

18 Nov 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis



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A. GS 1 Related

Category: WORLD AND INDIAN GEOGRAPHY

1. Extreme Weather Events

Syllabus: Important Geophysical Phenomena

Mains: Role of Climate change on poor livelihoods in India

Context: A recent report by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and Down to Earth captured extreme weather events that occurred in India in 2022 so far.

Key Details:

- As per the report, India recorded extreme weather events on 242, or 88.6%, of the 273 days between January 1 and September 30 in 2022.
- This means that India has experienced a disaster “nearly every day in the first nine months of this year”, ranging from heat waves, [cyclones](#), and lightning, to heavy rain, floods and landslides.
- Such events claimed the lives of 2,755 people, and affected 1.8 million hectares of crop area across the country.
- The country recorded its warmest March, and the third warmest April, in over a century. Madhya Pradesh witnessed the highest number of days with extreme weather events, with such events occurring every second day in the state.
 - Himachal Pradesh saw the highest number of human deaths, at 359.
- Region-wise, the central region (the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Goa) witnessed the highest number of days with extreme weather events at 198 and resulting in 887 deaths.
 - The east and northeast regions witnessed 783 deaths in all.
- Overall, extreme weather events affected 1.8 million hectares of crop area, destroyed over 4 lakh houses and killed almost 70,000 livestock.
 - More than 50% of Karnataka’s crop area has been affected over the year.

Month-wise list of select records set during 2022

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September
Temperature records	Eighth warmest night-time temperature since 1901	East & northeast India saw its 11th coldest February in 121 years	India recorded its hottest March in 121 years	The Northwest recorded its warmest April in 121 years	The Northwest saw 1.43°C warmer night-time temperature than 1981-2010*	Central India was a 0.71°C warmer than 1981-2010	East & northeast India saw its warmest July in 121 years	East & northeast India saw its warmest August in 121 years	East & northeast India saw its fourth warmest September in 121 years
Rainfall records	Seventh wettest since 1901. The rainfall levels were 129% above LPA*	East & northeast India saw 44% surplus rainfall	Driest in 112 years. Rainfall was 71% lower than LPA	The Northwest recorded its driest April in 68 years	South Karnataka recorded its wettest May in 121 years	Assam & Meghalaya saw the wettest June in 121 years	East & northeast India recorded its driest July in 121 years	East & northeast India recorded its third-driest August in 121 years	East & northeast India also saw a 14% rainfall deficit

Image Source: The Hindu

Chart 2 | The chart shows the % of days in a month an extreme event was recorded in 2022. For instance, in January, 71% days saw a cold wave in at least one part of India

All figures in %	Heavy rains, floods and landslides	Lightning and storms	Cold waves/ cold days	Heat-waves	Cloud-bursts	Snow-fall	Cy-clones
Jan.	19	23	71	0	0	3	0
Feb.	0	18	29	0	0	4	0
Mar.	6	13	0	55	0	0	0
Apr.	20	63	0	77	0	0	0
May	68	65	0	35	3	0	3
June	100	77	0	47	0	0	0
July	100	100	0	3	13	0	0
Aug.	100	71	0	0	13	0	0
Sep.	100	93	0	0	7	0	0

Image Source: The Hindu

What are Extreme weather events?

- Extreme weather events are those that are “rare at a particular place and time of year”, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ([IPCC](#)).
- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) classifies lightning and thunderstorms, heavy to very heavy and extremely heavy rainfall, landslides and floods, cold waves, heatwaves, cyclones, snowfall, dust and sandstorms, squalls, hail storms and gales as extreme weather events.

Significance of the report:

- The report is timely and quantifies direct damages such as deaths and crop loss. However, it does not capture indirect impacts (such as impacts on human health and mental stress) caused by such extreme events because there is no mechanism to record them.
- Therefore, it demonstrates the need for “transparent and coherent methodologies” to quantify such losses and damages, “especially in data-poor and multi-hazard countries such as India”.
- This will also add to the discussions on loss and damage in the 27th Conference of Parties ([COP27](#)).

Nut Graf: Recent report by the Centre for Science and Environment shows the increased severity of extreme weather events and the losses and damages they caused in India. This analysis acts as a timely intervention to pay attention to non-economic losses and damages, such as increased mental stress, loss of cultural practices, or escalating conflict due to climate variability.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. Collegium system review

Syllabus: Doctrine of Checks & Balances

Mains: Efficiency of Collegium system in judicial appointments

Context: Supreme Court of India recently agreed to list in due course a writ petition to reconsider the [Collegium system](#) of judicial appointments.

