swadhar and Short Stay Homes Schemes** -SwadharGreh Scheme targets the women victims of unfortunate circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they could lead their life with dignity. The Scheme envisages providing shelter, food, clothing and health as well as economic and social security for the women victims of difficult circumstances. SwadharGreh Scheme is a sub-scheme of the Centrally Sponsored Umbrella Scheme “**Protection and Empowerment**” and is being implemented through States/ UTs.

#### Implemented by **the Ministry of Finance, Government of India**

- **Nirbhaya fund:** a dedicated fund called Nirbhaya Fund was set up in 2013, for implementation of initiatives aimed at **enhancing the safety and security of women** in the country.
- **Ministry of Finance (Department of Economic Affairs)** has issued guidelines by which an Empowered Committee of Officers was constituted under the Chairmanship of Secretary, WCD for appraising and recommending various schemes/projects proposed by the Ministries/Departments to be funded from the Nirbhaya Fund. The Empowered Committee of Officers, which is an inter-ministerial committee appraises and recommends various proposals/projects proposed by different Ministries/Departments/States. The concerned Ministries then take up the sanction and implementation of the schemes/proposals so appraised as they do for their other schemes/projects.

## 6. Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill, 2016 passed in the Parliament

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx>

- **Updates regarding passage**

The Lok Sabha has passed the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill, 2016. The Bill had already been passed by the Rajya Sabha during the Winter Session.

- **Main Provisions in the bill:**

The Bill seeks to amend the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 to provide for the following:

- a) Maternity leave available to the working women to be increased from **12 weeks to 26 weeks** for the first two children.
- b) Maternity leave for children beyond the first two will continue to be 12 weeks.
- c) Maternity leave of 12 weeks to be available to mothers adopting a child below the age of three months as well as to the “**commissioning mothers**”. The commissioning mother has been defined as biological mother who uses her egg to create an embryo planted in any other woman.
- d) Every establishment with more than 50 employees to provide for **crèche facilities** for working mothers and such mothers will be permitted to make four visits during working hours to look after and feed the child in the crèche.
- e) The employer may permit a woman to work from home if it is possible to do so. Every establishment will be required to make these benefits available to the women from the time of her appointment.

- **Inference:**

These changes in the provisions of the act enable working woman to get enough time to exclusively breast-feed her child for 6 months after the birth. This period also enables the working mother to recover herself before she goes to back to work.



## 7. New midday meal norms ‘inhuman’

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/new-midday-meal-norms-inhuman/article17437776.ece>

### Issue:

- Related to poverty and hunger
- Recently centre decided to link Mid-day meal scheme to Aadhar.

### What's in news?

- Teachers and Anganwadi workers in Rajasthan have spoken out against the Centre's recent decision to link the midday meal scheme to Aadhaar, saying it would **completely disrupt the process of food distribution and teaching and learning**. The teaching-learning process will also be disrupted, as the day would be over in the exercise to authenticate an average of 200 children in each school.
- Creates an “inhuman culture” where children would be denied food due to exclusion through biometrics. Children coming to the government schools are from economically weaker sections, mostly Dalits and minorities, schools generally ensure that the little siblings who come with the older children are also fed. If the machine does not match biometrics of a child, he/she will remain without food and sit in a corner watching others having their meals-inhuman.
- Teachers gave instances of classroom hunger and stunted children coming to their schools. So teachers called upon the administration to focus on more nutritious food



for the children along with a strong school health programme.

### Positive Impact

- Many parents allegedly enrol their children simultaneously in state and private schools to take advantage of government benefits. The government pays the tuition fees for poor children enrolled in private schools, while those in government schools are entitled to the meal, uniforms and textbooks. Since Aadhaar stores biometric data that are accessible online, the school can easily authenticate a beneficiary's identity.
- Curtail leakages in the institutional mechanism and diversion of food items.
- Proper rationing from FCI

### Negative

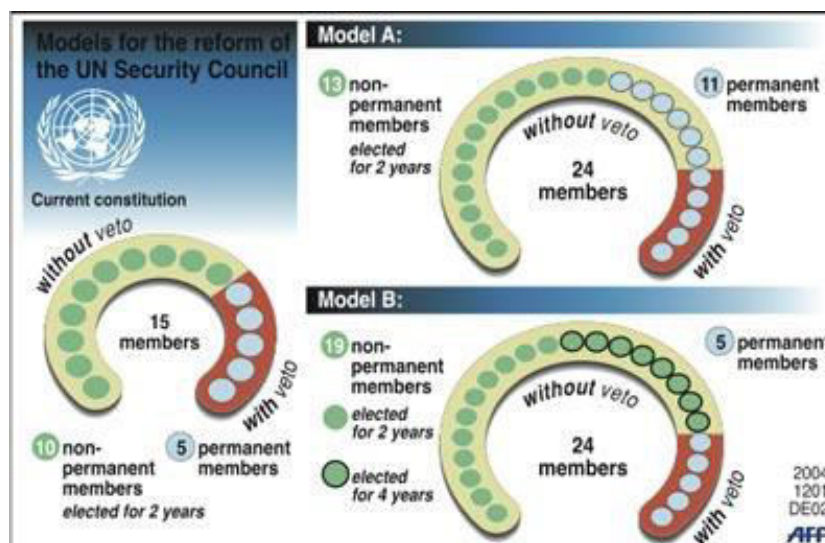
- The Aadhaar-linking will take away the little nutritional support the kid gets.
- Focus more on nutritional requirement of children

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 1. 'No change of stance, says India on veto power at UNSC'

<http://www.theweek.in/news/india/no-change-of-stance-says-india-on-veto-power-at-uns.html>

- India's Ambassador to the UN addressed the General Assembly's Inter Governmental Negotiations on behalf of **Brazil, Germany, India and Japan (called the G-4)**.
- India and other G-4 countries are **ready to accept a United Nations (UN) permanent Security Council seat without using a veto for the first 15 years**.
- He said there had been "no change in the government's position" on securing veto power at the UNSC, but India did not wish to "impede" the process.
- New permanent members would as a principle have the **same responsibilities and obligations as current permanent members** they **shall not exercise the veto until a decision on the matter has been taken during a review [expected after 15 years]**
- India is hopeful that the Chairpersons of the Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) **will now respond to every country's views** to take the reforms to the next step.
- However, few **doubted whether India could uphold** the moratorium if there were any resolutions at the UNSC that affected India directly.



### What is the "Power of veto"?

- The **United Nations Security Council "power of veto"** refers to the veto power wielded solely by the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States), enabling them to **prevent the adoption of any "substantive" resolution**.
- **Abstention or absence from the vote** by a permanent member **does not prevent a draft resolution from being adopted**.
- The **permanent members can vote against a "procedural" draft resolution** without blocking its adoption by the Council.
- A negative vote by a permanent member will also block the selection of a Secretary-General, although this is a "recommendation" to the General Assembly rather than a Resolution.

## 2. H1B visa reform: Why US companies are worrying about changes

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/xzlbHGwyPZRl7G4eQHeMNI/H1B-visa-US-companies-worry-about-cherished-tech-visa.html>

- President Trump's immediate focus is on **tackling illegal immigration** and the overall revamp of the immigration process will come subsequently.
- **No changes in the H-1B visa program for skilled temporary foreign workers.**
- U.S. admits 85,000 people on H-1B visas every year, through a **lottery process** that begins with the filing of applications on April 1.
- Revamping of immigration policy has focused on **border security**, keeping country safe and people safe.
- Senators pushing for legislation that will **restrict family-linked and employment-related legal immigration to the U.S**
- U.S is one of only a handful of countries that doesn't use a **merit-based system of immigration**.
- Mr. Trump's **preference for merit-based immigration** as opposed to family-linked immigration could be seen as **beneficial for Indian tech workers**
- Mr. Trump has spoken about merit-based immigration throughout his campaign, even while opposing immigrant workers allegedly undercutting or replacing American workers.
- Neither Mr. Trump nor his advisers believe the H-1B program is merit-based, going by their public statements so far.

## 3. Sri Lanka to scale back China deal

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sri-lanka-to-scale-back-hambantota-port-deal-with-china/article17437376.ece>

### Why in news?

- The **Hambantota port**, built during the former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, has become a **white elephant with insufficient revenues**.
- Sri Lanka is to **steps back a profitable but controversial deal** to sell a deep-sea port to a Chinese company after widespread protests.
- It had **hoped to transfer an 80% stake to the China Merchants Port Holdings** on a long lease, but the proposed deal met with **opposition** from residents in the southern town of Hambantota and some members of the ruling coalition.
- Official sources wanted to **reduce the Chinese company's equity holding and the lease period**, and ensure overall security of the port remained in its control.
- The new government, which came to power in January 2015, has been **trying to**

**renegotiate terms of its \$8-billion Chinese debt**, which includes the construction costs of the Hambantota port.

#### **Chinese projects in Sri Lanka and its impact on India's external security(String of Pearls)**

- The **String of Pearls** theory is a geopolitical theory regarding potential Chinese intentions in the Indian Ocean region through a network of Chinese military and commercial facilities and relationships along its sea lines of communication.
- This Chinese Influence routes from the **Chinese mainland to Port Sudan**.
- There are several **major maritime choke points** such as the **Strait of Mandeb, the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Hormuz and the Lombok Strait**, as well as other strategic maritime centers (**String of Pearls**) include a facility in **Gwadar** and a port in **Karachi** (both in Pakistan); Construction of new facility at **Colombo** and new port **Hambantota** (both in Sri Lanka); container facility in **Chittagong** (Bangladesh); and **ports in Myanmar**.
- **Chinese warships have stopped at Colombo** on the way to Pakistan and to anti-pirate operations in the Gulf of Aden. **Two Chinese Submarines also harbored** at Colombo port despite India's strong opposition.



#### **4. India sees options in U.S. energy policy**

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-business/india-sees-options-in-us-energy-policy/article17438066.ece>

##### **Why in news?**

- The Trump administration's is on **making American oil and gas sector competitive in the world market**.

##### **How?**

- By deregulating oil and gas, and rolling back incentives available to non-conventional energy.
- The Trump administration does not want environmental concerns holding back the

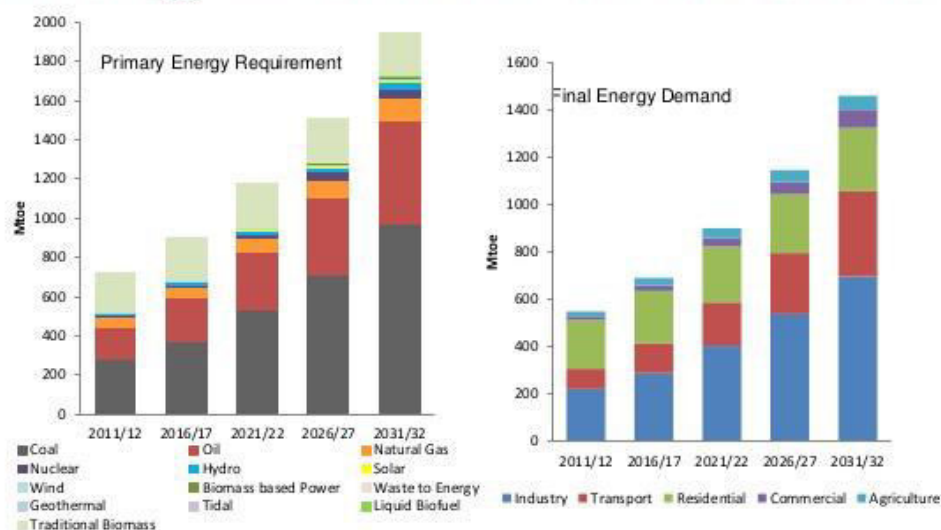


sector.

### How will it Impact India?

- India bids to enhance its bilateral cooperation in the field of oil and gas exploration taking this opportunity.
- Thirty percent of all increase in world's energy demand from now to 2040 will be from India. Right pricing can enable India to ramp up imports from the U.S.
- India will start importing Liquefied Natural Gas from the U.S. in 2018 under contracts signed during the previous Obama administration.
- Three Indian public sector companies, GAIL, Oil India and IOC and Reliance have invested in U.S. shale gas production.
- The Obama administration's focus was on pushing renewable energy cooperation with India, but Trump administration's focus is different.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment is to increase the share of non-conventional sources in India's energy mix and it is independent of what the American administration thinks or does.
- India's PM is clear that India will go ahead with its COP 21 commitments.
- India's cooperation could be in the areas of clean coal technology, and in converting coal to synthetic gas.
- India looks forward for American technology and investment that could be of great help in coal sector. U.S technology will also be helpful in building smart grids and reducing transmission losses.

## India: Energy Use Scenario – Present & Future



- Primary energy supply increases from 717 (2011/12) mtoe to 1950 mtoe (2031/32); coal followed by oil remain the two dominant energy sources
- Final energy demand rises from 549 mtoe (2011/12) to 1460 mtoe (2031/32), an increase of about 2.7 times in 20 years
- Industry sector continues to remain the major energy consumer (40%-48%), and the share of transport sector rises from 16% (2011/12) to 25% (2031/32)

Source: IIT's MARKAL Model Results

### 5. Silk Road evolved from nomadic movements

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/silk-road-evolved-from-nomadic-movements/1/900633.html>

## Background

- The Great Silk Road that spans across many countries including India was **carved by nomads** who were moving herds to lush mountain pastures **nearly 5,000 years ago**.



