



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

- IAS SELF STUDY GUIDE -

DAILY QUIZ

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| SL. NO. | TOPIC | PAGE NO. |
|------------|--|-------------|
| | I. ECONOMY..... | 2 |
| | II. ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT | 18 |
| | III. GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AND PROGRAMMES..... | 27 |
| | IV. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY | 32 |
| | V. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS..... | 39 |
| | VI. POLITY | 51 |
| | VII. HISTORY & ART AND CULTURE..... | 61 |
| | VIII. STATES..... | 65 |
| | IX. DEFENCE & SECURITY | 73 |
| | IIX. Miscellaneous..... | 75 |
| | Clarifications | 86 |

I. ECONOMY

1. The latest Economic Survey notes three areas of policy focus that must stand out over the medium term. Which among the following is **not** one?
- Education
 - Agriculture
 - Employment
 - Climate action

Solution: d.

Over the medium term, three areas of policy focus stand out:

- **Employment:** finding good jobs for the young and burgeoning workforce, especially for women.
- **Education:** creating an educated and healthy labor force.
- **Agriculture:** raising farm productivity while strengthening agricultural resilience.

Above all, India must continue improving the climate for rapid economic growth on the strength of the only two truly sustainable engines—private investment and exports.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=175979;>

2. The colour of this year's Economic Survey (Survey 2017-18) is
- Pink
 - Red
 - Green
 - Blue

Solution: a.

- The Pink-color Economic Survey 2017-18 lays special emphasis on **Gender and Son meta-preference**, while providing an assessment of India's performance on gender outcomes relative to other economies.

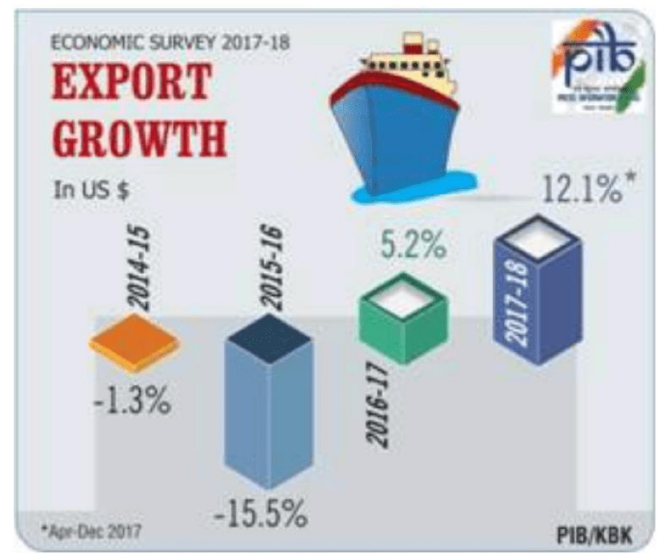
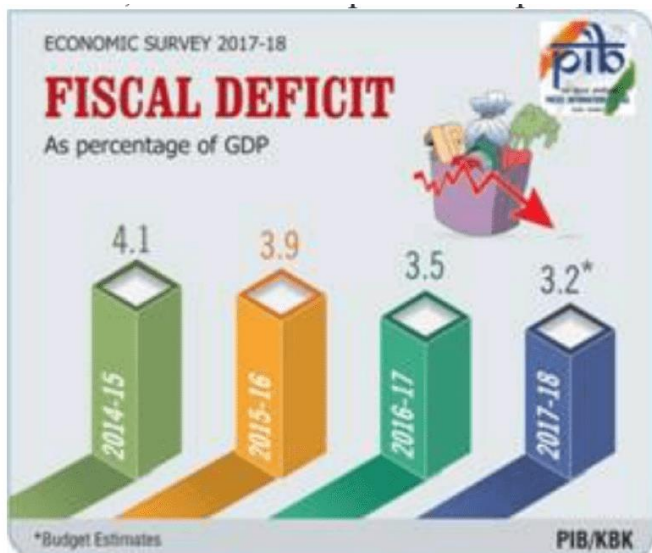
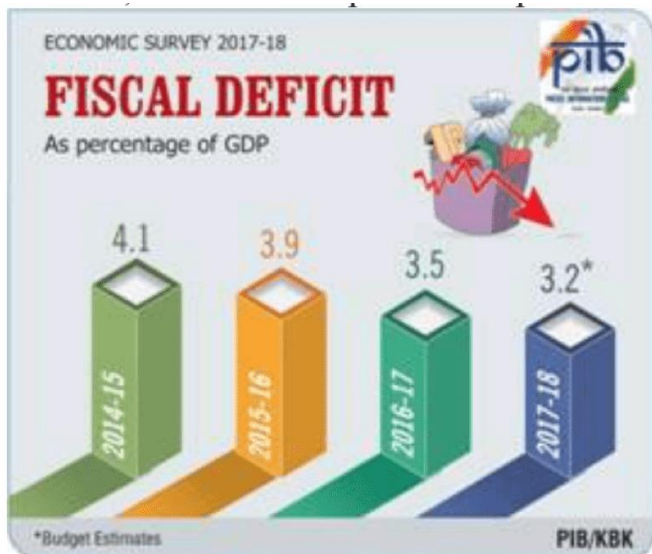
Says Arvind Subramanian, "The colour of this year's survey cover was chosen as a symbol of support for the growing movement to end violence against women, which spans continents. Addressing the deep societal meta-preference in favour of sons, and empowering women with education and reproductive and economic agency are critical challenges for the Indian economy addressed in Chapter 7."

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=175976;>

3. Consider the following statements with reference to the Indian economy:
- After remaining in negative territory for a couple of years, growth of exports rebounded into positive territory in 2014-15 and has been on an uptick since
 - The fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP has witnessed a steady decline since 2014-15
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: b.

“...after remaining in negative territory for a couple of years, growth of exports rebounded into positive one during 2016-17 and expected to grow faster in 2017-18. However, due to higher expected increase in imports, net exports of goods and services are slated to decline in 2017-18.”



<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=175979>

4. Consider the following statements with reference to inflation trends in the Indian economy over the past few years:

1. The average Consumer Price Index has steadily declined since 2014-15
2. The average Wholesale Price Index declined in 2015-16 but has been rising since

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

Solution: c.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=175979>;



5. The Economic Survey 2017-18 points out that five states account for 70% of India's exports (goods and services). In this context, which of the following statements is correct?

- All these states have coastal access either to the Arabian Sea or the Bay of Bengal (viz. they open out to either of them)
- States opening out to the Arabian Sea account for the majority share of exports

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: b.

Dwelling on the subject of International Trade, Inter-State Trade and Economic Prosperity, the Survey points-out for the first time in India's history that five States-Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana account for 70% of India's exports. New data on the international exports of States

| State | % share | Cumulative |
|-------|---------|------------|
| MH | 22.3% | 22.3% |
| GJ | 17.2% | 39.5% |
| KA | 12.7% | 52.3% |
| TN | 11.5% | 63.8% |
| TE | 6.4% | 70.1% |

suggests a strong correlation between export performance and States' standard of living.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=175977;>

6. 'Legal tender' in India includes

- Currency notes and coins
- Cryptocurrencies
- Cheques

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Solution: a.

The value of currency notes and coins is derived from the guarantee provided by the issuing authority of these items. They are called legal tenders as they cannot be refused by any citizen of the country for settlement of any kind of transaction. Cheques drawn on savings or current accounts, however, can be refused by anyone as a mode of payment. Hence, demand deposits are not legal tenders.

Introductory Macroeconomics, Class 12 NCERT;

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/business/budget/jaitleys-view-on-cryptocurrencies-splits-opinion/article22629059.ece>;

7. Which among the following proposals in the budget 2018-19 may be regarded as pro-employment measures?

1. A reduction in statutory employees' provident fund (EPF) contributions by new female employees
2. Contribution by the Centre of a share of the wages of new employees of all sectors under the EPF Organisation
3. The facility of fixed term employment being extended to all industries

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

Justification for Statement 1: The budget announced a reduction in the contribution that new women workers make to the employees provident fund, from 12% to 8%, to promote women's participation in the labour force as well as increase their take-home pay. Women's labour force participation rate in India is below 25% as against 40% globally. Economists and industry veterans point out that improving their participation will help boost the economy.

Justification for Statement 2: Jaitley also announced that the government will now "contribute 12% of the wages of new employees to the EPFO for all sectors for the next three years" for the next three years. This means companies across sectors will not have to pay the employer's share of EPF contribution when they hire new employees. The move will reduce payroll costs of companies, and may encourage them to hire more.

Justification for Statement 3: To create quick jobs, the budget mentioned that the government is rolling out fixed-term contractual jobs across industry segments. Some experts say this will fuel the so-called hire-and-fire system. But both industry and the government believe it will add more jobs and reflect a shift in the government's policy from job security to job creation.

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/N2skEpg9vvHOjmV9S2TgTL/Budget-2018-and-Unemployment-Job-creation-comes-in-the-spot.html>;

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/business/budget/govt-to-pay-new-recruits-pf/article22624308.ece>;

8. The Budget 2018-19 has proposed a Long Term Capital Gains Tax on equities without offering any 'indexation benefit'. What does the term 'indexation benefit' mean?
- Investors will be eligible for tax exemption on capital gains to the extent of taxable income on the value of any prior capital loss
 - Investors can save taxes by clubbing all capital gains and losses incurred by them in their equity investments during any financial year
 - It allows investors to adjust the purchase price for inflation thereby bringing down taxable gains
 - None of the above

Solution: c.

- The Budget has proposed an LTCG tax on equity instruments on all capital gains exceeding ₹1 lakh at the rate of 10%, without offering any indexation benefit that allows gains to be set off against inflation.
- Indexation** helps investors in long-term debt funds to save taxes – when the purchase price is increased (adjusted for inflation) and deducted from the sale price to calculate LTCG, it brings down taxable gains.

What is indexation: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/mf/learn/fund-basics/indexation-helps-you-to-save-taxes-on-long-term-debt-mutual-funds/articleshow/55596384.cms>;

Source/Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/business/markets/return-of-long-term-capital-gains-tax-spooks-sensex/article22633141.ece>;

9. Consider the following statements:

- Outward Direct Investments (ODIs) can take the form of either of a greenfield investment or a merger/acquisition of an existing foreign facility
- ODIs of Indian firms primarily take the form of mergers and acquisitions

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: c.

A mains-oriented question. Both statements are correct.

- The finance minister in his budget speech stated, "The Government will review existing guidelines and processes and bring out a coherent and integrated **Outward Direct Investment (ODI) policy.**"
- The proposed ODI policy may contain provisions that would encourage and enable internationalisation of many Indian firms – envisioning ambitious plans to transform themselves into MNCs, to go global and expand.
- Indian firms invest in foreign shores primarily through mergers and acquisition (M&A) transactions. With rising M&A activity, companies will get direct access to newer and more extensive markets, and better technologies, which would enable them to increase their customer base and achieve a global reach.

Additional Information: The ODI policy was expected to tighten regulations to prevent round-tripping structures, where funds are routed by India-based companies into a newly formed or existing overseas subsidiary and then brought back to India to circumvent regulations here.

- Top ten ODI destination countries over the past few financial years included Mauritius, Singapore, the U.S., the UAE, the Netherlands, the U.K, Switzerland, Russia, Jersey and British Virgin Islands (these countries provide higher tax benefits). Cumulatively, these nations were the beneficiaries of 84% or more of India's ODI during each of those financial years. Interestingly, this composition of ODI destination countries more or less mirrored the top sources of foreign direct investment inflows into India in the same period.

https://www.investopedia.com/terms/o/outward_direct_investment.asp;

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/easier-norms-may-help-indian-firms-go-global/article22651310.ece>;

10. Which of the following can be gleaned from announcements made with reference to bitcoins in the recent budget?

1. Their use as a part of the payment system will be eliminated
2. The government recognises them to be crypto-assets

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: c.

A bitcoin is one of several cryptocurrencies.

Para 112 (<http://www.indiabudget.gov.in/bspeecha.asp>): Distributed ledger system or the block chain technology allows organization of any chain of records or transactions without the need of intermediaries. The Government does not consider crypto-currencies legal tender or coin and will take all measures to eliminate use of these crypto-assets in financing illegitimate activities or as part of the payment system. The Government will explore use of block chain technology proactively for ushering in digital economy.

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/fearing-cryptocurrencies/article22661656.ece>;

11. Which of the following is likely to happen as a consequence of India's recent initiation of crude oil imports from USA?

1. It will mitigate the risks arising out of geo-political disruptions and enhance energy security for India
2. It will aggravate the trade imbalance between India and Iran

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: a.

- India has a significant trade deficit with Iran since 2006-07 on account of surge in oil imports. Diversifying its crude oil import basket (procuring now from USA as well) means that India's dependence of countries such as Iran and Saudi for crude oil shipments will decrease, thereby reducing India's trade deficit with these countries.
- Additionally, India has a favourable trade balance with USA. India's crude oil imports will reduce USA's trade deficit with us.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/us-energy-secretary-to-visit-india/article22661893.ece>;

From 2016: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/indias-trade-with-iran-set-to-increase/article8155000.ece>;

12. A nation's ranking in the World Bank's "ease of doing business" index is based on the average of 10 sub-indices. Consider the following statements about one of these sub-indices, "enforcing contracts":

1. A country's performance on this indicator is directly dependent on its ability to provide an effective dispute resolution system
2. India's position in this sub-index has improved in the latest report

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

Solution: c.

