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Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Understanding the Draft India Data Accessibility & Use Policy, 2022

Syllabus: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability.

Mains: The need for the draft policy on India Data Accessibility & Use and the issues associated with it.

Context

Recently the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) proposed a policy named “**Draft India Data Accessibility & Use Policy, 2022**”

India Data Accessibility & Use Policy, 2022

- **Aim:** To radically transform India’s ability to harness public sector data.
- The nature of the policy objectives suggested in the draft is mainly commercial.
- The Policy proposes permitting the licensing and sale of public data by the Government to the private sector.
- The policy will apply to all data and information created and collected by the Central Government. It also has provisions for the State governments.

The key features of the Policy

- The policy proposes the establishment of an **India Data Office (IDO)** under the MEITY for overall management, with each government entity designating a **Chief Data Officer** to help achieve its objectives.
- An **India Data Council** will act as a consultative body.
- The policy strategy is to make Government data open by default and then maintain a negative list of datasets that cannot be shared. The declaration of sensitive data that has restricted access is left to the independent government ministries.
- The existing data sets will be enriched or processed to gain greater value and termed high-value datasets.
- As a measure of privacy protection, there is a recommendation for anonymisation and privacy preservation.

The need for the policy

- The generation of citizen data is expected to increase at a rapid rate in the next decade and become a foundation of India’s \$5 trillion-dollar digital economy.
- The policy aims to harness the economic value of the generated data.
- The National Economic Survey, 2019 noted that “The private sector may be granted access to select databases for commercial use, given that the private sector has the potential to reap massive dividends from this data”
- Currently, there are several bottlenecks in data sharing and use which includes,
 - The absence of a body for policy monitoring and enforcement of data sharing
 - Absence of technical tools and standards for data sharing
 - Identification of high value datasets and licensing and valuation frameworks.

Issues associated with the policy

- **Privacy Issues** – India does not have a data protection law that can provide a remedy for privacy violations such as coercive and excessive data collection or data breaches. The inter-departmental data sharing poses concerns related to privacy since the open government data portal may result in state-sponsored mass surveillance.
- **Lack of transparency** – The list of stakeholders who have been consulted, which according to MEITY include, “academia, industry, and Government” are not revealed along with their view on the policy.
- **Lack of scientific analysis** – The lack of analysis of scientific evidence and the availability of tools pose a challenge as the commercial value of the data increases with greater amounts of personal data to the private sector. It becomes a challenge to limit the usage of this data by private agencies.
- **The policy bypasses parliament** – The policy as it contemplates large scale data sharing and enrichment that will be borne from public funds.
- **The issue of federalism** – The constitution of offices and prescription of standards apply to the Central government as well as State governments and schemes administered by them.

Nut Graf

Realising the economic potential of “data”, the government has proposed a policy that empowers the government to license and sell public data to the private sector. In this regard, the various issues associated with the policy, including privacy and transparency need to be addressed such that India can become a \$5 trillion-dollar digital economy without compromising social security.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1. NASA’s plan to decommission the International Space Station

Syllabus: Awareness in the field of Space.

Prelims: International Space Station

Mains: Decommissioning of International Space Station – the reasons, the process and challenges associated with it.

Context

NASA plans to decommission the International Space Station (ISS) by 2031.

International Space Station (ISS)

- The ISS was launched in 1998 by five space agencies, namely, **NASA** (USA), **Roscosmos** (Russia), **European Space Agency** (ESA-Europe), **JAXA** (Japan) and the **Canadian Space Agency** (CSA-Canada).
- The ISS operates in low-earth orbit and is at an altitude between about 200 km and 400 km and weighs more than 400,000 kg.
- The ISS orbits the earth at about 5 miles per second and makes 15.5 orbits per day. It takes about 93 minutes to make one revolution around the earth.
- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has announced plans to retire and decommission the International Space Station (ISS) by 2031.

