

11 Oct 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. **Iran makes 20% more enriched uranium**

Context:

Iran's nuclear chief has said that the country has produced more than 120 kg of 20% enriched uranium.

Issue:

- The nuclear deal, known as the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action](#), or JCPOA, promises Iran economic incentives in exchange for limits on its nuclear programme, and is meant to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear bomb.
 - Under the terms of the nuclear deal, Iran was prohibited from enriching uranium above 3.67 per cent with the exception of its research reactor activities.
 - Enriched uranium above 90 per cent can be used in a nuclear weapon.
- The U.S. unilaterally pulled out of the deal in 2018 under then-President Donald Trump, but Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia have tried to preserve the accord.
- Under the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, the other signatories were to provide Iran with 20% enriched uranium needed for its research reactor. But according to Iran, it was not delivered.
- The 20 per cent uranium enrichment process was launched as a part of Iran's Strategic Action Plan to counter US sanctions, which was approved by the Iranian parliament in December 2020.

Read more on this topic covered in [March 2nd, 2021 CNA](#).

2. There is consensus over Kalapani: ex-Nepal Minister**Context:**

Former Foreign Minister of Nepal has said that Nepalese political parties have a general consensus over the fact that Kalapani in Uttarakhand is part of Nepal's sovereign territory.

Read more on the boundary dispute between India and Nepal covered in [May 24th, 2020 CNA](#)

C. GS 3 Related**Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY****1. Stubble burning: bio-decomposer solution to be sprayed on city farmlands from today**

Context:

The Delhi government will start its campaign to use the bio-decomposer solution on farmlands under its winter action plan.

Details:

- The solution has been given free of cost to farmers who will spray it in over 4,000 acres.
- It is a move to provide an alternative to [stubble burning](#) and combat air pollution.

Bio-decomposer:

- Pusa Bio-decomposer is a mix of seven fungi that produce enzymes to digest cellulose, lignin and pectin in paddy straw.
- The fungi thrive at 30-32 degree Celsius, which is the temperature prevailing when paddy is harvested and wheat is sown.
- It improves the fertility and productivity of the soil as the stubble works as manure and compost for the crops leading to lesser fertiliser consumption.

Stubble Burning:

- Stubble burning is the burning of rice straw by farmers to clear fields for sowing.
- The paddy residue is not used as fodder as it's unfit and hence farmers burn both the paddy stalk and straw close to autumn every year which is a key contributing factor of pollution causing breathing problems in the northern region.
 - Paddy is a Kharif (monsoon) crop.
 - In Punjab and Haryana, the harvesting of paddy crop is usually done between the first week of October till October end.
- The wheat residue is used as fodder for cattle and it's only the stalk that is set on fire.
 - Wheat is a Rabi (winter) crop.
 - It is sown from late October to December while the harvesting usually starts from mid-April onwards.

Other measures taken to tackle the menace:

- The states have put in efforts towards raising awareness of the ill effects of stubble burning.
 - Farmers are being educated by the agriculture department regularly about the bad effects of burning fields which kills several crop-friendly insects and causes pollution.
- Penalties are being imposed on farmers as there's a ban on burning the residue.
- To check stubble burning this Kharif season, the Punjab government has appointed nodal officers in villages that grow paddy.

- Crop residue management machines are being given to farmers for on-site management of straw.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. A 'Taiwan flashpoint' in the Indo-Pacific

Introduction

- Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China (ROC), is an island separated from China by the Taiwan Strait.
- The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) views the island as an unfinished business of China's liberation and vows to eventually "unify" Taiwan with the mainland.

Civil war

- The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) war with the Kuomintang (KMT, or Nationalist Party) started in the 1920s.
- The KMT forces under Chiang Kai-shek lost the 1945-49 civil war to the CCP forces under Mao Zedong.
- Chiang retreated to the island of Taiwan and set up a regime that claimed authority over the whole of China and pledged to recover the mainland eventually.

Role of US

- The CCP always wanted to unite Taiwan with Mainland China but it was not able to conquer it by force as Taiwan became a military ally of the United States during the [Korean War](#) of 1950-53.
- This support to a larger extent came to an end when U.S. recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the legitimate government of China in 1979 ending its official relationship with Taiwan and abrogating its mutual defence treaty with the island.