## Research Study

- The analytical study combines **satellite analysis, human geography, archaeology and Geographic Information Systems (GIS)** to show that 75% of ancient Silk Road sites across highland.
- All along the path its model simulates as optimal for moving herds to and from prime mountain meadows.
- Historic mobility by highland **nomadic herders structured enduring routes for seasonal migrations to summer pastures** which correspond significantly with the evolving geography of 'Silk Road' interaction across Asia's mountains.
- The locations of ancient cities, towns, shrines and caravan stops have long illustrated key points of interaction along this vast network, but defining its many routes has been far more elusive with this project.
- Scholars have previously traced Silk Road trade corridors modeling the shortest "least-cost" paths between major settlements and trade hubs. This connect-the-dots approach makes sense in lowland areas where direct routes across arid plains and open deserts correlate with **ease of travel between trade centers**.
- According to **Archaeological documentation** the development of mountain-herding economies in highland Asia is recorded as early as 3,000 BC
- Researchers designed a model that simulates highland herding mobility as **"flows"** directed by seasonally available meadows. This model is generated without using Silk Road sites in its calculations; the pathways it projects show remarkable geographic overlap with known **Silk Road locations**.
- The field work showed that these societies had inter-continental connections spanning thousands of years that formed the grassroots network that became the Silk Road.

## C. GS 3 RELATED

### ECONOMY

#### 1. India and Belgium sign Protocol amending the India-Belgium Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and Protocol

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=159028>

Key Points:

- Fighting the menace of Black Money stashed in offshore accounts is a key priority area for the Government
- The Protocol will broaden the scope of the existing framework of exchange of tax related information. This in turn will help curb tax evasion and tax avoidance between the two countries and will also enable mutual assistance in collection of taxes.
- Fighting the menace of Black Money stashed in offshore accounts has been a key priority area for the Government.
- To further this goal, India has either signed or amended international agreements, declarations or conventions for the Avoidance of Double Taxation & Prevention of Fiscal

Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income and for the Exchange of Information with Switzerland, Mauritius, Cyprus, Japan, Republic of Korea, Kazakhstan, Singapore and Austria during the financial year 2016-17.

### **What is DTAA(Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement)?**

- A DTAA is a tax treaty signed between two or more countries.
- Its key objective is that tax-payers in these countries can avoid being taxed twice for the same income.
- A DTAA applies in cases where a tax-payer resides in one country and earns income in another.
- DTAAs can either be comprehensive to cover all sources of income or be limited to certain areas such as taxing of income from shipping, air transport, inheritance, etc.
- India has DTAAs with more than eighty countries, of which comprehensive agreements include those with Australia, Canada, Germany, Mauritius, Singapore, UAE, the UK and US.

### **Why is it important?**

- DTAAs are intended to make a country an attractive investment destination by providing relief on dual taxation. Such relief is provided by exempting income earned abroad from tax in the resident country or providing credit to the extent taxes have already been paid abroad. DTAAs also provide for concessional rates of tax in some cases.
- Favourable tax treatment for capital gains under certain DTAAs such the one with Mauritius have encouraged a lot of foreign investment into India. Mauritius accounted for \$93.65 billion or one-third of the total FDI flows into India between April 2000 and December 2015. It has also remained a favoured route for foreign portfolio investors.

### **Concern:**

- The problem is DTAAs can become an incentive for even legitimate investors to route investments through low-tax regimes to sidestep taxation. This leads to loss of tax revenue for the country.

## **2. Centre may raise equity cap for pensions: PFRDA**

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/centre-may-raise-equity-cap-for-pensions-pfrda/article17436302.ece>

### **Key Points:**

- The pension fund regulator is hopeful of the Centre soon agreeing to its suggestion for allowing up to 50% of the funds contributed by government subscribers under the National Pension System to be invested into equities.

### **Present Scenario:**

- Presently, the ceiling on investments in equity markets from contributions made by government subscribers is 15%. In contrast, up to 50% of the contributions by non-government subscribers is permitted to be invested in equities.
- Contributions from non-government subscribers account for 15% of the corpus which is managed by seven pension fund managers (PFMs).

### **Other Suggestions to improve coverage:**

- Among other suggestions is one to permit auto enrolment aimed at increasing pension coverage in the informal sector.
- Noting that some countries, including the U.K., had tried this out successfully, anybody who came under the ambit of the scheme was automatically covered but had an option to opt out.

#### Outcome:

- The Centre is examining PFRDA's suggestion to make auto enrolment mandatory for Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers and employees of gram panchayats, the PFRDA Chairman added.

### **3. Centre issues draft rules on e-wallet payments**

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/centre-issues-draft-rules-on-ewallet-payments/article17436304.ece>

#### Key Points:

- The rules are meant to ensure integrity, security and confidentiality
- The Centre has issued draft rules to ensure integrity, security and confidentiality of electronic payments made through prepaid payment instruments (PPIs), popularly called e-wallets.
- The draft rules, on which the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has sought public comments, make it mandatory for e-PPI (electronic pre-payment instrument) issuers to develop an information security policy that ensures that the systems operated by them are secure.
- The Information Technology (Security of Prepaid Instruments) Rules, 2017, define an e-PPI issuer as a "person operating a payment system issuing prepaid payment instruments to individuals/organisations" under the aegis of Reserve Bank of India.
- The rules make it compulsory for e-PPIs to publish on their websites and mobile applications both their 'privacy policy' and terms for use of their payment systems.
- The draft also details the requirements of a privacy policy. The rules mandate that e-PPIs should carry out risk assessment to spot security risks and also ensure adequate due diligence is done before issuing PPIs.

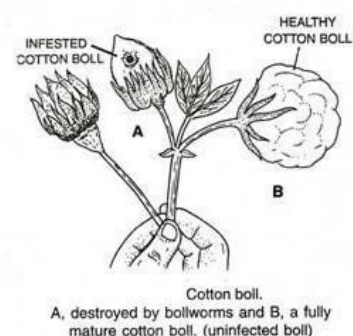
## **ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

### **1. Punjab varsity develops new BT cotton varieties**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/punjab-varsity-develops-new-bt-cotton-varieties/article17437275.ece>

#### What's in news?

- **Punjab Agricultural University** in Ludhiana has announced that it has developed the **country's first genetically-modified varieties of cotton** — the seeds of which could be reused by farmers with no commercial restrictions, resulting in savings on repeat purchases every season.
- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has identified three Bt cotton varieties – **PAU Bt 1, F1861 and RS2013** – for cultivation in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

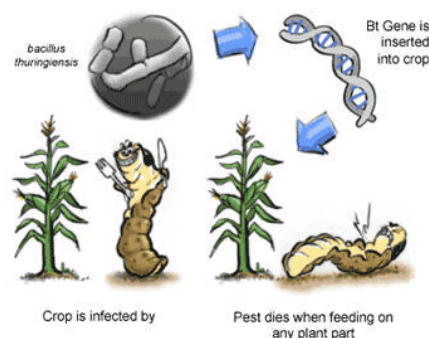


#### Advantages:

- All three varieties carry the **Cry1Ac gene** imparting resistance against **bollworm**

**complex.**

- The genetic modification involves introduction of the Bt bacterial gene that codes for a protein which kills the bollworm cotton pest.
- **Cost effective:** Farmers need not have to buy costly Bt cotton seeds every year. The farmers can keep their own harvest for next year's sowing. The price of these varieties will be much lower than current Bt cotton hybrid seed, and it can cut cultivation costs



#### **Facts check:**

- Cotton is the only GM crop allowed to be cultivated in India.
- Punjab alone needs around 20-25 lakh packets of Bt cotton seed which amounts to about 225 crore.

## **2. Illegal Construction along Ganga River Banks**

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx>

**Case–** M.C. Mehta V/s Union of India & Others, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) is dealing with the case of pollution and rejuvenation of river Ganga.

#### **National Green tribunal order:**

- Segment -Gaumukh to Haridwar (Uttarakhand)
- Illegal constructions activities likely to affect river Ganga are hotels/dharamshalas/ashrams, construction of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) for treatment of sewage or domestic affluent falling directly into the river Ganga and to stop its discharge.
- The NGT has also directed that at least 100m from middle of the river would be treated as **'Eco-sensitive and prohibited zone'**. **No activity whether permanent or temporary in nature will be permitted to be carried on in this zone.**
- The NGT has further directed that the area beyond 100 meters and less than 300 meters would be treated as **regulatory zone** in the hilly terrain.
- The area upto 200 meters shall be the **prohibited area** in the plain terrain and more than 200 meters and less than 500 meters would be treated as **regulatory zone**.
- Restrictions have been imposed on activity or construction in the regulated area where the gradient is beyond 350 meters to prevent ecological damage and land sliding in that area.
- The river bed mining, shall be carried on in a highly regulated manner and under strict supervision of the authorities concerned.
- Discharge of domestic waste directly into the Ganga river is being managed by a mix of interception & diversion projects, sewage network and sewage treatment plant projects.

## **3. Pilot Project for improving Water Table**

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=0>

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/home/environment/the-good-earth/rs-6000-crore-world-bank-backed-scheme-proposed-to-manage-groundwater-resources/articleshow/56392332.cms>

- **The National Groundwater Management Improvement Scheme** (NGMIS), supported by the World Bank, is under active consideration of the Government.
- The Scheme envisages **sustainable ground water management** through suitable supply/demand side interventions with stakeholder participation in identified priority areas of seven States viz. Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- The estimated cost of the Scheme is Rs. 6,000 crore and it will be implemented over a period of six years.
- Half of the total cost of the scheme, called National Groundwater Management

Improvement Scheme (NGMIS), will be supported by the World Bank as loan while the remaining half (Rs 3,000 crore) will be funded by the government through budgetary support.

- Infrastructure development includes building recharge structure\facilities for utilising rain water directly from roof top, creating rain water harvesting structures for conserving surplus run-off and recharging ground water in aquifers.
- Program is being designed in coordination with existing programmes and activities including MGNREGA, the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) as well as the National Hydrology Project (NHP).
- The programme will also have a 'performance-based incentive' system as its key component to reward states and local authorities for improvement in groundwater management. The NGMIS will also look after the policy aspects of irrigation efficiency, crop diversification and artificial recharge in the areas which witnessed uncontrolled and unplanned groundwater extraction over the last 50 years.
- The water resources ministry will coordinate implementation of the programme which includes clear targets for groundwater recharge, water use efficiency and aquifer protection by participating states.

#### **Fact's Review:**

- India annually extracts 245 Billion Cubic Meter (BCM) of groundwater which accounts for nearly 25% of the total global groundwater abstraction. About 222 BCM out of 245 BCM of groundwater is being used annually for irrigation while remaining 23 BCM is consumed by domestic and industry sector.

#### **D. GS 4 RELATED**

#### **E. TERMS OF THE DAY**

##### **Psephology**

A branch of political science which deals with the study and scientific analysis of elections.

##### **Cognizable offence**

cognizable offence means a police officer has the authority to make an arrest without a warrant and to start an investigation with or without the permission of a court. By contrast, in the case of a non-cognizable offence, a police officer does not have the authority to make an arrest without a warrant and an investigation cannot be initiated without a court order. The police can file a First Information Report (FIR) only for cognizable offences.

##### **Benthic ecosystem:**

The benthic zone is the ecological region at the lowest level of a body of water such as an ocean or a lake, including the sediment surface and some sub-surface layers. Organisms living in this zone are called benthos, e.g. the benthic invertebrate community, including crustaceans and polychaetes. The organisms generally live in close relationship with the substrate bottom and many are permanently attached to the bottom. The superficial layer of the soil lining the given body of water, the benthic boundary layer, is an integral part of the benthic zone, as it greatly influences the biological activity that takes place there. Examples of contact soil layers include sand bottoms, rocky outcrops, coral, and bay mud.

#### **F. ARTICLES IN NEWS**

Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill, 2016

The Bill seeks to amend the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 to provide for the following:

- a) Maternity leave available to the working women to be increased from 12 weeks to 26 weeks for the first two children.
- b) Maternity leave for children beyond the first two will continue to be 12 weeks.
- c) Maternity leave of 12 weeks to be available to mothers adopting a child below the age of three months as well as to the "commissioning mothers". The commissioning mother has been defined as biological mother who uses her egg to create an embryo planted in any other woman.
- d) Every establishment with more than 50 employees to provide for crèche facilities for working mothers and such mothers will be permitted to make four visits during working hours to look after and feed the child in the crèche.
- e) The employer may permit a woman to work from home if it is possible to do so. Every establishment will be required to make these benefits available to the women from the time of her appointment.

## **G. PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

Q1) As seen in the news regarding UNSC reforms negotiations, consider the following statements.

1. G4 countries in the lead for permanent seat in UNSC comprise of Brazil, India, South Africa and Japan.
2. The United Nations Security Council "power of veto" refers to the veto power wielded solely by the six permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

Identify the **incorrect** statements

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) None of the above

**Answer:** c

Topic: International Relations

Level: Moderate

Type: Factual

### **Explanation:**

- G4 countries: Brazil, India, Germany and Japan
- United Nations Security Council has five permanent members who can exercise the power of veto to prevent the adoption of any "substantive" resolution.