To read more about [International Space Station \(ISS\)](#)

The Reasons for Decommissioning the ISS

- The ISS was initially built to operate for 15 years. The space station has surpassed the timeline and plans to serve till 2030.
- The ISS goes through 16 rotations of the earth per day, experiencing extreme temperature changes, causing intense expansion and contraction of the material.
 - The side facing the sun gets heated up to 121°C.
 - The temperature on the opposite, darker side falls upto -157°C.
- The orbital thermal cycling, along with dynamic loading, affects the longevity of the structure of the ISS.
- The technical lifetime of the space station is also limited, with parts like radiators, modules and truss structures tend to degrade over time.

Challenges with the decommissioning

- The ISS is a huge structure and it was not designed to be disassembled in space.
 - The process of dismantling in space has posed huge logistical and financial challenges.
- The ISS cannot be decommissioned by boosting to a higher orbit because of its large mass and low operational altitude.
 - The station also has a mass of over 4,30,000 kg.
 - Existing propulsion systems cannot raise the station's altitude to a high target and escape low-earth orbit.
- The random re-entry method was discarded since it carries a huge risk for the human population on the ground.

The process of decommissioning

- NASA plans to remove the ISS from its orbit around the earth and eventually plunge it into the ocean at a point farthest from human settlements.
- NASA will use the dual method of **natural orbit decay** and a **re-entry manoeuvre** to decommission the ISS.
- The earth's atmospheric drag will be used to lower the altitude of the ISS while setting up the de-orbit.
- The space station operators provide the final push to lower the structure to the maximum possible height and ensure safe re-entry into the earth's atmosphere, leading it to **Point Nemo** over the **South Pacific Oceanic Uninhabited Area (SPOUA)**.
- The exterior of the module is expected to melt when it re-enters the earth's atmosphere.
- The internal hardware is also expected to burn during the process.
- It is believed that denser components will survive the re-entry and fall into the SPOUA.
- NASA claims that the process will not cause any substantial long-term impact on the environment.

