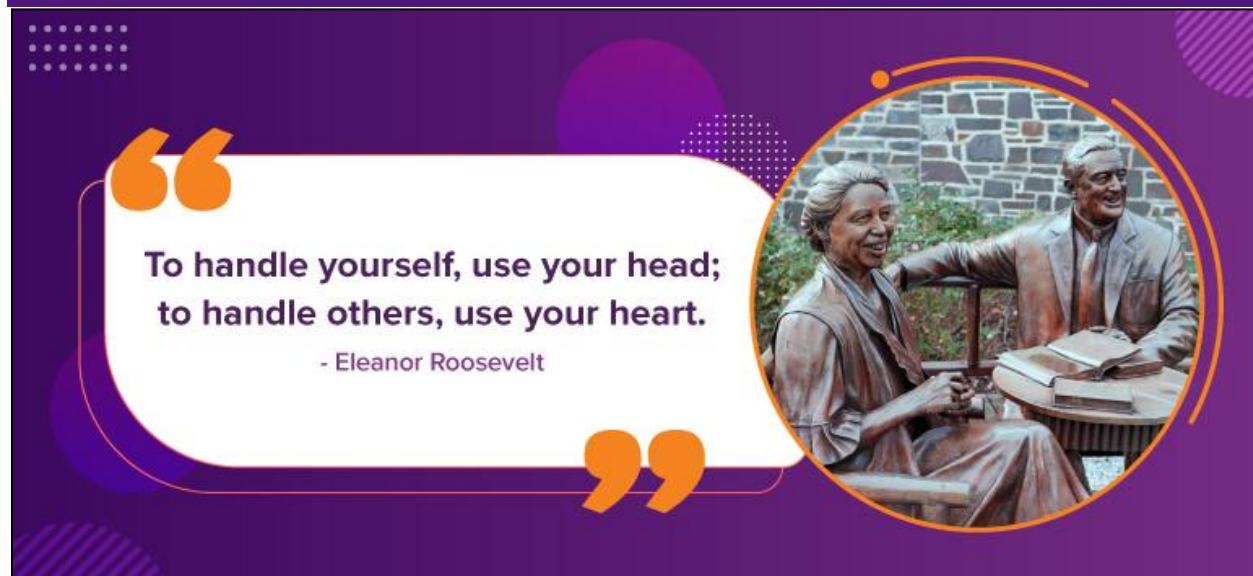


# 21 Dec 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### A. GS 1 Related

### B. GS 2 Related

### C. GS 3 Related

#### *ENVIRONMENT*

#### 1. A new global biodiversity framework

### D. GS 4 Related

### E. Editorials

#### *INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS*

#### 1. The new normal in the Indo-Pacific contestation

#### *INDIAN POLITY*

#### 1. Fluid boundaries

#### *INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND POLITY*

#### 1. Upholding the autonomy of the Election Commission

### F. Prelims Facts

#### 1. Rule 267 of the Rajya Sabha rulebook

#### 2. Three more sites added to tentative list of UNESCO

#### 3. Vagir

### G. Tidbits

#### 1. Govt. hospitals can't insist on voter ID for treatment: HC

#### 2. New scanners to speed up security check at airports

### H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

### I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions



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### Category: ENVIRONMENT

#### 1. A new global biodiversity framework

**Category:** GS 3, ENVIRONMENT

**Syllabus:** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

**Prelims:** UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) and Kunming-Montreal Agreement

**Mains:** Biodiversity – its Importance, need for protection and the challenges associated with the protection efforts

#### Context

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was adopted during the COP15 to the [UN Convention on Biological Diversity \(UNCBD\)](#)

#### Biodiversity and its significance

- Biodiversity refers to the variety of species present on earth, which are all connected and play a key role in sustaining the balance of ecosystems, and helping humans to coexist.
- Biodiversity is often regarded as “the web of life”.
- According to UNCBD, only around 1.75 million species have been identified so far and it is estimated that there may be around 13 million species existing on earth.
- Biodiversity plays a crucial role in rendering various ecosystem services to humans such as providing food, air, fuel, shelter, building materials, water purification, stabilisation of climate,

pollination of plants, and mitigating the adverse impacts of calamities like floods, drought, and extreme weather conditions.

