

23 Oct 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Bengal can't bar CBI from probing crimes in State, Centre tells SC

Context:

The Union Government has told the Supreme Court that the West Bengal State Government does not have any absolute power to keep the [Central Bureau of Investigation \(CBI\)](#) from investigating crimes inside the State.

Details:

- The Union Government, through the Department of Personnel and Training, was responding to a suit filed by the West Bengal Government against the Union of India under Article 131 of the Constitution.
- Article 131 gives the [Supreme Court original jurisdiction](#) (i.e., the Supreme Court can hear the case first-hand rather than reviewing a lower court's judgment) to mediate disputes between states or between the Centre and states.

Issue:

- West Bengal has challenged the CBI's jurisdiction to register FIRs and conduct investigations in the State in myriad cases.
- West Bengal said it had withdrawn "general consent" to the CBI way back in 2018.

Union Government's Argument:

- The Union Government has said that the withdrawal of general consent would not stand in the way of constitutional courts entrusting the CBI with the cases "where it is found that the State police would not effectively conduct a fair and impartial investigation".
- Besides, it argues that the CBI is empowered to probe cases concerning any of the Central subjects enumerated in the Union List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
- It also argues that the alleged crimes under investigation were offences under parliamentary laws.

What is General Consent?

- In order to conduct an investigation in a state, the CBI must mandatorily have the consent of that state government.

- The general consent is routinely given by State governments for periods ranging from six months to a year to the CBI and all agencies under the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946.
- The consent is necessary as the jurisdiction of these agencies is confined to Delhi and Union Territories under this Act.
- There are two kinds of consent: case-specific and general. Given that the CBI has jurisdiction only over central government departments and employees, it can investigate a case involving state government employees or a violent crime in a given state only after that state government gives its consent.
- “General consent” is normally given to help the CBI seamlessly conduct its investigation into cases of corruption against central government employees in the concerned state. Almost all states have given such consent. Otherwise, the CBI would require consent in every case.
- Other states such as West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra have also withdrawn consent to the CBI to operate freely in their respective jurisdictions.

Does withdrawal of General Consent mean that the CBI can no longer probe any case in the state?

- Withdrawal of consent will only bar the CBI from registering a case within the jurisdiction of such states.
- The CBI would still have the power to investigate old cases registered when general consent existed.
- Also, cases registered anywhere else in the country, but involving people stationed in a state that has withdrawn general consent, would allow CBI’s jurisdiction to extend to these states.
- There is ambiguity on whether the agency can carry out a search in either of the two states in connection with an old case without the consent of the state government.
- However, there are legal remedies to that as well. The CBI can always get a search warrant from a local court in the state and conduct searches.
- In case the search requires a surprise element, there is [CrPC](#) Section 166, which allows a police officer of one jurisdiction to ask an officer of another to carry out searches on his behalf.
- And if the first officer feels that the searches by the latter may lead to loss of evidence, the section allows the first officer to conduct searches himself after giving a notice to the latter.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. 43 countries call on China at UN to respect Uighur rights

Context:

Forty-three countries have called on China to “ensure full respect for the rule of law” for the Muslim Uighur community in Xinjiang.

Who are Uighurs?

- The Uighurs are a minority Turkic ethnic group originating from and culturally affiliated with the general region of Central and East Asia.

- The Uighurs are recognized as native to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.
- They are considered to be one of China's 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities.
- The Uighurs have traditionally inhabited a series of oases scattered across the Taklamakan Desert comprising the Tarim Basin, a territory that has historically been controlled by many civilizations including China, the Mongols, the Tibetans and the Turkic world.
- An estimated 80% of Xinjiang's Uyghurs still live in the Tarim Basin. The rest of Xinjiang's Uyghurs mostly live in Urumqi, the capital city of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), which is located in the historical region of Dzungaria.

Details:

- The declaration, signed by the United States as well as several European and Asian member states and others, accused China of a litany of human rights violations against the Uighurs, including torture, forced sterilisation and forced disappearances.
- In a joint statement, the countries called on China to allow immediate, meaningful and unfettered access to Xinjiang for independent observers, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- The countries argued that credible reports indicate the existence of a large network of 'political re-education' camps where over a million people have been arbitrarily detained.