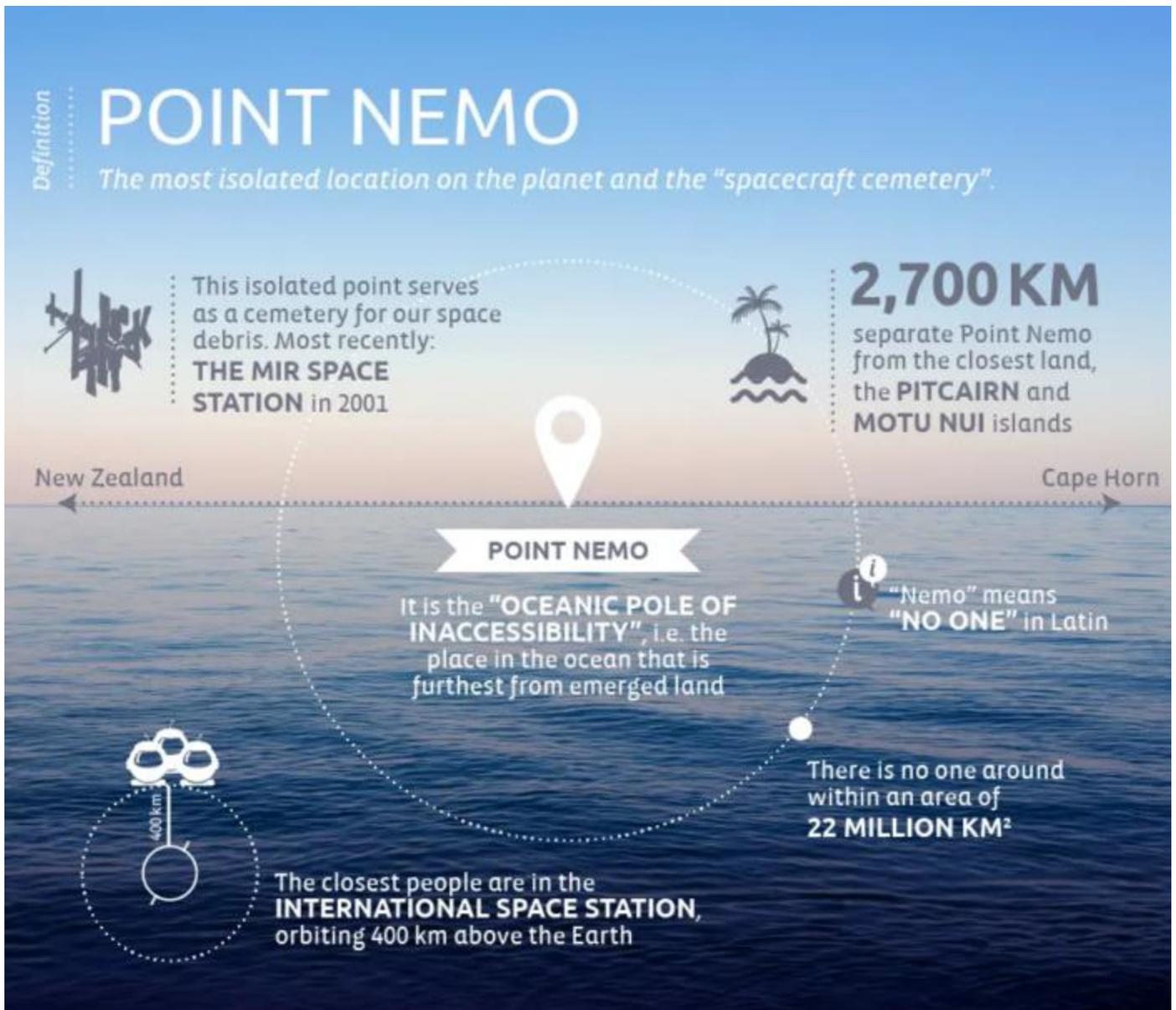


Image Source: escales

Future space stations

- China announced that its space station will be ready for operations in 2022.
- Blue Origin, an aerospace company, has also announced its plans to build **Orbital Reef**, a commercially developed, owned, and operated space station in low-earth orbit.

Nut Graf

Acknowledging the fact that the International Space Station is facing limitations due to its long life-cycle, NASA plans to decommission its operations and is further planning to hand-over the operations in low-earth orbit to private players to focus on its missions to explore the moon and Mars.

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Railways installing solar fences to save elephants

Syllabus: Conservation

Mains: Various innovative measures employed to avoid man and animal conflicts

Context

Railways installing solar fences to save elephants.

Details

- Railways have begun the installation of hanging solar fences at sensitive forest areas between Kanjikode and Walayar stations.
- The Southern Railways installed hanging solar fences for the first time to prevent elephant movement across the tracks.
- The hanging solar fences are being set up for 600 metres on both sides of the B-line railway track. Steel wires are hung in a row from a three-metre high overhead wire. The overhead wire is supported by posts at both ends. The hanging wires will touch the ground.
- These fences hang like a curtain with a gap underneath for smaller animals to cross
- As it is a mild shock, there will be no threat to the elephant's life.

Nut Graf

As dozens of wild animals, particularly elephants have been mowed down by trains, there is an increasing demand to check the loss of wildlife on the tracks. Indian railways has come up with an innovative measure of installing a hanging solar fence for the first time to prevent elephant movement across the tracks.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Ukraine as a Matryoshka doll set of crises

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries

Mains: The major consequences in case of a war in Ukraine.

Context

Russia has officially recognised **Donetsk** and **Luhansk** provinces, in Eastern Ukraine that have been seeking autonomy from Ukraine since 2014.

Background

- Russia has sent its troops as being 'Russian Peacekeeping Forces', to protect the separatists and Russian ethnic minorities who populate the region.
- The move has outraged the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and calls from the rest of the world for de-escalation.