Introduction:

- Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud agreed to list a writ petition to reconsider the Collegium system of judicial appointments to the Supreme Court and the High Courts.
- The petition sought the revival of the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC), which briefly gave the government an equal role with the judiciary in the appointment of judges to the constitutional courts before it was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2015.
 - The petition said the 2015 judgement should be rendered *void ab initio* as it had revived the Collegium system which they called a “synonym for nepotism and favouritism”.
- The petition follows recent verbal attacks by Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on the Collegium system, calling it opaque.

Background:

- NJAC was a constitutional body proposed to replace the present Collegium system of appointing judges.
- The NJAC was established by amending the Constitution [Constitution (Ninety-Ninth Amendment) Act, 2014] passed by the parliament in 2014.
- In a 4-1 majority verdict in 2015, the Supreme Court held that both the Constitution (Ninety-ninth Amendment) Act, 2014, and the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, 2014, were unconstitutional as they would undermine the independence of the judiciary.

Nut Graf: *A writ petition is filed in the Supreme Court for the revival of NJAC and challenges the Collegium of appointment of judges to bring a transparent and open process in judicial appointments. The apex court has agreed to list the petition to find a solution to make judicial appointments more transparent, accountable and democratic.*

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. Weighing in on PMGKAY, the free grains scheme

Syllabus: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population and the performance of these schemes

Prelims: About Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana

Mains: Significance of PMGKAY and critical evaluation of the implementation of the scheme

Context: The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) was extended for three more months in September 2022.

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)

- PMGKAY was launched in April 2020 and was recently extended to last till December 2022.
- The Scheme was introduced at the time when the country was fighting the COVID pandemic and it aims to distribute free food grains to the poor and vulnerable sections of society.
- Under the scheme, five kg of food grains are provided per month per unit to Antyodaya/eligible household beneficiaries covered under [National Food Security Act, 2013 \(NFSA\)](#).
- Close to around 80 Crore beneficiaries are covered under this social security scheme.

Significance of PMGKAY

- The PMGKAY aimed at extending an additional allocation of foodgrains (rice/wheat) from the central pool thereby benefiting a large number of cardholders of the **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)** and **Priority Households (PHH)** categories under the NFSA.
- PMGKAY provides food grains above the regular monthly quota under the NFSA which is 35 kg/month/family for AAY and 5 kg/month/person for PHH.
 - The PMGKAY covers even Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) beneficiaries.
- The analysis of the total estimated outgo of food grains including the recent extension reveals that the overall allocation would be close to 1,121 lakh tonnes with the overall expenditure of the scheme being close to ₹3.91 lakh crores.
- Various policymakers as well as experts have accepted that the scheme played a considerable role in ensuring food security during a public health emergency such as the COVID pandemic.
- Further, the scheme has received appreciation from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Food and Public Distribution and the IMF-published working paper titled “Pandemic, Poverty, and Inequality: Evidence from India”.

Concerns about the latest extension of scheme

- Reports suggest that the Department of Expenditure that comes under the Union Ministry of Finance had not favoured the extension of PMGKAY in June and had cited funds crunch as the reason and also said that such a scheme was no longer required post-pandemic.
- Critics point out that the extension of the Scheme had come at a time when there was widespread debate about the relevance and the extension of freebies.
- The Government has held that the scheme was extended in order to support the poor and the vulnerable during the festival season between October and December.
 - However, critics feel that no such regard was shown during December 2020 and April 2021 when the scheme was discontinued and it was also the time when the country was still recovering from the first wave of the pandemic.
- Critics of the government also argue that the latest round of extension of the scheme is a tactic used by the government to appease people in the wake of upcoming Assembly elections in the states of Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat.

Recommendations

- The Union Government must initiate a study on the implementation of PMGKAY and make its findings public.