Q2) Consider the following statements with respect to adjournment motion?

1. Motion should be introduced on a matter of definite and urgent public importance.
2. A question of privilege or any other questions which can be raised via other distinct motion cannot be raised in adjournment motion.
3. Both the houses of parliament do not exercise equal rights with respect to adjournment motion.
4. Such a motion needs support of at least 30 members.

Identify the correct statements

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1,2 and 3



d) All the above

**Answer:** c

Topic: Polity

Level: Moderate

Type: Conceptual

**Explanation:**

- The primary object of an adjournment motion is to draw the attention of Lok Sabha to a recent matter of urgent public importance having serious consequences and in regard to which a motion or a resolution with proper notice will be too late.
- Adjournment motion is allowed only in Lok Sabha {or in state legislative assembly} and NOT in Rajya Sabha {or in state legislative council} because it has an element of censure against the government.
- Motion needs support of at least 50 members.

Q3) Consider the following statement with reference to the newly discovered canyon system by the National Institute of Oceanography

1. The canyon system was found near kovvada coast.
2. The new canyon system is very huge and probably formed by the river Kandivalasa.
3. The depth is more than that of Grand Canyon.
4. Most of the canyons in the ocean system across the world act as channels for depositing sediments in the shelf region. The more the deposit, the more are the chances of finding hydro-carbons.

Choose the correct answer

- a) 1 and 3
- b) 1 and 2
- c) 1,2 and 4
- d) All are correct

**Correct answer: (d)**

Topic: Current affair related

Level: Moderate.

Type: Factual

**Explanation:**

- Scientists of CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) in Visakhapatnam have found three new canyons forming a **major canyon system** in the depths of Bay of Bengal close to **Kovvada** in Srikakulam district.
- The new canyon system is very huge and probably formed by the **river Kandivalasa**. The depth of the canyon varies from about 90 metres from the starting point to about 2,500 metres at the deepest point, and it extends to about 50 to 70 km deep into
- The depth is more than the Grand Canyon, which is about 1,857 metres.
- Most of the canyons in the ocean system across the world act as channels for depositing sediments in the shelf region. **The more the deposit, the more are the chances of finding hydro-carbons.**

Q4) Choose the correct statement with reference to **National Groundwater Management Improvement Scheme**

- a) The scheme is supported by World Bank
- b) The Scheme envisages sustainable ground water management through suitable supply/demand side interventions with stakeholder participation in identified priority



- areas.
- c) Program is being designed in coordination with existing programmes and activities including MGNREGA, the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) as well as the National Hydrology Project (NHP).
  - d) All are correct.

**Correct answer: (D)**

Topic: Current Affairs

Level: moderate

Type: Factual

Explanation:

- **The National Groundwater Management Improvement Scheme** (NGMIS), supported by the World Bank, is under active consideration of the Government.
- The Scheme envisages **sustainable ground water management** through suitable supply/demand side interventions with stakeholder participation in identified priority areas of seven States viz. Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- The estimated cost of the Scheme is Rs. 6,000 crore and it will be implemented over a period of six years.
- Half of the total cost of the scheme, called National Groundwater Management Improvement Scheme (NGMIS), will be supported by the World Bank as loan while the remaining half (Rs 3,000 crore) will be funded by the government through budgetary support.
- Infrastructure development includes building recharge structure\facilities for utilising rain water directly from roof top, creating rain water harvesting structures for conserving surplus run-off and recharging ground water in aquifers.
- Program is being designed in coordination with existing programmes and activities including MGNREGA, the Pradhan Mantri Krishi SinchayeeYojana (PMKSY) as well as the National Hydrology Project (NHP).
- The programme will also have a 'performance-based incentive' system as its key component to reward states and local authorities for improvement in groundwater management. The NGMIS will also look after the policy aspects of irrigation efficiency, crop diversification and artificial recharge in the areas which witnessed uncontrolled and unplanned groundwater extraction over the last 50 years.
- The water resources ministry will coordinate implementation of the programme which includes clear targets for groundwater recharge, water use efficiency and aquifer protection by participating states.

Q5) Recently Centre has issued draft rules on e-wallet payments. Which of the following ministry has issued them?

- a) Ministry of Finance
- b) Ministry of Commerce
- c) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
- d) Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

Answer: C

Topic: Digital payments

Type: Factual

Difficulty: Easy

Q6) Consider the following statements about DTAA(Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement)

1. A DTAA is a tax treaty signed between two or more countries.
2. It allows tax-payers in countries which have signed the treaty to avoid being taxed twice for the same income.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) None

Answer: C

Topic: Taxation

Type: Conceptual

Difficulty: Medium

## **A. POLITY**

### **1. Bihar's woman MLAs seek 50% quota in Lok Sabha, state legislative houses**

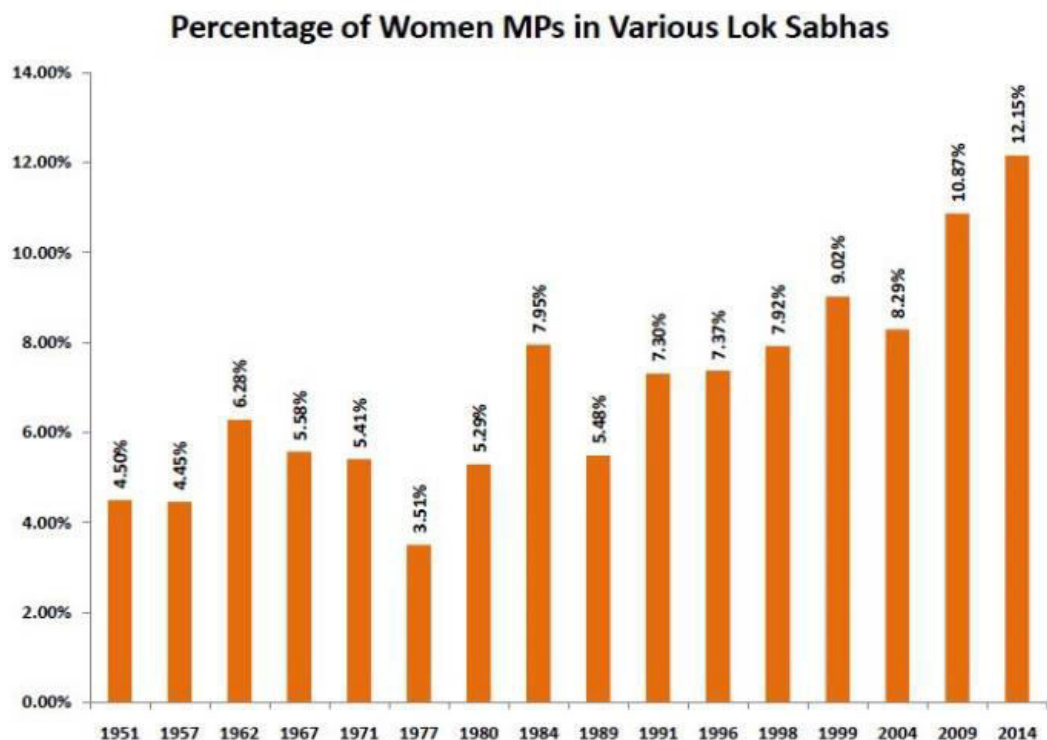
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/bihars-woman-mlas-seek-50-quota-in-lok-sabha-state-legislative-houses/articleshow/57540592.cms>

#### **What's in news?**

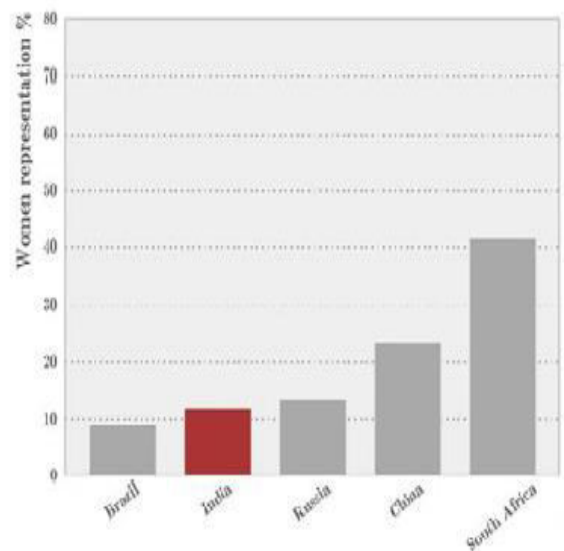
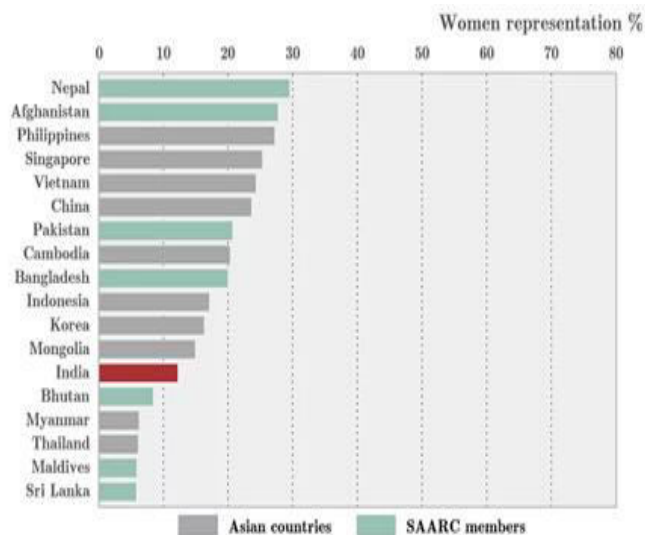
- Women legislators of Bihar demanded 50% reservation for women in State legislature and in Parliament as well.
- In the 243-member State assembly, there are only 27 women legislators.
- Bihar government has already made provision of reserving 50% seats for women on all posts in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and urban local bodies (ULBs).
- Bihar government has also provided 50% reservation to women in the recruitment of school teachers, she said.

#### **Key Facts:**

- A bill has to be introduced in the Parliament for enhancing the reservation given to women both at the legislature as well as at Parliament as it involves amendment of constitution.
- At present as per the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment act, 33% of seats at Panchayath bodies and Urban local Bodies are reserved for women.
- The first Lok Sabha in 1951 had 22 women MPs. The current 2014 Lok Sabha has 66. In the span of 54 years and 16 Lok Sabha elections it amounts to a three- fold increase in the number of women MPs that made their way to the lower house of the parliament. From 5% in 1951, women MPs constitute 12.2% of the Lok Sabha today



- Representation given to women among **Asian countries** and **BRICS NATION**



## 2. SC to HCs: Don't keep review pleas pending

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/sc-to-hcs-dont-keep-review-pleas-pending/article17429670.ece>

### What's in news?

- The apex court's observation came as it was dealing with a matter in which the **Kerala High Court** had kept a review plea pending for almost four years.
- It said the review plea should be disposed of as expeditiously as possible and it is the duty of the high court registry to place the matter before the concerned judge so that the application can be dealt with **"in quite promptitude"**.

### Supreme Court guidelines

- High Courts not to keep the applications for review pending as that is likely to delay the matter in every court and also embolden the likes of the petitioner to take a stand intelligently depicting the same in the application for condonation of delay.
- Litigant to file his review plea against a judgment on time. The court said it was the obligation of counsel filing an application for review to cure or remove the defects at the earliest.
- Registry of the High Court's is required to be vigilant.

## B. ECONOMY

### 1. Centre plumps for rural FMCG e-sales

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/centre-plumps-for-rural-fmcg-esales/article17429540.ece>

**Key Points:**

- Move aimed at enabling sales of goods from firms like Patanjali, P&G at common service centres
- CSCs are designed to be the hub Centre of activities in rural India.
- The government is focused on expansion of CSCs because of their inherent strength to transform rural India. With the sale of FMCG products, the door has been opened for popularising e-commerce through CSCs.

**What are Common Service Centres(CSC)?**

There are more than 2.5 lakh CSCs across the country which enable people, particularly in rural areas, to access government services online. These services include ration card, birth certificate, train tickets and online form submission, among other things.

**How it helps rural economy and Village Entrepreneurship?**

- Going beyond delivery of public services through such centres, the Centre is now opening up to tie-ups with private companies for their products to be sold through CSCs to increase profits for Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs). For example, CSC also has a tie up with Videocon d2h and Reliance Jio to sell their connections.
- The move will help VLEs who run CSCs to earn commission on the products sold while also enabling access for customers in rural areas to these products. According to estimates, a VLE is likely to earn a commission in the range of 12-20% on FMCG products, which is far higher than less than 10% on other services offered.
- All the back-end and logistics would be taken care of by the CSCs.

**2. Centre mulls border haats**

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/centre-mulls-more-border-haats/article17429466.ece>

**Key Points:**

- There are four border haats, along the India-Bangladesh border.
- Two border haats are located in Meghalaya at Kalaichar and Balat and two are located in Tripura at Srinagar and Kamalasagar.
- The trade at border haats is permitted to be carried out in Indian Rupees/Bangladesh Taka and on barter basis, and data of such trade is maintained by the Haat Management Committee of the respective border haat.