China's Stand:

- While experts have estimated that more than one million people are incarcerated in camps, China has for long denied accusations of ethnic cleansing against Uighurs and other Muslim Turkic people in Xinjiang.
- It has said that while it is willing to host a friendly visit to the region, it would not agree to an inquiry by the UN human rights commissioner.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. India weighs 'net zero' target ahead of CoP

Context:

The 26th meeting of the United Nations Conference of Parties (CoP) will begin in Glasgow on November 1, 2021.

Net Zero Target:

- The major focus of COP26 is to have all nations commit to "net zero".
- Net zero means achieving a balance between the greenhouse gases put into the atmosphere and those taken out.

- Achieving net-zero emissions does not mean eliminating all emissions. It means ensuring any human-produced carbon dioxide or other planet-warming gases that can't be avoided or locked up are removed from the atmosphere some other way.
- According to the scientists, if all countries do this by 2050, there would be a chance of restricting the average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, provided emissions fall to around 45% of the 2010 levels by 2030.
- This, however, would require deep and significant cuts to fossil fuel use that can affect the development trajectory of India and other developing countries.

Road to net zero | In 2015, over 190 countries committed to limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Countries such as the U.K. and France have already enacted laws to achieve net zero target by 2050. This has put pressure on India, the third-largest emitter, which has not been in favour of committing to a deadline

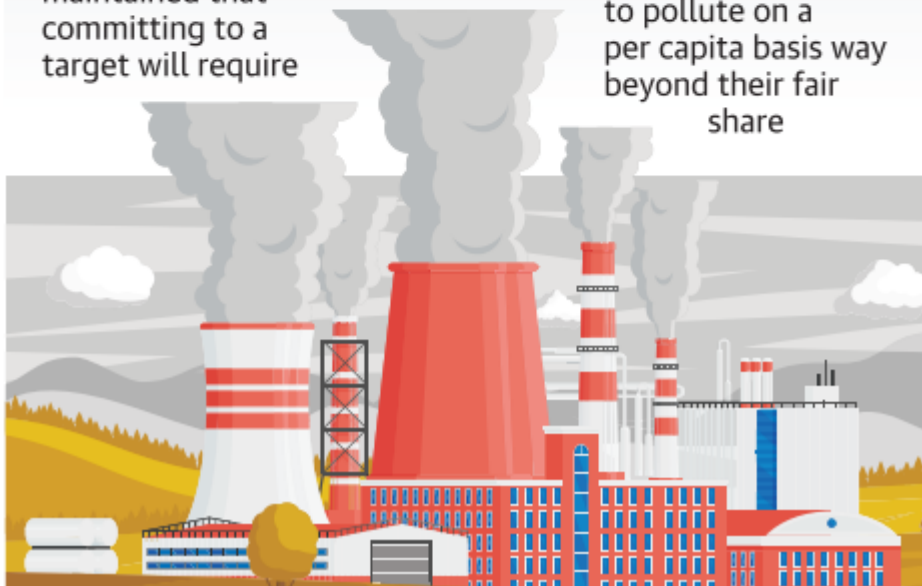
■ Net zero means committing to a year beyond which emissions will be balanced by taking an equivalent amount of greenhouse gases from the air

■ India has maintained that committing to a target will require

retiring coal plants and fossil fuel use overnight and even then, it will not guarantee that temperature rise stays below 1.5°C

■ India says that future net zero promises are hollow as countries responsible for the climate crisis have not delivered on previous promises

■ India argues that countries clamouring for net zero will continue to pollute on a per capita basis way beyond their fair share



Source: The Hindu

India and “Net Zero” target:

- A study by the think tank Council for Energy Environment and Water said that for India to achieve the net zero target even by 2070, usage of coal, especially for power generation, will need to peak by 2040 and drop by 99% between 2040 and 2060.
- The consumption of crude oil across sectors will need to peak by 2050 and fall substantially by 90% between 2050 and 2070.
- India's long-term position in climate talks has always been that it will forego the use of fossil fuels but only gradually because it cannot compromise on development, which is now primarily reliant on coal.
- Also because it goes against the core principle of “common but differentiated responsibility” that requires developed countries, which are responsible for the climate crisis, to take on deeper cuts and pay developing countries for the environmental damage from rising temperature as well as finance their transition to clean energy sources.
- However, the U.S, and EU delegations, in recent months, had several meetings with the Indian officials to chart out a more ambitious pathway to cut emissions.
- Most recently, India and the United Kingdom have agreed to strengthen climate initiatives and further their green partnership.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Development that is mindful of nature

The article talks about the need for sustainable development with minimal effect on the environment in Kerala that has been a victim of environmental disaster yet again.