### Need for the protection of biodiversity

- The disruption of critical ecosystems causes serious consequences such as failure of agriculture, irregular climate patterns and cascading losses of species that accelerate the degradation of the earth.
- As per the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), about 25% of the plants and animals assessed during the 2019 Global Biodiversity Outlook were listed as threatened.
  - This indicates that close to one million species are facing the risk of extinction.

### Challenges to protecting biodiversity

- A review on the economics of biodiversity by a Cambridge professor commissioned by the U. K. government reported that the current model of economic growth would require about 1.6 earths to maintain current lifestyles.
- According to the professor, the key challenge to protecting and expanding biodiversity conservation is the use of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the chief determinant of development.
- Few economists believe that the GDP is based on a faulty application of economics that excludes the depreciation of valuable assets such as nature which is degraded by the continuous exploitation of resources.

Read more about Kunming-Montreal GBF in the following article:

[UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis dated 20 Dec 2022](#)

**Nut graf:** *As nature and biodiversity are being degraded by the relentless extraction of resources, experts have urged for moving away from the use of GDP as the chief determinant of development and instead use the measure of inclusive wealth which captures financial and produced capital as well as the human, social and natural capital.*

## D. GS 4 Related

**Nothing here for today!!!**

## E. Editorials

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. *The new normal in the Indo-Pacific contestation*

**Syllabus:** India and its neighborhood relations.

**Mains:** Contestation in Indo-Pacific.

### Details:

- The world is embracing a 'new normal' with the reconfiguration of fault lines in the Indo-Pacific.
- Considering their geo-political and geo-economic significance along with India's rise as a prominent power, the Indian Ocean and South Asian regions are at the heart of the contestation.
- India's Quad partners are also making inroads and ushering significant changes in the region in the backdrop of increasing tensions between an aggressive China and an emerging India.

For more information on the Quad, read here: [Quadrilateral Security Dialogue \[QUAD Group\] India, Japan, USA, Australia](#).

### China's Expanding Outreach:

- China has long tried to register its influence in these regions and enhance its strategic ambition by limiting India's influence, military power, and status and sustaining its energy supply and economic growth.
- China's outreach in South Asia increased considerably in the early 2000s. It began to extend its strategic ends in the region through loans, incentives, and mega-infrastructure projects. These efforts became more institutionalized with the introduction of the [Belt and Road Initiative \(BRI\)](#) in 2013.
- As a result, China's accessibility to the Indian Ocean increased. Beijing could promote its political and security ties in the region, harbour military vessels and submarines, and take certain islands and ports on the lease ( like the Hambantota port of Sri Lanka).
- The Indian strategic thinking is deeming Beijing as a bigger threat than Islamabad, post the [Galwan clash of 2020](#).
  - It should be noted that though the possibility of a two-front war persists, Pakistan's strategic isolation, economic and political fallout, and border and terror challenges from Afghanistan have reduced the likelihood of its aggression.
  - Whereas, China's larger strategic and diplomatic presence, and great ambitions have continued to trigger angst for India.

For more information on Hambantota, read here: [Hambantota Port: Overview, Facts and India's Concerns](#)

### Measures by India and Quad:

- India has re-energized its diplomatic efforts in its neighborhood. For instance:
  - India is reciprocating Maldives' 'India First' policy through massive economic assistance, grants, and infrastructure projects. Both countries are also cooperating on maritime security.
  - Nepal has attempted to improve its overall bilateral relations with India.
  - In a span of one year, India provided economic and humanitarian assistance and investments worth \$4 billion to crisis-hit Sri Lanka.
- India's efforts in the region have also attracted other Quad members. Some of the examples are:

- All the members of Quad (Australia, Japan, and the United States) are closely cooperating to push China by offering alternatives to BRI. They also assisted Sri Lanka throughout the crisis.
- Japan is in the final talks with Sri Lanka on account of debt restructuring.
- Australia and the U.S. have committed to opening their embassies and new areas of cooperation in Maldives. Furthermore, the U.S. signed a defence and security framework with the Maldives in 2020.
- Earlier in 2022, Nepal also ratified the U.S.'s Millennium Challenge Cooperation (Nepal Compact) which was against China's interest.