- The Economic Survey notes that India jumped 30 places to break into the top 100 for the first time in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report (EODB), 2018. The rankings reflect the government's reform measures on a wide range of indicators.
- India leaped 53 and 33 spots in the taxation and insolvency indices, respectively, on the back of administrative reforms in taxation and passage of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016.
- It also made strides on protecting minority investors and obtaining credit, and retained a high rank on getting electricity, after a 70 spot rise in EODB, 2017 due to the government's electricity reforms.
- The Survey however says that India continues to lag on the indicator on enforcing contracts, marginally improving its position from 172 to 164 in the latest report.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=175975>;

Source/Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/courting-the-rankings/article22661678.ece>;

13. Which among the following is **not** a sub-index in the World Bank's "ease of doing business" index?
- a) Labour market regulation
 - b) Getting electricity
 - c) Trading across borders
 - d) Protecting minority investors

Solution: a.

Following are the ten indicators:

1. Starting a business
2. Dealing with construction permits
3. Getting electricity
4. Registering property
5. Getting credit
6. Protecting minority investors
7. Paying taxes
8. Trading across borders
9. Enforcing contracts
10. Resolving insolvency

<http://www.doingbusiness.org/methodology>;

Source/Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/courting-the-rankings/article22661678.ece>;

14. Inverted Duty Structure, which adversely impacts manufacturing, refers to
- a) Taxation of imported finished goods at rates lower than on similar domestically produced finished-goods
 - b) Inputs being taxed at higher rates than on finished products
 - c) A taxation system that the World Trade Organisation requires developing countries to adopt
 - d) None of the above

Solution: b.

An **IDS** means higher duty on intermediate as opposed to final/finished goods. Take for example, the fertilizer industry – if import of key raw materials such as phosphoric acid, ammonia and sulphur attracts 18 per cent GST while the final product is taxed at 5 per cent, it would lead to large-scale closure of potash-based fertiliser-manufacturing companies and expose the country to the monopoly of international suppliers.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-manufacturing-muddle/article22671001.ece>

15. Consider the following statements in the context of the Indian economy:

1. The Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) as a percentage of GDP has gradually declined since mid-2000s
2. Savings rate as a percentage of GDP has been gradually rising since mid-2000s

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

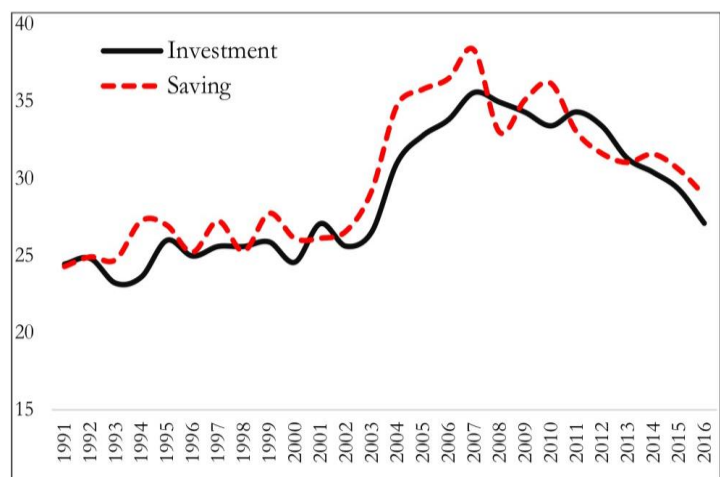
Solution: a.

“India’s unprecedented climb to historic **high levels of investment and saving rates** in the mid- 2000s has been followed by a pronounced, albeit gradual, decline. This current episode of investment and saving slowdown is still ongoing.”

Source/Improvisation:

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-formal-informal-divide/article22682258.ece>;

Ch-3, Economic Survey 2017-18;



16. Consider the following statements in the context of the Indian economy:

1. The government slipping on its fiscal goal causes the crowding out effect
2. The fiscal deficit has been budgeted at 3.3% of GDP for 2018-19, 3.1% for 2019-20 and 3% for 2020-21

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

Solution: c.

Regarding Statement 1: A situation when increased interest rates lead to a reduction in private investment spending such that it dampens the initial increase of total investment spending is called crowding out effect.

Regarding Statement 2: The government now aims to reduce its debt-to-GDP ratio to 48.8% in 2018-19, 46.7% in 2019-20 and 44.6% in 2020-21, while fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP is targeted to be reduced to 3.3%, 3.1% and 3%, respectively during the same period.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/crowding-out-effect>;

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-formal-informal-divide/article22682258.ece>;

- 17.** To calculate production cost in agriculture for the purpose of fixing Minimum Support Prices of crops, two broad concepts are used – A2 and C2. Which among the following costs is included in calculation of BOTH cost concepts?
- Imputed cost of family labour
 - Interest on working capital
 - Interest on fixed capital
 - Rental value of owned land

Solution: b.

For those who are not familiar with the exercise of MSP recommendations, there are several cost concepts that the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) considers while recommending MSPs of 23 crops.

- There are the costs the farmer actually pays out of his/her pocket for buying various inputs ranging from seeds to fertilisers to pesticides to hired labour to hired machinery (also depreciation of assets) or even leased-in land, which are all put under the cost **A2 concept**.
- However, in agriculture, farmers also use a lot of family labour and if their cost is imputed and added to cost A2, that concept is called cost **A2+FL**.
- But then there is also a comprehensive cost (**cost C2**), which includes not only imputed costs of family labour but also the imputed rent of owned land and imputed interest on owned capital.
- It is 50 per cent margin over C2 which has been at the centre of the farmers' demand, and also the **M S Swaminathan Commission's** (National Commission on Farmers, 2006) recommendation.

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/agriculture/the-lowdown-on-the-msp-roadmap/article22715922.ece>;

<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/from-plate-to-plough-the-msp-smokescreen-5052736/>;

- 18.** The single largest share of the central government's annual expenditure is accounted for by
- Interest payments
 - Subsidies
 - Defence
 - Pensions

Solution: c.

Note: The bulk of the central government's loans are from domestic sources.

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/why-the-fuss-about-fiscal-deficit/article22723770.ece>;

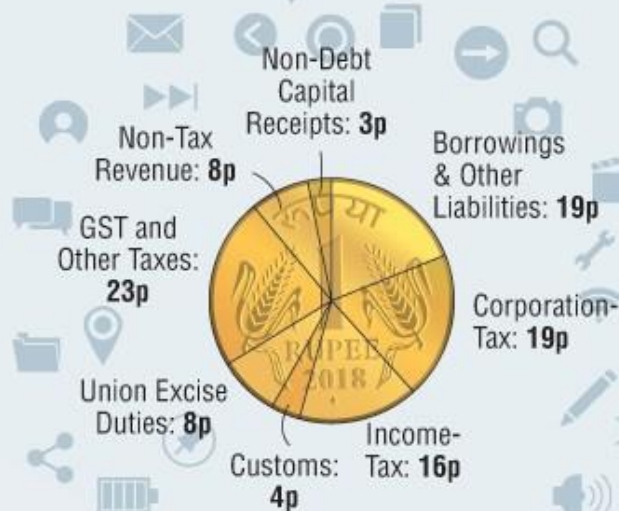
<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-business/niti-bats-for-separate-debt-office-at-centre/article22725394.ece>;

Budget 2018-19

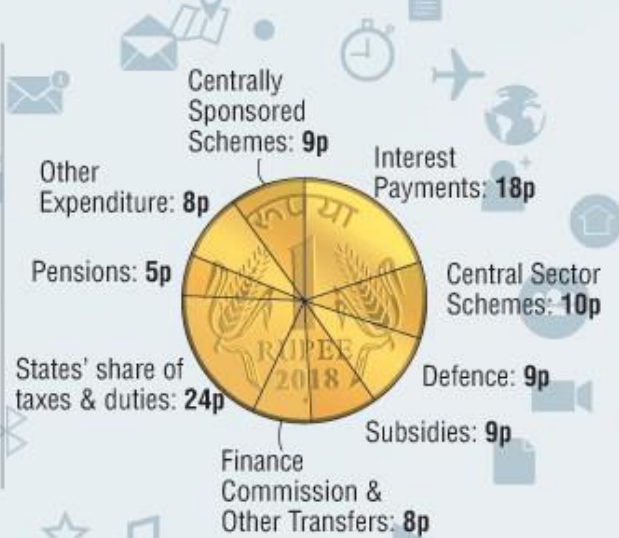
Budget 2018-19



Rupee Comes From...



Rupee Goes To...



PIB/KBK

19. In calculating the ratio in which tax money that the central government raises gets divided among the states, the 13th Finance Commission did **not** include certain variables that the 14th FC did. Which among the following are these variables?

1. Fertility rate
2. Forest Cover
3. 2011 Population figures
4. 1971 Population figures

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) 3 and 4

Solution: b.

Improvisation: <https://thewire.in/224114/fifteenth-finance-commission-threatens-split-open-demographic-fault-lines-south-north-india/>;

Improvisation: Vikaspedia November 2017 Current Affairs – <http://vikaspedia.in/education/current-affairs/current-affairs-2017/>;

Table 10.1 : Horizontal Devolution Formula in the 13th and 14th Finance Commissions

| Variable | Weights accorded | |
|---|------------------|------|
| | 13th | 14th |
| Population (1971) | 25 | 17.5 |
| Population (2011) | 0 | 10 |
| Fiscal capacity/Income distance (See box-1) | 47.5 | 50 |
| Area | 10 | 15 |
| Forest Cover | 0 | 7.5 |
| Fiscal discipline (See box-1) | 17.5 | 0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Source: Reports of 13th and 14th Finance Commission

20. Consider the following statements:

1. The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) can be used as an indicator of the economic health of the manufacturing sector only
2. While the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an output measure, the PMI is an indication of the activity at the input, or purchasing level

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

Solution: b.

- In the news (<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/what-is-the-lowdown-on-industrial-renewal/article22785218.ece>): "Industrial activity, as measured by the government's Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and the private sector Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), has improved significantly over the last two months.. Growth in the IIP soared to 8.8% in November, the highest since October 2015, and stood at a slightly slower but still robust 7.07% in December.. Similarly, the PMI surged to a 60-month high of 54.7 in December and came in at 52.4 in January (The PMI is usually released at the start of the month, much before most of the official data on industrial output, manufacturing and GDP growth becomes available. It is, therefore, considered a good leading indicator of economic activity). These two sets of data are interesting because not only do they show the picture from both the government and private sector sides but also highlight different elements of the sectors they measure. While the IIP is an output measure, the PMI is an indication of the activity at the input, or purchasing, level. If both show strong growth, the implication is an overall recovery in industrial activity and sentiments."
- PMI or a Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an indicator of business activity – it can be utilised as an indicator for both, the manufacturing and services sectors. It is a survey-based measures that asks the respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from the month before.
- The PMI is derived from a series of qualitative questions. Executives from a reasonably big sample, running into hundreds of firms, are asked whether key indicators such as output, new orders, business expectations and employment were stronger than the month before and are asked to rate them. A figure above 50 denotes expansion in business activity. Anything below

50 denotes contraction. Higher the difference from this mid-point, greater the expansion or contraction.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/what-is-purchasing-managers-index-pmi/articleshow/6259031.cms>;

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/pmi.asp>;

21. The recent scam in a Public Sector Bank was associated with which among the following banking instruments?

- a) Banker's Receipt
- b) Letter of Undertaking
- c) Payment Order
- d) Demand Draft

Solution: b.

Such a question will not be asked in CS(P). This is an issue relevant for mains/interview.

- Alarmed by the manner in which Letters of Undertaking (LoU) were fraudulently issued to importers in connivance with certain PNB officials, the Enforcement Directorate suspects that the same modus operandi could have been adopted in other banks to raise funds illegally in the name of settling import bills.
- LoU is a bank guarantee generated on behalf of importers for payments abroad. Under this arrangement, the issuing bank agrees to unconditionally repay the principal amount and interest thereupon. It remains valid for three months.
- In the PNB case, the accused officials misused the Society for Worldwide Inter-bank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) system to verify the fraudulently issued LoUs, confirming to the overseas branches of several banks that they could extend foreign exchange credit to the beneficiaries. The SWIFT system is mainly used for clearing international wire transfers.
- The PNB now has also issued a note to all the banks cautioning them against the modus operandi adopted in the fraud. The bank found that the beneficiary companies were maintaining only current accounts with the branch and had not been sanctioned any credit limit.

Refer image, 'Decoding the PNB fraud' for a better understanding of the scam: (The Hindu, Feb 16th)

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pnb-nirav-modi-and-a-fraud-that-went-undetected-for-7-years/article22765349.ece>;

22. In the context of the International Banking fora, 'SWIFT' is

- a) A messaging network that financial institutions use to securely transmit information
- b) A Bank for International Settlements (BIS) programme to help member country-banks improve the quality and speed of Credit Appraisal Procedures
- c) A model policy of the International Monetary Fund which provides guidelines on ways and means to recover loans
- d) None of the above

Solution: a.

Question asked in the context of the PNB scam.

SWIFT stands for the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications. It is a messaging network that financial institutions use to securely transmit information and instructions through a standardized system of codes.

<http://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/050515/how-swift-system-works.asp>;

23. With reference to the role of the Comptroller and Auditor General in the auditing of public corporations, consider the following statements:

1. Some corporations are audited totally and directly by the CAG
2. Some corporations are audited by private professional auditors who are appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the CAG
3. Some corporations are totally subjected to private audit and the CAG does not come into the picture at all

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: d.

- The role of CAG in the auditing of public corporations is limited. Broadly speaking, his relationship with the public corporations falls into the following three categories:
- Some corporations are audited totally and directly by the CAG, for example, Damodar Valley Corporation, Oil and Natural Gas Commission, Air India, Indian Airlines Corporation, and others.
- Some other corporations are audited by private professional auditors who are appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the CAG. If necessary, the CAG can conduct supplementary audit. The examples are, Central Warehousing Corporation, Industrial Finance Corporation, and others.
- Some other corporations are totally subjected to private audit. In other words, their audit is done exclusively by private professional auditors and the CAG does not come into the picture at all. They submit their annual reports and accounts directly to the Parliament. Examples of such corporations are Life Insurance Corporation of India, Reserve Bank of India, State Bank of India, Food Corporation of India, and others.