Context:

- Unusually heavy rains have caused landslides in Kottayam and Idukki in Kerala.
- Flash floods, mudslides and landslides have been reported in most districts located between central and southern Kerala. Some bridges and a number of roads have been washed away.

In the backdrop of these environmental disasters and consequent loss of life, there is a dire need for a serious review of the land-use pattern in Kerala.

Land-use pattern in Kerala:

- Historically, most of the settlements were concentrated in the coastal plain, the adjoining lowlands and parts of the midlands.
- At present, this scenario has altered with significant land-use change across topographic boundaries.

- Population growth, agricultural expansion, economic growth, infrastructure development — particularly road construction — and intra-State migration have all led to the settlement of the highlands.
- Kerala is experiencing high growth of residential buildings.
 - The Census records that during the decade between 2001 and 2011, the population grew by 5% whereas the number of houses grew by 19.9%.
- With a population density of 860 persons/sq. km against an all-India average of 368 persons/sq. km (Census 2011), Kerala experiences very high pressure on the land.

Concerns:

- The rapid pace of construction has serious implications for the geo-environment.
 - Not only in terms of the locations for housing the settlements but also the demand for construction materials is altering the landscape in the state.
- The basin characteristics of all rivers have been altered.
 - It has resulted in gross disturbance of the character of the terrain evolved through weathering and formation of soil under natural vegetation cover.
 - Consequently, the water-absorbing capacity of the river catchment is lost, and has contributed to increasing surface run-off and reduction in groundwater recharge.
- Road construction in hilly areas has created conditions conducive to landslides.
 - Construction on hill slopes prone to disintegration during heavy rain is a threat not only to those who choose to live there but also to those who are in the path of the debris that gets dislodged in a landslide.
 - In parts of the State, the hills have been overbuilt, posing a danger to life.
- Extremely complicated rules for registration of purchase and sale of property in Kerala are not matched by due diligence of building plans.
- While the idea of a construction-free Coastal Regulation Zone, instituted by the Government of India and applicable to the entire country, is fairly well recognised in the State, the Government of Kerala has not been proactive in enforcing similar regulation.
 - The hesitancy towards the implementation of the recommendations by the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, commonly known as the **Gadgil Committee**, on protection of the Western Ghats is the best example of this.

Way Forward:

Review of two projects:

The most recent landslide in Kerala should lead the government to immediately review two major projects with the potential to lower ecological security.

1. The Silver Line project – a light railway connecting the two extremities of the State.
 - Its potential to usurp agricultural land and cause ecological disturbance is well known.
 - The claim that it is vital to the development of the State is debatable.

- Kerala's deficit is less with respect to transportation than what it is to power generation, urban infrastructure and a well-trained workforce.
- 2. Widening of the highway taking place in parts of the State.
 - Entirely under the authority of the Government of India, this has involved mass felling of trees and the removal of habitation on both sides of the road.
 - The loss of vegetation and tree cover is sure to have an impact on local climate and water retention, impacting its availability.
 - It is not known whether the Government of India has consulted the people affected or just used the principle of eminent domain to have them evicted.
 - Eminent domain power is regarded as an inherent power of the State to take private property for a public purpose. This power depends on the superior domain of the State over all the property within its boundaries.

Technical expertise needed:

- Kerala's longitudinal topographic grain combined with its east-west-running rivers gives rise to an alternating ridge-valley landform.
 - Given this feature, the construction of roads or any structure with a north-south alignment involves cutting across the valleys and lowlands, impacting natural drainage and overall landscape ecology.
 - Therefore, development interventions should be cautious and ecologically sensitive to avoid unwarranted consequences and to be sustainable.
- Evaluating ecosystem services lost in a developmental overdrive is a difficult exercise. Economic consequences of the actions towards nature are immediately not known. However, there is a need to acknowledge this.
- Technical expertise is needed when re-engineering the earth.
 - Earth scientists, independent public policy experts, elected representatives and citizens from the affected areas must be duly consulted before taking up such developmental projects.