- The two provinces of Ukraine have been asserting independence since the annexation of Crimea in 2014.
- The provinces populated mainly by Russian ethnic minorities striving for independence, separatist leaders supported by Russia seized these regions and declared the 'People's Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk' in 2014.

Read more about the issue in the [CNA dated 23 Feb, 2022](#)

Peace talks so far

- The NATO-led by the U.S. feels that Russia's recognition of this independence and the building of its army on the Ukrainian border is a violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and international law.
 - However, Russia justifies its position as safeguarding its own as well as the security of ethnic Russians living in the regions.
- Talks between Russia, Ukraine and the **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe** (OSCE) led to the **Minsk Protocols of 2014 and 2015**.
 - This Protocol proposed a ceasefire, decentralising power without recognising the autonomous Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk, a pulling out of forces and heavy weaponry 15 kilometres from the Line of Contact.
 - However, violations of the ceasefire have led to the death of 14,000 people in the fighting between the Ukrainian army and Moscow-supported rebels.
- Talks again between France, Germany, Ukraine with Russia, called the **Normandy-Paris Process in 2019**, have not seen success as Russians want a legal guarantee of security that the West refuses.

Read about [Normandy format talks and Minsk Protocol](#)

Consequences of Ukraine joining the NATO

- NATO membership would give Ukraine the strength to regain the autonomous regions of Luhansk, Donbas and also Crimea and hold the ports in the Black Sea region.
- NATO has expanded to include 13 former Central East European countries, all of which are well armed and where Russia poses the major threat.
 - NATO missiles in Ukraine could reach Moscow in about five minutes.
- Through the 1990s after the Soviet collapse, a weakened Russia made repeated offers of collaboration, equal treatment and better relations. Russian leaders were promised that NATO would not expand eastwards. However many central east European states joined NATO.
 - The OSCE and Europe's Paris Charter signed mutual cooperation for steps forward in peace and security with Russia in 1990.
 - Russia made several concessions from the 1990s to accommodate NATO positions including in Serbia.
- The **Russia-NATO Partnership for Peace** of 1994 and the **NATO-Russia Founding Act 1997** committed that NATO and Russian security would not be undermined.
 - The 1999 OSCE-Charter for European Security declared that the security of countries in Europe would not be undermined at the expense of the other.

- Ukraine is the rimland and bridge between Russia and Europe, all the attacks on Russia, from Napoleon to Hitler, came through Ukraine.
 - Also, Russia's route to Europe for transport and oil pipelines is through Ukraine.
- Post the 9/11 attacks, Russia was supportive of U.S. concerns.
 - Now, as Russia has achieved strategic equality, the U.S. has rejected any written commitment for Russian security from NATO.

The U.S. has gained traction

- The faceoff with Russia has provided the U.S. with several opportunities.
- The dominant narrative is that Ukraine is a sovereign nation that has the right to join NATO.
- Russia's actions of sending an army as peacekeepers will lead to heavy sanctions that could hurt and isolate Russia.
- Russia has provided the U.S. the opportunity to strengthen a weakening European alliance.
- Although France and Germany have been taking independent actions, they have been forced to accept U.S. leadership, presence and control in Europe.
- The Nord Stream pipeline that is ready to be used will suffer delays and this will affect Russia, Germany and Europe.

Conclusion

The Ukrainian crisis is multiple crises unfolding as one. The crisis signifies the importance of inclusive citizenship and accommodating ethnic minorities. The crises call for inclusive and common security.

Nut Graf

A war in Ukraine would be a disaster for Europe and the world as the Ukrainian standoff does not address any of the existential crises of the century like climate, ecological damage, pandemics, and sustainable development. Hence, along with de-escalation, a review of the security architecture and reality and narrative checks are also essential.

2. Turning to trade winds

Syllabus: Bilateral groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Mains: Significance of FTA with UAE and the need for the arrangements with other countries.