Improvisation/In the news (<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/how-did-system-allow-pnb-fraud-asks-cvc/article22778169.ece>): “**Banks are audited at three levels** — apart from an internal audit, there is an external auditor and a statutory audit undertaken by the **RBI**. The CVC is keen to understand how none of these audits picked up a red flag on the letters of undertaking that seem to have been issued bypassing the system.”

24. The recent PNB scam can be regarded as a case of

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Operational Risk | b) Credit Risk |
| c) Market Risk | d) Foreign Exchange Risk |

Solution: a.

- “Meanwhile, the RBI broke its silence on the fraud and blamed internal control failures for PNB’s woes in a statement terming the incident as a ‘case of operational risk’ due to ‘delinquent behaviour’ by one or more employees.”
- Generally, **operational risk** is defined as any risk, which is not categorised as market or credit risk, or the risk of loss arising from various types of human or technical error. The most important type of operational risk involves breakdowns in internal controls and corporate governance (as is being recognised in the PNB scam). Such breakdowns can lead to financial loss through error, fraud, or failure to perform in a timely manner or cause the interest of the bank to be compromised.
- **Credit risk** or **default risk** involves inability or unwillingness of a customer or counter-party to meet commitments in relation to lending, trading, hedging, settlement and other financial transactions.
- Traditionally, **credit risk management** was the primary challenge for banks. With progressive deregulation, market risk arising from adverse changes in market variables, such as interest rate, foreign exchange rate, equity price and commodity price has become relatively more important.
- **Forex risk** is the risk that a bank may suffer losses as a result of adverse exchange rate movements.

<https://m.rbi.org.in//scripts/NotificationUser.aspx?Id=85&Mode=0>

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/how-did-system-allow-pnb-fraud-asks-cvc/article22778169.ece;>

25. Budget 2018-19 defined a role for NITI Aayog with reference to which of the following matters?

1. Guaranteed procurement at Minimum Support Price
2. Arable land remaining fallow
3. Model Tenancy Act
4. Artificial Intelligence

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 2, 3 and 4
- c) 1, 2 and 4
- d) 1, 3 and 4

Solution: c.

NITI in the Budget:

- NITI Aayog, in consultation with Central and State Governments, will put in place a fool-proof mechanism so that farmers will get adequate price for their produce.
- NITI Aayog, in consultation with State Governments, will evolve a suitable mechanism to enable access of lessee cultivators to credit without compromising the rights of the land owners.
- NITI Aayog will initiate a national program to direct our efforts in the area of artificial intelligence, including research and development of its applications.

Apart from the above mentions, NITI Aayog through its officers, advisers and policy shaping role has been predominant in the planning of Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest health insurance scheme. (The Model Tenancy Act was drafted by the Ministry of HUPA in 2015.)

[http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176698;](http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176698)

26. Consider the following statements:

1. The level of productivity in an economy is a crucial determinant of a standard of living
2. Capital goods are important factors in determining productivity

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

Solution: c.

- **Increased productivity** allows people to get what they want faster, or to get more of what they want in the same amount of time. **Supply rises with productivity**, dropping real prices and increasing real wages; it lifts people out of poverty and allows them to focus on efforts beyond mere survival.
- **Capital goods** – machines, technology, improved techniques – are crucial factors in determining productivity. To take a historical example, consider the economy of the United States in 1790 when nearly 90% of the working population was involved in agriculture. In 2000, less than 1.5% of the population was involved in agriculture. By percentage, agriculture consumed some 60 times as much labor in 1790, yet agricultural output is significantly larger today than in the 18th century. This makes food prices much less expensive today, and it frees up hundreds of millions of labor hours that can be employed towards other ends. This is how an economy grows.

[PIB: VP gives away PM Shram Awards;](#)

[Investopedia: Why is productivity an important concept in economics ?](#)

II. ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

1. Which among the following plants/grasses/trees exhibit a cyclic ecological phenomenon of flowering that occurs once every 50 years or so? This phenomenon causes a dramatic increase in the local population of rats that destroy crops.
- a) Bamboo
 - b) Guar
 - c) Banyan
 - d) Kurinji

Solution: a.

“Called the green gold, the bamboo has been in focus for the wrong reasons in the northeast. A rat famine triggered by flowering of this grass in 1959 led to the creation of the Mizo National Front that metamorphosed into a political party. The flowering of bamboo every 50-55 years leads to dramatic increase in the population of rats that destroy crops triggering famine, also called Mautam.”

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-miscellaneous/tp-others/the-grass-is-greener-for-bamboo/article22626870.ece>;

Reference to the great famine of 1959 in Mizo hills also finds mention in the section ‘Secessionist movements’ -> Chapter ‘Regional Aspirations’ -> Politics in India Since Independence, Class 11, NCERT;

2. A ‘floating treatment wetland (FTW)’ in the Nekkampur lake (Hyderabad) utilises which among the following techniques to help clean the lake?
- a) Phytoremediation
 - b) Bioventing
 - c) Bioleaching
 - d) Composting

Solution: a.

A GK and mains-oriented question.

- Several plants on this FTW help clean the lake by absorbing nutrients such as excess nitrates and oxygen present in the water. They thus reduce the content of these chemicals. The FTW is based on the soilless hydroponics technique. The project is a joint effort of an NGO Dhruvansh, the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority, the district administration and other organisations.
- **Phytoremediation** (‘phyto’ means plant) is a generic term for the group of technologies that use plants for remediating soils, sludges, sediments and water contaminated with organic and inorganic contaminants.
- **Hydroponics**: A technique of growing plants in a nutrient solution in the complete absence of soil.

<http://www.unep.or.jp/Ietc/Publications/Freshwater/FMS2/1.asp>;

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Hyderabad/tulsi-and-ashvagandha-to-purify-hyderabad-lake/article22637540.ece>

3. Off the coast of which among the following places was a century-old shipwreck recently unearthed, followed by the discovery of a second shipwreck and the presence of the critically endangered species Goliath grouper?
- Bheemunipatnam
 - Nagapattinam
 - Kannur
 - Gopalpur-on-sea

Solution: a.

In what could catapult Visakhapatnam into a top scuba diving destination in the world, a second shipwreck with a **critically endangered species of Goliath grouper** (considered to be the **keystone species** of an ecosystem) was discovered by a team of experienced divers and diving instructors recently in the sea off **Bheemunipatnam**, 45 km from the city of Vishakhapatnam. This comes a month after a century-old shipwreck was unearthed in the region.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/second-shipwreck-goliath-grouper-fish-found-near-vizag/article22683229.ece>

4. The Clean Air Campaign was jointly launched recently in Delhi by
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the World Health Organisation
 - Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Delhi Government
 - Ministry of Coal and the World Bank Group
 - Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Clean Air Asia

Solution: b.

8th February (<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176376>): The Clean Air Campaign is not just a symbolic exercise, but a serious effort to drastically bring down pollution levels in the national capital, the Environment Minister said that a strong message has to go down that pollution is a serious economic and health issue and is linked to our national image also.

The **Centre and Government of Delhi** will together launch the intense exercise to address all sources of pollution in Delhi from February 10-23, 2018. This follows from the determination of the Government to tackle the problem in its entirety. Seventy joint teams of officials of Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, CPCB, Delhi Government, DPCC, Municipal Corporations and NDMC have already been constituted, which will fan out to every administrative division of Delhi, monitor causes of pollution and initiate remedial measures, including penal actions against serious polluters on the spot.

In the news: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176554>;

5. According to the India State of Forest Report 2017 (ISFR), there has been an increase in
1. Total forest cover and tree cover compared to the previous assessment
 2. Total mangrove cover compared to the previous assessment
 3. The extent of water bodies inside forest cover during the last decade (2005-2015)

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

- There is an increase of 8, 021 sq km (about 80.20 million hectare) in the total forest and tree cover of the country, compared to the previous assessment in 2015. Much of the increase in the forest cover has been observed in Very Dense Forest (such forests absorb maximum carbon dioxide from the atmosphere). The increase in forest cover in VDF is followed by increase in open forest.
- As per the ISFR 2017, the total mangrove cover stands at 4,921 sq km and has shown an increase of 181 sq km. All the 12 mangrove states have shown a positive change in the mangrove cover, as compared to the last assessment.
- There is an increase of 2,647 sq km in the extent of water bodies inside forest cover between 2005 to 2015.
- In comparison to the last assessment (of bamboo-bearing area) done in 2011, there has been an increase of 1.73 million ha in bamboo-bearing area.

[http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176496;](http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176496)

6. As per the ISFR 2017,

1. States of South India have shown maximum increase in absolute forest cover
2. States of Northeast India have shown maximum reduction in absolute forest cover

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: b.

- Top 5 states where maximum forest cover has increased are Andhra Pradesh (2,141 sq kms), Karnataka (1,101 sq kms), Kerala (1,043 sq kms), Odisha (885 sq kms) and Telangana (565 sq kms).
- Top 5 states where forest cover has decreased are Mizoram (531 sq km), Nagaland (450 sq km), Arunachal Pradesh (190 sq km), Tripura (164 sq km) and Meghalaya (116 sq km).
- It is important to mention here that these states are in the North Eastern region of the country where the total forest cover is very high i.e. more than 70% in each state.

- The main reasons for the decrease are – shifting cultivation, other biotic pressures, rotational felling, diversion of forest lands for developmental activities, submergence of forest cover, agriculture expansion and natural disasters.

<http://pibphoto.nic.in/documents/rlink/2018/feb/p201821201.pdf>;

7. India is striving towards achieving its Nationally Determined Contribution goal of creating additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030. As per the ISFR 2017, compared to the previous assessment, by how much has the carbon stock increased?

- 38 million tonnes
- 95 million tonnes
- 190 million tonnes
- 570 million tonnes

Solution: a.

- India is striving towards achieving its NDC goal of creating additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3.0 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.
- As per present assessment total carbon stock in forest is estimated to be 7,082 million tonnes.
- There is an increase of 38 million tonnes in the carbon stock of country as compared to the last assessment.
- Additionally, in addition to national level estimates, the ISFR 2017 marks the first time that the state level estimates of carbon stock have been given under different carbon pools for major forest type groups. The information is useful for analysis and developing strategies for achieving the NDC target.

<http://pibphoto.nic.in/documents/rlink/2018/feb/p201821201.pdf>;

8. In terms of density classes of forests, the area covered by which among the following is the largest in India?

- Very Dense Forest
- Moderately Dense Forest
- Open Forest
- Scrub Forest

Solution: b.

“ISFR 2017 categorises more than 300,000 sq km of area as open forests with a tree canopy of 10-40%. These lands provide the opportunity to bring back diverse, indigenous trees.”

Improvisation:

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/woods-and-trees/article22745312.ece>;

Table 2.2 Forest cover classified in terms of canopy density classes

| Class | Description |
|-------------------------|---|
| Very Dense Forest | All lands with tree canopy density of 70 percent and above. |
| Moderately Dense Forest | All lands with tree canopy density of 40 percent and more but less than 70 percent. |
| Open Forest | All lands with tree canopy density of 10 percent and more but less than 40 percent. |
| Scrub | Degraded forest lands with canopy density less than 10 percent. |
| Non-forest | Lands not included in any of the above classes. (includes water) |

Table 2.3 Forest cover of India

| Class | Area (sq km) | Percent of Geographic Area |
|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Very Dense Forest | 98,158 | 2.99 |
| Moderately Dense Forest | 3,08,318 | 9.38 |
| Open Forest | 3,01,797 | 9.18 |
| Total Forest Cover * | 7,08,273 | 21.54 |
| Scrub | 45,979 | 1.40 |
| Non-Forest | 25,33,217 | 77.06 |
| Total Geographic Area | 32,87,469 | 100.00 |

*Includes 4,921 sq km under Mangrove Cover
Percentage rounded off

9. The 'Champion and Seth classification' is associated with

- Forests
- Climate
- Antibiotics
- Human Development Index

Solution: a.

"India may be endowed with 16 major forest types, and 221 types and sub-types based on the Champion and Seth classification, but retains very little of its ancient forests after centuries of pre-colonial and colonial exploitation."

Trivia:

- The Forest types of India were classified in the year 1936 by H.G.
- Champion which was later on revised in the year 1968 by Sir H.G.
- Champion and S.K. Seth as 'A Revised Survey of Forest Types of India'.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/woods-and-trees/article22745312.ece;>

10. A 'Blue Flag' certification granted by the Central Government to select States and UTs will be an acknowledgment of them having
- Clean beaches
 - Actively promoted sustainable fishing practises
 - Protected and expanded the area under mangroves
 - Achieved the mid-term targets of the United Nations' Subregional Administrative Reforms Agenda

Solution: a.

“With prime objective of enhancing standards of cleanliness, upkeep and basic amenities at beaches, the **MoEFCC** has launched a pilot project for **beach cleanup and development**, also striving for the “**Blue Flag**” **Certification** for such identified beaches. Under the pilot programme, each of the **coastal State/UT** was requested to identify/nominate a beach, to be funded through the ongoing **Integrated Coastal Management Programme (ICMP)**.”

Vikaspedia December 2017 Current Affairs;

<http://pib.nic.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1513894;>

11. The 'Minamata Convention' is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of
- Fluoride
 - Mercury
 - Lead
 - Lead

Solution: b.

The Union Cabinet recently **approved** the proposal for ratification of **Minamata Convention on Mercury**.

- It will provide flexibility for continued use of mercury-based products and processes involving mercury compound up to **2025**.
- The Convention protects the most vulnerable from the harmful effects of mercury and also protects the developmental space of developing countries.
- The **Minamata Convention on Mercury** will further urge enterprises to move to mercury-free alternatives in products and non-mercury technologies in manufacturing processes. This will drive research & development, and promote innovation.