- The outcomes and findings of this study must be used for scrutinising the available data, updating the database of the beneficiaries and identifying the needy.
- In order to check the budgetary allocation, the rules on quota for rice or wheat can be changed suitably.
- While undertaking such social security programmes it is important that the Union and State authorities must always keep an eye on the challenges of diversion from the Public Distribution System (PDS).
 - Efforts must be initiated to address the problem of diversion of food grains as several deserving persons and households still remain outside the ambit of the food security net.
- As done during the initial stages of the pandemic, the Union must once again consider providing 1 kg pulses free to States on a regular basis, or at subsidised rates.
- Further, the viability of extending food grains free of cost should be analysed and if the need arises food grains can be supplied at reasonable costs instead of free supply as the culture of providing essential commodities free of cost must be phased out.

***Nut graf:** The government has once again extended the PMGKAY citing various reasons but experts and critics urge the government to commission a study and take the decision based on the findings of the study on the overall impact of the scheme as large-scale diversion of foodgrains and exclusion of deserving persons has been widely reported.*

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Opaque political financing could cost democracy dear

***Syllabus:** Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability*

***Prelims:** About electoral bonds*

***Mains:** Significance of political financing and key issues associated with the Electoral Bonds Scheme*

Context: Recently the Union government amended the electoral bonds scheme to allow an additional period of 15 days for electoral bond sales in years which have State elections.

Crucial role played by political financing

- All three axes of political competition namely institutional (the regulation of competition between ruling and Opposition parties); organisational (the regulation of competition within a party); and ideological (the role of ideas in determining competition between parties) are significantly influenced by the nature of political finance.

- The extent of centralisation of political funding within a political party reflects whether power in the party is drawn from organisational structures or exercised in a discretionary or an autocratic manner.
- Political financing also plays a crucial role in shaping political competition and when political financing is concentrated only on certain specific political ideologies and parties the political competition would be severely eroded.
- The degree of transparency in political funding is directly related to the efficacy of institutional protections in a country such as the [Election Commission of India](#).

Concerns associated with Electoral Bonds Scheme

Advantage to ruling party

- Experts feel that the overall design of electoral bonds leans towards helping the ruling party.
- As per the ECI data, the ruling party got over 75% of the total electoral bonds sold in 2019-20.
- Further, the electoral bonds also violate the ideas of transparency and openness in political funding as only the government (ruling party) has the access to the transaction details.
- The prevailing information asymmetry and opaqueness to institutional scrutiny have been advantageous to the ruling party.

Advantage to national parties over regional parties

- The electoral bonds also centralise political funding towards the national units of political parties thereby empowering the national parties over the State and local units.
- According to a [Right To Information](#) (RTI) query response, 80% of the electoral bonds out of the ₹5,851 crores of electoral bonds sold in 2018-19 were redeemed in Delhi.
- Further, amendments were introduced to electoral bonds which includes the removal of erstwhile limits on corporate donations. These amendments have given rise to a chance of alliance between national political parties and corporate conglomerates thereby squeezing the space for both local parties and regional capital.
- There have been several instances in the past wherein the nexus between big business conglomerates and national parties have worked against the growth of local/regional parties.

Centralisation of power

- The centralisation of political power is concentrating more in the hands of the national parties as compared to their regional counterparts.

- This can be seen through various instances of the national ruling party commanding authority over state units such as bringing about changes in the leadership in State governments and imposing measures such as demonetisation and Goods and Services Tax (GST).

***Nut graf:** In a democratic country like India the nature of political finance acts as an important determinant of the structure of political competition. Therefore it has become extremely significant for independent institutions like the ECI and the Supreme Court to intervene and plug the loopholes in the electoral bonds to ensure that the democratic values of the country are upheld.*

Category: ECONOMY

1. Trade tumult

***Syllabus:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.*

***Mains:** Trends in Indian exports, imports and trade deficit.*

Context: Indian goods exports declined in October 2022 for the first time since February 2021.

Details

- India's goods exports in October 2022 shrank below \$30 billion after about 20 months and reports reveal that the goods exports dropped about 16.7% as compared to October 2021 and 16% from September 2022.
- Most of the sectors such as pharmaceuticals and chemicals; engineering goods; gems and jewellery; textiles and handlooms are severely affected.
- Further, the imports increased at 5.7% year-on-year which has widened India's trade deficit by over 50% to \$26.9 billion.
 - October 2022 is said to be the fourth straight month of a \$25 billion-plus goods [trade deficit](#).
- Also, a slight reduction in petroleum imports and a 10.3% shrinking of non-oil, non-gold imports from September 2022 reflects a slowdown in domestic demand.