For more information on Sri Lanka economic crisis, read here: [Sri Lankan Economic Crisis 2021-Present](#)

#### **Emerging Challenges:**

- It should be noted that India and its partners' efforts are unlikely to deter China, especially with rising tensions against India, and the Quad making inroads in South Asia.
- The Chinese surveillance vessel [Yuan Wang-5](#) (docked in Sri Lanka in August 2022), re-entered the Indian Ocean in early December.
- A similar incident occurred in November, when another vessel of the Yuan Wang series entered the Indian Ocean, coinciding with the test flight of the Agni-series missile.
- China also hosted its first-ever China-Indian Ocean Region Forum, to institutionalize its presence in the region and challenge initiatives like the Quad and the Colombo Security Conclave.
- Countries in South Asia are facing economic and political turmoil. For example,
  - Nepal, the Maldives and Bhutan are struggling with depleting forex reserves.
  - Bangladesh reached a bailout agreement of \$4.5 billion with the International Monetary Fund.
  - Sri Lanka also reeling under the economic crisis.
  - These countries are also facing issues like energy shortages, inflation, and negative or slow economic growth.
- As 2023 marks an election year for a large part of South Asia, these economic grievances combined with political opportunism will likely fuel more instability in the region. For example, protests in Bangladesh.

#### **Balancing Act by other Countries:**

- South Asian countries would hesitate to completely sideline China as they hope to exercise their agency by balancing with China and India, thereby making this competition a 'new normal'.
- This trend would further increase with new players entering the region.

#### **Related Link:**

[Strategic Importance of Indo Pacific: RSTV – Big Picture](#)

#### **Nut Graf:**

*China will continue to leverage its financial and economic might and political influence in South Asia. India and other Quad countries are also establishing their foothold in the region. The majority of South Asian countries would balance with India and China, making this competition a 'new normal'.*

## **Category: INDIAN POLITY**

### **1. Fluid boundaries**

**Syllabus: Functions, issues, and challenges of State legislatures.**

**Mains: Interstate border disputes.**

**Prelims: Interstate border disputes.**

**Context:** Interstate dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra.

**Details:**

- The dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra over areas that are claimed by both States has deepened in the past few weeks, also leading to violence.
- Campaigners favouring the merger of Karnataka's Marathi-speaking regions with Maharashtra upped the ante by organizing a conference in Belgaum.
- Politicians from Maharashtra willing to attend it were stopped by the police, leading to a flare-up.
- Karnataka's practice (since 2006) of holding the winter session of the Assembly in Belgaum, is an expression of its authority over the region.
- Moreover, Karnataka's Chief Minister reiterated the state's claim over 48 villages of Sangli in Maharashtra which drew a sharp rebuttal.
- With exchanges getting increasingly provocative, Union Home Minister has asked the respective Chief Ministers to wait for the **Supreme Court** to look into the matter.
- The Court is seized of the issue, but it can only do so much as the underlying factors that originated along with the **1956 linguistic reorganization of Indian States** are not easily amenable to technical and legal solutions.
- It should be noted that almost all States in India comprise linguistic minorities that are accorded special rights. The Maharashtra-Karnataka dispute basically arises due to a lack of appreciation of this reality.
- In 1957, the Government of Maharashtra claimed 814 villages and the 3 urban settlements of Belagavi, Karwar, and Nippani in Karnataka. In retaliation, Karnataka not only rebuffed these claims but also began to claim areas in Kolhapur, Sholapur, and Sangli districts in Maharashtra.
- Moreover, Maharashtra and Telangana are engaged in a dispute in Chandrapur and Asifabad districts, respectively.
- In the Northeast, some boundary disputes between States have even cost the lives of some people.

**Conclusion:**

- Though it is wise to defer to the Court's decision on any dispute, harmony can be achieved only by embracing and promoting a political culture that is respectful of diversity.
- It should be remembered that if new fires are lit through divisive politics, the judiciary also can do very little. This will result in double engine failure.