The Convention draws attention to a global and ubiquitous metal that, while naturally occurring, has broad uses in everyday objects and is released to the atmosphere, soil and water from a variety of sources. **Controlling the anthropogenic releases of mercury** throughout its lifecycle has been a key factor in shaping the obligations under the Convention.

Major highlights of the Minamata Convention include

- a ban on new mercury mines,
- the phase-out of existing ones,
- the phase out and phase down of mercury use in a number of products and processes,
- control measures on emissions to air and on releases to land and water, and
- the regulation of the informal sector of artisanal and small-scale gold mining.

The Convention also addresses **interim storage of mercury and its disposal** once it becomes waste, sites contaminated by mercury as well as health issues.

<http://www.mercuryconvention.org/Convention/tabid/3426/Default.aspx>;

Improvisation: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176356>;

12. Consider the following statements:

1. Mangrove forests only grow at tropical and subtropical latitudes
2. The Sundarbans lies in latitudes north of the Tropic of Cancer

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: a.

- Mangrove trees grow in areas with low-oxygen soil, where slow-moving waters allow fine sediments to accumulate. Mangrove forests only grow at tropical and subtropical latitudes near the equator because they cannot withstand freezing temperatures.
- The Sundarbans lies south of the Tropic of Cancer.

<https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/mangroves.html>;

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/sundarbans-mangroves-struggle-to-find-new-ground/article22785340.ece>;

13. Mission Innovation

1. Aims to make it cheaper to produce clean energy, enough to outcompete 'dirty' or coal energy, even without any subsidies, by 2025
2. Is a global initiative of which India is a member

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: b.

Statement 1 refers to the [Global Apollo Programme](#).

Mission Innovation (MI) is a global initiative of 22 countries and the European Union to dramatically accelerate global clean energy innovation.

- As part of the initiative, participating countries have committed to double their governments' clean energy research and development (R&D) investments over five years, while encouraging greater levels of private sector investment in transformative clean energy technologies.

Presently, the 22 participating countries and the European Union represent more than 80 percent of global clean energy R&D budgets.

- Mission Innovation was announced on November 30, 2015, as world leaders came together in Paris to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change.
- India was also one of the countries which took initiative in sowing the seed of 'Mission Innovation'.

The **Global Apollo Programme**: The Apollo programme aims to double the money being spent globally on research and development of renewable energy, energy storage and smart grids from the current 2% of the world's R&D budget. Nations joining the programme would commit to spending 0.02% of GDP on the R&D (each country will spend this in their own country) and would get a place on a global commission that would coordinate and direct the research to avoid duplication.

[About Mission Innovation;](#)

Improvisation: [PIB – International Conference on Sustainable Biofuels 2018;](#)

14. Consider the following statements about the 'Biofuture Platform', seen recently in the news:

1. It aims to accelerate development and deployment of modern sustainable low carbon alternatives to fossil based solutions in, among others, the transport sector
2. It is a multi-stakeholder initiative
3. The idea to set up the platform was first suggested by India at the Paris Climate Change Conference in 2015

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: a.

In the news (PIB – [International Conference on Sustainable Biofuels 2018](#)): The two day international conference on Sustainable Biofuels is jointly being organized by Department of Biotechnology, Govt. of India and **Biofuture platform. Sustainable Biofuels Innovation Challenge** is one of seven innovation challenges endorsed by Mission Innovation.

- The Biofuture Platform aims to accelerate development and scale up deployment of modern sustainable low carbon alternatives to fossil based solutions in transport, chemicals, plastics and other sectors.
- The Biofuture Platform was proposed by the government of **Brazil** to several leading countries in all five continents.
- The initiative aims to bring together a relatively limited but strong group of like-minded countries which are either already leaders in the new advanced bioeconomy or interested in its development. 20 countries (including India) are the founding and current Member States.
- As a multistakeholder initiative, international organizations, academia, and private sector associations are also involved and engaged as official partners.

[About Biofuture Platform;](#)

III. GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AND PROGRAMMES

1. The Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQIP) is run by
- Ministry of Labour and Employment
 - Ministry of Human Resource Development
 - Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
 - Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

Solution: b.

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development has recruited more than 1200 highly qualified and motivated graduates from IITs and NITs among others to teach in Engineering Colleges in the most backward areas for the next 3 years.
- Under this project (presently TEQIP-III, assisted by World Bank), all Government engineering colleges are selected for direct intervention, and all private engineering colleges are selected for indirect intervention. The measures are institution-based (ex: governance reforms) and student-based (ex: improving the quality of teaching).

<http://pib.nic.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1518453>

<http://mhrd.gov.in/technical-education-12>

2. The recently announced National Health Protection Scheme is an intervention to address health in which of the following systems?
- Primary healthcare
 - Secondary healthcare
 - Tertiary healthcare

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Solution: b.

- There are two major initiatives as part of the “**Ayushman Bharat**” programme which is aimed at making path breaking interventions to address health holistically, in primary, secondary and tertiary care system covering both prevention and health promotion.
- The **National Health Policy, 2017** has envisioned **Health and Wellness Centres** as the foundation of India’s health system. These 1.5 lakh (primary healthcare) centres will bring health care system closer to the homes of people. These centres will provide comprehensive health care, including for non-communicable diseases and maternal and child health services. These centres will also provide free essential drugs and diagnostic services.

- The flagship **National Health Protection Scheme** will cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries), providing coverage upto 5 lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/making-health-insurance-work/article22661666.ece>;

3. 'SHe-Box' will help with better implementation of

- a) Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act), 2013
- b) The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- c) The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- d) The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

Solution: a.

“**SHe-Box** is an effort of the government of India to provide a single-window access to every woman, irrespective of her work status, whether working in organised or unorganised, private or public sector, to facilitate registration of complaint of sexual harassment.”

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/in-sc-centre-lists-steps-to-end-sexual-harassment-at-workplace/article22723506.ece>;

From 2017: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=168892>;

4. Which of the following statements is/are observations/recommendations made by the Dun & Bradstreet 'Port Logistics: Issues & Challenges in India' report?

1. It introduces a 'Port Performance Index' as an attempt to benchmark performance of various ports
2. It recommends the setting up of an 'Indian Customs Electronic Commerce Gateway (ICEGATE)' to provide e-filing services for quicker customs clearance
3. It finds that processes and operations across Indian ports are not standardised or uniform

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: c.

- ICEGATE (already an established portal) stands for the Indian Customs Electronic Commerce/Electronic Data interchange (EC/EDI) Gateway. ICEGATE is a portal that provides e-filing services to the trade and cargo carriers and other clients of Customs Department.
- The report identifies five issues, namely port congestion, customs clearance (including scanning & ICEGATE), shipping line issues & charges, documentation & paperwork, and regulatory clearance as the most common problems across ports.

- The three major findings of the report are – Processes and operations across the ports are not standardized or uniform; Costs and time for key processes are unpredictable and there is an unacceptable level of variation across ports as well as within port; Several government initiatives taken need to be followed through to completion.

<http://pib.nic.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1520359;>

5. Consider the following statements:

1. Some medical implants such as cardiac stents and knee implants are considered as drugs under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940
2. Price caps on medical implants are notified by an authority that functions under the aegis of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: c.

The **National Pharmaceutical and Pricing Authority**, responsible for notifying price caps on medical implants among others, functions under the aegis of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers.

[http://www.cdsc.nic.in/writereaddata/list-of-notified-medical-device\(1\).pdf](http://www.cdsc.nic.in/writereaddata/list-of-notified-medical-device(1).pdf)

<http://www.nppaindia.nic.in;>

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/price-cap-on-hip-implants-awaited/article22754449.ece;>

6. The prime objective of the 'Sagarmala project' is to

- a) Aid the construction of world-class port facilities in Indian Ocean littoral nations
- b) Develop naval bases in Indian Ocean littoral nations
- c) Promote port-led direct and indirect development in India
- d) Thwart China's rising geo-political ambitions in the Indo-Pacific

Solution: c.

The prime objective of the Sagarmala project is to promote port-led direct and indirect development and to provide infrastructure to transport goods to and from ports quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively. Therefore, the Sagarmala Project shall, inter alia, aim to develop access to new development regions with intermodal solutions and promotion of the optimum modal split, enhanced connectivity with main economic centres and beyond through expansion of rail, inland water, coastal and road services.

Sagarmala Project: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=117691;>

Improvisation: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176631;>

7. The 'Scheme for Awareness Generation and Publicity' is administered by
- Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
 - Youth and Sports Affairs
 - Ministry of Human Resource Development
 - Ministry of Women and Child Development

Solution: a.

The **Union Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment** recently felicitated the 17 member Blind Cricket World Cup winning Indian Team and presented them with a cash award of Rs.34 Lakhs. The cash award has been given under the **Awareness Generation and Publicity Scheme** of the Ministry.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176712;>

[http://disabilityaffairs.gov.in/content/page/awareness-generation-scheme.php;](http://disabilityaffairs.gov.in/content/page/awareness-generation-scheme.php)

8. The recently announced GOBAR-DHAN initiative aims to
- Ensure cleanliness in villages
 - Generate energy and wealth from cattle dung only

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: a.

- In the current budget, emphasis has been laid on turning 'waste to wealth' and 'waste to energy' through Bio gas, under the Swachh Bharat Campaign. An effort was initiated which was named **GOBAR-Dhan – Galvanizing Organic Bio Agro Resources**. The aim of this GOBAR-DHAN scheme is **ensuring cleanliness in villages** and generating wealth and energy by converting cattle dung and solid agricultural waste into Compost and Bio Gas.
- India is home to the highest cattle population in the world, close to 300 million in number, with a daily output of 3 million tonnes of dung. Some European countries and China use animal dung and other Bio-waste to produce energy. But India was lacking full capacity utilization. Under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural), we are taking rapid strides in this direction.
- It will be easier to keep the village clean and sanitized, livestock health will improve and farm yields will increase. Biogas generation will increase self-reliance in energy utilized for cooking and lighting. Farmers and cattle herders will be helped in augmenting their income. There will be novel opportunities for newer jobs linked to waste collection, transportation, biogas sales etc

[PM's Mann Ki Baat;](#)

9. Under the aegis of which ministry/body does DIPAM or the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management function?
- a) Ministry of Commerce and Industry
 - b) NITI Aayog
 - c) Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
 - d) None of the above

Solution: d.

The Department of Disinvestment was set up as a separate Department in 1999 and was later made the Ministry of Disinvestment in 2001. From 2004, it became the Department of Disinvestment under the Ministry of Finance. The Department of Disinvestment was renamed as Department of Investment and Public Asset Management in 2016.

<http://dipam.gov.in/mandate>;

In the news: <http://www.thehindu.com/business/niti-aayog-working-on-new-list-of-sick-psus/article22818251.ece>;

IV. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Researchers found more than 60,000 hidden Maya ruins in Guatemala in a major archaeological breakthrough recently. Which among the following technologies was used to make this discovery?
- SONAR
 - LIDAR
 - RADAR
 - Echolocation

Solution: b.

- In what's being hailed as a "major breakthrough" in Maya archaeology, researchers have identified the ruins of more than 60,000 houses, palaces, elevated highways, and other human-made features that have been hidden for centuries under the jungles of northern Guatemala.
- Using a revolutionary technology known as **LiDAR** (short for "Light Detection And Ranging"), scholars digitally removed the tree canopy from aerial images of the now-unpopulated landscape, revealing the ruins of a sprawling pre-Columbian civilization that was far more complex and interconnected than most Maya specialists had supposed.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-42916261>;

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/massive-mayan-ruins-found-in-guatemala/article22645692.ece>;

2. Consider the following statements:

- Radar, Lidar and Sonar are all remote sensing methods
- Lidar's pulses of radio waves can penetrate forest cover to record the shape of the ground below

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- None of the above

Solution: a.

- Remote sensors** collect data by detecting the energy that is reflected from Earth. These sensors can be on satellites or mounted on aircraft (or on ships in the case of Sonar).
- Lidar** bounces a laser pulse (NOT radio wave) off a target and then measures the time (and distance) each pulse traveled. Those measurements reveal the relative heights of features on the ground struck by the laser pulses. These pulses can penetrate forest cover to record the shape of the ground below. That makes this technology especially valuable for mapping.
- A **LIDAR instrument** principally consists of a laser, a scanner, and a specialized GPS receiver. Airplanes and helicopters are the most commonly used platforms for acquiring LIDAR data over broad areas. Two types of LIDAR are topographic and bathymetric. Topographic LIDAR typically

uses a near-infrared laser to map the land, while bathymetric lidar uses water-penetrating green light to also measure seafloor and riverbed elevations.

<https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/remotesensing.html>;

<https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/lidar.html>;

<https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/explainer-what-are-lidar-radar-and-sonar>;

Improvisation: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-42916261>;

3. Consider the following pairs:

| Launch Pad | – | Location |
|-------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1. Kennedy Space Centre | – | San Francisco, California |
| 2. Europe's Spaceport | – | Kourou, French Guiana |
| 3. Satish Dhawan Space Centre | – | Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha |
| 4. Rocket Lab Launch Complex | – | Mahia Peninsula, New Zealand |

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

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

Solution: c.

You can eliminate the 1st given pair easily. Because **satellites** and **missile** tests **always** are launched from the **east coast** (<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/why-are-all-satellites-and-missiles-launched-from-the-east-coast/article7202159.ece>)

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Kennedy Space Centre | – | Florida |
| 2. Europe's Spaceport | – | Kourou, French Guiana |
| 3. Satish Dhawan Space Centre | – | Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh |
| 4. Rocket Lab Launch Complex | – | Mahia Peninsula, NZ |



Improvisation (passing reference to the launch pad at Kourou): <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/isro-needs-4-years-to-catch-up-with-satellite-demand-dr-sivan/article22651083.ece>;

4. The ‘Cochrane Collaboration’, sometimes in the news, is deals with which one of the following issues?
- Healthcare
 - Cybersecurity
 - Gender equality
 - Money laundering

Solution: a.