**What are Border Haats?**

- The Border Haats in Indian Language means Rural Market. It aims at promoting the well-being of the people dwelling in remote areas across the borders of two countries.
- It seeks to establish traditional system of marketing the local produce thorough local markets in local currency or according to barter basis.
- Though the trade carried in this informal market is not significant in terms of percentage of bilateral trade, but these local measures help to improve economic well-being of marginalised sections of society.

**3. RCEP: Ministry awaits political nod for more tariff cuts**

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/rcep-ministry-awaits-political-nod-for-more-tariff-cuts/article9576068.ece>

**Key Points:**

- The RCEP, which includes the 10-member ASEAN countries, India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, is aiming for free trade in goods and services and freer flow of investments between members.
- Once concluded, it could be the largest free trading bloc in the world accounting for 45 per cent of the world population and over \$22 trillion of gross domestic product (about 30 per cent of world GDP).
- The Commerce Ministry is under pressure to expedite a political decision on the market openings offer to members of the proposed regional comprehensive economic partnership (RCEP), particularly China, the country largely responsible for India's indecisiveness.
- In last week's negotiating round in Kobe, Japan, there was a broad agreement between the 16 participating countries that efforts would be made to submit revised and concrete offers in May, when members meet for the next round of negotiations in the Philippines, and to try and wrap up the negotiations before the end of this year

**India's Concern:**

- India's main problem is that the members have rejected its initial offer under a three-tiered system where it extended the ASEAN the maximum tariff elimination on 80 per cent items, followed by elimination on 62.5 per cent of items for Japan and South Korea (countries with which bilateral free trade pacts exist) and elimination on 42.5 per cent items for China, Australia and New Zealand (where no free trade such pacts exist).
- Not only will New Delhi now have to give a single structure of tariff cuts for all countries, with only some deviations allowed to take care of its sensitivities, it also has been asked to improve its offers, the official said.
- It was difficult enough for India to give an offer of eliminating 42.5 per cent of tariffs for China, despite the fact that it will happen over an extended period of time. To improve upon that will be a very difficult political call.

**Conclusion:**

- Now that the US has pulled out of the ambitious TPP — of which seven members from RCEP were also a part — participating countries are viewing the RCEP as their last recourse to a large regional pact.
- While the failure of the TPP has made India less vulnerable in the discussions on IPR and investments where the TPP provisions were being treated as the gold standard, definitely the pressure in the area of goods has gone up several-fold.

**C. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS****Dire straits (International Relations)**

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/dire-straits/article17431234.ece>

**Issue**

- Killing of a Tamil Nadu fisherman somewhere between the Indian and Sri Lankan coast triggers tensions.
- There is no clarity that who pulled the trigger — whether it was the Sri Lankan Navy or some armed group.
- It is also not clear where the shooting took place, whether in Sri Lankan waters or elsewhere.

### **Past scenario and the lacunae in bilateral relationship**

- The direct fallout of the long-standing dispute between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lankan Tamil fishermen over fishing rights in the Palk Bay.
- The shooting exposes the lack of progress in the implementation of the agreement between the two countries on preventing loss of life while managing the fishing dispute through official channels.



### **Unfulfilled Promises**

- Last year, the two countries agreed on establishing a Joint Working Group (JWG) on fisheries to help resolve the dispute.
- A hotline between the Coast Guards of India and Sri Lanka, convening of the JWG once in three months, and meetings of the fisheries ministers every half-year were the components of the mechanism

### **Negative Consequences**

- Without arriving at a settlement on sustainable exploitation of the marine resources that would end the use of bottom trawlers from Tamil Nadu, India and Sri Lanka will not be able to ensure incident-free fishing in the strait.
- Instances of Indian fishermen crossing into Sri Lankan waters have always been commonplace.
- Consequences for such transgressions in recent years have been limited to seizure of boats and prolonged detention.
- During the period of Sri Lanka's war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, its Navy indiscriminately shot at boats and trawlers fearing smuggling of contraband by the Tamil rebels

### **Sri-Lanka's stand on the issue**

- Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said Indian fishermen who crossed the maritime boundary to fish in another country's territorial waters would be fired upon.

### **Way forward**

- India to take deep-sea fishing, and inland alternatives. This could free India's fishermen from being locked in a conflict with their Sri Lankan counterparts as well as with a hostile Sri Lankan Navy.
- Need of the hour is to get a bilateral Joint Working group (JWG) to regulate and prevent the exploitation of marine resources.

## **D. SOCIAL ISSUES**

### **Smartphone Connectivity Drives Social Change & Rural Empowerment**

<http://brandstories.livemint.com/TATAcommunications/smartphone-connectivity.html>

## Current scenario

- The **telecom sector is redefining technological transformation in India**, with greater reach and penetration across all sections of society.

## Research and Survey

- According to a survey conducted by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) last year, **120 million Indian consumers living in rural areas were connected to the Internet**. That number constitutes 36% of India's online population.
- By 2020, the figure is expected to increase to 315 million, at an expansion of 30% each year.
- The BCG survey indicates that **98% of internet users in rural areas are men**.
- **Private firms like Tata Communications** are working hard to ensure that they keep up with any changes in technology.

## Initiatives and their Importance

- Government decision to **demonetise** a chunk of Indian currency enhances the **importance of online connectivity and the smartphone**, as we move towards a **cashless economy**, where payment of goods and services is being carried out through a **range of digital platforms**.
- As technologies evolve and adapt, there is a huge potential for **the Internet to affect different aspects of life, economy and society**.
- A better understanding of the internet is likely **to improve the appreciation of the Internet** and its capabilities leading **to new and innovative ways to incorporate digital resources into daily activities**
- The smartphone can also serve as **an important tool for social change and empowerment**, especially for sections of society that are marginalized.
- There have been **several initiatives to address that disparity and empower women through the use of mobile phones**.

## Private Sector Initiative

- Tata Communications joined hands with MasterCard and a host of other partners in 2015, for a commitment to action to financially empower women by delivering payment-enabled phones to them.
- The project is called, aptly, 100 Million Women, and will develop financial-service smartphone apps, in consultation with women belonging to low-income groups, as a means of financial, health, and educational emancipation.
- It started off as a series of pilot projects in India, Nigeria, Indonesia, and Guatemala, engaging 25,000 women in its initial run.
- Project has a larger plan to provide support to 100 million women in the developing world.

## Obstacles

- **Issues of literacy and numeracy** will detract consumers' ability to use apps.
- Access to **electricity and connectivity**.
- Further, the **nature of the software and apps** is another difficult task, as it has to be of the optimum quality to ensure that the needs of the women are met

## Way forward

- Given the emphasis on Financial Inclusion in the country today, institutions can leverage the Tata Communications Payment Solutions infrastructure as a way to support their own micro-finance initiatives and rural coverage.
- It offers in-house technology solutions for urban and rural financial inclusion, as well



as options such as transaction switching, device management, card issuance and lifestyle management, clearing and settlement, biometric authentication, a helpdesk, and others.

## **E. ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

### **1. Two more Tiger reserves soon in Uttarakhand**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/2-more-tiger-reserves-soon-in-uttarakhand/article17430981.ece>

#### **What's in news?**

- Uttarakhand State to get two more tiger reserves.
- **The Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary**, which falls under the **Terai Arc Landscape** spanning across **India and Nepal**, and **the Surai Range** in the Terai East division of the Uttarakhand forest department are the two proposed tiger reserves.

#### **Facts review**

- Uttarakhand now has two tiger reserves – the Corbett Tiger Reserve and the Rajaji Tiger Reserve.
- According to the tiger census data released in 2015, Uttarakhand has 340 tigers making it a State with the second highest tiger population in the country after Karnataka.
- With the two new tiger reserves, Uttarakhand, would become the first State in North India to get four tiger reserves.
- The Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary, The Nandhaur Sanctuary lies between the Gola and Sarda rivers in the Haldwani forest division and covers an area of 269.96 km<sup>2</sup>. The Nandhaur Sanctuary is a link between the Bramhadev and Sukhlaphata Wildlife Reserves of Nepal and the western forests of Ramnagar and the Terai central forest division in India
- Terai Arc Landscape, The Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) extends from River Yamuna in India in the west to River Bagmati in Nepal in the east covering an area of about 50,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The landscape is part of the Tarai-Duar Savana Eco-region and has two distinct physiographic regions, the terai and the bhabar. TAL has one of the world's densest tiger populations and houses 14 protected areas of which five are in Nepal. The tiger, the Asian elephant and the Indian rhinoceros are three flagship species of the region.

### **2. Fewer migratory water birds sighted at Ropar**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/fewer-migratory-water-birds-sighted-at-ropar/article17431005.ece>

#### **What's in news?**

- Asian Waterbird Census 2017, conducted by Wetlands International, South Asia, and Punjab's Wildlife Preservation Department, revealed that the number of water birds this season stood at 2,302 as against 3,114 last year.
- Fewer winter migratory water birds from central and north Asia were sighted at the Ropar Wetland in Punjab.
- The birds that came up this year included **oriental darter** and **river papwing**, both put on the **red-list by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**.

## Reasons

- **Anthropogenic factors:** Due to local disturbance such as threat and unavailability of food, the number of migratory birds decreased on many wetlands. At Ropar, boating, fishing and human disturbances along the riverbanks seem to drive away the water birds.
- With seasonal wetlands getting dry because of global warming, migratory birds going to a particular wetland switch to nearby wetlands, lakes, reservoirs with a large open area for seasonal congregation.



## Key facts:-

- **The Ramsar convention of Wetland:** - The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. It is also known as the Convention on Wetlands. It is named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the Convention was signed in 1971. Every three years, representatives of the Contracting Parties meet as the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP). The List of Wetlands of International Importance included 2,231 Ramsar Sites in March 2016 covering over 2.1 million square kilometres. The country with the **highest number of Sites** is the **United Kingdom** with 170, and the country with the **greatest area of listed wetlands** is **Bolivia**, with over 140,000 square kilometres.

- **Ropar Wetland**, also named **Ropar Lake**, is a man-made freshwater riverine wetland. **Indian narrow-headed softshell turtle** (*Chitraindica*) also known as **small-headed softshell turtle** is an endangered species of softshell turtle is found here.



## **F. TERMS OF THE DAY**

### **Siri**

Siri is a computer program that works as an intelligent personal assistant and knowledge navigator, part of Apple Inc.'s iOS, watchOS, macOS, and tvOS operating systems. The feature uses a natural language user interface to answer questions, make recommendations, and perform actions by delegating requests to a set of Web services. The software, both in its original version and as an iOS feature, adapts to the user's individual language usage and individual searches (preferences) with continuing use, and returns results that are individualized.

### **Misoprostol**

Misoprostol, is a medication used to start labor, cause an abortion, prevent and treat stomach ulcers, and treat postpartum bleeding due to poor contraction of the uterus. It is taken either by mouth, under the tongue, or placed in the vagina.

## **G. ARTICLES IN NEWS**

### **Article 136 – SPECIAL LEAVE TO APPEAL BY THE SUPREME COURT**

As per this article

**Clause(a)** The Supreme Court may, in its discretion, grant special leave to appeal from any judgment, decree, determination, sentence or order in any cause or matter passed or made by any court or tribunal in the territory of India

**Clause(b)** Nothing in clause (a) shall apply to any judgment, determination, sentence or order passed or made by any court or tribunal constituted by or under any law relating to the Armed Forces.

## **H. PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

**Q1)** Consider the following statement with reference to Special Leave petition

1. SLP can be filed against any judgment of High Court within 90 days from the date of judgement.
2. SLP can be filed within 60 days against the order of the High Court refusing to grant the certificate of fitness for appeal to Supreme Court.
3. Even High courts can issue SLP
4. SLP can be issued against judgment, determination, sentence or order passed or made by any court or tribunal constituted by or under any law relating to the Armed Force

Choose the correct answer

- a) 1,2 and 3.
- b) 1 and 2
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All are correct.

Answer (B)

Subject – Polity

Difficulty level – Moderate

Type – Conceptual

### **Explanation:**

Article 136: SPECIAL LEAVE TO APPEAL BY THE SUPREME COURT

As per this article

**Clause(a)** The Supreme Court may, in its discretion, grant special leave to appeal from any judgment, decree, determination, sentence or order in any cause or matter passed or made by any court or tribunal in the territory of India

**Clause(b)** Nothing in clause (a) shall apply to any judgment, determination, sentence or order passed or made by any court or tribunal constituted by or under any law relating to the Armed Forces.

Special Leave petition or SLP can be presented under following circumstance: SLP can be filed against any judgment or decree or order of any High Court /tribunal in the territory of India or, SLP can be filed in case the High court refuses to grant the certificate of fitness for appeal to Supreme Court of India.

Time frame within which SLP can be filed: SLP can be filed against any judgment of High Court within 90 days from the date of judgement or SLP can be filed within 60 days against the order of the High Court refusing to grant the certificate of fitness for appeal to Supreme Court.

Who can file SLP: Any aggrieved party can file SLP against the judgment or order of refusal of grant of certificate.