Rushing through developmental projects in the face of intimations from nature through disasters such as landslides would be a case of utter ignorance. Projects such as the new railway lines and highway widening should be undertaken only after public hearings open to citizens.

Category: ECONOMY

1. A Clean energy transition plan for India

Context:

A clean energy transition plan is proposed that is expected to ensure energy security and also contribute towards climate change.

Background:

- Energy security ensures uninterrupted supply of energy sources at affordable prices.
- India has twin challenges in terms of energy.

- On one hand, India has to ensure the availability and affordability of energy to 1.3 billion population, and
- on the other hand, it has to make noticeable contributions towards climate change.
- The Electricity Act of 2003 has helped to transform the power sector of India and the thermal power plant (TPP) generation capacity in India has increased from 94GW in 2011 to 192 GW in 2017, which is more than double the number in 2011.
- This, in turn, has made it possible for the government to increase per capita electricity consumption by 37% and the energy demand deficit has also declined from 9.8 percent in 2010-11 to 1.6 percent in 2016-17.
- India still has to work on providing energy security to the whole population as it stands third at the international level in terms of per capita energy consumption.

Coal as the major contributor to electricity:

- India is a coal abundant country and the contribution of the Thermal Power Plant (TPP) out of 1382 billion units of electricity generation by utilities, stood at 71 percent, and in terms of total installed capacity (382 GW as of March), the contribution was 55 percent.
- It implies that coal is the major source of electricity generation in India as piped gas is not easily accessible because of geopolitical reasons.

Renewable energy:

- Variable Renewable Energy Sources (VRE), mainly wind and solar, contribute 24 percent of the total installed capacity and in terms of electricity generation by utilities, their share was 10.7 percent in FY 2020-21.

VREs and costs to the consumer:

Given below are the key points with regards to VREs and the costs to the consumers:

- The increase in electricity generation through VRE without a proportionate increase in demand for electricity has led to lower capacity utilization of the TPPs.
- The distribution companies (DISCOMS) have to pay the fixed costs of these TPPs despite the low capacity utilization and the burden is ultimately shifted to the final consumers.
- The government of India is focusing on the rapid growth of VREs through various policy measures as well as financial incentives whose ultimate cost is borne by the consumers.
- The current level of VRE in the national power grid has increased the cost of procurement for DISCOMS which in turn is increasing the rates of tariffs for the consumers.
- Hence, India has to implement the plan for increasing energy efficiency and reducing the emission of carbon dioxide and airborne pollutants from TPPs without making electricity unaffordable to the industries that require low-cost power 24x7 to compete in the international market.

Structure of a plan:

A time-bound plan for India's power sector has been developed which includes:

- **Retirement of certain TPPs:**

- Progressive retirement of 211 Thermal Power Plants (TPPs) that contribute to 36GW of total installed capacity. This retirement will be based on the following key performance indicators:
 - Efficiency,
 - Specific Coal Consumption,
 - Technological Obsolescence, and
 - Age.
- The shortfall in baseload electricity generation will be compensated by increasing the utilization of the High-Efficiency-Low-Emission (HELE) TPPs that are currently underutilized.
- This should be done in order to promote VRE and accomplishment of 47 government-owned TPPs that are under construction in which the investment of Rs. 1,77,742 has been already done by the government.
- The power purchase agreement has already been signed between the DISCOMS and these TPPs and under the two-part tariff policy program, its cost will be borne by the power consumers irrespective of their usage.
- **Nuclear Power Plants:**
 - The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) is developing 11 nuclear power plants. Features of these plants will be:
 - The total generation capacity of these plants will be 8,700 MW,
 - 24x7 power supply, and
 - No carbon dioxide emission.