- “The **human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine** has run into more trouble. In January, a Rome-based epidemiologist, Tom Jefferson, of the **Cochrane Collaboration** highlighted in a paper worrying gaps in published data on the vaccine, designed to prevent HPV-related cervical cancer.”
- About **Cochrane** (<http://www.cochrane.org/about-us>): It is a “global independent network of researchers, professionals, patients, carers, and people interested in health.. Cochrane is for anyone who is interested in using high-quality information to make better health decisions.”

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/understanding-the-hpv-vaccines-risk/article22651385.ece>;

5. The Museum of London recently unveiled its latest display – a fatberg. What do the museum authorities consider it to symbolise?
- Gender inequality in the 21st century
 - The Dongria Kondh’s anti-mining struggle
 - Unsustainable urban living
 - Ocean plastic pollution

Solution: c.

- The Museum of London recently unveiled its latest display, a chunk of a 130-ton fatberg that was blasted out of a city sewer last year. It took sewage workers with jet hoses nine weeks to dislodge the 250-metre-long mass of oil, fat, diapers and baby wipes.
- The **fatberg** is considered a natural for the museum, which charts the city’s ancient and modern history. The word itself, a hybrid of “fat” and “iceberg”, is one of London’s gifts to the world: It was coined by the city’s sewer workers and entered the Oxford English Dictionary in 2015.

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/fatberg-goes-from-sewer-to-museum/article22695130.ece>

6. A Mission on Cyber Physical Systems will enable investment in research, training and skilling in

1. Robotics
2. Big data analysis
3. Quantum communication

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

- **Cyber Physical Systems** is an interdisciplinary field that deals with the deployment of computer-based systems that do things in the physical world, such as, for instance, self-driven cars. Though India is only now developing a programme on CPS, the National Science Foundation of the United States had identified it as a key area of inter-disciplinary research back in 2003.
- Chapter 'Transforming Science and Technology in India', Economic Survey 2017-18: The term **Cyber Physical System (CPS)** refers to machine based communication, analysis, inference, decision, action, and control in the context of a natural world ("Physical" aspect). This is hugely multidisciplinary area including deep mathematics used in Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Big data Analytics, Block Chains, Expert Systems, Contextual Learning going to integration of all of these with intelligent materials and machines, control systems, sensors and actuators, robotics and smart manufacturing. Together these are the building blocks of future industry that will throw up both new challenges and opportunities.
- Para 109 (<http://www.indiabudget.gov.in/bspeecha.asp>): Combining cyber and physical systems have great potential to transform not only innovation ecosystem but also our economies and the way we live. To invest in research, training and skilling in robotics, artificial intelligence, digital manufacturing, big data analysis, quantum communication and internet of things, **Department of Science & Technology** will launch a **Mission on Cyber Physical Systems** to support establishment of centres of excellence.

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/big-discoveries-have-small-origins/article22695426.ece>;

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/jaitley-heralds-cyber-physical-systems-mission-to-create-new-jobs/article22624153.ece>;

7. With reference to 'Bitcoin mining', a term often seen in the news, which of the following statements is/are true?

1. It involves solving complex mathematical problems
2. Most bitcoin mining operations are located usually concentrated where the cost of electricity is cheapest
3. More bitcoin miners means a more secure network

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

- **Bitcoin mining** is the process by which transactions are verified and added to the public ledger, known as the block chain, and also the means through which new bitcoin are released. Anyone with access to the internet and suitable hardware can participate in mining. (Bitcoin miners are required to approve/verify transactions. Therefore more miners means a more secure network.) The mining process involves compiling recent transactions into blocks and trying to solve a computationally difficult puzzle. The rewards, which incentivize mining, are both the transaction fees associated with the transactions compiled in the block as well as newly released bitcoin.

- In the earliest days of Bitcoin, mining was done with CPUs from normal desktop computers. Graphics cards (used for gaming) for mining became dominant as bitcoin gained popularity. Eventually, hardware known as an ASIC, which stands for Application-Specific Integrated Circuit, was designed specifically for mining bitcoin.
- **Bitcoin mining operations** – essentially massive and powerful datacenters – are located internationally, and usually concentrated where the cost of electricity is cheapest. That's because the cost of electricity can make up 90-95% of total ongoing mining costs.

Additional Information: The **MoonLite** Project will operate several industrial scale data centres in the Crypto-Currency Mining industry, and plans to begin by mining predominantly Bitcoin, DASH, Litecoin, and Ethereum using 100% sustainable, green energy. 100% of the energy they consume will be generated using Hydro, Geo-Thermal, and Wind sources. The MoonLite Project will base its first mining operation in data center capital of the world, Iceland.

Video: <https://youtu.be/GmOzih6I1zs>;

From 2017: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/12/19/why-the-bitcoin-craze-is-using-up-so-much-energy/>;

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/bitcoin-mining.asp>;

In the news (<http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-43030677>): This year, electricity use at Iceland's Bitcoin mining data centres is likely to exceed that of all Iceland's homes.

8. SpaceX's 'Falcon Heavy', launched recently, is capable of

1. Delivering a maximum payload to low-earth orbit that is more than double that of the world's next most powerful rocket
2. Returning to earth all of its boosters (side cores)

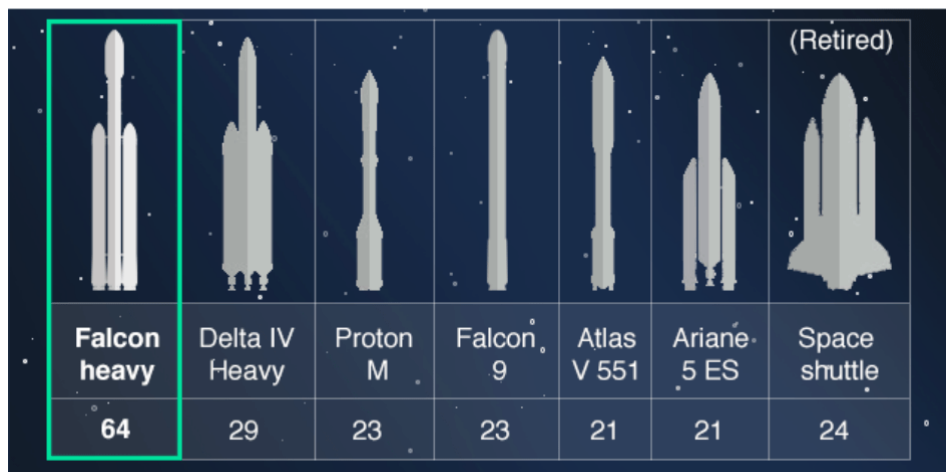
Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: c.

Rocket payload comparison

Payload to low-Earth orbit measured in tonnes



Source: SpaceX

BBC

- Inside each of Falcon Heavy's three cores is a cluster of nine Merlin engines (developed by SpaceX itself).
- Falcon Heavy was designed to be fully reusable. Both the center core and side boosters carry landing legs, which will land each core safely on Earth after takeoff.

<http://www.spacex.com/falcon-heavy>;

<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-42969020>;

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/isro-too-has-designs-on-a-60-tonne-super-lift-rocket/article22724826.ece>;

9. Graphics Processing Units or GPUs are utilised for

1. Searching for extraterrestrial intelligence
2. Mining crypto-currencies
3. Producing high definition video streams

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

- Scientists listening out for broadcasts by extra-terrestrials are struggling to get the computer hardware they need, thanks to the crypto-currency mining craze, a radio-astronomer has said.
- SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) researchers want to expand operations at two observatories. However, they have found that key computer chips are in short supply. "We'd like to use the latest GPUs [graphics processing units]... and we can't get 'em," said Dan Werthimer.
- Demand for GPUs has soared recently thanks to crypto-currency mining. These are high-performance chips and aren't just used for powering video games – they may be stacked together by Bitcoin miners, radio-astronomers or others interested in processing large amounts of data for certain applications.
- Earlier this year, there were reports that video gamers had been hit by a sudden rise in the cost of GPUs, thanks in particular to a rise in Ethereum mining, which can be done with chips aimed at consumers.

Additional Information:

- **ASIC (Application-Specific Integrated Circuit)** chips are chips designed to carry out specific tasks. In recent times, these chips are increasingly being used for crypto-currency mining. ASIC chips use lesser energy compared to GPUs.
- SETI, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, is an exploratory science that seeks evidence of life in the universe by looking for some signature of its technology. The SETI Institute is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to scientific research, education, and public outreach.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-43056744>

10. In the context of science and technology, the term 'Long March' refers to/is used in the context of
- a) The rise of 'renewable superpowers' – countries that have the largest reserves of Cobalt, Lithium and such metals that are important for the renewable energy industry
 - b) An expendable satellite launch system
 - c) The gradual acceptance among the public, globally, of 'green' alternatives, especially in the automobile sector
 - d) The fourth Industrial Revolution

Solution: b.

“The Chinese seemed to have narrowed down on **Long March-7 rockets** as the heavy-duty vehicle of choice for building the space station. The plans are only getting bigger. By 2030, China wants to perfect a heavy-lift carrier rocket, currently called Long March-9, according to the Science and Technology Committee of the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology. The Long March-9 rocket aspires to lift a jaw-dropping 100 tonnes of payload into space.”

[http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/the-long-march-into-outer-space/article22784731.ece;](http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/the-long-march-into-outer-space/article22784731.ece)

V. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

1. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a regulation that intends to strengthen and harmonise data protection law frameworks across the
- European Union
 - G20 group of nations
 - OECD countries
 - NATO countries

Solution: a.

- GDPR seeks to create a harmonised data protection law framework across the EU and aims to give citizens back the control of their personal data, whilst imposing strict rules on those hosting and 'processing' this data, anywhere in the world. The Regulation also introduces rules relating to the free movement of personal data within and outside the EU.
- GDPR would apply to all firms, regardless of their location, that process personal data of people living in the EU. Once in force, the GDPR would require companies to notify a data breach within 72 hours of the event.

What is the GDPR? : <https://www.ibm.com/analytics/us/en/technology/general-data-protection-regulation/>; <https://www.eugdpr.org/>;

Source/Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/too-few-prepared-for-gdpr/article22612475.ece>;

2. Why is it that nearly a decade after the India-US Civil Nuclear Agreement (123 Agreement) was signed, foreign reactor vendors still largely refuse to enter into agreements with India to supply nuclear reactors?
- India is not a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group
 - India has not ratified the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damages (CSC)
 - India's own nuclear liability law violates the CSC

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Solution: c.

A mains-oriented question. India officially argues that our nuclear liability law is in conformity with the CSC.

- One of the reasons cited by reactor manufacturers is the supplier liability that is present in our domestic nuclear liability law. Countries such as the U.S. have said that the Indian law's provisions are violative of the CSC (which India ratified in 2016), but this has been denied by India.

- The other issue is related to the price negotiations. For instance, Indo-French negotiations for six European Pressurised Reactors (EPRs) in Maharashtra's Jaitapur have dragged on for a decade on this count, with the Department of Atomic Energy announcing in 2013 that the cost "cannot go above" ₹6.50 per unit, and the French company Areva (the project has now been handed to EDF) clearly seeking more.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/forging-a-new-nuclear-deal/article22637628.ece>;

<https://thewire.in/21587/indias-nuclear-liability-regime-is-still-up-in-the-air/>;

3. The Olive Branch operation was launched recently by

- Turkey
- Philippines
- Russia
- Venezuela

Solution: a.

- **Turkey's "Olive Branch"** operation was launched on 20 January to drive the Kurdish YPG militia out of Afrin (Syria).

"...Mr. Kaya, who has Kurdish and Turkish roots, believes the ongoing situation in Afrin 'will not just kill innocent people' but also 'destroy many friendships'. 'In fact, it's an abuse of the olive branch, which is a symbol of peace,' he said, referring to the code name of the operation..."

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-international/tremors-of-afrin-attack-reach-europe/article22647875.ece>;

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42934041>;

4. Maldives is a member of

- SAARC
- The Commonwealth
- BIMSTEC

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Solution: a.

"...adding to the limitations is the fact that the Maldives has left the Commonwealth, and the SAARC is not meeting, and neither multilateral fora has much leverage over the Maldivian government at present."

BIMSTEC members include Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-international/india-disturbed-by-emergency/article22672636.ece>;

5. Which among the following countries is **not** landlocked?

1. Benin
2. Nigeria
3. Macedonia
4. Albania

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: a.

The same appeared in the Hindu:



[https://www.graphicnews.com/en/pages/36207/EU_Balkans_expansion_\(1\);](https://www.graphicnews.com/en/pages/36207/EU_Balkans_expansion_(1);)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/oil-tanker-22-indians-freed/article22672747.ece;>

6. The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)

1. Is an institution placed under the administrative and financial authority of the International Olympic Committee
2. Handles any disputes directly or indirectly linked to sport
3. Sets up non-permanent tribunals for many major events that include the Olympic Games and the Commonwealth Games

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

- The **Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)** is an institution independent of any sports organization which provides for services in order to facilitate the settlement of sports-related disputes through arbitration or mediation by means of procedural rules adapted to the- specific needs of the sports world. The CAS was created in 1984 and is placed under the administrative and financial authority of the **International Council of Arbitration for Sport (ICAS)**.
- The CAS has the task of resolving legal disputes in the field of sport through arbitration. It does this pronouncing arbitral awards that have the same enforceability as judgements of ordinary -courts. It can also help parties solve their disputes on an amicable basis through mediation, when this procedure is allowed.
- The CAS sets up non-permanent tribunals, which it does for the Olympic Games, the Commonwealth Games or other similar major events. To take into account the circumstances of such events, special procedural rules are established on each occasion.
- Any disputes directly or indirectly linked to sport may be submitted to the CAS. These may be disputes of a commercial nature (e.g. a sponsorship contract), or of a disciplinary nature following a decision by a sports organisation (e.g. a doping case).