**Q2)** Consider the following statement with reference to Terai Arc Landscape

1. The Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) extends from River Yamuna in India in the west to River

Bagmati in Nepal

2. The landscape is part of the Terai-Duar Savana Eco-region and has two distinct physiographic regions, the terai and the bhabar.
3. TAL has one of the world's densest tiger populations.

Choose the correct answer

- a) 2 and 3
- b) 1 and 2
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All are correct.

Correct Answer (D)

Subject: Environment and Ecology

Type: Factual

Difficulty Level: Hard

**Explanation:**

Terai Arc Landscape, The Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) extends from River Yamuna in India in the west to River Bagmati in Nepal in the east covering an area of about 50,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The landscape is part of the Terai-Duar Savana Eco-region and has two distinct physiographic regions, the terai and the bhabar. TAL has one of the world's densest tiger populations and houses 14 protected areas of which five are in Nepal. The tiger, the Asian elephant and the Indian rhinoceros are three flagship species of the region

**Q3)** Consider the following statement with reference to Ropar Wetland which was in news recently

1. The Ropar wetland is recognized under The Ramsar Wetland Convention.
2. Ropar wetland is a habitat for the endangered small-headed soft-shell turtle.

Choose the correct answer

- a) Only 1 is correct
- b) Only 2 is correct
- c) Both of them are correct
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Correct Answer: (C)

Subject: Environment and Ecology (Current Affairs)

Difficulty Level: Moderate

**Explanation:**

- Ropar Wetland, also named Ropar Lake, is a man-made freshwater riverine wetland. Indian narrow-headed softshell turtle (*Chitra indica*) also known as small-headed softshell turtle is an endangered species of softshell turtle found here.
- Considering the wetland's diverse and rich biodiversity, Ramsar Convention has included Ropar Wetland (listed as Ropar Lake) as one of the Ramsar sites among the 26 sites listed under India, for "the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the ecological and hydrological functions they perform."

**Q4)** The 13th amendment also called Indo-Sri Lanka Accord was signed between Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene, this agreement provided for

1. Establishment of provincial councils.
2. Taking action against the human rights violators
3. Creation of a second chamber in central legislature.
4. Enable Sinhalese alone as national language and preserve English as the link language.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: a

Topic: International Relations

Level: Moderate

**Explanation:** The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka is amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka which created Provincial Councils in Sri Lanka. This also made Sinhala and Tamil as the official language of the country and English as link language. Statement 2 is false. There are talks about creation of a second chamber in central legislature. This is deemed as 13 plus. It was not there in the original 13th amendment.

**Q5)** Consider the following with respect to the Tulip festival as recently seen in news

1. Mega Tulip festival was organised in the Kashmir valley by the Indian Government.
2. Asia's largest tulip garden is the showcase of the festival

Identify the correct statements

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) None of the above

Answer: b

Topic: Environmental Facts

**Explanation:** Tulip festival is organised by the Jammu and Kashmir government. The showcase of the event is the Asia's largest Tulip garden located in the Kashmir Valley.

**Q6)** Which of the following countries are there in Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership?

1. USA
2. India
3. South Korea
4. North Korea

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 2, 3 and 4

- c) 2 and 3
- d) 1 and 4

Answer: c

Topic: International relation

Type: Factual

Difficulty Level: easy

**Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** is a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and the six states with which ASEAN has existing free trade agreements (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).

RCEP negotiations were formally launched in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia. RCEP is viewed as an alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement, which excludes China and India and includes several nations of the Americas.

In 2016, prospective RCEP member states accounted for a population of 3.4 billion people with a total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$21.4 trillion, approximately 30 percent of the world's GDP.

## **B.GS 2 RELATED**

### **POLITY**

#### **1. Supreme Court issues bailable warrants against Justice Karnan**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/sc-issues-bailable-warrant-against-justice-karnan/article17440526.ece>

##### **What's in news?**

- A seven-judge Bench, comprising the senior most judges of the Supreme Court, issued a **bailable warrant** against sitting **Calcutta HC judge C.S. Karnan** to secure his presence in the Supreme Court on March 31 in a suo motu **contempt case** against him for **denigrating the judicial institution**.
- Calcutta HC judge C.S. Karnan says he was targeted for being Scheduled caste community.
- Justice Karnan argued, "no contempt either civil or criminal can be initiated against a sitting High Court Judge under Sections 2 (c), 12 and 14 of the Contempt of Courts Act or under Article 20 of the Constitution of India."

##### **Why these proceedings against Karnan?**

- Earlier in a letter to the Prime Minister, Justice Karnan had allegedly accused **several sitting and retired High Court and Supreme Court judges of corruption** (Serious allegation).
- An order has been passed by Justice Karnan admitting a petition filed by a lawyer in the Calcutta HC seeking enquiry into the allegations in the suicide note of former Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Kalikho Pul. Pul had made **corruption allegations against sitting Supreme Court and HC judges**.

##### **A judicial first**

A look at the curious case of Justice C.S. Karnan

**NOV. 2011:** Writes to the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes, alleging harassment by fellow judges

**JAN. 2014:** Enters a court hall in the midst of a hearing on names recommended for the post of judges; calls the process 'unfair'

**MARCH 2014:** SC condemns his 'raw, unconventional protest'

**MAY 2015:** He accuses a sitting judge of the Madras HC of assaulting an intern

**NOV. 2015:** Goes on

long leave, dissatisfied over the allocation of "dummy" portfolios to him

**FEB. 2016:** Is transferred to Calcutta High Court, suo motu stays the order. His order was later stayed by the SC

**JAN. 2017:** Writes to the PM accusing 20 judges of corruption

**FEB. 8:** SC asks him to appear to explain why contempt proceedings should not be initiated

**MARCH 10:** SC issues bailable warrant



#### **2. Projects cleared faster in 2015: CAG**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/projects-cleared-faster-in-2015-cag/article17444493.ece>

##### **What's in news?**

- Report Comptroller and Auditor General tabled in the parliament.
- Delays in granting environmental clearance (EC) to projects fell in 2015 after consistently rising between 2011 and 2014



- **62 projects examined by it had “irregularities” in the way they garnered public consent** (that involves discussing the impact of project with villagers or residents.)

#### **Basic Information**

- **The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India** is an authority, established by the Constitution under Constitution of India, Part V - Chapter V, Article 148
- CAG audits all receipts and expenditure of the Government of India and the state governments, including those of bodies and authorities substantially financed by the government.
- The CAG is also the external auditor of Government-owned corporations and conducts supplementary audit of government companies, i.e., any non-banking/ non-insurance company in which Union Government has an equity share of at least 51 per cent or subsidiary companies of existing government companies.
- The reports of the CAG are taken into consideration by the Public Accounts Committees (PACs) and Committees on Public Undertakings (COPUs), which are special committees in the Parliament of India and the state legislatures.
- The CAG is also the head of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department, the affairs of which are managed by officers of Indian Audit and Accounts Service.
- The CAG is **ranked 9th** and enjoys the same status as a judge of Supreme Court of India in Indian order of precedence.
- CAG is usually referred to as India’s Public Account watch dog.

### **3. The Enemy Property (Amendment & Validation) Bill, 2016 passed.**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/enemy-property-bill-passed-amid-opposition-walkout/article17444198.ece>

<http://www.prsindia.org/billtrack/the-enemy-property-amendment-and-validation-bill-2016-4212/>

#### **Highlights of the Bill:**

- The Bill amends the Enemy Property Act, 1968, to vest all rights, titles and interests over enemy property in the Custodian
- The Bill declares **transfer** of enemy property by the enemy, conducted under the Act, to **be void**. This applies **retrospectively** to transfers that have occurred before or after 1968.
- The Bill prohibits civil courts and other authorities from entertaining disputes related to enemy property.

#### **Key Issues and Analysis:**

- The Enemy Property Act, 1968 allows transfer of enemy property from the enemy to other persons. The Bill declares all such transfers as void. **This may be arbitrary and in violation of Article 14 of the Constitution.**
- The Bill **prohibits civil courts** from entertaining any disputes with regard to enemy property. It does not provide any alternative judicial remedy (eg. tribunals). Therefore, it limits judicial recourse or access to courts available to aggrieved persons.

### Time Line:

- When wars broke out against China in 1961, and Pakistan in 1965 and 1971, properties belonging to nationals of these countries were taken over by the central government under the Defence of India Acts, 1962 and 1971.
- These properties were designated as “enemy property” and vested in an office of the central government, the Custodian of Enemy Property.
- The Enemy Property Act, 1968 was enacted to regulate enemy property.
- Over the years, several disputes regarding powers of the Custodian and rights of enemies over enemy property went to the courts.
- In a 2005 decision, the Supreme Court held that the Custodian was a trustee of enemy property responsible for its management, and the ownership lay with the enemy and his legal heirs.
- To negate this decision, an Ordinance was promulgated in 2010, which subsequently lapsed. On January 7, 2016, an ordinance with a similar purpose was promulgated. The Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2016 was then introduced and passed in Lok Sabha.

CENTRE, THE CUSTODIAN	
A look at the Enemy Property Act, 1968 and the Centre's latest move to amend it	
• After the 1962 Sino-Indian war and the 1965 Indo-Pak war, the government took over the properties of those who migrated from India	<b>THE AMENDMENT</b> The Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2016, passed by the Lok Sabha, intends to guard against claims of properties by the descendants of those who migrated abroad
• These 'enemy properties' were taken over by the Centre via the Enemy Property Act, 1968	

#### 4. We can't declare Pak. a terror state: Centre

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/we-cant-declare-pak-a-terror-state-centre/article17444760.ece>

#### Independent member withdraws Bill

- The government told Rajya Sabha that **declaring Pakistan a “terror state” could have “diplomatic as well as other far-reaching consequences.”** Before doing so a detailed study is required.
- **Independent Member of Parliament Rajeev Chandrasekhar**, who is also the Vice-Chairman of the BJP's Kerala unit, had **moved ‘The Declaration of Countries as Sponsor of Terrorism Bill, 2016’ to create a legal, economic and travel sanctions regime for citizens of countries which promote terror.**
- Centre was set to oppose the Bill as it **would jeopardize international relations under the Geneva Convention.**

#### Independent member of Indian parliament

- An independent or nonpartisan politician is **an individual politician not affiliated with any political party. "Private member" is any member of parliament (MP) who is not a member of the cabinet (executive).**
- Independents may support policies which are different from those of the major political parties.

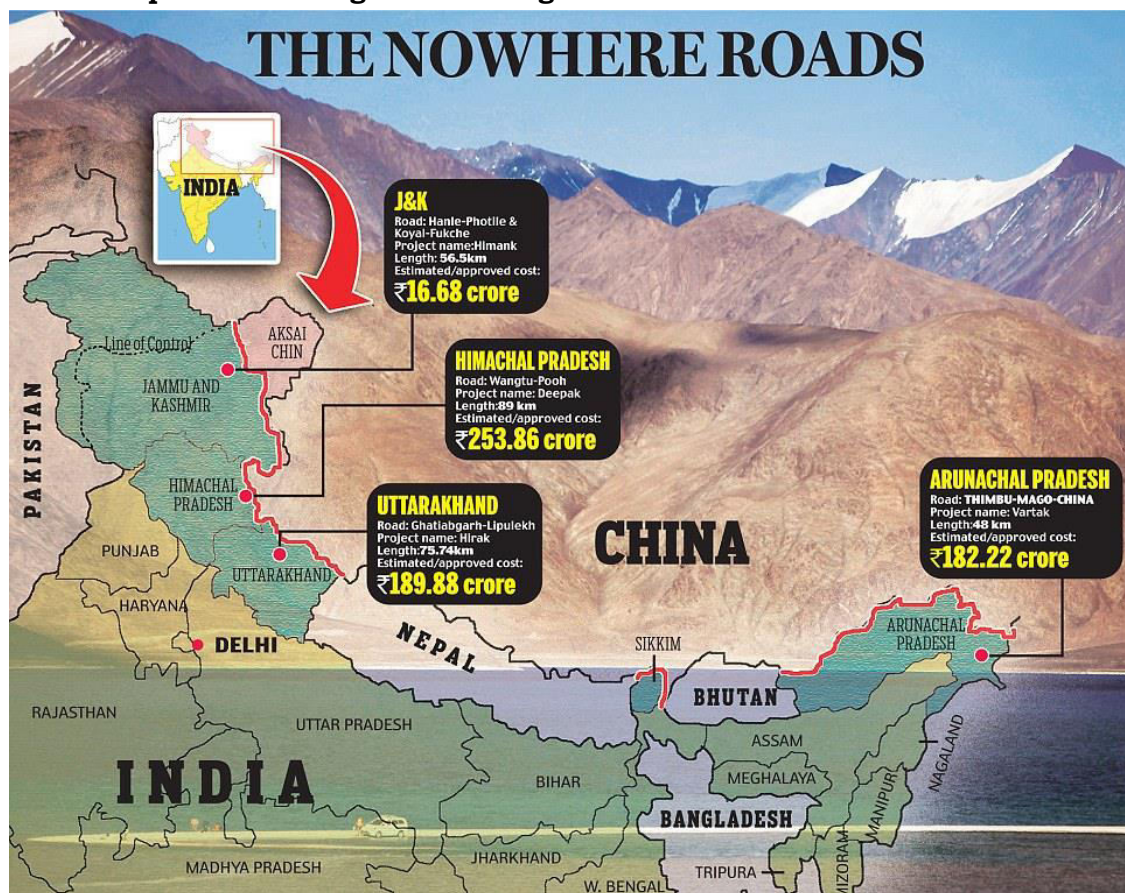
- A private member's bill in a parliamentary system of government is a bill (proposed law) **introduced into a legislature by a legislator who is not acting on behalf of the executive branch.**
- They may be introduced by **non-ministerial MPs from government-supporting parties** (backbenchers), **by members of opposition parties** (frontbencher or backbencher), **or by independents or crossbenchers**