Benefits of the plan:

The estimated benefits of the plan are as follows:

- **Capacity increase:**
 - The total installed capacity of TPPs by utilities will increase from the current 209 GW to 220GW by 2029-30.
 - The combined thermal (220 GW) and nuclear (15 GW) capacity of 235 GW is expected to match the baseload requirement (80 percent of the peak demand) during the evening peak in FY 2029-30.
 - The optimum utilization of the existing and under construction HELE TPPs with efficient capabilities and a low level of technical minimus will also help in the integration of VRE.
 - The electricity generation from TPPs is likely to be reduced from the 2020-21 level of 71 percent to 57 percent of the total electricity generation by 2029-30.
 - The contribution of HELE TPPs will shoot up from 25 percent (as in 2018-19) to 44 percent in 2029-30.
 - The contribution of inefficient TPPs will decline from 46 percent (as in 2018-19) to 4 percent in 2029-30.

- As a result, the emission of carbon dioxide will decline by 57Mt in 2029-30 and even the electricity generation from coal is expected to be increased by 21 percent to 1,234 Billion Units (BU) in 2029-30.
- **Economic and Environmental benefits:**
 -
 - The promotion of HELE TPPs will reduce the emissions of particulate matter SO₂ and NO₂.
 - Avoidance of sustenance Capital Expenditure and desulphurization plants (FGDs) costs in the 211 inefficient TPPs that are proposed to be retired. Besides, there will be savings in terms of specific coal consumption and water consumption by these TPPs. This will, in turn, reduce the electricity tariffs and PM pollution.
 - The implementation of this plan will enable India to safeguard its energy security and ensure efficient grid operations with lower water consumption, PM pollution, and CO₂ emissions.
 - Ultimately, this plan demonstrates India's commitment to climate change mitigation by optimizing the use of our land, coal, water, and financial resources with indigenous technology.

Conclusion:

India is working continuously to become energy efficient and it should implement the transition plan as soon as possible to meet its energy requirements and mitigate climate change.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Rocket systems, BrahMos add offensive punch along LAC

What's in News?

India's military posture in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh has added an offensive punch through new deployments.

Details:

- The Army has deployed Pinaka and Smerch long-range, multi-barrel rocket launch systems as well as [BrahMos](#) supersonic cruise missiles in the region.
- In addition to the rocket systems, the deployment of BrahMos missiles, which have a range of over 290 km, gives the Army the ability to hit targets deep inside China in case of any Chinese misadventure in this sector.
- Pinaka, indigenously designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation, has a range of 38 km.
- Smerch, procured from Russia, is the longest range conventional rocket system in the Army's inventory with a maximum range of 90 km.

2. Amur falcons in Manipur for annual migration

What's in News?

The arrival of the migratory [Amur Falcons](#) to Tamenglong district of Manipur for the annual stopover.



Amur falcons visit the State every year from breeding grounds in China and Russia
Getty Images/iStockphotoGetty Images/iStockphoto

- Amur falcons visit the district every year from breeding grounds in China and Russia before beginning their onward voyage to Africa for the winter.
- They are the world's longest travelling raptors that start travelling with the onset of winters.
- They get their name from the Amur River that forms the border between Russia and China.
- Doyang Lake in Nagaland is a famous roosting site for the species during its migration.
- **Nagaland is called the falcon capital of the world.**

Conservation Status:

- IUCN Red List Status – Least Concerned.
- It is protected under the Indian [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#), and the Convention on Migratory Species, to which India is a signatory.
- Also, the hunting of the bird is punishable under the Manipur Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and could lead to three years of imprisonment and a fine of ₹25,000.

3. Winter session likely from November-end

What's in News?

The month-long winter session of Parliament is likely to commence from the fourth week of November 2021 following all COVID-19 protocols.

Read more on [Sessions of Indian Parliament \(Monsoon, Winter, Budget\)](#).

Sessions of the Parliament:

A session of the Indian Parliament is the period during which a House meets almost every day uninterrupted to manage the business. There are typically three sessions in a year.

- Budget session (February to May)
- Monsoon session (July to September)
- Winter session (November to December)

G. Tidbits

1. Air bubbles to continue for some time

What's in News?

According to Minister for Civil Aviation, international air travel to and from India will continue only under the “air bubble” arrangement for the foreseeable future.

- Concerns over the spread of COVID-19 as well as travel restrictions by various countries are hindering India from fully opening up international travel.
- Scheduled international flights were banned by the government in March 2021.
- Later that year, the Government started gradually opening up the skies by entering into “air bubble” agreements with various countries, with a limited number of direct flights permitted to and from India.
- India now has “air bubble” tie-ups with 28 countries.