<http://www.tas-cas.org/en/general-information/frequently-asked-questions.html>;

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/winter-cheer/article22670999.ece>

7. If you were to travel along the periphery of South America in an anti-clockwise direction starting from Guyana, which among the following sequences would you have to traverse countries to get to Chile?
- Suriname, French Guiana, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina
 - French Guiana, Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador
 - Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru
 - Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina

Solution: c.

Hyperinflation and severe recession in oil-rich Venezuela are prompting Venezuelans to flee over the border to Colombia, now about 2,000 a day, Colombian Finance Minister said.

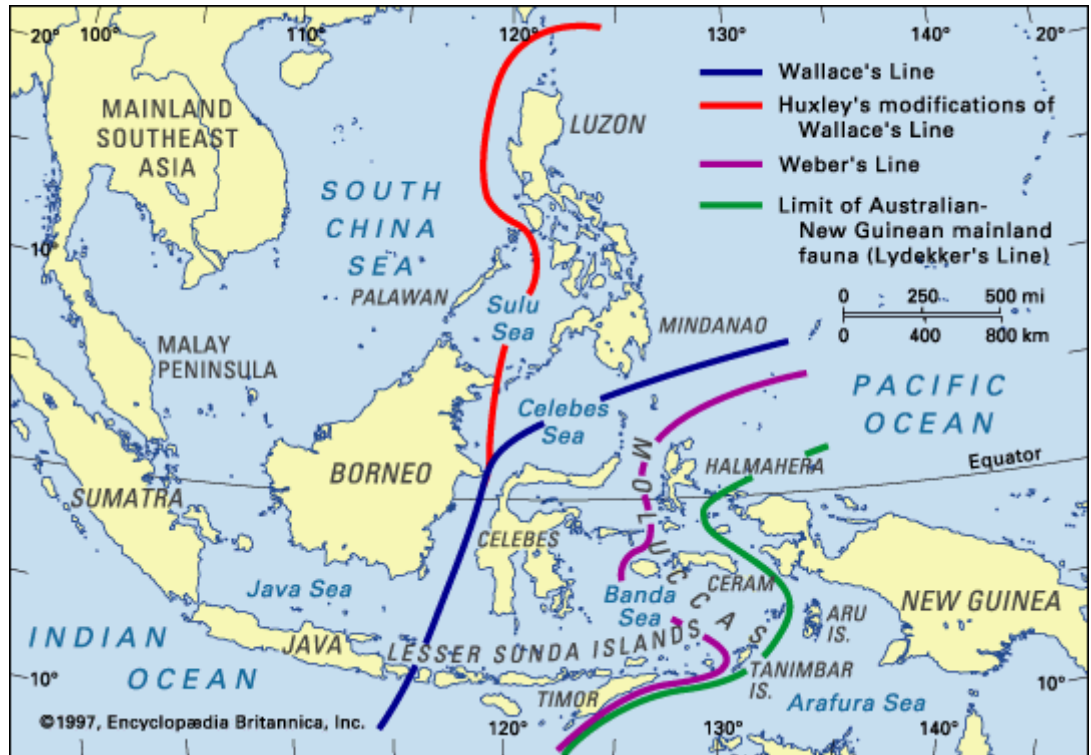
<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/we-need-a-financial-rescue-plan-for-venezuela-colombia/article22716608.ece>;



8. The 'Wallace Line', a floral boundary, roughly divides
- The Southeast Asian region from the Australian
 - Russia from North America
 - Madagascar from the rest of Africa
 - The Central American region from the South American

Solution: a.

Wallace Line is boundary between the Oriental and Australian faunal regions, proposed by the 19th-century British naturalist **Alfred Russel Wallace**. The line extends (see image) from the Indian Ocean through the **Lombok Strait** (between the islands of Bali and Lombok), northward through the **Makassar Strait** (between Borneo and Celebes), and



eastward, south of Mindanao, into the **Philippine Sea**. Although many zoogeographers no longer consider the Wallace Line to be a regional boundary, it does represent an abrupt limit of distribution for many major animal groups. Many fish, bird, and mammal groups are abundantly represented on one side of the Wallace Line but poorly or not at all on the other side.

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/on-the-origin-of-oranges/article22713163.ece>;

<https://www.britannica.com/science/Wallace-Line>;

9. The Commonwealth of Independent States comprises mainly of
- Former territories of the British empire
 - Countries that were formed out of the dissolution of the Soviet Union
 - Independent states of the Americas (North and South America)
 - None of the above

Solution: b.

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), or the Russian Commonwealth refers to the free association of sovereign states formed in **1991** by Russia and 11 other republics that were formerly part of the Soviet Union.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Commonwealth-of-Independent-States>;

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/more-nukes/article22733833.ece>;

10. Consider the following statements about the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD):

1. It was founded in the 1940s to create a new post-World War era in Central and Eastern Europe
2. Its core operations pertain to private sector development
3. The Bank assists only those countries committed to and applying the principles of multi-party democracy

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

- The **EBRD** was established to help build a new, post-Cold War era in Central and Eastern Europe.
- It is committed to furthering progress towards '**market-oriented economies and the promotion of private and entrepreneurial initiative**'.
- It is currently active in more than 30 countries from central Europe to central Asia and the southern and eastern Mediterranean, plus the West Bank and Gaza.
- It serves the interests of all its shareholders – 66 countries from five continents plus the European Union and the European Investment Bank – not just those countries which receive its investments.
- The EBRD's understanding of how a market economy works and engagement with other international financial institutions also allowed us to play a crucial role in stabilising its regions and planning for recovery after the shock of the global financial crisis in 2008.
- Uniquely for a development bank, the EBRD has a political mandate in that it assists only those countries 'committed to and applying the principles of multi-party democracy & pluralism'.

Improvisation: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=173734>; Vikaspedia November 2017 Current Affairs;

<http://www.ebrd.com/cs/Satellite?c=Content&cid=1395236789737&d=Tablet&pagename=EBRD%2FContent%2FContentLayout>;

11. Which among the following water bodies are landlocked between Israel and Jordan?

1. Sea of Galilee
2. Dead Sea
3. Eyre Sea

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: c.

- **Dead Sea**, also called the **Salt Sea**, is a landlocked salt lake between **Israel** and **Jordan** in southwestern Asia. Its eastern shore belongs to Jordan, and the southern half of its western shore belongs to Israel. The northern half of the western shore lies within the Palestinian West Bank and has been under Israeli occupation since the **1967** Arab-Israeli war. The Jordan River, from which the Dead Sea receives nearly all its water, flows from the north into the lake.
- **Sea of Galilee** is a **lake** in Israel through which the **Jordan River** flows.

Additional Information:

- Jordan is bounded to the north by Syria, to the east by Iraq, to the southeast and south by Saudi Arabia, and to the west by Israel and the West Bank. The West Bank is so named because it lies just west of the Jordan River.



<https://www.britannica.com/place/Sea-of-Galilee>; <https://www.britannica.com/place/Dead-Sea>;

Improvisation: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/world/modi-to-be-first-indian-pm-to-visit-palestine/article22705845.ece>;

<https://idsa.in/idsacomments/jordan-is-more-than-a-transit-point-pr-kumaraswamy-120218>;

12. Consider the following statements with reference to the International North-South Transport Corridor:

1. India, Iran and Russia are its founder members
2. The corridor connects the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Black Sea via Iran, then connect Northern Europe via Russia

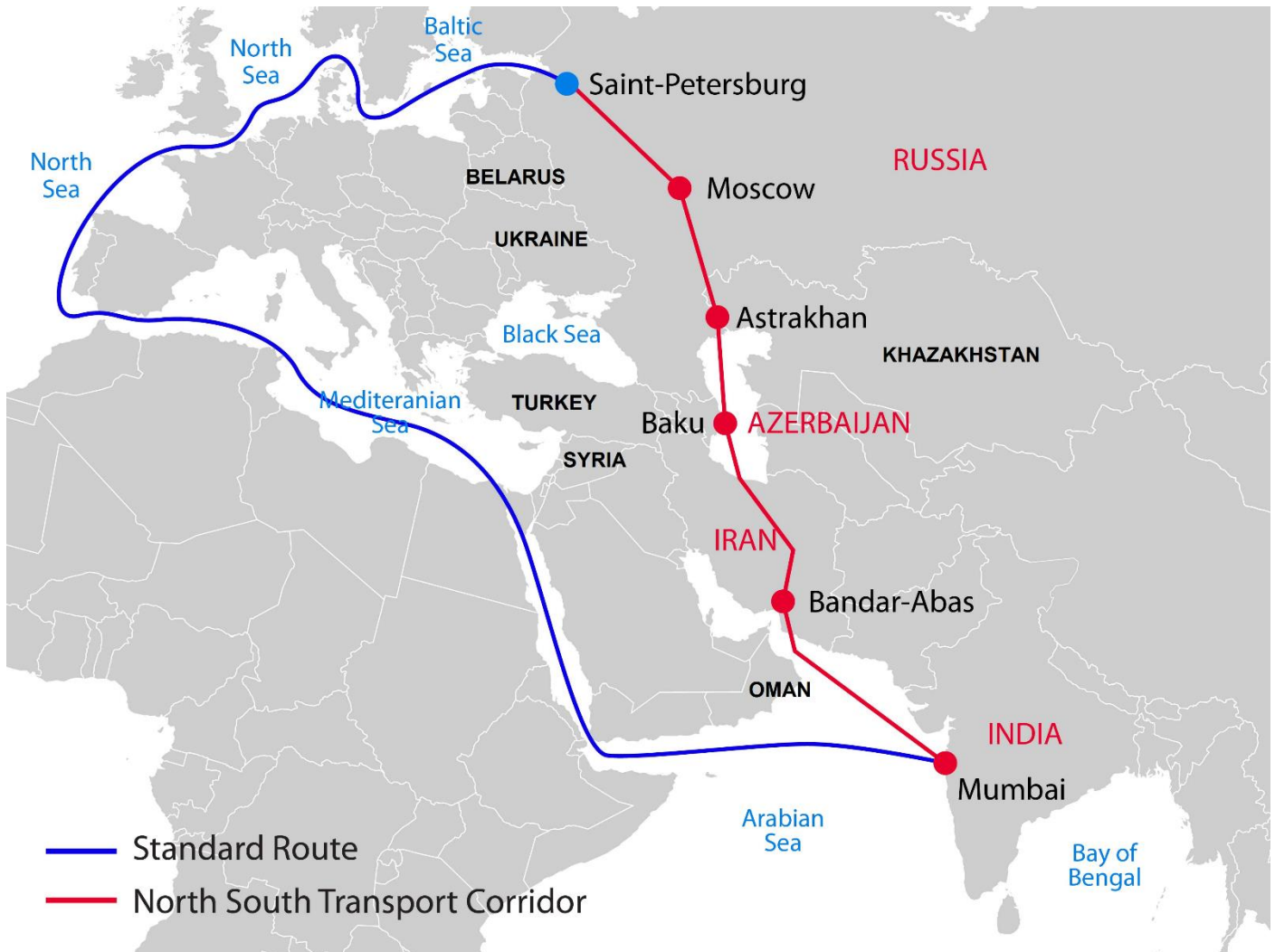
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Both 1 and 2

Solution: a.

International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), is a multi modal transportation established in **2000** by **Iran, Russia** and **India** for the purpose of promoting transportation cooperation among the Member States. This corridor connects **India Ocean** and **Persian Gulf** to

the **Caspian Sea** via Islamic republic of Iran, then is connected to **St. Petersburg** and North European via Russian Federation.



The INSTC has been expanded to include eleven new members, namely: Republic of **Azerbaijan**, Republic of **Armenia**, Republic of **Kazakhstan**, **Kyrgyz** Republic, Republic of **Tajikistan**, Republic of **Turkey**, Republic of **Ukraine**, Republic of **Belarus**, **Oman**, **Syria**, *Bulgaria (Observer)*.

<http://www.instc-org.ir/Pages/Map1.aspx>;

http://www.instc-org.ir/Pages/Home_Page.aspx;

Improvisation: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176621>

About TIR Convention: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=158890>;

13. If and when every country in our world moves away from fossil fuels entirely and an OPEC-like arrangement were to be created for the major producers of renewable energy raw materials, the power exercised by the Middle East today will shift to

1. Central Africa
2. South America
3. Central Asia
4. Australia

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a group of 14 nations that together contain almost half the world's oil production and most of its reserves. It is possible that a related group could be created for the major producers of renewable energy raw materials, shifting power away from the Middle East and towards central Africa and, especially, South America.

The list of countries that would become the new “renewables superpowers” contains some familiar names (USA, China), but also a few wild cards that include –

- **Brazil** and **Norway** for sources of quartzite (for silicon production, used for solar energy);
- **Chile, Peru, Congo** and **Indonesia** for sources of copper (especially for wind power);
- **Chile** for Lithium (batteries)
- **Congo** for cobalt (another ingredient in batteries)

<https://thewire.in/225574/renewable-superpowers-nations-wind-solar/>;

14. The Financial Action Task Force is an inter-governmental body established by

- a) The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
- b) G20 or Group of Twenty
- c) International Monetary Fund
- d) None of the above

Solution: d.

- In response to mounting concern over money laundering, the **Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF)** was established by the **G-7 Summit** that was held in **Paris** in **1989**.
- FATF is an **inter-governmental body** whose objectives are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- The FATF is therefore a “**policy-making body**” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.
- The FATF has developed a series of **recommendations** that are recognised as the international standard for combating of money laundering and the financing of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/pakistan-moves-against-terrorists-superficial-us/article22827310.ece>;

15. UNICEF's 'Every Child ALIVE' is a global campaign to

- a) Eradicate all vaccine-preventable diseases
- b) Eliminate open defecation
- c) End newborn deaths
- d) Achieve gender equality

Solution: c.