## 5. Slow progress in roads along China border: CAG

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/slow-progress-in-roads-along-china-border-cag/article17444428.ece>

### What's in news?

- In 2007, the government decided to aggressively develop infrastructure along the border with China
- A CAG report points out that targets are not met and incidence of huge cost escalations.
- Of the 61 India-China Border Roads scheduled to be completed by 2012, only 22 had been completed as late as March 2016 with massive cost overruns.
- **These roads are critical for the Indian Army to quickly mobilise men and equipment to remote posts in the high altitude region.**



### Basic information:

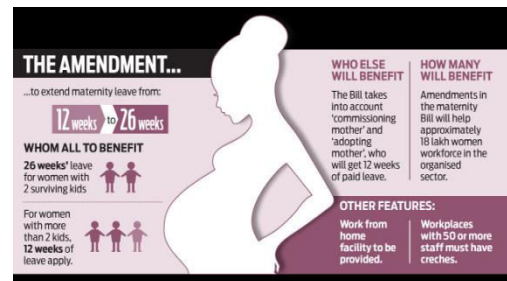
- **Border road Organisation:** Ministry of Defence
- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighbouring countries. It is staffed by officers and troops drawn from the Indian Army's Corps of Engineers, Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Army Service Corps, Military Police and army personnel on extra regimental employment. Officers from the Border Roads Engineering Service and personnel from the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) form the parent cadre of the Border Roads Organisation.
- Currently, the organisation maintains operations in twenty-one states, one UT (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), and neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.

## 6. Partial cover: More needs to be done on the mother and child front

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/partial-cover/article17443314.ece>

### Update

- Recently Parliament passed **Maternity benefit amendment bill**, which enhanced paid maternity leave for women in the **organised sector** to 26 weeks from 12.



### Critics

- Focused only on organized sector workers.
- Unorganized workers fall beyond the scope of any worthwhile labour welfare measures. The amended law is expected to cover **only 1.8 million women**, a small subset of women in the workforce.
- For many poor millions in the unorganized sector, the only support available is a **small conditional cash** benefit of Rs 6,000 during pregnancy and lactation offered under the Maternity Benefit Programme. **The reported move to restrict even this meagre benefit to the first child for budgetary reasons is retrograde and must be given up.**

### Way Forward

- Providing benefits for women and children is a **societal responsibility** which can be funded in a large country through a combination of general taxation and contributory payments from those who have the means.
- Health care should be treated as a right and deliveries handled **without cost** to women.
- The income guarantees during the 26-week period can be ensured through a **universal social insurance system**.
- There would also be no discrimination against women in recruitment by employers who currently have to factor in benefit payments.
- Mandating creche facilities to help women workers under the changed law is a forward-looking move, but it will work well only with **a good oversight mechanism**.
- Create more jobs for women in a diversified economy, and provide social opportunity through maternal and child welfare measures.

## **7. National Foundation for Corporate Governance (NFCG)**

### **Key facts**

- The **National Foundation for Corporate Governance (NFCG)** has accredited **forty Seven premier Indian Institutions/Organizations as National Centers for Corporate Governance**.
- These centers conduct seminars, workshops conferences, directors' orientation programmes etc. **for promoting good corporate governance practices** and also carry out **research work** in this field.
- The research report of the foundation include subject such as the role of independent directors, CSR, corporate governance in energy sector, reforms in banking sector etc.
- National Foundation for Corporate Governance (NFCG) **set up in 2003**.

### **Objectives**

- Fostering a **culture of good governance**.
- To provide a **platform to deliberate issues** relating to **good corporate governance** as the **key to sustainable wealth creation**;
- To **sensitize corporate leaders** on the importance of good corporate governance, **self-regulation and directorial responsibilities- statutory, social and environmental**;
- To **stimulate and to facilitate exchange of experiences and ideas** between corporate leaders, policy makers, regulators, law enforcing agencies, non-government organizations and voluntary agencies with **a view to developing a framework for corporate governance reforms in the context of liberalization and globalization**;
- To **provide research, training, practice, building, standard setting, advocacy, rating, monitoring, recognition and related support** in the field of corporate governance;
- To **provide financial or any other assistance directly or indirectly** for activities which seek to promote corporate governance including research and training;
- To develop strategies that enhance value for all stakeholders and ensure long term benefits to the shareholders and the society at large;
- **To establish and deepen links with organizations** in various parts of the world which promote corporate governance **for exchange of ideas and for collaborative actions, projects and programs**;
- To **institute national awards and recognitions for excellence** in corporate governance and **develop a system of corporate governance rating**;
- To **collaborate and to support, directly or indirectly**, the initiative of any individual, group, organization or institution in promoting corporate governance;
- To develop a **code of best practices** for corporate governance taking into consideration **the international examples** and to **promote its voluntary adoption by the corporate bodies**;
- To **prepare, print and publish** any papers, periodicals or newspapers, books or leaflets either on its own or in collaboration with other persons/ entities through print or other media and to contribute to any papers or periodicals to disseminate **information and knowledge in the area of corporate governance**;



- To **facilitate, promote, commend and collaborate** on the proposals from individuals, associations and organizations for **funding by national, international and multi- lateral organizations as also industry- associations, regulators and governments;**
- To **provide advice, consultancy and technical and managerial support** to the beneficiaries of the Trust's programmes through a network of advisors drawn from the industry and institutions of excellence; and other related objects.

## **8. Department of Consumer Affairs issues an advisory to the State Governments on Levy of Service Charge by Hotels**

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=159154>

### **Why in news?**

- A number of complaints from consumers received in the National Consumer Helpline that hotels and restaurants are following the **practice of charging 'service charge' in the range of 5-20%, in lieu of tips.**
- A consumer is forced to **pay this charge irrespective of the kind of service** provided to him.
- The consumers are also required to **pay service tax on this service charge** so collected by the hotels and restaurants.

### **What is Service Tax?**

- It is a type of indirect duty levied on particular services that are categorized as taxable services. The responsibility of paying this kind of levy lies on the service provider. This duty can't be levied on services that are not included in the specified list. Over last one or two years, the domain of service tax been broadened to include new services.
- The goal behind imposing service tax in India is to lower the extent of concentration of taxation on business and industry without compelling the government to find the middle ground on the revenue requirements

### **Insights into the Constitution**

- **The Consumer Protection Act, 1986** provides that a **trade practice** which, for the purpose of promoting the sale, use or the supply of any goods or for the provision of any service, adopts **any unfair method or deceptive practice is to be treated as an unfair trade practice.**
- The said Act further provides that a **consumer can make a complaint to the appropriate consumer forum** established under the Act against
  - i. An **unfair trade practice** adopted by any trader or service provider
  - ii. the services hired or availed of, suffered from **deficiency in any respect**
  - iii. a trader or service provider, as the case may be, **has charged for the goods or for the services a price in excess of the price**
    - a) fixed by or under any law for the time being enforce,
    - b) displayed on the goods or any package containing such goods,
    - c) Displayed on the price list exhibited by him or under any law for the time being in force or agreed between the parties.

### **Solution derived**

- State Governments to sensitize the companies, hotels and restaurants in the state regarding aforementioned provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 and to **disseminate the information through display at the appropriate place in the**

**hotels/restaurants** that the ‘**service charges**’ are **discretionary/ voluntarily** and a **consumer dissatisfied with the services** can have it **waived off**.

- **Service tax is levied uniformly as per statutory provisions**, which is different from the service charge.

## 8. Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

### What's in news

- Telecom Regulatory and Authority of India recommended setting up an “**Office of Telecom Ombudsman**”.
- This Ombudsman will have the powers to levy penalties on telecom service providers, resolution of complaints and grievances of the consumers.

## 9. Rs. 294.84 crores deposited by Pharmaceutical companies against demand notices issued by Government for overcharging patients for Scheduled Medicines.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=159154>

### Background

- **Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO)** issued by the Government from time to time contains provisions to take **appropriate action against any manufacturer selling a schedule bulk drug or formulation at a price higher than the ceiling price fixed and notified by the Government**.
- The provisions empower the Government to direct the **manufacturer to deposit the overcharged amount along with the interest** thereon from the date of overcharging, **in addition to the penalty**.

### Why in news?

- The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), under Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, **has issued demand notices to companies which have overcharged patients**.

### ESSENTIAL MEDICINES



- **GUIDING PRINCIPLE:** A limited range of carefully selected essential drugs leads to **Better health care, Better drug management & at Lower costs**
- **DEFINITION:** That satisfy the priority **health care needs of the population at all time**.
- **SELECTION:** with due regard to public health relevance, evidence of **efficacy and safety**, and **comparative cost-effectiveness\***

### Steps taken

- **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)** is prepared by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on the recommendation of the core committee appointed by the Ministry.
- There were 348 medicines listed in NLEM 2011. A total of 106 medicines have been added, and 70 medicines have been deleted to prepare NLEM 2015, which **now contains a total of 376 medicines**.
- The initial **price fixation/price determination** is **not under the purview of Government**. Government only controls price of medical devices declared as essential drugs.

\*WHO, [Online], [http://www.who.int/topics/essential\\_medicines/en](http://www.who.int/topics/essential_medicines/en)  
31 Essential Medicines List: Concept and Procedures



- Out of the 23 medical devices regulated as “Drugs” under Drugs & Cosmetics Act & Rules thereunder, 3 devices namely **‘Condom’, ‘Intra Uterine Device (IUD) containing copper’ & ‘Coronary Stents’** have been included in the Schedule-I of DPCO, 2013 and are **under price control**.
- The remaining 20 medical devices are categorized as **non-scheduled formulations** under DPCO, 2013 and therefore, **no price has been fixed** for these non-scheduled medical devices.
- However, manufacturers are **not allowed to increase the price of these 20 medical devices more than 10% per annum**.

## **10. National Program for prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular diseases and Stroke with integration of Ayurveda, Homoeopathy and Unani**

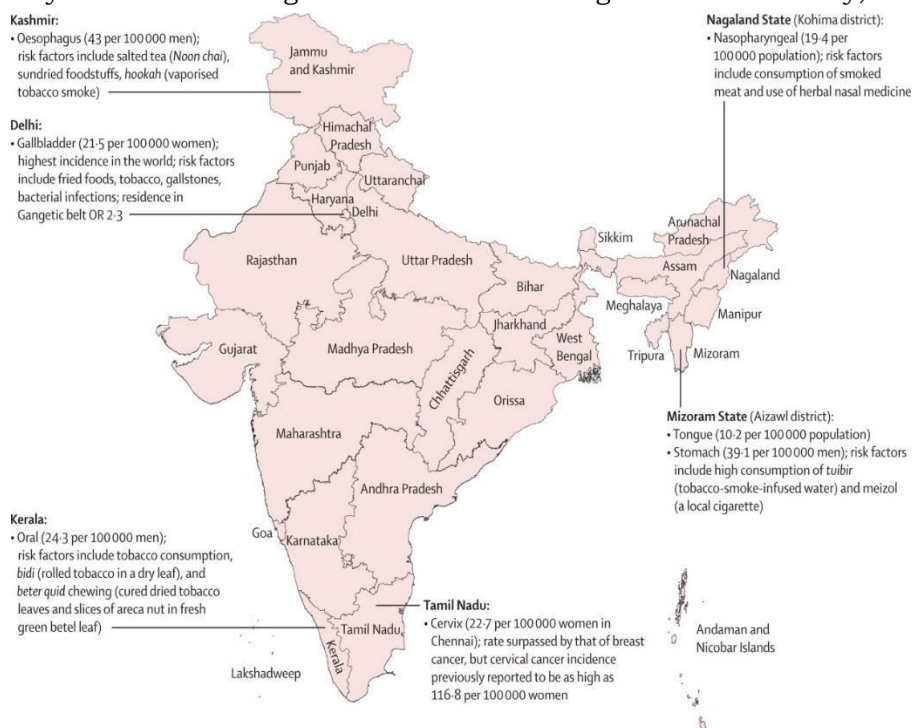
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=159154>

### **Traditional vs Modern**

- The ancient systems of medicine follow a holistic approach focused on the individual (patient) while treating the patients for a specific disease whereas the Modern system of medicine focuses on the disease, thus, the two approaches are fundamentally different from each other.

### **Intention of the program**

- The Ministry of AYUSH has launched a program to integrate Ayurveda, Homoeopathy and Unani with National Program for prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS).
- The Ministry of AYUSH through its three research organizations. namely, Central Council





for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH) and Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM) implements the program.

#### **Objective of the initiative**

- Prevention and early diagnosis of these diseases, reducing complications and reducing drug dependency through these systems.

