

11 Feb 2023: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

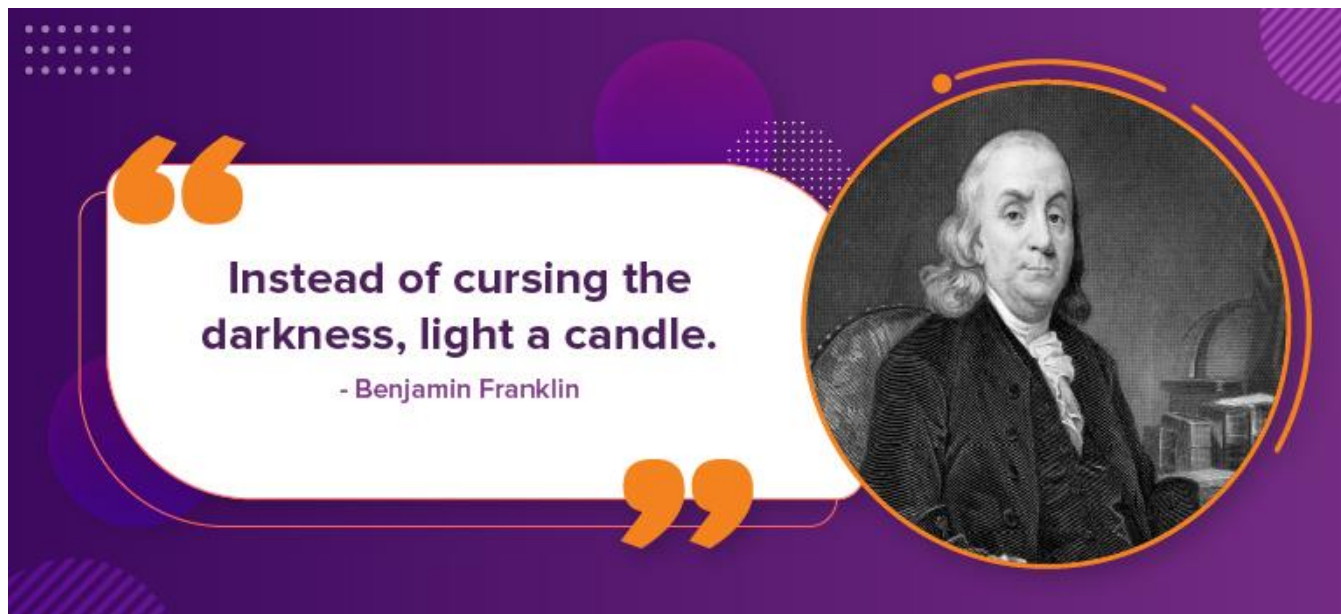


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Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Lithium Deposits in India

Syllabus: Economic Geography-Mineral resource

Mains: India's Lithium Dependency

Context: Lithium reserves found in Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction:

- The [Geological Survey of India](#) has for the first time established Lithium inferred resources of 5.9 million tonnes in the Salal-Haimana area of Reasi District of Jammu & Kashmir.
- This report along with 15 other resource-bearing geological reports were handed over to respective state governments on 9th February 2023 at the 62nd Central Geological Programming board meeting.
- Out of these 51 mineral blocks, 5 blocks pertain to gold and other blocks pertain to commodities like potash, molybdenum, base metals, etc. spread across 11 states of Jammu & Kashmir (UT), Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.
- The blocks were prepared based on the work carried out by GSI from field seasons 2018-19 to till date.

Significance of Lithium Discovery in India:

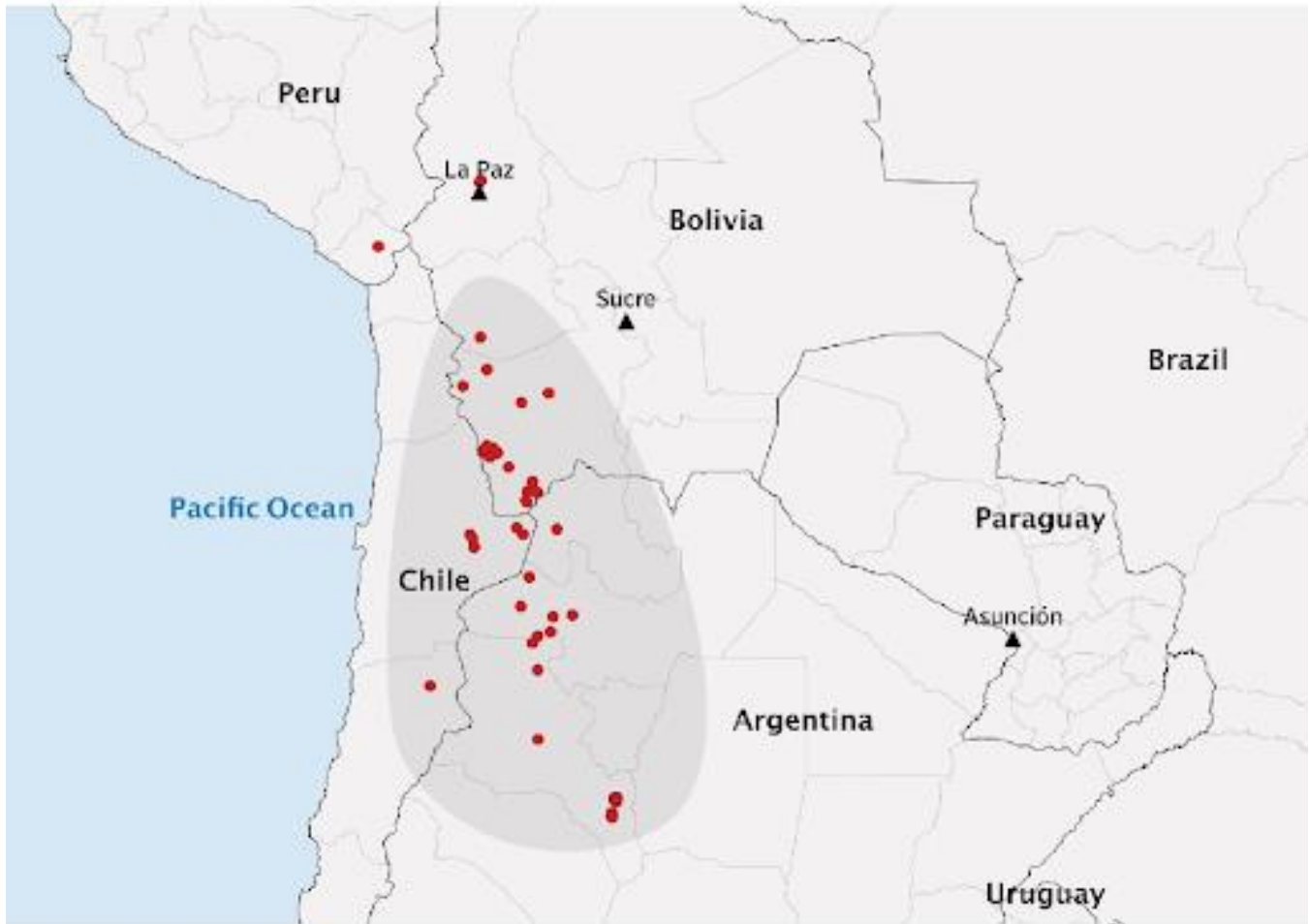
- As per the government, lithium reserves have been found for the first time in the country in Jammu and Kashmir.
 - The Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD) under the Department of Atomic Energy, had earlier conducted preliminary surveys that had shown the presence of lithium resources of 1,600 tonnes in the igneous rocks of the Marlagalla–Allapatna region of Karnataka's Mandya district.
- One of the essential components of [electric vehicle](#) (EV) batteries is lithium. The demand for lithium is increasing quickly as more and more people switch from driving gasoline and diesel automobiles to electric ones.
- Lithium is also used in batteries for gadgets like laptops and mobile phones. It has also found application in the glass and ceramics industries.