- **UNICEF's** global **Every Child ALIVE** campaign is an urgent appeal to governments, businesses, health-care providers, communities and individuals to fulfil the promise of **universal health coverage** and **keep every child alive**. It is a demand for affordable, quality health care for every mother and newborn.
- A child's birth and the **28 days** that follow are the most dangerous period of her life. Almost half of all under-five children who died in 2016 were newborns. These children are not dying because we don't have the tools to save them. More than 80 per cent of all newborn deaths are caused by three preventable and treatable conditions: complications due to prematurity or during delivery, and infections like sepsis, meningitis and pneumonia.

[https://www.unicef.org/every-child-alive/;](https://www.unicef.org/every-child-alive/)

https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_102640.html;

Source/Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/saving-lives-on-mortality-rate/article22828317.ece;>

- 16.** Which among the following countries is sometimes referred to in the news as the 'Republic of NGOs'?
- Haiti
 - India
 - South Sudan
 - Syria

Solution: a.

In the news – The Oxfam sex scandal

More non-governmental organizations exist per capita in Haiti than in any other country. "Even before the devastating earthquake of January 2010, it was estimated that there were over 10,000 NGOs operating in Haiti, some with very little official oversight or regulation.. Now the Oxfam sex scandal has increased many Haitians' frustrations at the actions of some of the charities operating there."

[BBC Video;](#)

- 17.** Which among the following countries are included in the 'Fragile Five' – a term sometimes seen in the news?
- Brazil
 - Russia
 - Indonesia
 - South Africa

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1, 3 and 4 only
- 1 and 4 only
- 3 only
- 1, 2, 3 and 4

Solution: a

'Fragile Five' is a term coined in August of 2013 by a financial analyst at Morgan Stanley to represent emerging market economies that have become too dependent on unreliable foreign investment to finance their growth ambitions. The five members include Brazil, Turkey, South Africa, India and Indonesia.

[PM addresses ET Global Business Summit;](#)

Introductory paragraph of [Budget Speech 2018;](#)

18. The 'Galkynysh Gas Field', sometimes in the news, is nearest to

- Mongolia
- Afghanistan
- India
- Myanmar

Solution: b.

Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India aim to complete the 1,840-km pipeline and begin pumping natural gas from **Turkmenistan's Galkynysh gas** fields by the beginning of 2020. These countries ceremonially broke ground recently on the Afghan section of the ambitious, multi-billion dollar gas pipeline, expected to help ease energy deficits in South Asia.



[TH: From Turkmenistan with natural gas;](#)

[TAPI breaks ground at Turkmenistan's border with Afghan;](#)

19. Recently in the news, Tier-I and H4 visas are issued by

- UK and USA
- Singapore and Japan
- Australia and New Zealand
- Canada and Sweden

Solution: a.

- Regarding Tier-I Visas: An increasing number of migrants from the subcontinent who have come to the UK on a 'Tier 1 Highly Skilled Visa' have had their applications to remain rejected or delayed because of amendments made to their tax filings. Campaigners say that with increasing regularity, a clause within Britain's immigration legislation — which focusses on a person's character and is intended to prevent the settlement of criminals — is being used to reject applicants. The campaigners say that the government was attempting to negatively portray workers who had simply made tax errors in their filings.
- Regarding H4 Visas: Some Indians opt for the H-4 visa, meant for dependents of H-1B visa-holders, to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams. H-1B visa regulations require its holders to earn a salary, whereas H-4 visa regulations does not. The Donald Trump administration may end work authorization for spouses of H-1B holders, to open up more jobs for Americans. It was a 2015 executive action by the administration of President Barack Obama that was meant to allow these people to leave their jobs and instead become job creators in America.

[TH: South Asians protest 'unjust' treatment of 'Tier I' visa-holders;](#)

[Indian H-4 entrepreneurs in limbo as US rethinks visa rules;](#)

VI. POLITY

1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Parliament can amend a repealed legislation retrospectively
2. The finance bill, the passing of which by the Parliament is a part of enactment of the budget, is a money bill

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

Solution: c.

Presently, consider statement 1 to be correct. Keep track of the news for any updates on this issue.

- The Union government has, in the Budget, proposed to amend the repealed Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 1976, retrospectively, a move that will benefit the ruling BJP and the Congress held guilty by the Delhi High Court for receiving foreign funds from two subsidiaries of Vedanta, a U.K.-based company. (The Representation of the People Act and the FCRA bar political parties from receiving foreign funds.)
- In 2016, the government amended the FCRA through the Finance Bill route, allowing foreign-origin companies to finance non-governmental organisations and clearing the way for donations to political parties by changing the definition of “foreign companies”. The amendment, though done retrospectively, only made valid the foreign donations received after 2010, the year when the 1976 Act was amended. The retrospective amendment did not apply to donations prior to 2010.

Justification for Statement 2 (Stages in Enactment of Budget -> Chapter ‘Parliament’, Indian Polity by M Laxmikanth): The **Finance Bill** (not financial bill) is introduced to give effect to the financial proposals of the Government of India for the following year. It is subjected to all the conditions applicable to a Money Bill.

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/fcra-changes-will-help-bjp-cong/article22639424.ece;>

<http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/fcra-amendment-in-finance-bill-to-help-bjp-congress-escape-scrutiny-5049589/>

2. Disruptions in either House of the Parliament often cause the presiding officer to

- a) Prorogue the sitting
- b) Terminate the sitting by adjournment *sine die*
- c) Terminate the sitting by adjournment
- d) None of the above

Solution: c.

- While the presiding officer can either **adjourn** the house for a specified time or indefinitely, disruptions have often led to him/her adjourning the house for a specified time and not indefinitely.
- An **adjournment** suspends the work in a sitting for a specified time, which may be hours, days or weeks.
- **Adjournment sine die** means terminating a sitting of Parliament for an indefinite. In other words, when the House is adjourned without naming a day for reassembly, it is called adjournment sine die. The power of adjournment as well as adjournment sine die lies with the presiding officer of the House.
- The **presiding officer (Speaker or Chairman)** declares the House adjourned *sine die*, when the business of a session is completed. Within the next few days, the **President** issues a notification for **prorogation** of the session. However, the President can also prorogue the House while in session.

Source/improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/rs-adjourned-twice-as-sp-aap-members-protest/article22636943.ece>;

3. Consider the following pairs:

| State/Union Territory | – | High Court with jurisdiction |
|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Andaman and Nicobar Islands | – | Madras High Court |
| 2. Dadra and Nagar Haveli | – | Gujarat High Court |
| 3. Lakshadweep | – | Kerala High Court |

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- 1 and 2 only
- 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Solution: b.

- Andaman and Nicobar Islands – Calcutta High Court
- Dadra and Nagar Haveli (also, Goa and Daman and Diu) – Bombay High Court
- Lakshadweep – Kerala High Court

<https://archive.india.gov.in/citizen/lawnorder.php?id=8> (Same table is provided at the end of the chapter 'High Court' in Laxmikanth's Polity);

<https://www.gktoday.in/quiz-questions/jurisdiction-of-which-among-the-following-high-courts-covers-the-union-territory-of-lakshadweep/>;

Source/Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kolkata/paucity-of-judges-in-calcutta-hc/article22651191.ece>;

4. Section 3 of the Indian Patents Act, 1970 belongs to the chapter titled

- Applications for Patents
- Opposition proceedings to grant of patents
- Powers of Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks
- Inventions not patentable

Solution: d.

- As per Section 2(1)(ja) (definition of ‘inventive step’) of the Patents Act, the product in question must feature a technical advance over what came before that’s not obvious to a skilled person. Because secondary patents for pharmaceuticals are often sought for trivial variants, they typically fail to qualify as an invention.
- Further, when a medicine is merely a variant of a known substance, Section 3(d) necessitates a demonstration of improvement in its therapeutic efficacy.
- Section 3(d) is complemented by other exceptions to patentability: Section 3(e) ensures that patents for combinations of known substances are allowed only if there is synergistic effect, while Section 3(i) ensures that no exclusivity can be claimed over methods of treatment.

The Act: http://www.ipindia.nic.in/writereaddata/Portal/IPOAct/1_31_1_patent-act-1970-11march2015.pdf;

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/biologics-patents-and-drug-prices/article22682251.ece>

5. Which of the following statements is/are amendments included in the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Amendment) Bill, 2017?

1. NABARD’s capital has been increased to Rs 3 lakh crore
2. The central government alone must hold at least 51 percent of the share capital of NABARD
3. Experts from MSMEs are included in the Board of Directors of NABARD

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

- The Bill allows the central government to increase this capital to Rs 30,000 crore. The capital may be increased to more than Rs 30,000 crore by the central government in consultation with the RBI, if necessary.
- Under the **original** Act (NABARD Act, 1981; NOT the amendment bill), the **central government** and the **RBI** together must hold **at least 51%** of the share capital of NABARD. The Bill (**amendment bill**) provides that the **central government alone** must hold **at least 51%** of the share capital of NABARD. (The Bill transfers the share capital held by the RBI and valued at Rs 20 crore to the central government. The central government will give an equal amount to the RBI.)
- The Bill **replaces** the terms ‘**small-scale industry**’ and ‘**industry in the tiny and decentralised sector**’ with the terms ‘**micro enterprise**’, ‘**small enterprise**’ and ‘**medium enterprise**’ as defined in the **MSME Development Act, 2006**.
- Under the 1981 Act, **experts** from **small-scale industries** are included in the **Board** of Directors and the Advisory Council of NABARD. The Bill extends this provision to the **MSMEs**.

For the other amendments, refer: <http://www.prsindia.org/billtrack/the-national-bank-for-agriculture-and-rural-development-amendment-bill-2017-4726/>

6. India's first-ever Health Index report titled, "Healthy States, Progressive India", has been prepared by NITI Aayog with assistance from
- World Health Organisation
 - Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
 - United Nations Development Programme
 - World Bank

Solution: d.

This report is the first attempt to establish an annual systematic tool to measure and understand the heterogeneity and complexity of the nation's performance in Health. The report has been developed by **NITI Aayog**, with technical assistance from the **World Bank**, and in consultation with the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**,

[http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176418;](http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176418)

[http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala-punjab-tn-top-niti-aayogs-health-index-report/article22707013.ece;](http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala-punjab-tn-top-niti-aayogs-health-index-report/article22707013.ece)

7. NITI Aayog's Health Index report ranks

- India's federal units into two categories namely, States and Union Territories (UTs)
- States and UTs on their year-on-year incremental change in health outcomes
- States And UTs on their overall performance with respect to each other

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Solution: b.

- The report ranks **states** and **Union territories** innovatively on their year-on-year incremental change in health outcomes, as well as, their overall performance with respect to each other.
- States and UTs have been ranked in three categories namely, **Larger States**, **Smaller States**, and **Union Territories (UTs)**, to ensure comparison among similar entities.

[http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176418;](http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176418)

[http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala-punjab-tn-top-niti-aayogs-health-index-report/article22707013.ece;](http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala-punjab-tn-top-niti-aayogs-health-index-report/article22707013.ece)

8. In terms of annual incremental performance (between 2014-15 and 2015-16), which among the following states/UTs was/were among the top performers according to NITI Aayog's Health Index report?

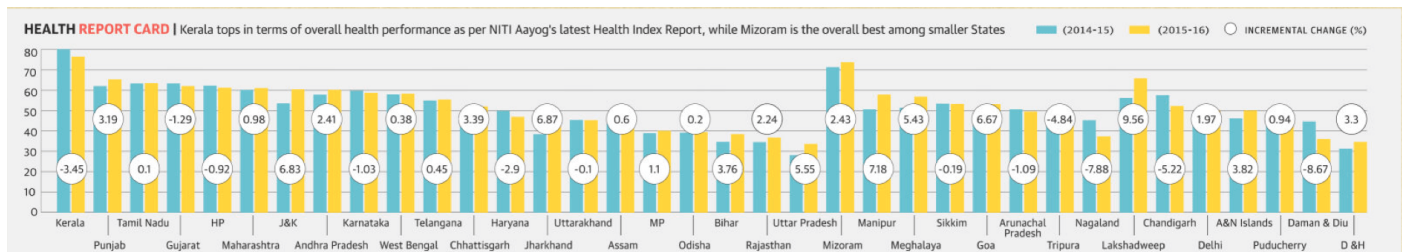
- Uttar Pradesh
- Lakshadweep
- Manipur
- Kerala

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1, 2 and 3
- 4 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 2, 3 and 4

Solution: a.

- The top performing states/UTs in terms of annual incremental performance include Jharkhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Goa and Lakshadweep.
- About one-third of the states have registered a decline in their performance in 2015-16 as compared to 2014-15.
- States/UTs with best overall performance include Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Mizoram, Manipur, Lakshadweep



<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176418;>

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala-punjab-tn-top-niti-aayogs-health-index-report/article22707013.ece;>

9. Consider the following pairs:

- | | | |
|--|----------|--|
| NGO | : | <i>Electoral reform due to petition filed by NGO in judiciary</i> |
| 1. Lok Prahari | : | Furnishing details of assets, educational qualifications and criminal antecedents of candidates contesting elections |
| 2. Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) | : | Disclosure of sources of income of candidates |
| 3. People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) | : | option of negative voting, viz. NOTA (None of the Above) |

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Solution: c.

Options 1 and 2 must be interchanged.

- In 1999, a PIL was filed by ADR with Delhi HC requesting for the disclosure of the criminal, financial and educational background of the candidates contesting elections. Based on this, the SC in 2002, and subsequently in 2003, made it mandatory for all candidates contesting elections to disclose criminal, financial and educational background prior to the polls by filing an affidavit with the EC.
- The SC has asked the Centre to amend the rules as well as the disclosure form filed by candidates along with their nomination papers, to include the sources of their income, and those of their spouses and dependants. The verdict of the two-judge Bench on a petition from the NGO, Lok Prahari, is one more in a long line of significant verdicts aimed at preserving the purity of the electoral process.