Context

India announced the signing of a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement** with the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Significance of the arrangement

- The UAE is India's third-largest trading partner with bilateral trade in 2019-20 valued at **\$59 billion**.
- India's exports accounted for about **\$29 billion** in the pre-pandemic fiscal year ended March 2020.
- The UAE supplied India with **\$10.9 billion** worth of crude oil in the same period and considers India as its second-largest trading partner.
- The two countries aim to leverage the free trade deal to lift bilateral merchandise trade to **\$100 billion** over the next five years.

- India has expected that a range of exports including textiles and jewellery are set to benefit from a zero-duty regime once the accord is formally operationalised.
- The two-way investment flows and remittances (major source of foreign exchange earnings for India, given the large Indian workforce in the UAE) are expected to receive a boost.

The need for trade pact with other countries

- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the public health and economic vulnerabilities of an interconnected world. As a result, countries tried to look for domestic productions to protect populations. Now there is an imminent need for countries to negotiate FTAs to boost trade and economic output.
- Even as India sought to promote atmanirbharta or self-reliance, the pandemic disrupted the domestic consumption demand, bringing down the overall economic output.
- Exports have recovered strongly, and the growth is better than the pre-pandemic levels.

Conclusion

With multiple FTAs in the pipeline, India has an opportunity to reset its trade ties with the international community that in turn will help boost India's exports and economic growth.

Nut Graf

The Government's renewed focus to negotiate bilateral free trade agreements is a welcome sign and suggests that India is interested in strengthening trade ties with individual partners rather than being tied into multilateral pacts that do not always address its key concerns.

Category: ECONOMY

1. The Budget lacks the 'power' to transform services

Syllabus: Infrastructure: Energy

Mains: The role and significance of reliable energy in delivering services such as health and education.

Context

The Budget 2022-23 has shown intent to prioritise investments in clean energy and sustainable development, in line with the country's commitments at COP26.

Analysis of the allocations in the Budget 2022-23

- The health sector saw a 16% increase in Budget allocations compared to 2021-22.
- Medical and public health spending declined by 45%.
- The education sector saw an increase of 11.86% in the allocations.
- Despite the push for digital education, which includes the **e-Vidya program**, the 2021-22 year revised allocation saw a reduction of 35%.
- The health and education sectors continue to share only about 2% each of total annual allocations.
- While the health sector was allocated ₹74,602 crores in 2021-22, the Government exceeded its spending by over ₹5,000 crores more on health in 2022-23.
- Greater allocation of funds is a welcome sign, but research on health and education policies shows that the objectives of providing better healthcare facilities get hampered due to the absence of electricity and power facilities.

The importance of reliable energy

- It is accepted that the availability of reliable power supply can enhance the delivery of health and education services.
 - 74% of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals are connected with universal access to reliable power supply.
- Currently, 44% of schools and 25% of India's primary health centres remain unelectrified.
- The lack of integration of electrification requirements in development sector policies are due to lack of information about electricity, poor coordination between the sectors and departments, and poor access to finances.
- The number of hours that electricity is available without any fluctuations also plays a significant role in delivering services.
- Even as electricity is considered, it is limited to being a one-time infrastructure activity rather than a continuous effort required for the daily operations of services.

Way forward

- Multiple policies should be formulated that complement each other to achieve the larger sectoral objectives.
 - Example: in Assam, the **Energy Vision document** that lays out the electricity and development outcomes is to be applied in tandem with the Solar Energy Policy 2017.
- To successfully integrate electricity provisioning and maintenance, the policy frameworks should include innovative coordination and financing mechanisms.
- The mechanisms, while constituting mandates, should also include room for flexibility to respond to local contexts.
 - Flexibility can be placed in funds to provide local decision-makers with some freedom to tackle obstructions.
- Providing reliable electricity for health and education centres should be the responsibility of centralised decision-making entities at the State or national level.
 - Individual facilities should not be imposed with the responsibility to meet the eligibility criteria for policies or programs.
- In India, there are gaps between “critical supply departments” (electricity and water) and “demand-generating departments” (health and education).
 - These gaps can be plugged when coordination mandates are met with sustained finance to support human resources and common activities.