Widening deficit

India's trade deficit widened to \$26.91 billion last month from October 2021 as exports shrank by 16.7% while imports rose by 5.7%

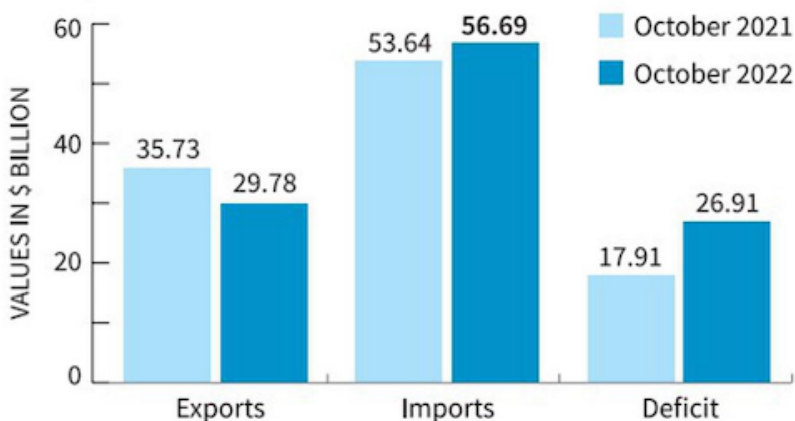


Image Source: The Hindu

Path ahead

- The government has acknowledged the decline in the exports and it attributed this decline to a seasonal Deepavali effect wherein production drops on account of holidays and leaves and imports increase due to festive demand.
- Officials also suggest that there is no need for worry as India has a very low share of global trade which can only grow.
- However, according to experts, export growth cannot be achieved automatically as in a shrinking global market, export rivals such as Vietnam cannot be expected to wait out the slump.
 - But in India, the new **Foreign Trade Policy** which was to replace the current policy of 2015 was deferred again till April 2023 for reasons that included waiting out the current global turmoil.
- Experts urge policymakers and officials to follow a proactive approach in addressing various challenges encountered.

Nut graf: India's huge trade deficit is expected to further expand on account of higher energy prices, depreciation of Rupee and a slowdown in the global demand impacting the exports. This necessitates proactive actions by the policymakers and other agencies to address the existing concerns as a wait-and-watch approach might not be a viable approach.

F. Prelims Facts

1. National Investment and Infrastructure Fund

Syllabus: Economy-Infrastructure

Prelims: Infrastructure-related schemes and policies

Context: 5th Meeting of the Governing Council of [National Investment and Infrastructure Fund \(NIIF\)](#) was held recently.

Key Details:

- Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman chaired the 5th meeting of the Governing Council (GC) of NIIF in New Delhi.
- NIIF's first bilateral fund - an "India Japan Fund" with a contribution from the union government has been proposed through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Limited (NIIFL) and Japan Bank for International Development (JBIC).
- The GC noted that NIIF has developed into an internationally credible and commercially viable investment platform, backed by several highly respected global and domestic investors who have invested alongside the Government of India in NIIF Funds.
- The GC also guided NIIF to undertake advisory activities proactively to support central and state governments to create a pipeline of investible PPP projects.
- The Finance Minister also urged the NIIF to expand its operations and explore ways to crowd in private capital for projects under the [National Infrastructure Pipeline](#), PM Gati Shakti and National Infrastructure Corridor.

G. Tidbits

1. International Maritime Boundary Line

- Fourteen fishermen from Tamil Nadu were reportedly detained by the Sri Lankan Navy for trespassing into the territorial waters of Sri Lanka.
- A maritime boundary is a conceptual division of the Earth's water surface areas using physiographic or geopolitical criteria.
- As such, it usually bounds areas of exclusive national rights over mineral and biological resources, encompassing maritime features, limits and zones.

- In some countries the term maritime boundary represents the borders of a maritime nation that are recognized by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Read more on [UNCLOS Maritime Zones](#) in the link.
- The maritime boundary between India and Sri Lanka was established through a pair of bilateral agreements that were reached in 1974 and 1976 and spans 288 km from the tripoint with the Maldives in the west to the 200 nautical mile limit of India and Sri Lanka in the east.
- The portion of the boundary that passes through the Palk Strait, which is defined as historic waters, was established based on the principle of modified equidistance in a 1974 Agreement.
- The boundary in the Indian Ocean/Gulf of Mannar and in the Bay of Bengal was established in 1976 and follows a simplified equidistance line.