- Therefore, lithium has been dubbed “white gold” for its widespread usage in items indispensable to modern-day living.
- The demand for lithium is outstripping availability in the world already. According to a prediction by the [International Energy Agency](#), a lithium shortage could occur by 2025.
- Lithium resources are concentrated in a few places. Around 50 percent of the world’s lithium deposits are found in the salt flats of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile. Australia also has around 2.7 million tonnes of lithium resources.
 - China controls 60 percent of the world's capacity for processing raw lithium products into batteries.
- With limited supply and rising prices, the discovery of Lithium in India is crucial as it currently relies on imports to meet its mineral demand, including lithium, nickel, and cobalt.
 - Over 165 crore lithium batteries are estimated to have been imported into India between FY17 and FY20 at an estimated import bill of upwards of \$3.3 billion.
- It is critical as India is trying to wean itself off dependence on China for crucial battery materials and position itself as an alternative in the electric vehicle supply chain.
- Although the lithium find in J & K, in inferred terms, is comparatively small, it is expected to give a big push to the government’s plans of expanding into the EV market.
 - The proven reserves in Bolivia are 21 million tonnes, 17 million tonnes in Argentina, Chile (9 million tonnes) 6.3 million tonnes in Australia, and 4.5 million tonnes in China.

The Lithium Triangle

53% of the world's lithium ore reserves are located in a geographical area that encompasses northern Argentina, northern Chile and southern Bolivia.

● Proven deposit of lithium ore



Source: U.S. Geological Service (USGS).



Image Source: IADB

Steps taken by the Indian government to secure access to Lithium reserves:

- The government has directed three state-owned mineral companies (National Aluminium Company (Nalco), Hindustan Copper (HCL) and Mineral Exploration Corp. Ltd (MECL)) to team up for a new venture tasked with scouting and acquiring strategic mineral assets abroad.
- Khanij Bidesh India Ltd., (KABIL), a consortium of three PSU companies mentioned above is also prospecting to secure minerals from Argentina and Chile.

- Also, high-level visits like the President of India visiting these South American countries demonstrate a proactive and aggressive stance to secure lithium sourcing.
- India has leveraged its way into the Bolivian lithium reserves after signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Bolivia for the development and industrial use of lithium.
- India has set up a National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage.
- An inter-ministerial steering committee has also been set up which is chaired by [NITI Aayog](#) CEO Amitabh Kant.
- The government set up R & D and technology development centres for indigenous [lithium-ion battery](#) manufacturing plants: BHEL and LIBCOIN to build India's first Lithium-Ion Giga Factory.
- In the first phase, Rs 165 crore will be invested to produce li-ion cells having a total storage capacity of 200,000 Ah (Ampere hour) per day.

Lithium:

- Lithium is a non-ferrous, silvery-white alkali metal.
- Under standard conditions, it is the least dense metal and the least dense solid element.
- Like all alkali metals, lithium is highly reactive and flammable, and must be stored in vacuum, inert atmosphere, or inert liquid such as purified kerosene or mineral oil.
- It never occurs freely in nature, but only in (usually ionic) compounds, such as pegmatitic minerals, which were once the main source of lithium.
- Due to its solubility as an ion, it is present in ocean water and is commonly obtained from brines.
- Lithium metal is isolated electrolytically from a mixture of lithium chloride and potassium chloride.
- Lithium can be extracted in different ways, depending on the type of the deposit — generally either through solar evaporation of large brine pools or from hard-rock extraction of the ore.
 - In India, Lithium can be recovered from brines of Sambhar and Pachpadra areas in Rajasthan, and Rann of Kutch, Gujarat.
 - The major mica belts located in Rajasthan, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh and the pegmatite belts in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, alongside rock mining being undertaken at Mandya, Karnataka, are other potential geological domains.

Nut graf: The recent discovery of Lithium resources in Jammu and Kashmir could be crucial towards India's move to position itself as an alternative in the electric vehicle supply chain.

Category: INDIAN SOCIETY

1. Dawoodi Bohra Practice

Syllabus: Inequality and Exclusion

Mains: Judiciary on essential religious practice doctrine

Context: Larger Bench to hear plea against Dawoodi Bohra practice.