## **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

### **1. Pakistan Parliament passes landmark Hindu Marriage Bill**

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-international/pakistan-parliament-passes-landmark-hindu-marriage-bill/article17444727.ece>

#### **Why in news?**

- Pakistan's Parliament passed the landmark **bill to regulate marriages of minority Hindus in the country**.
- Pakistan's National Assembly **unanimously adopted** the Hindu Marriage Bill, 2017.

#### **Amendment procedure**

- As per rules, the same text should be passed by the two Houses of the Parliament before it is sent to the President for his signature and promulgation for implementation.

#### **Minutes of the bill**

- The Senate included an amendment to the draft approved by the National Assembly in September. The final text approved by both Houses includes the **'ShadiParath' — a document similar to 'Nikahnama' in Islam**.
- The **'ShadiParath' will be required to be signed by a pandit** and will be **registered with the relevant government department**

#### **Military courts**

- Meanwhile, the Pakistani government introduced a constitutional amendment bill in Parliament to **revive the controversial special military courts for trying "hardcore" militants**.
- Apart from changes sought in the constitution, another bill was presented to **seek amendment in the army law to enable military to regulate these courts**.
- In 2015, the Parliament passed two bills, including Twenty-first (Amendment) Bill, and The Pakistan Army (Amendment) Bill, **to set up military courts to hear the cases of hardcore criminals**.

## **C. G.S.3 RELATED**

## **ECONOMY**

### **1. PAN may be made mandatory for TAN**

- As per a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), the Central Board of Direct Taxes may make PAN mandatory as a requirement for allotting Tax Deduction Account Numbers (TAN) to companies that deduct tax at source.
- The CAG had earlier observed that the procedure for allotting TAN does not require any documents as proof of identity or address.
- The inability to deliver the notices to the correct addresses resulted in the tax department being unable to recover a demand of Rs. 4,180 crore raised in the period 2007-08 to 2011-12.

### **2. Centre incurs loss of Rs. 3,000 crore on TDS: CAG**

- According to a report by CAG, in the period FY13 to FY15 the Centre has incurred a revenue loss of almost Rs. 3,000 crore either due to TDS not being collected, or being collected and not being deposited by the assessee.
- There were 128 cases in which the Assessing Officer allowed the expenditure in contravention of the provisions there under even though tax deducted at source was not deducted or deducted but not deposited before the due date of filing of return on such payments.
- The mistakes in 155 cases resulted in short levy of tax of Rs. 2,026.42 crore.”
- Additionally, in 168 cases, the Assessing Officer did not impose interest on defaulting tax deductors amounting to Rs. 902.16 crore for failure to deduct TDS or deducting less TDS under the relevant sections of the Income Tax Act.
- There were also a total of 654 cases where penalties were not imposed against tax deductors on account of non-deduction/collection of tax at source and where tax was deducted at source but not deposited within due date respectively.

### **3. Faster demonetisation dissipated negative impact: RBI**

#### **Highlights of the RBI Report:**

- The decision has had some negative macroeconomic impact, but it has been transient as demonetisation has moved at an accelerated pace in last twelve weeks.
- The adverse impact, in general, was short-lived as it was felt mainly in November and December 2016. The impact moderated significantly in January and dissipated by and large by mid-February 2017.
- Demonetisation is expected to have a positive impact over the medium to long-term.
- Greater formalisation of the economy with increased use of digital payments is expected. There has been a significant improvement in the use of digital modes of payments post demonetisation, although their base is still small.
- The reduced use of cash will also lead to greater intermediation by the formal financial sector of the economy, which should help improve monetary transmission.
- The currency in circulation declined and deposits with banks surged which expanded the balance sheet of banks and created large surplus liquidity in the system, which was managed by the RBI mostly through a mix of reverse repo and MSS securities.
- Large surplus liquidity led to a significant improvement in monetary policy transmission as reflected in a significant decline in deposit and lending interest rates.
- Some NBFCs, especially microfinance institutions, were adversely affected, in terms of disbursements and collection of repayments. But, the situation for most NBFCs began to improve from late December 2016.
- Jan Dhan accounts increased by 23.3 million post demonetisation, while deposits under Jan Dhan accounts increased by Rs 18,700 crore (41%).

- After initial softening, G-sec yields increased significantly on two occasions — after the announcement of application of incremental cash reserve ratio (ICRR) and the status quo in monetary policy in December 2016.
- The impact on the forex market was transitory. Demonetisation has impacted some segments of the export sector such as readymade garments, and gems and jewellery. The impact, however, was transitory. Imports of gold increased sharply in November, but moderated in December.

#### **4. Centre creating a dynamic buffer of up to 2 million tonnes of Pulses**

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=159154>

##### **Related Facts**

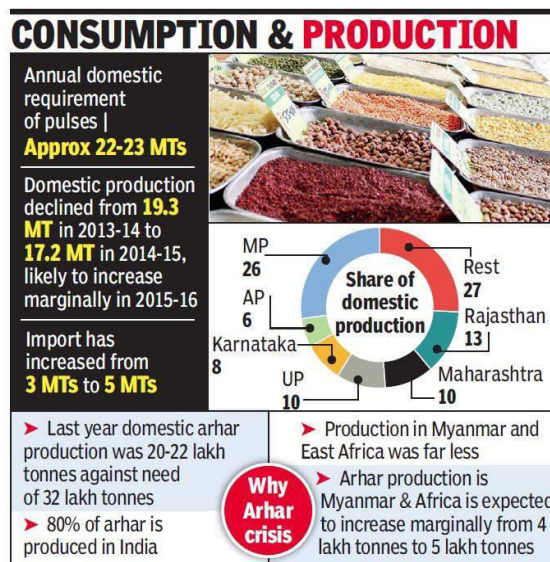
- **Buffer Stock of Pulses Crosses 14.25 lakh MT**
- During 2015-16, around 5.88 million tonnes pulses were imported.

##### **Steps taken**

- The measures taken by the Government to **improve the domestic availability**, inter alia, include **zero import duty on pulses, export ban on pulses with certain exemptions, regular enhancement of MSP for pulses, and implementation on National Food Security Mission (NFSM).**

##### **Need for the buffer stock??**

- **Sky-rocketing pulse prices**, especially when the crucial Bihar elections were underway.
- The **shortfall in pulse production** 2015-16 around 5 million tonnes.
- India's average annual **import of pulses** during 2010-11 and 2014-15 was 3.56 million tonnes. That is roughly a quarter of total pulse exports globally.
- Any effort to fulfil the production deficit through imports is both difficult and **inflationary**.
- Recent data from the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) shows that **domestic prices of pulses are often higher than international prices.**



#### **5. Rs.285 crore deficit budget tabled in Arunachal**

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/285-cr-deficit-budget-tabled-in-arunachal/article17444713.ece>

##### **What's in news?**

- Arunachal Pradesh Finance Minister presented a Rs285-crore deficit budget for the 2017-18 fiscal with major thrust on women empowerment, infrastructure development and law and order.

### **What is a deficit budget?**

- A budget is said to be deficit when the total expenditure is more than the total revenue earned.
- It increases the liability of the government.

## **Environment and Ecology**

### **1. Four States come together for elephant census**

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/>

#### **What's in news?**

- Four States – Odisha, West Bengal, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand to conduct synchronized elephant census.
- These four states have the maximum number of human-elephant conflict-prone regions in INDIA.
- Method used for survey- direct counting method (involves direct sighting) and indirect counting (uses the dung decay method- analysis of dung is made out to estimate the elephant population).
- As per 2015 census, Odisha has 1954 elephants, Jharkhand – 700, Chattisgarh-275 and West Bengal-130 elephants respectively.

### **2. A mass Coral Bleaching again**

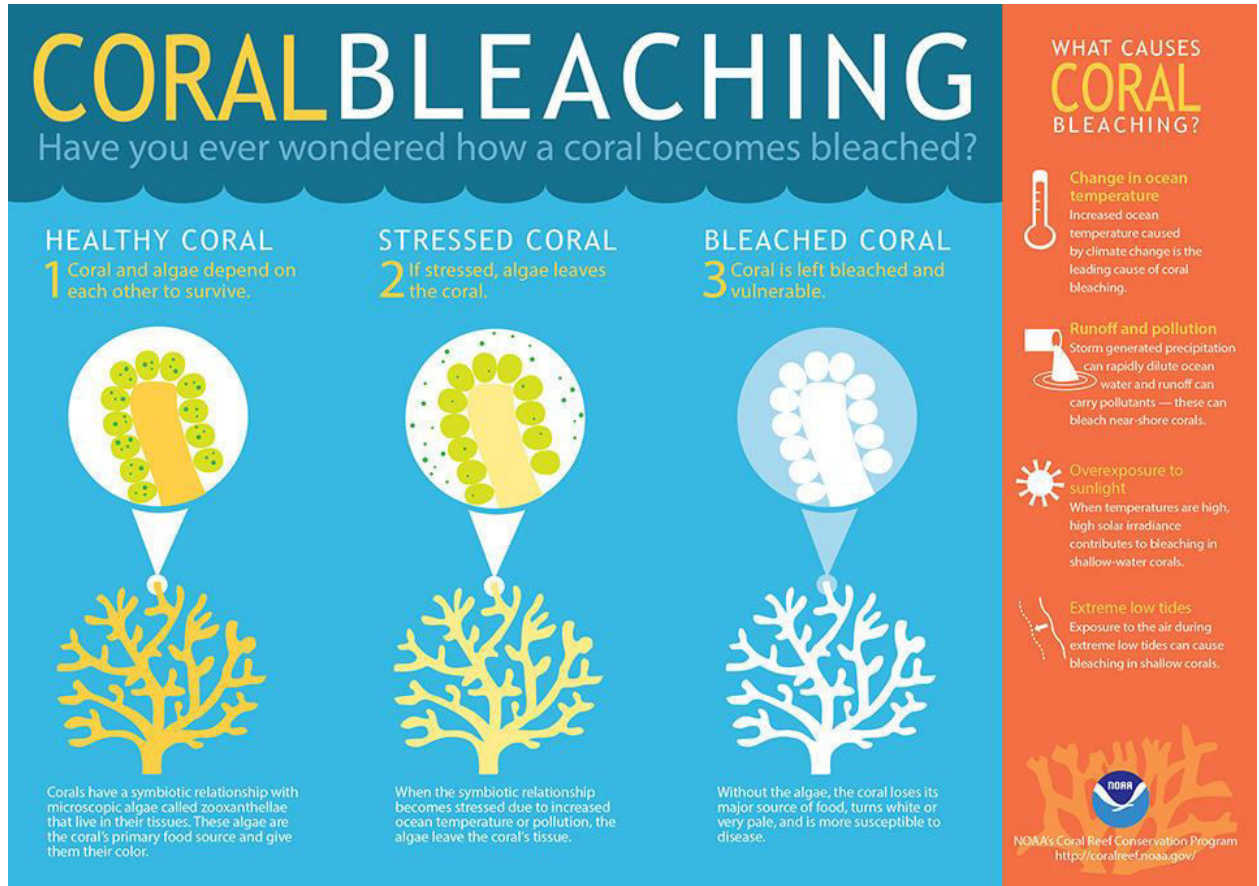
<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/a-mass-coral-bleaching-again/article17444664.ece>

#### **What's in news?**

- Great Barrier Reef threatened by **heat wave** for second consecutive year
- Australia's Great Barrier Reef is experiencing an unprecedented second straight year of **mass coral bleaching**
- Many species would struggle to fully recover.
- The 2,300-km reef suffered its most severe bleaching on record last year due to warming sea temperatures during March and April.
- This is the first time the Great Barrier Reef bleached two years in sequence.
- The back-to-back occurrence of widespread bleaching leaves insufficient time for corals to fully recover
- The Barrier Reef — already under pressure from farming run-off, development and the crown-of-thorns starfish — escaped with minor damage after two other bleaching events in 1998 and 2002.

### **What is Bleaching**

- Warmer water temperatures can result in coral bleaching. When water is too warm, corals will expel the algae (zooxanthellae) living in their tissues causing the coral to turn completely white. This is called **coral bleaching**. When a coral bleaches, it is not dead. Corals can survive a bleaching event, but they are under more stress and are subject to mortality.
- Corals can recover if the water temperature drops and the algae are able to recolonise them.



## Science and Technology

### 1. 'Lost' Chandrayaan-1 found orbiting Moon by NASA

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/lost-chandrayaan1-found-orbiting-moon-by-nasa/article17444382.ece>

#### What's in news?

- India's first lunar probe, Chandrayaan-1, which was considered lost, is still orbiting the moon, NASA scientists have found by using a **new ground-based radar technique**.
- The ISRO lost communication with Chandrayaan-1 on August 29, 2009, almost a year after it was launched on October 22, 2008.

- To find a spacecraft 380,000 km away, NASA's 70-metre antenna at NASA's Goldstone Deep Space Communications Complex in California send out a powerful beam of microwaves towards the moon. Then the radar echoes bounced back from lunar orbit were received by the 100-metre Green Bank Telescope in West Virginia.
- Finding a derelict spacecraft at lunar distance that has not been tracked for years is tricky because the moon is riddled with mascons (regions with higher-than-average gravitational pull) that can dramatically affect a spacecraft's orbit over time, and even cause it to have crashed into the moon.
- Chandrayaan operated for 312 days, as against the intended two years.