**Related Link:**

**Inter State Border Dispute: Sansad TV Perspective Discussion of 15 Dec 2022**

**Nut Graf:**

*The interstate dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra has once again flared up. The resolution to such interstate disputes lies in a political culture that is respectful of diversity.*

**Category: INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**

**1. Upholding the autonomy of the Election Commission**

**Syllabus: Appointment to various constitutional posts, functions and responsibilities of Constitutional bodies.**

**Mains: Election Commission appointments.**

**Prelims: Election Commission of India.**

**Details:**

- A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court of India heard an important case about the way in which the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** is constituted, and the appointment of Election Commissioners.
- The judgment is expected early in the new year.
- The issues before the Court are:
  - Constitutionality of complete executive control over appointments to the ECI.
  - If unconstitutional, then the procedure of appointment preserving the independence of the ECI, and the fairness of elections.

**'Fourth Branch Institution' of Modern Democracy:**

- As per the classical understanding of modern democracy, there are 3 "wings" of the state: the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary.
- Conventionally bodies that are involved with administrative and implementational issues like elections fell within the executive domain.
- However, in contemporary times, it is a well-accepted fact that healthy constitutional democracies require "fourth branch institutions" (or "integrity institutions") as various basic rights and guarantees cannot be effective without an infrastructure of implementation.
- For instance, without an infrastructure of implementation, the **right to information** will remain only a paper guarantee. An adequately staffed and funded Information Commission is required to oversee the enforcement of the right, compel public institutions to release public information, resolve disputes, etc.

- The “fourth branch institutions” should be functionally independent of the political executive because they are the vehicles for implementing rights against the executive. For example, citizens invoke the right to information to extract public information from government departments for transparency.
- Governments have a direct interest in these cases. Thus to be effective, Information Commission must be thoroughly independent of the government. It is also argued that the government control over the Central Information Commission (like appointments) has made it a largely toothless and ineffective body.

#### **Examples from different countries:**

- The Constitutions of South Africa and Kenya have dedicated constitutional provisions for “fourth branch institutions” like Human Rights Commissions, Election Commissions, etc. calling them “integrity institutions”, and requiring them to be “independent.” The appointment procedure for these bodies usually involves multiple stakeholders from different wings of the state.
- The Indian Constitution also has similar provisions for bodies like ECI, **Comptroller and Auditor General**, the Public Service Commission(s), and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes.
- Though it grants some degree of independence to these institutions like a high threshold on the removal of officers, the power of appointment lies exclusively with the executive.
- The constitutional court of South Africa observed in one of its landmark judgments that true and functional independence is effectively impossible if the power to appoint rests entirely within a single individual/office/entity.
- Likewise, Supreme Court in the Vineet Narain case held that for the rule of law to prevail, the appointment of the CBI Director should be ratified by a three-member body comprising the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Chief Justice of India.

#### **Way Ahead:**

- It is important to note that nearly no constitutional democracy in the entire world allows the political executive sole power to staff a body as important to sustaining democracy as an Election Commission.
- Appointment processes should involve the government, the Opposition, independent experts, and judicial experts, in a way such that no one has dominance or veto power.
- Moreover, it is also difficult to create an appointment process simply by judicial decree. It requires political consensus, public deliberation, and, a carefully crafted law.
- The Court should carefully avoid band-aid or stop-gap solutions. One possible alternative is to suggest certain interim guidelines and leave a more permanent, structural solution to the legislature.
- Functional and effective independence from the executive, from the moment of appointment to retirement, and then beyond should be the guiding principle.

#### **Related Link:**

**Electoral Reforms In India – Indian Polity**



## Nut Graf:

*In contemporary democracy, there is a need to have a 'fourth branch institution' that is adequately independent of the political executive. These institutions are crucial for the effective and fair functioning of democracy.*

## F. Prelims Facts

### 1. Rule 267 of the Rajya Sabha rulebook

**Syllabus:** GS-2; Polity; Parliament – functioning and the conduct of business

**Prelims:** About Rule 267 of Rajya Sabha rulebook

#### Context

Rule 267 of the Rajya Sabha rulebook has become a bone of contention in the ongoing Winter Session (2022) of the Parliament.