'Strategic ambiguity'

- It is the practice by a government of being intentionally ambiguous on certain aspects of its foreign policy.

How it helps the USA?

- The U.S. has declared that it will “maintain the ability to come to Taiwan’s defence” while not committing itself to do so.
- Strategic ambiguity allows the United States to hide its cards in the various scenarios that may arise in the cross-strait relationship.
- Beijing will think twice about harming Taiwan, because it doesn’t know for certain how the United States will respond and to what degree.
- This essentially acts as deterrence and at the same time maintains a carefully orchestrated balance of power by restricting all relevant parties from escalating the situation.

China

- China also has a policy of strategic ambiguity: a refusal to renounce the use of force against Taiwan, but retains the right to use force to achieve the objective. This is its own version of strategic ambiguity.

Carrot and stick policy of China

- China had promised to introduce “one country two systems” in Taiwan, which was first applied to Hong Kong after its reversion to Chinese sovereignty in 1997.
 - Hong Kong can have different economic and political systems from that of mainland China, while being part of the People’s Republic of China.
 - China promised to honour Hong Kong’s liberal policies, system of governance, independent judiciary, and individual freedoms for a period of 50 years from 1997.
- The same was promised to Taiwan, but with the added assurance that it could also retain its armed forces during the transition period.

Economic links

- In 1979, Deng Xiaoping announced the Open Door Policy.
- The open-door policy adopted a stance to achieve economic growth through the active introduction of foreign capital and technology while maintaining its commitment to socialism.
- After this policy was introduced, Taiwan business entities have invested heavily in mainland China and the two economies have become increasingly integrated.

A look at numbers

- Between 1991 and 2020, the stock of Taiwanese capital invested in China reached U.S. \$188.5 billion and bilateral trade in 2019 was U.S. \$150 billion, about 15% of Taiwan's GDP.
- By contrast, the stock of Chinese capital invested in Taiwan is barely U.S. \$2.4 billion although investments through Hong Kong may be considerable.

Concerns for Taiwan

- The Govt in Taiwan in the past has tried to reduce the island's economic exposure to China, but has been abortive.
- China is also capable of inflicting acute economic pain on Taiwan through coercive policies if the island is seen to drift towards an independent status.

Taiwan's politics

Taiwan has two major political parties.

1. The KMT
 - It is dominated by the descendants of the mainlanders who came to the island along with Chiang Kai-shek in 1949.
 - It remains committed to a one-China policy and does not support the independence of Taiwan.
2. Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
 - It is more representative of the indigenous population of the island, and favours independence.

How does China view these political parties?

- China feels more comfortable with the KMT and is hostile to the DPP.
- DPP won the elections in 2016 under the leadership of Tsai Ing-wen. After the elections, China has resorted to a series of hostile actions against the island, which include economic pressures and military threats.
 - The threats have increased since the re-election of Tsai Ing-wen in the 2020 elections.
 - Public opinion in Taiwan swung in favour of Tsai Ing-wen primarily because of China initiating intimidating tactics in Hong Kong and abandoning the 'One Country Two Systems' formula.
- China could no longer pretend that the model was relevant in any sense to Taiwan's future under Chinese sovereignty.

Inference

- One important implication of this development is that prospects for peaceful unification have diminished.
- Sentiment in Taiwan in favour of independent status has increased.
- The escalating military threats against Taiwan, through daily violations of its Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) and aggressive naval manoeuvres in the Taiwan Strait, are currently deterrent in nature, aimed at heading off any move towards independence and its closer military relationship with the U.S.

The U.S. stance

- The USA will not support the idea of an independent Taiwan. However, it has gradually reversed the policy of avoiding official-level engagements with the Taiwan government.
- Examples:
 - Senior and Cabinet-level officials from the Trump Administration had visited Taiwan.
 - Joe Biden Administration continues with the same policy.
- The Taiwanese representative in Washington was invited to attend the presidential inauguration ceremony (Biden), again a first since 1979.
- There are reports which say U.S. defence personnel have been training with their Taiwanese counterparts for some time.
- A U.S. nuclear-powered submarine reportedly ran into an “unidentified object” while in the South China Sea.