## INTERNAL SECURITY

### 1. SSB signs MoU with NSDC & NSDF

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=159154>

#### Why in news?

- A MoU was signed between **Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and National Skill Development Fund (NSDF)**.
- An **android based** and in-house developed mobile application **"MySSB"** was launched.

#### Need of the MoU?

- The paramilitary forces are highly skilled because of the nature of their job and the Skill Development Ministry aspires to **provide them better livelihood options for their future**.
- Recent MoU with the CRPF was fostered and led to a partnership with SSB, NSG and Welfare and Rehabilitation Board (WARB).
- These **workforces are an important and integral part of our society** and respect should be given to all those who possess skills in them.
- Objective of the MoU is also to make skilling an aspiration and aim to attract more people towards the mission.
- SSB will be able to **provide gainful employment to the retiring/retired personnel** of SSB in-order to facilitate resettlement through generation of second career option.
- MoU will establish a framework under which dependents of SSB personnel as well as **locals, school dropouts, victims and potential victims of Human Trafficking** will also be benefited directly in the area/region where SSB is deployed.
- The mobile application **"MySSB" will cater to the general requirements and information of Force personnel** i.e. accessibility to details of salary & allowance, GPF subscription, service particulars including posting profile, APAR etc.
- Presently, SSB has been deployed with its mandate to guard 1751 kilometers of Indo-Nepal and 699 kilometers of Indo-Bhutan Borders as well as deployed in the state of Bihar, Jharkhand & Chhattisgarh and in the state of J&K.
- Through this MoU the **unemployed educated/ uneducated youths will get an opportunity to adopt a course of their choice/earn their livelihood and plan their future**.
- Skill development training program will be organized in collaboration with Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship. **Sectors like Apparel, Food Processing, Beauty and Wellness, Automotive, Security, Sports etc are given emphasis for the said program.**

## E. TERMS OF THE DAY



- 1 Contempt of court:-** Contempt of court, often referred to simply as "contempt", is the offence of being disobedient to or disrespectful towards a court of law and its officers in the form of behavior that opposes or defies the authority, justice, and dignity of the court. It manifests itself in willful disregard of or disrespect for the authority of a court of law, which is often behavior that is illegal because it does not obey or respect the rules of a law court.  
There are broadly two categories of contempt: being rude or disrespectful to legal authorities in the courtroom, or wilfully failing to obey a court order.
- 2 Bailable warrant:-** Bailable warrants means ,if you appear before the court on the mentioned date, the court will recall his order and cancel the warrants and will not take you in custody . In case you do not appear on the date, the bailable warrants will be converted into non-bailable and in that case you may be arrested by the police or the court will take you into legal custody.  
You just have to appear before the court on mentioned date and move an application for cancellation of bailable warrants.
- 3 Mascons:-** In astronomy and astrophysics, a mass concentration (or mascon) is a region of a planet or moon's crust that contains a large positive gravitational anomaly.
- 4 Tax Deduction Account Number:** It is a 10-digit alpha- numeric number issued by the Income-tax Department. TAN is to be obtained by all persons who are responsible for deducting tax at source (TDS) or who are required to collect tax at source (TCS).

## **F. ARTICLES IN NEWS**

- **Article 20:- Protection in respect of conviction for offences**  
(1) No person shall be convicted of any offence except for violation of the law in force at the time of the commission of the act charged as an offence, nor be subjected to a penalty greater than that which might have been inflicted under the law in force at the time of the commission of the offence  
(2) No person shall be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once  
(3) No person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.
- **Article 129:-Supreme Court to be a court of record**  
The Supreme Court shall be a court of record and shall have all the powers of such a court including the power to punish for **contempt of itself**
- **Article 215:- High Courts to be courts of record**  
Every High Court shall be a court of record and shall have all the powers of such a court including the power to punish for **contempt of itself**.
- **Article 148:- Comptroller and Auditor General of India**  
(1) There shall be a Comptroller and Auditor General of India who shall be appointed by the **President** by warrant under his hand and seal and shall **only be removed from office in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of the Supreme Court**  
(2) Every person appointed to be the Comptroller and Auditor General of India shall, before he enters upon his office, make and subscribe before the President, or some person appointed in that behalf by him, an oath or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the **Third Schedule**

(3) The salary and other conditions of service of the Comptroller and Auditor General shall be such as may be determined **by Parliament** by law and, until they are so determined, shall be as specified in the Second Schedule: Provided that neither the salary of a Comptroller and Auditor General nor his rights in respect of leave of absence, pension or age of retirement shall be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment

(4) The Comptroller and Auditor General shall not be eligible for further office either under the Government of India or under the Government of any State after he has ceased to hold his office

(5) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution and of any law made by Parliament, the conditions of service of persons serving in the Indian Audit and Accounts Department and the administrative powers of the Comptroller and Auditor General shall be such as may be prescribed by rules made by the President after consultation with the Comptroller and Auditor General

(6) The Administrative expenses of the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, including all salaries, allowances and pensions payable to or in respect of pensions serving in that office, shall be **charged upon the Consolidated Fund of India.**

- **Article 14:-Equality before law**

The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India

Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth

### **Laws in news:-**

- **Contempt of court Act, 1971**:- This act distinguishes between civil and criminal contempt.

**Civil Contempt** has been defined as wilful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other process of a court or wilful breach of an undertaking given to a court.

**Criminal Contempt** has been defined as the publication (whether by words, spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise) of any matter or the doing of any other act whatsoever which: (i) Scandalizes or tends to scandalize, or lowers or tends to lower the authority of, any court, or (ii) Prejudices, or interferes or tends to interfere with the due course of any judicial proceeding, or (iii) Interferes or tends to interfere with, or obstructs or tends to obstruct, the administration of justice in any other manner.

### **G. PRACTICE QUESTIONS:**

Q1) Consider the following statement with reference to Comptroller and Auditor general of India.

1. Comptroller and Auditor General of India shall be appointed by the President.
2. CAG is directly removed by President based on the recommendation of Council of ministers.
3. CAG expenditure is not a charged upon consolidated fund of India.
4. CAG has to subscribe to an oath administered by President before entering his office.



Choose the correct answer

- A. 1 and 4
- B. 1 and 2
- C. 1 and 3
- D. All are correct

**Correct Answer: A**

**Topic: Polity**

**Level: Easy**

**Application: Factual Based**

**Explanation:**

**Article 148:- Comptroller and Auditor General of India**

(1) There shall be a Comptroller and Auditor General of India who shall be appointed by the **President** by warrant under his hand and seal and shall **only be removed from office in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of the Supreme Court**

(2) Every person appointed to be the Comptroller and Auditor General of India shall, before he enters upon his office, make and subscribe before the President, or some person appointed in that behalf by him, an oath or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the **Third Schedule**

(3) The salary and other conditions of service of the Comptroller and Auditor General shall be such as may be determined **by Parliament** by law and, until they are so determined, shall be as specified in the Second Schedule: Provided that neither the salary of a Comptroller and Auditor General nor his rights in respect of leave of absence, pension or age of retirement shall be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment

(4) The Comptroller and Auditor General shall not be eligible for further office either under the Government of India or under the Government of any State after he has ceased to hold his office

(5) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution and of any law made by Parliament, the conditions of service of persons serving in the Indian Audit and Accounts Department and the administrative powers of the Comptroller and Auditor General shall be such as may be prescribed by rules made by the President after consultation with the Comptroller and Auditor General

(6) The Administrative expenses of the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, including all salaries, allowances and pensions payable to or in respect of persons serving in that office, shall be **charged upon the Consolidated Fund of India.**

Q2) Consider the following statement with reference to Enemy Property Bill, which was in news recently.

1. The Bill declares transfer of enemy property by the enemy to be void.
2. Retrospective transfers that have occurred before or after 1968 are to be nullified
3. The Bill allows civil courts and other authorities to deal with the disputes related to enemy property.

Choose the correct answer

- A. Only 1
- B. 1 and 2
- C. 1 and 3
- D. All are incorrect

**Correct Answer: B**

**Topic: Polity**

**Level: Easy**

**Application: Factual Based**

**Explanation: -Enemy Property Bill**

- The Bill amends the Enemy Property Act, 1968, to vest all rights, titles and interests over enemy property in the Custodian
- The Bill declares **transfer** of enemy property by the enemy, conducted under the Act, to **be void**. This applies **retrospectively** to transfers that have occurred before or after 1968.
- The Bill prohibits civil courts and other authorities from entertaining disputes related to enemy property.

Q3) Border road organization is under

- A. Ministry of Home affairs
- B. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
- C. Ministry of Defense
- D. None of the above

**Correct Answer: C**

**Topic: Current Affair**

**Level: Easy**

**Application: Factual Based**

**Explanation: -**

**Border road Organisation:** Ministry of Defence

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighbouring countries. It is staffed by officers and troops drawn from the Indian Army's Corps of Engineers, Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Army Service Corps, Military Police and army personnel on extra regimental employment. Officers from the Border Roads Engineering Service and personnel from the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) form the parent cadre of the Border Roads Organisation.

Currently, the organisation maintains operations in twenty-one states, one UT (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), and neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.

Q4) Identify the correct statements

1. Both African male and female elephant's possess tusk.
2. Only male elephants in India possess tusk.

Choose the correct answer

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both are correct
- D. Neither A nor B.

**Correct Answer: C**

**Topic: General Science**

**Level: Easy**

**Application: Factual Based**

**Explanation: -**

African elephants have much larger ears that look sort of like the continent of Africa, while Asian elephants have smaller, round ears.

African elephants have rounded heads, while Asian elephants have a twin-domed head, which means there's a divot line running up the head.

Both male and female African elephants can have tusks, but only male Asian elephants can grow them

Q5) Consider the following statement with reference to Maternity Benefits Bill, which was in news recently.

1. The Bill covers both the organized as well as unorganized women employees
2. The Bill enhanced paid maternity leave for women in the unorganized sector to 26 weeks from 12.

Choose the correct answer

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both are Correct
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**Correct Answer: D**

**Topic: Current Affairs**

**Level: Easy**

**Application: Factual Based**

**Explanation: -Maternity Benefits Bill**

The Bill seeks to amend the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 to provide for the following:

- i) Maternity leave available to the working women to be increased from **12 weeks to 26 weeks** for the first two children.
- ii) Maternity leave for children beyond the first two will continue to be 12 weeks.
- iii) Maternity leave of 12 weeks to be available to mothers adopting a child below the age of three months as well as to the "**commissioning mothers**". The commissioning mother has

been defined as biological mother who uses her egg to create an embryo planted in any other woman.

- iv) Every establishment with more than 50 employees to provide for **crèche facilities** for working mothers and such mothers will be permitted to make four visits during working hours to look after and feed the child in the crèche.
- v) The employer may permit a woman to work from home if it is possible to do so. Every establishment will be required to make these benefits available to the women from the time of her appointment.

Q6) Identify the correct statements

- 1. Coral and zooxanthellae are symbiotically linked.
- 2. It is the zooxanthellae which gives color to the coral.

Choose the correct answer

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both are correct
- D. Neither A nor B.

**Correct Answer: C**

**Topic: Current Affairs**

**Level: Easy**

**Application: Factual Based**

**Explanation:** -Corals are marine invertebrates in the class Anthozoa of phylum Cnidaria. They typically live in compact colonies of many identical individual polyps. The group includes the important reef builders that inhabit tropical oceans and secrete calcium carbonate to form a hard skeleton.

Although some corals can catch small fish and plankton using stinging cells on their tentacles, most corals obtain the majority of their energy and nutrients from photosynthetic unicellular dinoflagellates in the genus Symbiodinium that live within their tissues. These are commonly known as zooxanthellae and the corals that contain them are zooxanthellate corals. Such corals require sunlight and grow in clear, shallow water, typically at depths shallower than 60 metres (200 ft). Corals are major contributors to the physical structure of the coral reefs that develop in tropical and subtropical waters, such as the enormous Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Queensland, Australia.

Q7) Identify the correct statements

- 1. Warm water temperature results in Coral bleaching.
- 2. Corals can survive a bleaching event.
- 3. Usage of Sunscreen lotion by those who take sun bath, results in coral bleaching

Choose the correct answer

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2

- C. 1,2 and 3
- D. None of the above

**Correct Answer: C**

**Topic: Environment and Ecology**

**Level: Easy**

**Application: Factual Based**

**Explanation: -**

Warmer water temperatures can result in coral bleaching. When water is too warm, corals will expel the algae (zooxanthellae) living in their tissues causing the coral to turn completely white. This is called **coral bleaching**. When a coral bleaches, it is not dead. Corals can survive a bleaching event, but they are under more stress and are subject to mortality.

Many of the world's top coral reef scientists met at the International Coral Reef Symposium in Hawaii to discuss the challenges facing coral reefs. Sunscreen and other personal care product ingredients were hot topics. Of particular concern to scientists was oxybenzone, a chemical used in sunscreens to protect our skin from damaging UV light. Oxybenzone is bad news for corals, harming them by;

- A. Increasing a coral's susceptibility to bleaching
- B. Damaging coral DNA which interferes with reproduction
- C. Causing deformities and growth anomalies
- D. Disrupting a coral's hormonal processes for growth and reproduction