#### Rule 267 of the Rajya Sabha rulebook

- Rule 267 of the Rajya Sabha rulebook deals with the “Suspension of rules”
- According to the Rule, “any member, may, with the consent of the Chairman, move that any rule may be suspended in its application to a motion related to the business listed before the Council of that day and if the motion is carried, the rule in question shall be suspended for the time being”.
- The Rule mainly allows for the suspension of the day’s business to debate an important issue suggested by a member.
- As per the Rule, the Chairman alone has the power to give consent for moving a motion for suspension of a rule and it is for the House to decide whether a particular rule should be suspended or not.
- Further, any member of the House can issue a notice to the Chairperson for a discussion on an issue under Rule 267.
- The last instance of the use of this provision was in 2016 when the then Chairman Hamid Ansari allowed for a debate on the “[demonetisation of currency](#)”.

### 2. Three more sites added to tentative list of UNESCO

**Syllabus:** GS-1; Indian Art and Culture

**Prelims:** About UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India

#### Context

- Three more sites added to the tentative list of [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#).
- With the addition of three more sites, India at present has 52 sites on the UNESCO Tentative List which highlights the richness of cultural and natural wealth of India.

#### Details

- The three newly added sites are:
  - Vadnagar town in Gujarat
  - Sun Temple at Modhera in Gujarat
  - Rock cut sculptures of Unakoti in Tripura
- **Vadnagar Town:** It is a multi-layered historic town in the Mehsana district of Gujarat.
  - Vadnagar is known for its history stretching back to the 8th century BC.
  - Vadnagar town still has a large number of historic buildings that are mainly religious and residential in nature.
- **The Sun Temple at Modhera:** The iconic temple dedicated to the sun god at Modhera is one of the earliest of such temples in the country.
  - The temple is a classic example of the Solanki style of architecture which resembles the Rajasthani style of architecture.
  - According to the [Archeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#), the Temple was built in 1026-27 CE during the reign of Bhima I of the Chalukya dynasty.
- **Rock cut sculptures of Unakoti:** Unakoti is an ancient holy place associated with Shaiva worship.