China's Response

- China has objected to these U.S. actions vociferously.
- Chinese President Xi Jinping said, “The historic task of the complete reunification of the motherland must be fulfilled and will definitely be fulfilled.”

In spite of these differences and aggression Mr. Biden has assured Mr. Xi that the U.S. would abide by the “Taiwan agreement”, that is, the U.S. would not overturn its one China policy.

Is China prepared to carry out military operations to invade and occupy Taiwan?

- U.S. Pacific Commander, Philip Davidson, has a word of caution where he iterates China may invade Taiwan in the next few years to capture power and displace the USA from Asia.
 - Other analysts argue that cross-strait operations would be extremely complex and pacifying a hostile population may prove to be long drawn out and costly.
- China may, therefore, be content to head off Taiwan independence while continuing to build its capabilities and await a further relative decline of U.S. power and its will to intervene in the defence of Taiwan.

Impact of alliances

- The submarine incident might have been an accident or a miscalculation but it surely rings alarm bells in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The Quad grouping of which India is part of, along with AUKUS, with Australia owning nuclear-powered submarines, may act as a deterrent against Chinese moves on Taiwan.
- But they may equally propel China to advance the unification agenda before the balance changes against it in the Indo-Pacific.

Conclusion

- For these reasons, Taiwan is emerging as a potential trigger point for a clash of arms between the U.S. and China.
- In pursuing its Indo-Pacific strategy, India would do well to keep these possible scenarios in mind.

Category: ECONOMY

1. A homecoming

Context

- The government has announced its decision to sell all its stake in Air India (AI) as well as AI's stake in two other businesses — Air India Express Ltd (AIXL) and Air India SATS Airport Services Pvt Ltd (AISATS).

Background

- The sale of Air India to a private player has been in the offing for a long time.
- AI was started by the Tata Group in 1932, but in 1947, as India gained independence, the government bought a 49% stake in AI.
- In 1953, the government bought the remaining stake, and AI was nationalised.

LPG reforms

- With economic liberalization and the growing presence of private players, the dominance of Air India came under serious threat.
- Ideologically too, the government running an airline did not quite gel with the mantra of liberalization.

Attempts to privatize

- The first attempt to reduce the government's stake was made in 2001 under the then NDA government.
 - But that attempt to sell a 40% stake failed because of high losses.
- In 2018, the Narendra Modi government made another attempt to sell the government stake — this time, 76%. But it did not elicit even a single response.
- Another attempt started in January 2020, and now the government has been able to finally conclude the sale.

How was the Govt able to conclude the sale?

- One, in the past the government retained a partial stake and private players did not seem interested.
 - That's because the mere idea of government ownership, even if it was as little as 24%, made private firms wonder if they would have the operational freedom needed to turn around such a heavy loss-making airline.
 - Unlike all the past attempts, this time the government put 100% of its stake on sale.
- Two, the sheer mountain of debt on AI's books, not to mention the ongoing losses.
 - Earlier, the government expected the bidders to pick up a certain amount of the debt along with the airline. That approach did not work.
 - This time, the government let the bidders decide the amount of debt they wanted to pick up.

Significance

From the government's perspective:

- The Centre, for its part, can finally heave a sigh of relief at having successfully exited the commercial aviation space, a high-cost industry that most governments around the world have left in the hands of private carriers so as to ensure taxpayers' money is deployed more meaningfully in social and strategic sectors.
- It underscores the government's commitment to saving taxpayers from paying for daily losses of AI.

From the Tata's perspective:

- Apart from the emotional aspect of regaining control of an airline that they started, AI's acquisition is a long-term bet.