What are Air Bubble Agreements?

- The air bubble agreement is a bilateral agreement between two countries in which airlines from both countries can operate international flights with a set of rules and restrictions.
- They are reciprocal in nature, meaning airlines from both countries enjoy similar benefits.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q.1 Consider the following statements with regards to Amur Falcons:

1. These species of birds come under the category of Least Concern under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.
2. While migrating, the Amur Falcon covers a distance of 22,000 km, making it one of the longest distances covered by migratory birds.
3. Manipur is known as the Falcon Capital of the world.

Which of these statements are correct?

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Amur Falcons are known to be one of the world's longest-distance migratory birds as they travel more than a staggering 22,000 km a year.
- These species of birds come under the category of Least Concern under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.
- Nagaland is called the falcon capital of the world.

Q.2 Which of the following come in the category of 'beach sand minerals'?

1. Monazite
2. Zircon
3. Radium
4. Garnet

Options:-

- a. 1, 2 & 3 only
- b. 1, 3 & 4 only
- c. 1, 2 & 4 only
- d. 2, 3 & 4 only

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Mining of beach sand minerals by private parties is terminated as part of the efforts to curb unlawful mining.
- Two sectors are currently restricted – Beach sand minerals (only Department of Atomic Energy can do mining) and Offshore mining (currently only through PSUs).
- Monazite, Zircon and Garnet are classified as beach sand minerals. Radium does not fall under this category.
- Monazite is the mineral from which thorium is extracted. Thorium is a key ingredient of India's three-stage nuclear programme that can be turned into nuclear fuel after being combined with a fissile material such as plutonium.

Q.3 Consider the following statements with regards to allocation of cadre to an IAS officer:

1. While assigning a cadre, the candidate's home state and state of the allocated cadre are consulted by UPSC.
2. The candidate doesn't have the right to be allocated the cadre of his/her choice.
3. If candidates from Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), or Other Backward Class (OBC) get selected in the general category without recourse to the benefit of reservation, they can use it for getting cadre or place of appointment of choice.

Which of these statements is/are incorrect?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The procedure for allocation of cadre is a mechanical process and admits no exception except in terms of the rules. It said that consultation in respect of allocation of cadre is not required to be done with the state from which the candidate belongs or with the state to which the candidate is being allocated.
- The Supreme Court has held that successful civil services aspirants have no right to be allocated a cadre of their choice or their home state.
- If a candidate hailing from reserved Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), or Other Backward Class (OBC) category does not take benefit of quota and gets selected in the general category then later he or she cannot take recourse to reservation for getting cadre or place of appointment of choice.

Q.4 'e-MASIHA' app, often seen in the news, is used for

- a. Budget management of the Ministry of Minority Affairs
- b. Providing health facility for Haj visitors from India
- c. Applying for Haj pilgrimage
- d. Receiving grievance from Hajis and feedback to improve the service

Answer: b

Explanation:

E-Medical Assistance System for Indian Pilgrims Abroad or E-Masiha is an online system to create and maintain the complete health database of pilgrims along with doctors' prescriptions as well as medicine disbursements to deal with any emergency in Makkah-Madinah.

Q.5 With reference to the British colonial rule in India, consider the following statements: (UPSC-2019)

1. Mahatma Gandhi was instrumental in the abolition of the system of 'indentured labour'.
2. In Lord Chelmsford's 'War Conference', Mahatma Gandhi did not support the resolution on recruiting Indians for World War.
3. Consequent upon the breaking of salt law by Indian people, the Indian National Congress was declared illegal by the colonial rulers.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Mahatma Gandhi was instrumental in the abolition of the system of 'indentured labour'.
- In Lord Chelmsford's War Conference in April 1918, Mahatma Gandhi in his one-sentence speech said that he supported the resolution on recruiting Indians for World War.
- Consequent upon the breaking of Salt Law by Indian people in January 1932, the Indian National Congress was declared illegal by the colonial rulers.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Kerala must rethink the very idea of development to prevent disasters threatening its future. Do you agree? Justify. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-3, Environment & Ecology]
2. HELE (High Efficiency Low Emissions) coal technology provides a pragmatic path that meets energy needs and lowers emissions. Comment. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-3, Economy]