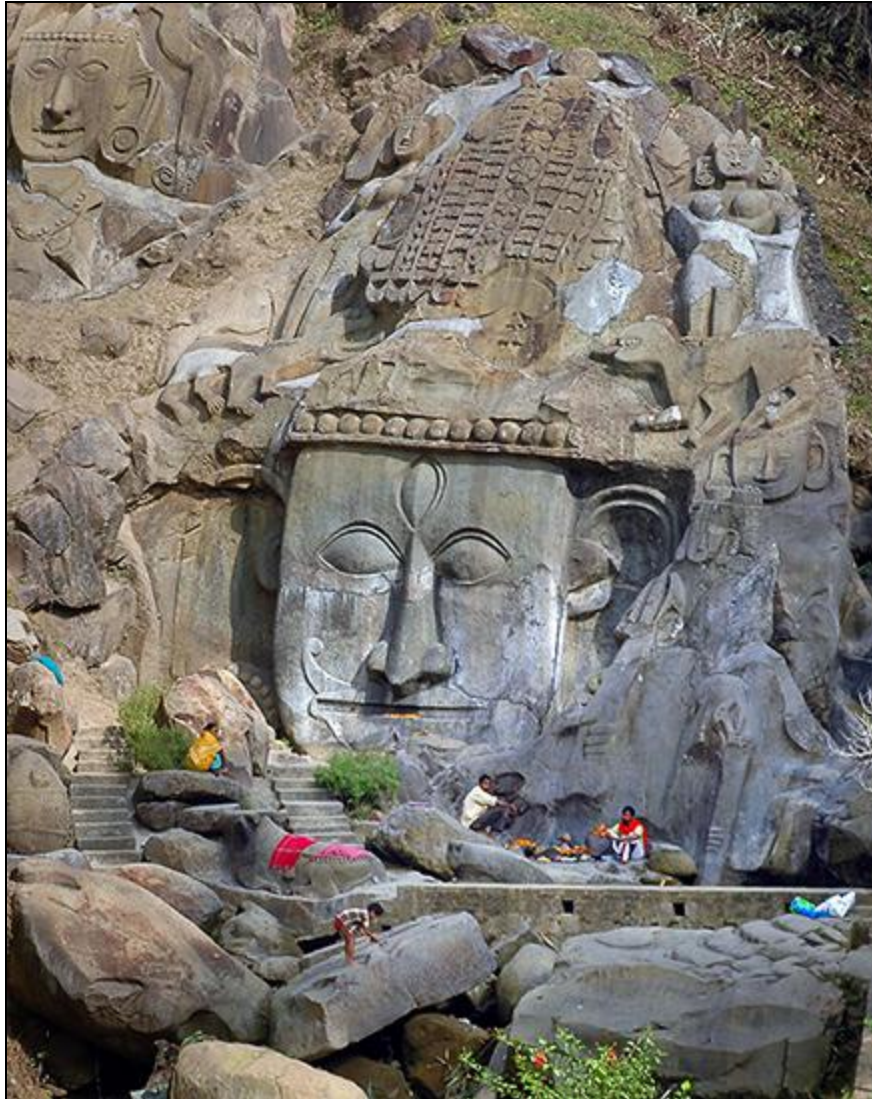


Image Source: The Hindu

- The site located amidst a forested area in Unakoti has several towering low-relief Rock cut sculptures which are very unique in nature and style.

Learn more about – [Temple Architecture in India](#)

### 3. Vagir

**Syllabus:** GS-3; Defence and Security

**Prelims:** About Vagir, Scorpene-class submarines and the submarine fleet of the Indian Navy

#### Context

- The fifth Scorpene-class submarine, Vagir, was delivered to the Navy by the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd.

- The Vagir submarine was launched into the water in 2020 and had started its sea trials in February 2022.

## Details

- Six Scorpene-class submarines are being constructed under **Project-75** by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd with the help of technology transfer from the Naval Group of France under a \$3.75-billion deal signed in October 2005.
  - The first submarine, **INS Kalvari**, was commissioned in December 2017
  - The second **INS Khanderi** in September 2019
  - The third **INS Karanj** in March 2021
  - The fourth **INS Vela** in November 2021.
  - The fifth is **INS Vagir** which is scheduled to be commissioned into service in January 2023.
  - The sixth is **INS Vagsheer** which will also be commissioned into the Indian Navy soon.
- The Indian Navy at present has 15 conventional and one nuclear submarine in service. The Naval fleet of submarines includes
  - Seven Russian Kilo-class submarines
  - Four German HDW submarines
  - Four Scorpene-class submarines
  - The indigenous nuclear ballistic missile submarine **INS Arihant**

Read more about – **INS Vagir**

## G. Tidbits

### 1. Govt. hospitals can't insist on voter ID for treatment: HC

- The Delhi High Court while hearing a plea by a Bihar resident who had accused the city government-run Lok Nayak hospital of providing free MRI tests only to the residents of Delhi, held that the government hospitals in Delhi should extend medical treatment to all citizens irrespective of their place of residence,
- The Delhi High Court further added that the hospitals can't insist on voter ID and said that AIIMS or any other hospital in Delhi cannot stop citizens from coming to the Capital to seek treatment.
- The court also reiterated its earlier judgment where it had directed that health treatment must be provided to all citizens without any consideration for their place of residence.

### 2. New scanners to speed up security check at airports

- The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), is expected to come up with new technical norms which will pave the way for airports to adopt modern equipment to screen bags without removing electronic devices thereby reducing the long queues of air travellers.
- An official from the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) said that the airports in India require the advancement of the machines deployed for screening of cabin bags and the

adoption of modern technologies like dual x-ray, computer tomography and neutron beam technology.