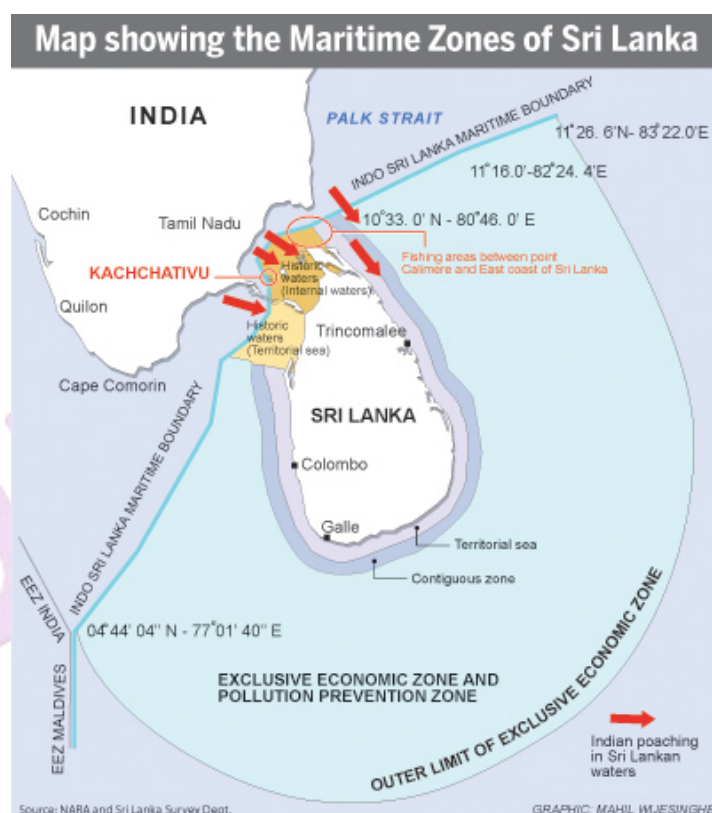


Image Source: Sri Lanka Survey Department

2. Electoral Bonds

- Electoral bonds worth ₹10,246 crore have been sold by the State Bank of India (SBI) since the instrument was launched in March 2018.
- Electoral bonds have been pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties as part of efforts to bring transparency to political funding.

- The majority of these bonds were of ₹1 crore while less than 10% of subscriptions were of lower denominations — ₹10 lakh, ₹1 lakh, ₹10,000 and ₹1,000.
 - About 93.5% of total bonds sold were in the denomination of ₹1 crore.
 - Only 0.25% in value terms were from ₹1 lakh, ₹10,000 and ₹1,000 denominations.
- The SBI has been authorised to issue and encash electoral bonds through 29 authorised branches.

3. Missile attack in Poland

- Seven suspected measles deaths and 164 cases of the viral infection have been reported in Mumbai since September 2022 according to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).
- Overall, the number of suspected measles cases in the city rose to 1,263, and 647 of these cases included children in the age group of 1 to 4 years.
- The Union Health Ministry has deputed a high-level multi-disciplinary team to Mumbai to take stock of the upsurge of measles cases in the city and assist the state health authorities in instituting public health measures and facilitate operationalisation of requisite control and containment measures.

About Measles:

- Measles is also known as rubeola or red measles.
- It is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by a virus which causes rashes all over the body.
- Measles could be spread through infected mucus and saliva.
- In measles, the child gets fever, cold, cough, and red rashes on the body.
- Complications from this disease can be serious in children who are partially vaccinated or unvaccinated.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. With respect to Sant Kabir Das, which of the following statements is/are correct?
(Level-Difficult)**

1. He did not undertake any formal education but was well-trained as a weaver.
2. He never opposed idol worship as he felt it is a means to focus one's religious pursuits and bhakti.
3. His famous writings include 'Sakhi Granth', 'Anurag Sagar' and 'Bijak'.