Challenges

- One of the immediate challenges facing the new owners will be to find office space.
 - The deal does not include the airline's other assets and the buildings like the Air India building at Nariman Point and the Airlines House in Delhi.
 - As a result, one of the Tata Group's first jobs will be to locate office accommodation for Air India's employees.
- In a bid to protect the interests of the more than 13,000 permanent and contractual staff at the airline and its unit, the government has bound Talace to ensure there should be no job cuts for at least one year.
 - Therefore, integrating the sizeable workforce is going to be one among the many serious challenges.
- The Tata Group will also have to launch a global manhunt for top personnel who will need to pick up the reins very quickly.
 - Currently, Air India has no CEO and Rajiv Bansal, its chairman and managing director, is an IAS officer, who is also the Civil Aviation Secretary.

Way forward

- Indian carriers have allowed the Gulf carriers to grab a large chunk of Indians travelling abroad.
 - It is said that Dubai's Emirates gets about 20 per cent of its revenue from Indian passengers. The same's true for Etihad and Qatar Airways.
- Similarly, Indians travelling eastwards have divided their preferences between airlines like Singapore Airlines, Thai Airways and Cathay Pacific.
- Air India gets two-thirds of its income from its international routes and is the leading player from India in the international market.
- Therefore, the Tatas have a huge opportunity in the international markets and it could build on this in coming years.

F. Prelims Facts

1. HC grants bail to man charged under POCSO

Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO):

- Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) was passed by the parliament in 2012.
- It was formulated in order to effectively address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.
- The Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age. It defines different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non-penetrative assault, as well as sexual harassment and pornography.

Read more: [POCSO or Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences Act: Necessity and Features](#)

2. Meghalaya river back from dead, claims govt.

What's in News?

According to the Meghalaya state government, a detoxing pilot project has brought River Lukha back from the dead.

River Lukha:

- The Lukha river is in the East Jaintia Hills district.
 - It is in this district that most of Meghalaya's rat-hole coal mines are located.
- The contamination by acid mine drainage and run-off from the coal mines had made it toxic beyond redemption a decade ago.
- The pilot project to rejuvenate the Lukha used algae to remove toxic contents from the water. The detoxification process is called phycoremediation.
- Phycoremediation has improved the pH level of a critical stretch of the river.

3. Study sought into rabies deaths despite vaccination

What's in News?

A proper study has been sought into recent deaths due to rabies among people who are vaccinated against the infection.

- Rabies is a fatal infection in which the chances of death are 100%.
- Patients are given four to five doses of the anti-rabies vaccine in intervals from the day of the bite, along with the anti-rabies serum.
- The vaccine gives full protection only 14 days after it is administered.

Rabies:

- Rabies is a viral disease that is spread through the animal bite such as the dog.
- The infection caused by this leads to encephalomyelitis i.e the inflammation of the brain as well as the spinal cord.

- The transmission of the virus happens through the saliva and affects the CNS or Central nervous system. This virus belongs to a family called Rhabdoviridae.

4. All-India Quarterly Establishment-based Employment Survey (AQEES)

- It was launched with the objective of collecting employment data on a quarterly basis from all the establishments.
- It is designed to be an Establishment based Employment Survey that would provide estimates for the demand side conditions of the labour market.
- It updates about the employment and related variables of establishments, in both organised and unorganised segments of nine selected sectors.
 - The nine selected sectors are Manufacturing, Construction, Trade, Transport, Education, Health, Accommodation and Restaurant, IT/ BPO and Financial Services.
 - These sectors account for 85% of the total employment in establishments employing 10 or more workers as per the Sixth Economic Census (EC), which serves as the basis of the QES survey.
- The AQEES has two parts, one is Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) and another is Area Frame Establishment Survey (AFES).

Quarterly Employment Survey (QES)

- It would provide the employment estimates for the establishments employing 10 or more workers.

Area Frame Establishment Survey (AFES)

- It has also been launched to cater to the need for data-driven labour welfare policy formulation, as a part of the AQEES, which would provide the employment estimates for the establishments recruiting 9 or fewer workers.

Context

- The Labour Bureau released the results of the All-India Quarterly Establishment-based Employment Survey (QES) for the first quarter (FQ) of 2021 (April to June).

1. Tejaswini initiative helps build confidence: police

What's in News?

Tejaswini - a women-centric safety initiative of north-west district - Delhi.