- The conventional X-ray machines which are currently in use produce a 2-D image, whereas modern technologies such as computer tomography produce a 3-D image with a higher resolution, and have better automated detection of explosives.
- Further, these technologies have a low rate of false alarms, which can often lead to unwanted physical inspection of a bag resulting in delays.
- The effort of modernisation comes at a time when airports across the country are seeing a record number of air travellers that have exceeded pre-COVID levels and the Delhi airport recently saw over-crowding resulting in passengers missing flights.

Read about – [The delays and chaos at Delhi airport](#)

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. The type of fog that is formed as the warm, moist air moves horizontally over a cool surface causing the water vapor to condense is: (Level - Medium)

1. Radiation fog
2. Freezing fog
3. Advection fog
4. Valley fog

Check Answer:

Option c

Explanation:

- **Advection fog** is a type of fog that is formed as the warm, moist air moves horizontally over a cool surface causing the water vapor to condense
- Radiation Fog forms when all solar energy exits the earth and allows the temperature to meet up with the dew point.
- Freezing fog occurs when the temperature falls at 32°F (0°C) or below.
- Valley fog forms in the valley when the soil is moist from previous rainfall.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to 'Unakoti': (Level - Difficult)

1. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in Tripura.
2. The site houses Shaivite rock carving figures and images of gods and goddesses.
3. Ashokastami Mela is organised at Unakoti once in five years.

How many of the given statements is/are correct?

1. One only
2. Two only

3. All three
4. None of the above

Check Answer:

Option a

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, Unakoti is an ancient holy site associated with Shaiva worship present in Tripura. The site has been added the tentative list of **UNESCO World Heritage Sites**
- **Statement 2 is correct**, The site houses Shaivite rock carving figures and images of gods and goddesses.
- **Among the rock cut carvings, the central Shiva head and gigantic Ganesha figures are the most prominent ones.**
- The central Shiva figure is known as “Unakotiswara Kal Bhairava”
- On each side of the central Shiva, there are two full size female figures which include Durga standing on a lion and another female figure on the other side.
- **Statement 3 is not correct**, Ashokastami Festival is one of the important festivals of Tripura especially at Unakoti Hills and is **celebrated every year** during the months of March and April.

**Q3. The ‘30×30 targets’ are seen in news in the context of:** (Level - Medium)

1. Global Clean Energy Action Forum
2. BRICS Summit
3. UN Biodiversity Conference
4. The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)’s World Sustainable Development Summit

(WSDS)

Check Answer:

Option c

Explanation:

- “30×30 targets” is a part of Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) which was adopted during the **COP15 to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD)**
- Under the 30×30 biodiversity target, countries would pledge to protect 30% of world’s land and sea by 2030.

**Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF):** (Level - Difficult)

1. It is an initiative that aims to strengthen economic partnership among participating countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

2. It was launched by the US President in 2022.
3. All the ASEAN members are the members of IPEF.

How many of the given statements is/are **INCORRECT**?

1. One statement only
2. Two statements only
3. All three statements
4. None of the above

Check Answer:

Option b

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct**, IPEF is an initiative that aims to strengthen economic partnership among participating countries in the Indo-Pacific region to enhance resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Statement 2 is correct**, IPEF is a US-led initiative that was launched in 2022.
- **Statement 3 is not correct**, The current members of IPEF include: Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, United States, and Vietnam.
  - **ASEAN Members:** Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia.

(PYQ – 2017)

**Q5. Which of the following is/are famous for Sun temples?**

1. Arasavalli
2. Amarakantak
3. Omkareshwar

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

1. 1 only
2. 2 and 3 only
3. 1 and 3 only
4. 1, 2 and 3

Check Answer:

Option a

Explanation:

- Arasavalli Sun Temple is a temple located in Andhra Pradesh.
- Amarakantak temple in Madhya Pradesh is dedicated to **Lord Shiva**.
- Omkareshwar temple dedicated to **Lord Shiva** is situated in Madhya Pradesh

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The existing system where the executive has absolute power over appointments to the Election Commission of India (ECI) is unsatisfactory, has been historically problematic, and damages the rule of law. Discuss.
2. With tensions between an aggressive China and an emerging India intensifying, there will be significant changes and challenges in the Indian Ocean and South Asian regions. Examine.

**Read the previous CNA [here](#).**