Introduction:

- A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court referred to a larger Bench of nine judges a series of petitions challenging the authority of Dawoodi Bohra community leaders to excommunicate their members.
- The five-judge Bench led by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul was dealing with the question of whether the practice of excommunication in the Dawoodi Bohra community could continue as a “protected practice” despite the coming into force of the [Maharashtra Protection of People from Social Boycott \(Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal\) Act of 2016](#).
- The reference to the five-judge Bench led by Justice Kaul was based on a 1962 judgement in the Sardar Syedna Taher Saifuddin vs The State Of Bombay case.
- Based on the doctrine of essential practices, the judiciary struck down the law that prohibited excommunications made by the Dai of the Dawoodi Bohra community.
 - The Bench had held that the religious faith and tenets of the Dawoodi Bohra community gave its religious heads the power of excommunication as part of their “management of religious affairs” under Article 26(b) of the Constitution.

Doctrine of essential practices:

- The doctrine of “essentiality” was invented by a seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in the ‘Shirur Mutt’ case in 1954. The court held that the term “religion” will cover all rituals and practices “integral” to a religion, and took upon itself the responsibility of determining the essential and non-essential practices of a religion.
- The essential religious practice test is a contentious doctrine evolved by the court to protect only such religious practices which were essential and integral to the religion.
- The essential practices doctrine owes its existence to a speech made by B.R. Ambedkar in the [Constituent Assembly](#).
- Ambedkar was striving to distinguish the religious from the secular, by arguing that the state should be allowed to intervene in matters that are connected to religion but are not intrinsically religious.

Read more on [Judicial Doctrines](#)

Who are the Dawoodi Bohras?

- The Dawoodi Bohras are Shia Muslims whose leader is known as the Al-Dai-Al-Mutlaq. According to members of the community, there are around 1 million Dawoodi Bohras spread around the world.
- For over 400 years, the leader of the community has been based in India, including the current and 53rd leader, His Holiness Dr Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin.
- The leader of the community is recognised by the members as having the right to excommunicate its members. The practice was claimed to be essential to the Dawoodi Bohra faith.
 - In practical terms, excommunication means not being allowed to access a mosque belonging to the community or a burial dedicated to the community.
- Among the members of the community who have faced excommunication in the past are those who contested the headship of the leaders.

Nut Graf: A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court referred a series of petitions to a larger Bench of nine judges to consider the broad issues on the interpretation of Articles 25 and 26 and the issue of challenging the constitutionality of the practice of excommunication of Dawoodi Bohra members by its community leaders.

B. GS 2 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. The battle against child marriage

Syllabus: GS-2, Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the people.

Mains: Issues related to women and children - Child Marriage.

Context: Crackdown against child marriage in different parts of Assam.

Details:

- Even today, a few people of the hill-dwelling Tiwa Tribal community in Assam's West Karbi Anglong district practice *Gobhiya Thaka* (a kind of live-in relationship).
- Several instances of child marriage were cracked down by the police in different parts of Assam.
- According to Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chief Minister of Assam, it was a planned exercise as the police collected data for three years (from 2020) and registered approximately 4074 cases.
- Though the exercise might have some social cost, the State government is keen to control child marriages and has directed the District Magistrates and the Social Welfare Department to take care of the minor married girls.
- Nearly 2763 persons have been arrested (as of 9th February 2023).
- The [National Family Health Survey - 5 report](#) was cited to justify the drive against child marriages in Assam.
 - According to the report, about 23.3% of women aged 20-24 years were married before the age of 18 during 2019-21 (it decreased from 27% in 2015-16).
 - Notably, West Bengal, Bihar, and Tripura topped the list with 40% of such cases. Assam registered 31.8%.
 - Similarly, teenage pregnancy accounted for 16.8% of more than 6.2 lakh pregnancies in Assam in 2022.
- The premises of the National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project was turned into a temporary prison for child marriage offenders. Similarly, transit camps set up for foreigners (illegal immigrants from neighbouring countries, specifically Bangladesh) are also being used for judicial custody.
- The exercise is appreciated by many social activists who are hopeful that the fear factor would help in spreading awareness with more authority.
- The Assam government also launched the Arundhati scheme in 2020 promising to provide 1 tola (11.66 grams) of gold to brides belonging to all communities after attaining the legal age of 18 years.
 - However, the age should be verified through a birth certificate and medical examination. And the marriage should be registered.
 - Furthermore, it is intended for people with an annual income below ₹5 lakhs.