Nut Graf

Considering the fact that the provisioning of reliable electricity, in turn, improves the delivery of health and educational services, the electricity and development sectors need more integrated approaches to achieve the vision outlined in the Union Budget.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Operation MILAN

Syllabus: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

*Prelims: Facts about Milan exercise***Context**

MILAN exercise to be held in Vizag in February, 2022.

MILAN Exercise

- The warships of Quad countries, France, Myanmar, South Korea and Vietnam and several others will come together at Visakhapatnam for the largest multilateral exercise, **MILAN**, hosted by the Indian Navy.
- Russia, Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia are participating in the exercise without ships.
- The exercise will see participation from around 42 countries. The U.S. will be participating in the exercise for the first time.
- **Theme of the MILAN 2022:** “Camaraderie – Cohesion – Collaboration”
- **Aim of MILAN:** To hone operational skills, imbibe best practices and procedures, and enable doctrinal learning in the maritime domain through professional interaction between friendly navies.
- The exercise was first started in 1995, with the participation of Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

To know more about the [MILAN Exercise](#)

2. Cobra Warrior

Syllabus: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

Prelims: Facts relating to Cobra Warrior exercise and LCA Tejas.

Context

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will deploy the indigenous **Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas** for multilateral air exercise ‘**Cobra Warrior**’ at Waddington, U.K.

Cobra Warrior Exercise

- The Cobra Warrior exercise is an apex event organised by the Royal Air Force of U.K.
- The exercise is for training the pilots and others in planning and executing complex airborne missions.
- **Aim:** providing operational exposure and sharing best practices amongst the participating Air Forces, thereby enhancing combat capability and forging bonds of friendship.
- The latest edition will also see the participation of Air Forces of Belgium, Saudi Arabia, Sweden and the U.S.
- Five Tejas aircraft will fly to the U.K., to participate in the event.

Read about [LCA Tejas](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Temples of Khajuraho:

1. Khajuraho group of temples are linked to two religions- Hinduism and Buddhism
2. The Temples of Khajuraho are a magnificent example of the Nagara style of temples
3. It was built by the Chandela rulers

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, The Khajuraho temples are a group of **Hindu** and **Jain** temples in Chhatarpur district in Madhya Pradesh.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, The Khajuraho Temples are an example of the Nagara style of architecture.
- **Statement 3 is correct**, The temples were patronised by the Chandela Kings.
- Read about – [Temple architecture in India](#)

Q2. Which of the following statements with respect to Exercise Cobra Warrior is/are correct?

- 1. They are a series of international Air Force exercises between the Indian Air Force and the United States Air Force
- 2. The exercise showcases efforts and commitment of the two nations to a free and open Indo-Pacific region

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

Answer: d

Explanation:

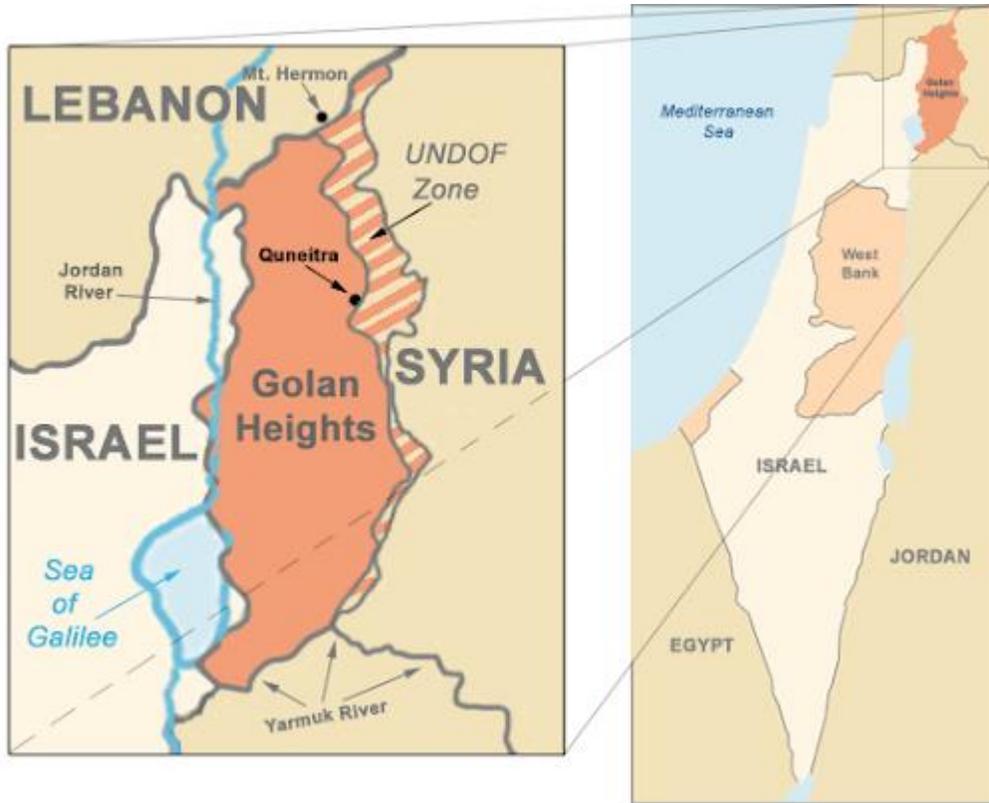
- **Statement 1 is not correct**, The Cobra Warrior exercise is an apex event organised by the **Royal Air Force of the U.K.**
- **Statement 2 is not correct**, The exercise is for training the pilots and others in planning and executing complex airborne missions and further provides operational exposure and shares best practices amongst the participating Air Forces, thereby enhancing combat capability and forging bonds of friendship.

Q3. Golan Heights often seen in news is related to affairs surrounding which amongst the following regions?

- a. Scandinavia
- b. Middle East

- c. Baltic region
- d. Western Africa

Answer: b



Explanation:

- Golan Heights is a hilly area overlooking the upper Jordan River valley in the west.
- Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria during the Six-Day War of 1967 and formally annexed the territory in 1981.
- To read more about [Golan Heights](#)

Q4. With respect to International Space Station (ISS), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The ISS was launched in 1998 as part of joint efforts by the U.S., Russia, China, Canada and Europe.
2. It is the largest artificial object in space and the largest satellite in low Earth orbit

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

Answer: b

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, The ISS was launched in 1998 by five space agencies, namely, NASA (USA), Roscosmos (Russia), European Space Agency (ESA-Europe), JAXA (Japan) and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA-Canada).
 - **China was not involved.**
- **Statement 2 is correct**, It is the largest artificial object in space and the largest satellite in low Earth orbit.
- To read more about the [International Space Station \(ISS\)](#)

Q5. "R2 Code of Practices" constitute a tool available for promoting the adoption of

- a. Environmentally responsible practices in the electronics recycling industry
- b. Ecological management of "Wetlands of International Importance" under the Ramsar Convention
- c. Sustainable practices in the cultivation of agricultural crops in degraded lands
- d. "Environmental Impact Assessment" in the exploitation of natural resources

Answer: a

Explanation:

- **R2** stands for **Responsible Recycling** and is a standard specifically created for the electronics recycling industry by Sustainable Electronics Recycling International (SERI).
- The standards were then accredited by ANAB, and in 2008, R2 was released.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Despite the promises of 24×7 power supply, the power sector has not been complemented with enough reforms in India. Evaluate. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Infrastructure]
2. This decade has the potential to reinvigorate India's trade relations with a series of trade agreements in the pipeline or at the advance stages of discussion. Discuss. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Economy]