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is incorrect**, [Sant Kabir Das](#) did not undertake any formal education. He was also not trained as a weaver. While his poems abound with weaving metaphors, his heart was not fully in this profession. He was on a spiritual journey to seek the truth, which is clearly manifested in his poetry.
- **Statement 02 is incorrect**, Kabir always opposed the idea of worshipping the idols and showed clear confidence in Bhakti and Sufi ideas.
- **Statement 03 is correct**, Sant Kabir Das was a highly acclaimed poet of his time. His writings significantly influenced the Bhakti movement.
 - Some of his famous writings include 'Sakhi Granth', 'Anurag Sagar', 'Bijak' and 'Kabir Granthawali'.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to the transfer of High Court Judges: (Level -Medium)

1. Consent of a Judge for his first or subsequent transfer would not be required.
2. Only the transferred judge and no one else is entitled to file a case challenging such transfer.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is correct**, Article 222 of the Indian Constitution makes provision for the transfer of a Judge (including Chief Justice) from one High Court to any other [High Court](#).

- The initiation of the proposal for the transfer of a Judge should be made by the Chief Justice of India whose opinion in this regard is determinative.
- Consent of a Judge for his first or subsequent transfer would not be required.
- **Statement 02 is correct**, A Division Bench of Madras High Court held that only the transferred judge and no one else was entitled to file a case challenging such transfer and that even the aggrieved judge concerned could question the transfer order only on limited grounds such as the proposal not having emanated from the Chief Justice of India (CJI).

Q3. Which of the following is the best description of Cerebrotendinous xanthomatosis (CTX)? (Level-Difficult)

- a) It is a rare genetic condition characterised by short stature and multiple facial, limb and genital abnormalities.
- b) It is a rare disorder characterised by abnormally elevated levels of iron in the body.
- c) It is a disorder characterised by abnormal storage of fats (lipids) in many areas of the body.
- d) It is a rare genetic disorder that can cause structural changes of the skull, bones of the face and other skeletal abnormalities.

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Cerebrotendinous xanthomatosis is a disorder characterised by abnormal storage of fats (lipids) in many areas of the body. People with this disorder cannot break down certain lipids effectively, specifically different forms of cholesterol, so these fats accumulate in the body in the form of fatty yellow nodules called xanthomas.
- People with cerebrotendinous xanthomatosis often develop neurological problems in early adulthood that are thought to be caused by an abnormal accumulation of fats and an increasing number of xanthomas in the brain.
- These neurological problems include recurrent seizures (epilepsy), movement disorders, impaired speech (dysarthria), loss of sensation in the arms and legs (peripheral neuropathy), a decline in intellectual function (dementia), hallucinations, and depression.

Q4. With respect to Baliyatra, which of the following statements is/are correct? (Level-Difficult)

1. It is a festival held in the State of West Bengal.
2. It is a unique socio-cultural event with a glorious history which commemorates the past association of the people of West Bengal with Bali remembering the glorious maritime tradition of transoceanic voyages.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is incorrect**, Baliyatra is the major festival held at Cuttack, Odisha at Gadagadia Ghata of the Mahanadi river on Kartik Purnima. It is considered to be one of Asia's largest open trade fairs.
- **Statement 02 is incorrect**, It is celebrated to mark the day when ancient Sadhabas (Odia mariners) would set sail to Indonesia and Sri Lanka for trade and cultural expansion from Odisha.
 - To commemorate this, the festival is celebrated every year from the day of Kartika Purnima (full moon day of the month of Kartika) according to the Odia calendar.

Q5. With reference to the proposals of Cripps Mission, consider the following statements: (Level-Medium) (CSE-PYQ-2022)

1. The Constituent Assembly would have members nominated by the Provincial Assemblies as well as the Princely States.
2. Any Province, which is not prepared to accept the new Constitution would have the right to sign a separate agreement with Britain regarding its future status.

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:

- **Statement 01 is incorrect**, As per the proposals of the [Cripps Mission](#), after the end of the war, a constituent assembly would be convened to frame a new constitution. Members

of this assembly would be partly elected by the provincial assemblies through proportional representation and partly nominated by the princes.

- **Statement 02 is correct**, Cripps Mission also proposed that the provinces not agreeing to the new constitution would have the right to keep themselves out of the proposed Union. Such provinces would also be entitled to create their own separate Union and have the right to sign a separate agreement with Britain regarding its future status.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. [Critically examine the system of appointment of Judges in India.](#) (250 words; 15 marks) (GS-2; Polity)
2. [Extreme weather events have increased in frequency and magnitude as a direct result of climate change. Evaluate the consequences.](#) (250 words; 15 marks) (GS-3; Environment)