Also read: [Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 - Sarda Act Overview](#)

Associated Concerns:

- In many instances, there was an error in the documents while declaring the age of the girls. This implies that the girls were not actually minors during their marriage and their husbands and fathers were wrongly arrested.

- Many tribal people are usually clueless about such laws.
- It is also argued by many local residents that the execution of such a campaign against child marriage could have been better accommodating the concerns of poor people.
- Some officials have also been accused of politicizing or communalizing the drive.
- Concerns have also been raised over classifying the married minor girls into two groups namely 'below 14 years' and 'from 14 to 18 years'. This is used to book people involved under the [POCSO Act](#) and the PCMA respectively.
 - It should be remembered that no such classification is possible under POCSO, especially after the Supreme Court's judgment of October 2017.
 - In the 2017 case, SC upheld every girl's right to bodily dignity and ruled that sexual intercourse by a man with his wife who is below 18 years should be considered rape.
- Legal experts have also raised concerns about interpreting the implementation of cases where the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1937 and the Assam Moslem Marriages and Divorces Registration Act of 1935 are followed. Notably, these laws do not bar girls under 18 years from getting married.
- Moreover, it is also argued that the [Prevention of Child Marriages Act \(PCMA\)](#) is not a settled law and is subject to interpretation by the court as there is no Uniform Civil Code.
- Currently, the legal age to marry in India is 18 years for women and 21 years for men and a parliamentary standing committee is deliberating to increase the minimum age of marriage for women to 21 years.
- Child marriage is prevalent among many communities, particularly among Muslim dwellers of the *chars* (shifting sandbars in the Brahmaputra) and the *Adivasi* tea plantation workers.
- The sustained efforts of the government against the evil practice of child marriage have prevented social ceremonies, but marriages still take place as formalities indoors.
- Many cases of child marriages and teenage abortions go unreported.

Also read: [What is Uniform Civil Code in India?](#)

Way Ahead:

- The hard approach of police action should be supplemented by soft measures like ensuring livelihood and education for girls.
- The tea plantation workers should also be convinced against child marriages.
- There should be more conversation and deliberation on the causes and effects of child marriages that are often resorted to in the case of romantic relationships and to avoid the fear of earning social shame.
- All the stakeholders like police, doctors, health workers, panchayat leaders, village headmen, and public representatives should work in close coordination.

Also read: [UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis. Nov 6th, 2022](#)

Nut Graf: *The Assam Government has strictly acted against child marriages prevalent in the state. However, it is argued by many legal experts and social activists that a holistic approach is required involving mass awareness apart from education and skill development of girls to deal with the social malaise of child marriage prevalent in many communities of Assam.*

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. India's law and order matrix needs a reboot

Syllabus: GS-2, Government policies and interventions.

Mains: Reforming India's law and order scenario.

Context: Annual All India Conference of Directors General/Inspectors General of Police.

Details:

- The DGPs/IGPs conference is comparatively new and is being held since 1980. Earlier it was held as an annual conference of Heads of Intelligence and CIDs of different States.
- Apart from intelligence, crime, criminal investigation, technology, and forensics, the conference also deals with policy and personnel matters.

Associated Concerns

- It is argued that the presence of an increasing number of delegates and subjects for discussion leaves little scope for any in-depth discussion.
- It should be noted that security threats are becoming more challenging in the present scenario and need in-depth analysis on issues like cybercrime, the [dark web](#), crypto, maritime security, drones, social media, drug trafficking, etc.
- Inadequate time to discuss these issues results in undermining both the quality and outcomes of such conferences.
- The security problems will grow at an exponential rate with swift technological change and the emerging challenges will require more innovativeness, agility, and newer cognitive skills.
- Furthermore, decision-making would require fundamental changes entailing more purposeful discussion at higher levels.
- It is suggested that law and order require newer skills, in both technology and crowd management, and these are not adequately available with security agencies. Notably, the attention of security forces is mostly focused on terrorism.