- The initiative aimed to reach out to women belonging to all strata of society and female senior citizens, and also to safeguard the rights and dignity of women and children.
- The tasks and assignments are carried out by women beat staff.
- It resulted in significant growth in terms of its reach and scope of work.
- The presence of women constables and their identifying the needy and distressed people have worked as a catalyst for building confidence and courage among women and making them more aware of their own safety.
- These women beat constables work in tandem with various NGOs, schools, colleges and other agencies to get insights and spread legal and social awareness of various issues concerning women and children.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q.1 Consider the statements as criteria given by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) for Heat Waves:

1. Heat Wave is considered if the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C for Plains and at least 30°C for Hilly regions.
2. A heat wave will be declared if there is a departure of 4.5 degrees C to 6.4 degrees C from the normal temperature.
3. A departure above 6.4 degrees C is regarded as a severe heat wave.
4. The above criteria have to be met for at least two consecutive days.

Which of these statements is correct?

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 2, 3 & 4 only
- c. 3 & 4 only
- d. All of the above

Answer: d

Explanation:

A Heat Wave is a period of abnormally high temperatures, more than the normal maximum temperature that occurs during the summer season in the North-Western parts of India in the month of March to June. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has provided the following criteria to define Heat Waves:

- Heat Waves need not be considered till the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C for Plains and at least 30°C for Hilly regions.
- A heat wave will be declared if there is a departure of 4.5 degrees C to 6.4 degrees C from the normal temperature.
- A departure above 6.4 degrees C is regarded as a severe heat wave.
- These criteria have to be met for at least two consecutive days.

Q.2 Consider the following statements with regards to Jim Corbett National Park:

1. It was India's first National Park.
2. It was set up as Ramganga National Park and was only given its current name in 1956, after Jim Corbett, the hunter-turned-naturalist.
3. In 1973, the park became the launchpad of Project Tiger – India's first tiger protection programme.

Which of these statements is/are not correct?

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 3 only
- d. All of the above

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Jim Corbett National Park was India's first National Park. It was set up as Hailey National Park after Sir Malcolm Hailey, the governor of the United Province.
- It was renamed Ramganga National Park, named after the river that flows through it, shortly after independence and was renamed yet again as Corbett National Park in 1956.
- In 1973, the park became the launchpad of Project Tiger – India's first tiger protection programme.

Q.3 Arrange the following in decreasing order of their contribution to India's greenhouse gas emissions:

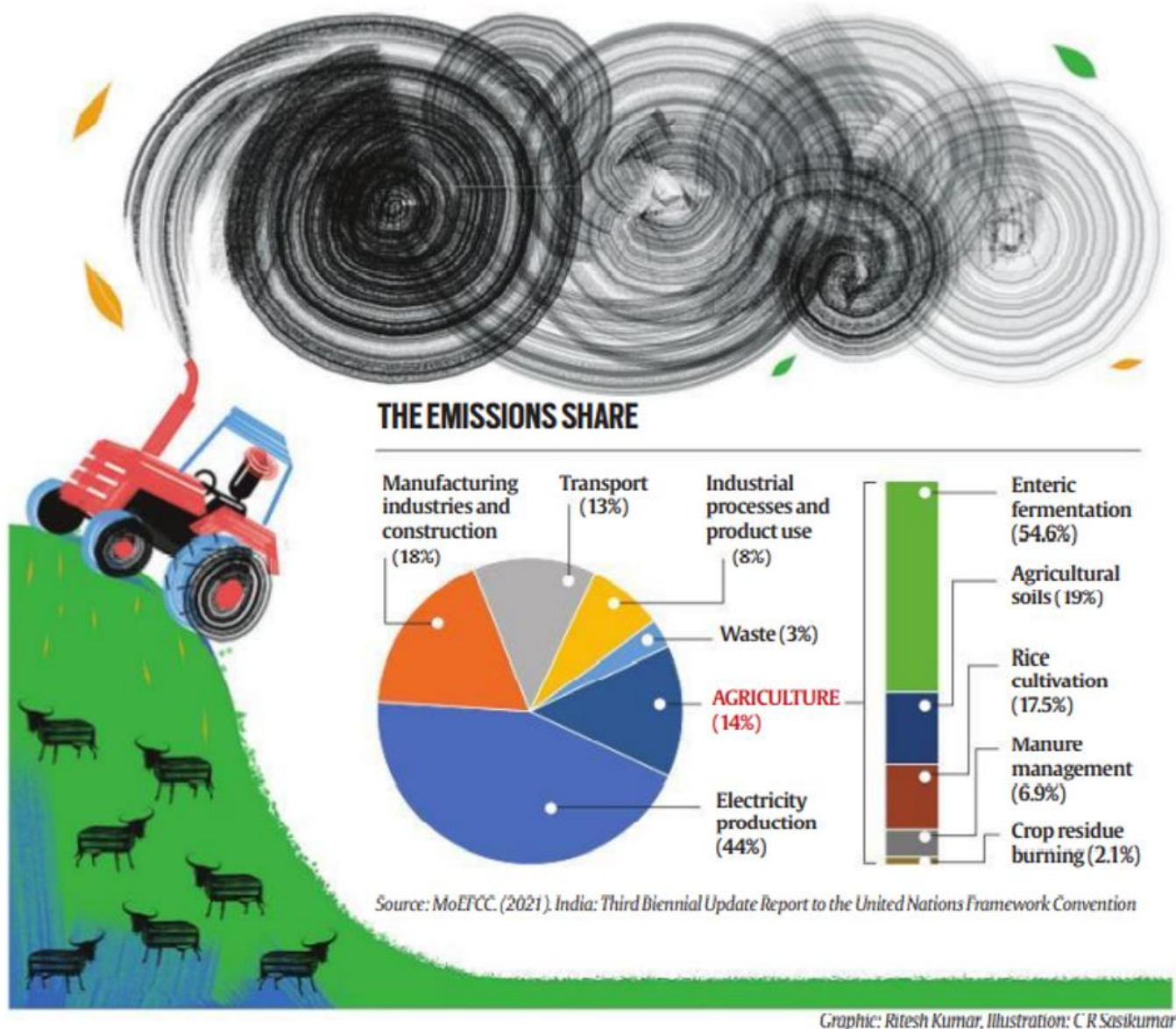
1. Transport
2. Agriculture
3. Electricity production
4. Waste management

Options:

- a. $2 > 3 > 1 > 4$
- b. $1 > 3 > 2 > 4$
- c. $3 > 2 > 1 > 4$
- d. $2 > 3 > 4 > 1$

Answer: c

Explanation:



Q.4 Consider the following statements with regards to the new railway line between Jaynagar in Bihar and Bardibas in Nepal:

1. This is Nepal's first-ever broad gauge passenger service.
2. The line has been built by Indian engineering major, IRCON.
3. The operations and maintenance of the line will be the responsibility of Konkan Railway Corporation Limited.

Options:

- a. 1 & 2 only

- b. 2 & 3 only
- c. 1 & 3 only
- d. All of the above

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The railway line between Jaynagar in Bihar and Bardibas in Nepal is Nepal's first-ever broad gauge passenger service.
- The line has been built by Indian engineering major, IRCON.
 - Indian Railway Construction Limited (IRCON) is under the ownership of Indian Railways, Ministry of Railways, Government of India.
- The operations and maintenance of the line will be the responsibility of Konkan Railway Corporation Limited.

Q.5 Consider the following statements:

1. The 44th Amendment to the Constitution of India introduced an Article placing the election of the Prime Minister beyond judicial review.
2. The Supreme Court of India struck down the 99th Amendment to the Constitution of India as being violative of the independence of the judiciary.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Explanation:

- 99th Amendment replaced the collegium system of appointing judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts with a new body called the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC).
- Later, the Supreme Court Bench led by Justice J S Khehar declared the National Judicial Appointments Commission and the 99th Constitutional Amendment Act as 'unconstitutional and void'.

Read about [44th Amendment of the Indian Constitution](#).

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. In pursuing its Indo-Pacific strategy, India needs to be mindful of the China-U.S. equations in the region. Analyse. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS 2 International Relations)
2. The U.S. appears to be outlining a softer focus for Quad. Evaluate. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS 2 International Relations)