- A heavy-handed approach to dealing with angry and unruly mobs in present scenarios might lead to a catastrophic divide between law enforcement agencies and the public.
- It is argued that reforms in the selection process of security personnel are not debated by the higher echelons of the forces.
- It is also said by several experts that 'Open Source intelligence' is often neglected by security agencies.
- The techniques and methodologies of different security agencies (intelligence and investigative agencies) are usually different. This results in various contradictions.

Way Ahead:

- Newer practices and skills are required to understand the psychology of agitating mobs and make them realize the dangers of their own predilections.
- Police and security agencies should also be adequately trained. Human skills should be adequately tailored for the Internet, social media, and other breakthroughs, which usually provide protestors/agitators with an upper hand and is detrimental to law and order.
- Moreover, a top-down approach would be required because there will be significant competition for resources (weaponry and technology) within the agencies.
- The selection process of security personnel would also require to be changed.
- Apart from acquiring new skills, a new mindset is also required to employ a variety of skills and tactics.
- Reforms should be brought in intelligence approaches, investigative techniques, ground situations, etc.
- Apex-level meetings of higher authorities like DGPs/IGPs should provide necessary direction and policy imperatives.
- It is also suggested that the annual conference of DGPs/IGPs should be split into two separate conferences. For instance, a higher level conference of DGPs/IGPs that should cover policy-related issues, and a separate conference for intelligence and security agencies (IGs/CID) to discuss the finer points of methodology, techniques, and acquisition of new skills for existing and emerging challenges.

Also read: [Police Reforms in India](#)

Nut Graf: *With the evolving security challenges, the law and order scenario in the country should be reformed. The high-level conferences should also adequately deliberate on emerging issues and provide appropriate and modern solutions in complex scenarios.*

F. Prelims Facts

1. Animal Welfare Board of India

Syllabus: GS03-Environment

Prelims: National Environment Agencies; Statutory bodies in India

Introduction:

- The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) recently withdrew its February 6 appeal urging people to celebrate February 14 as 'Cow Hug Day'.
- The appeal invited criticism from farmers' organisations and trade unions that such a circular was against the promotion of scientific temper.
- The appeal was withdrawn after directions from the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
- Appeal from AWBI claimed that hugging cows will bring "emotional richness" and will increase "individual and collective happiness."

Animal Welfare Board of India:

- It is a statutory advisory body under the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
- It was established in 1962 under Section 4 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
- Shrimati Rukmini Devi Arundale pioneered the setting up of the Board, with its Headquarters in Chennai.
- Headquarters was shifted to Ballabgarh, Haryana from Chennai in 2018.
- **Mandate:**
 - To prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals, in terms of the provision of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960.
 - It has also frequently litigated to have stricter laws to ensure animals were not unduly harassed or tortured.
 - The Board grants recognition to newly started Animal Welfare Organisations (AWOs) and provides financial assistance to them.
- **Membership:**
 - Several government organisations, along with animal rights activists and parliamentarians, are represented on the Board.
 - The Board consists of 28 Members. The term of office of Members is for a period of 3 years.

1. Khelo India Winter Games

- Khelo India Winter Games 2023 will take place in Gulmarg, Jammu and Kashmir from February 10 to 14.
- The third edition of Khelo India Winter Games will feature over 1,500 athletes from across the nation, competing in 11 sports.
- Alpine skiing, curling, bobsleigh, skeleton, snowshoe, Nordic skiing, snowboarding, ski mountaineering, ice skating, ice hockey and bandy will feature at the games.
- Khelo India Winter Games is part of the Union government's [Khelo India program](#), which aims to promote sports at the grassroots level in the country.
- Gulmarg and Leh were the joint hosts for the first two editions in 2020 and 2021. Jammu and Kashmir topped the medal tally in both years.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following is/are correctly matched? (Level-Difficult)

1. Operation Devi Shakti - India's evacuation mission from Afghanistan.
2. Operation Dost - search and rescue operation initiated by the Government of India to aid Syria and Turkey.
3. Operation Ganga - initiative to bring back Indians stranded in Ukraine.
4. Operation Maitri - rescue and relief operation in Nepal by the Government of India.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Pair 01 is correctly matched,** [Operation Devi Shakti](#) was an operation of the Indian Armed Forces to evacuate Indian citizens and foreign nationals from Afghanistan after the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the fall of Kabul to the Taliban.
- **Pair 02 is correctly matched,** Operation Dost is an ongoing search and rescue operation initiated by the Government of India to aid Syria and Turkey, after a violent earthquake devastated both countries on 6 February 2023.

- **Pair 03 is correctly matched,** [Operation Ganga](#) was an evacuation mission carried out by the Indian government to rescue its citizens stranded in neighbouring countries of Ukraine and Russia during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- **Pair 04 is correctly matched,** Operation Maitri was a rescue and relief operation in Nepal by the government of India and Indian armed forces in the aftermath of the April 2015 Nepal earthquake.

Q2. India is a signatory to/part of, which of the following Conventions/Groups? (Level-Medium)

1. Australia Group
2. Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)
3. Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)
4. Convention on Cluster Munitions
5. Wassenaar Arrangement

Options:

- a. 1, 2 and 3 only
- b. 3, 4 and 5 only
- c. 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- d. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) is an international treaty that prohibits all use, transfer, production, and stockpiling of cluster bombs. Additionally, the convention establishes a framework to support victim assistance, clearance of contaminated sites, risk reduction education, and stockpile destruction. The convention was adopted on 30 May 2008 in Dublin. It entered into force on 1 August 2010.
 - As of February 2022, a total of 123 states are committed to the goal of the convention, with 110 states that have ratified it, and 13 states that have signed the convention but not yet ratified it.
 - India is not a signatory to this convention.
- India formally became the 43rd member of the [Australia Group](#) on 19 January 2018.
- India ratified the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) in 1974.
- India is a signatory of the [Chemical Weapons Convention](#).
- India joined the [Wassenaar Arrangement](#) in December 2017 as its 42nd participating state.

Q3. The National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities (NCRLM) was constituted under the Chairmanship of (Level-difficult)

- a. Justice Markandey Katju
- b. Justice S. Rajendra Babu
- c. Justice Ranganath Misra
- d. Justice R.M.Lodha

Answer: c

Explanation: The National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities (NCRLM) was constituted under the Chairmanship of Justice Ranganath Misra to recommend measures for the welfare of socially and economically backward sections among religious and linguistic minorities. It submitted its report in 2007 and the same was laid on the Table of both Houses of Parliament in December 2009.

Q4. With respect to the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT), which of the following statements is/are correct? (Level-Difficult)

- 1. It is an array of thirty fully steerable parabolic radio telescopes of 45-metre diameter.
- 2. It is operated by the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA), a part of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc).

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- GMRT is a very versatile instrument for investigating a variety of radio astrophysical problems ranging from the nearby Solar system to the edge of the observable Universe.
- It is an array of thirty fully steerable parabolic radio telescopes of 45-metre diameter.
- It is operated by the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.
- The observatory of the GMRT is located north of Pune at Khodad, while its office is located at Savitribai Phule University.

Q5. Consider the following statements: (PYQ-CSE-2007) (Level-Medium)

1. Either of the two belts over the oceans at about 30° to 35° N and S Latitudes is known as Horse Latitude.
2. Horse Latitudes are low-pressure belts.

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: a

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is correct,** The horse latitudes are regions located at about 30° to 35° north and south of the equator.
- **Statement 02 is incorrect,** They are characterised by sunny skies, calm winds, and very little precipitation. They are also known as subtropical ridges or highs. It is a high-pressure area at the divergence of trade winds and the westerlies.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Fiscal federalism is tilted in favour of the Centre. Elaborate on how cess and surcharges are discriminatory against the state governments. (15 marks, 250 words) [GS-3, Economy]
2. There is an urgent need to reform the way our Police operates. Elaborate. (15 marks, 250 words) [GS-3, Internal Security]