- **From 2013:** With a view to bringing about purity in elections, the SC held that a voter could exercise the option of negative voting and reject all candidates as unworthy of being elected. The voter could press the NOTA button in the electronic voting machine.

<https://adrindia.org/about-adr/mission-and-vision;>

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/give-voters-right-to-cast-negative-vote-apex-court/article5174414.ece;>

Source/Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/directing-reforms/article22791205.ece;>

10. Consider the following statements:

1. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) is a statutory body, viz. it has been established by an act of the Parliament
2. The Quality Review Board (QRB) – mandated to conduct independent audit quality reviews – is not a member of the International Forum of Independent Audit Regulators

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

Solution: c.

- The **ICAI** has been established by an Act of Parliament, viz. The Chartered Accountants Act, 1949 for regulating the profession of Chartered Accountancy in the country. It functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, GoI.
- The **QRB** is set up under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949 and is mandated to conduct independent audit quality reviews. QRB is not a member of the International Forum of Independent Audit Regulators (IFIAR). For QRB to become a member, IFIAR requires QRB to demonstrate its independence from the profession. Providing QRB the necessary independence can help in ensuring that the errant auditors in this instance (PNB scam) are punished so that the deterrence created by such punishment helps to improve audit quality.

Additional Information: The **SEBI Committee on Corporate Governance** chaired by **Uday Kotak** had recommended setting up of a **National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA)** which would function as an independent regulatory body, similar to the USA's Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB). The ICAI on the other hand is a self-regulatory body. The SEBI committee had also recommended that till the creation of the NFRA, the QRB should be strengthened to meet the independence criteria laid down by IFIAR and become its member at the earliest.

[http://www.qrbca.in/functions-of-the-board/;](http://www.qrbca.in/functions-of-the-board/)

https://www.icai.org/new_post.html?post_id=165&c_id=195;

Source: <https://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/et-commentary/how-to-tackle-bank-fraud-pnb-scam-should-pave-the-way-to-reforming-the-audit-profession-in-india/>

11. Consider the following statements about Joint Parliamentary Committees (JPCs):

1. A JPC is an ad-hoc body
2. The mandate of JPCs need not be limited to the scrutiny of government finances
3. The government is not required to report on the follow-up action taken on the basis of the recommendations of a JPC

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: b.

- A **JPC** is an *ad-hoc* body. It is set up for a **specific object and duration**. JPCs are set up by a **motion** passed in one house of Parliament and **agreed** to by the other. The details regarding membership and subjects are also **decided by Parliament**.
- For example, the motion to constitute a JPC on the stock market scam (2001) was moved by the government in the Lok Sabha. The motion constituted a JPC of 30 members of which 20 were from the Lok Sabha and 10 were from the Rajya Sabha.
- The mandate of a JPC depends on the motion constituting it. This need not be limited to the scrutiny of government finances.
- JPC recommendations have persuasive value but the committee cannot force the government to take any action on the basis of its report. The government may decide to launch fresh investigations on the basis of a JPC report. However, the discretion to do so rests entirely with the government. The government is required to report on the follow-up action taken on the basis of the recommendations of the JPC and other committees.

<http://www.prsindia.org/theprsblog/?tag=joint-parliamentary-committee>;

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/opposition-divided-on-jpc-probe-demand/article22820385.ece>;

12. ‘Campione Rules’, ‘Berlin Rules’ and ‘Helsinki Rules 1966’, recently in the news, all recognise the

- a) Principle of Equitable Apportionment
- b) Principle of Non-Refoulement
- c) Principle of Dualism in International Law
- d) Principle of Homonymy

Solution: a.

- In arriving at its decision, the **Supreme Court** followed the “*principle of equitable apportionment*” recognised by international rules on water sharing like “the **Helsinki rules**, **Campione rules** and **Berlin rules**”.
- This **principle of equitable apportionment**, as is now intrinsically embedded generally in a pursuit for apportionment of water of an international drainage basin straddling over two or more States, predicates that every riparian State is entitled to a fair share of the water according

to its need, and is imbued with the philosophy that a river has been provided by nature for the common benefit of the community as a whole through whose territory it flows even though those territories may be divided by frontiers as postulated in law.

- The **Helsinki Rules** of **1966** for instance recognise equitable use of water by each basin State taking into consideration the geography and hydrology of the basin, the climate, past utilisation of waters, economic and social needs, dependent population and availability of resources.

[http://indianexpress.com/article/india/sc-raises-karnatakas-cauvery-share-lets-tamil-nadu-use-groundwater-5067164/;](http://indianexpress.com/article/india/sc-raises-karnatakas-cauvery-share-lets-tamil-nadu-use-groundwater-5067164/)

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/cauvery-a-national-asset-no-exclusive-ownership/article22778384.ece;>

13. Which among the following initiatives by NITI Aayog has a direct bearing on competitive federalism ?

1. Sustainable Action for Transforming Health
2. Samavesh
3. Champions of Change

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: a.

1. **SATH** (<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=165545>): NITI Aayog has launched SATH, a program providing ‘**Sustainable Action for Transforming Human capital**’ with the State Governments.
 - The vision of the program is to initiate transformation in the education and health sectors. SATH aims to identify and build three future ‘role model’ states each for health and education systems (NITI Aayog has selected Uttar Pradesh, Assam, and Karnataka to improve healthcare delivery and key outcomes. In Education, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Jharkhand have been selected for support to better learning outcomes.)
2. **Samavesh** (<http://niti.gov.in/content/concept>) is a programme launched by the NITI Aayog to link together various lead Knowledge and Research Institutions.
3. **Champions of Change** (<http://niti.gov.in/content/champions-change-transforming-india-through-g2b-partnership>) is an initiative organised by NITI Aayog to “transform India through G2B (Government-to-Business) partnership”.

NITI Aayog and Competitive federalism

- Introduction of Digital Transformation Index and Innovation Index for ranking states
- Launch of the Health Index, which is to become an annual exercise across the country evaluating health outcomes.
- SATH
- School Education Quality Index (SEQI)
- Composite Water Management Index

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176698;>

14. The compulsory provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992) cover the reservation of seats of chairpersons for

1. Women in panchayats at all three levels (village, intermediate and district)
2. Backward classes in panchayats at all three levels
3. Members of the state legislature in panchayats at district level

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: a.

Compulsory provisions include:

- Reservation of seats (both members and chairpersons) for SCs and STs in panchayats at all the three levels.
- Reservation of one-third seats (both members and chairpersons) for women in panchayats at all the three levels.

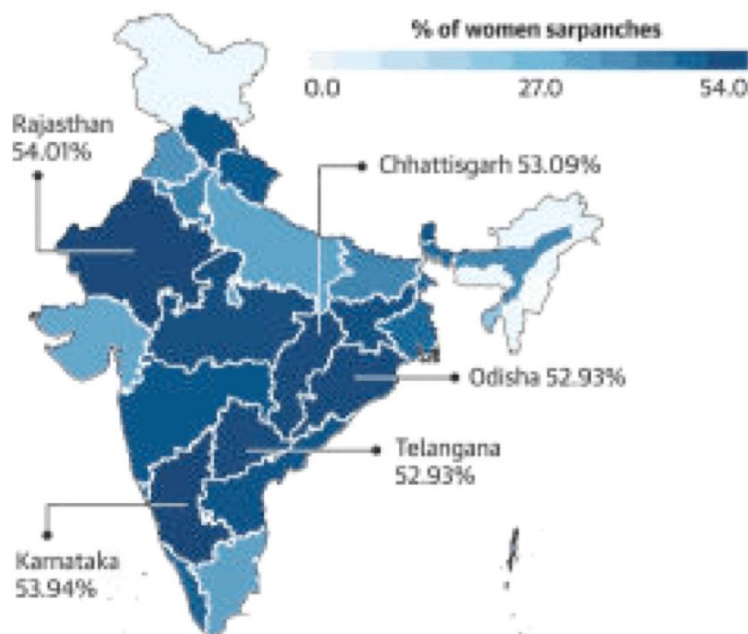
Voluntary provisions include:

- Giving representation to members of the Parliament (both the Houses) and the state legislature (both the Houses) in the panchayats at different levels falling within their constituencies.
- Providing reservation of seats (both members and chairpersons) for backward classes in panchayats at any level.

DATA POINT

Women at the helm

The number of women sarpanches in the country is 1.06 lakh – about 41% of the total number of sarpanches heading gram panchayats in the country. One in three positions in panchayats is reserved for women. The map shows that Rajasthan is the State with the highest number of women Sarpanches. Some States such as Jammu & Kashmir do not have any women sarpanches



VII. HISTORY & ART AND CULTURE

1. The research in this area presents a paradigm shift in thinking about the origin and spread of Middle Palaeolithic cultures in South Asia, suggesting a far greater antiquity than we thought. Here, the cultural sequence is contained in a single stratigraphic continuum and showing a long process of evolution. These statements refer to which among the following regions?
- Nubra Valley, Ladakh
 - Keezhadi, Tamil Nadu
 - Attirampakkam, Tamil Nadu
 - Unakoti, Tripura

Solution: c.

- Based on the study of over 7,200 stone artefacts collected from the archaeological site at Attirampakkam about 60 km from Chennai, researchers suggest that hominins in India may have developed a Middle Palaeolithic culture phase around 3,85,000 years ago and continuing up to around 1,72,000 years ago. According to earlier evidence, the Middle Palaeolithic culture in India was dated to around 1,25,000 years ago.
- 1.5-million-year-old stone artefacts belonging to the Lower Palaeolithic (Acheulian) culture were discovered from Attirampakkam in 2011. The objects were buried in sediments at the lowest levels in the excavation. In the top three metres of the soil, the same site has yielded artefacts that reflect a distinct Middle Palaeolithic culture.

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/archaeological-site-near-chennai-shows-the-long-process-of-human-evolution/article22612382.ece>

2. In which of the following ways did the British attempt to put down the rebellion of 1857?
- The whole of North India was put under martial law
 - Ordinary processes of law and trial were suspended and even ordinary Britons were given the power to try and punish Indians suspected of rebellion
 - Reinforcements were brought in from Britain

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Solution: d.

- In addition to the points mentioned above, "...the British used military power on a gigantic scale. But this was not the only instrument they used. In large parts of present-day Uttar Pradesh, where big landholders and peasants had offered united resistance, the British tried to break up the unity by promising to give back to the big landholders their estates. Rebel landholders were dispossessed and the loyal rewarded. Many landholders died fighting the British or they escaped into Nepal where they died of illness or starvation."

Themes in Indian History Part-III, NCERT Class XII;

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/alam-beg-martyr-of-sepoy-mutiny-wants-to-return-home/article22651852.ece>;

3. This cave site has iconography related to *Vaishnavism*, *Shaivism* and *Shaktism*. Of all the caves at this site, the most famous one has the colossal and iconic *Varaha* sculpture which represents the story of the rescue of *Bhudevi* (Earth). This cave site is at

- a) Ellora
- b) Mahabalipuram
- c) Udaygiri
- d) Badami

Solution: c.

- **Udayagiri** has 20 caves built during the **Gupta period** (300-550 CE).
- This site has iconography related to ***Vaishnavism***, ***Shaivism*** and ***Shaktism*** (Durga), as well as important inscriptions from the **Gupta period**. Of all the caves, cave number 5 is the most famous with its colossal and iconic ***Varaha* sculpture** which represents the story of the rescue of ***Bhudevi*** (Earth).



For a description of the **Varaha sculpture**, refer source:

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/columns/where-varaha-saves-the-earth/article22645921.ece>;

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

1. Modhera
2. Amarakantak
3. Arasavalli

Select the correct answer using the code given below :

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

Solution: c.

- The Sun Temple located at **Modhera** (Gujarat) was built in 1026-27 AD.
- **Arasavalli** Sun Temple is a 7th-century AD Sun Temple at Arasavalli, Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Omkareshwar** is a temple dedicated to God Shiva.

Q75 (CSP 2017): <http://www.insightsonindia.com/2017/06/19/answer-key-upsc-civil-services-prelims-exam-2017-general-studies-paper-1/>;

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/its-vadnagars-place-in-the-sun/article22661283.ece>;

5. The famous Bahubali Gomateshwara statue atop Vindhyagiri in Shravanabelagola is depicted in which among the following postures/*mudras*?

- Dhyana Mudra*
- Abhaya Mudra*
- Kayotsarga*
- Eka Pada Pranamasana*

Solution: c.

- **Lord Gomateshwara**, also known as **Bahubali**, was the son of the first **Jain Teerthankara**, Lord **Adinatha**. He is said to have meditated motionless for one year in a standing posture (*kayotsarga*) and that during this time, climbing plants grew around his legs.
- **Chavundaraya**, prime minister and commander-in-chief of the (Western) Ganga Kingdom, consecrated the statue of Bahubali in in 981 AD.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/ceremonies-for-mega-event-begin-today/article22672197.ece>;

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahubali>;

6. *Lopamudra*, *Gargi* and *Maitreyee* are women who belong to India's past and are commonly associated with

- The *Vedas*
- The first *bhikkhuni sangha*
- Temple architecture in Gupta age
- The *Bhakti* movement

Solution: a.

"In our country, respect for women, their status in society and their contribution has proved to be awe inspiring to the entire world, since ancient times. There has been a long tradition of *Vidushis*... women exponents or women champions. Many *Vidushis* of India have contributed in composing the verses of the *Vedas*. *Lopamudra*, *Gargi*, *Maitreyee*...it's a long list of names.. Be it the erudition of the *Vidushis* of the Vedic Period, be it the learning & devotion of **Akka Mahadevi** or **Meerabai**, be it the governance of **Ahilyabai Holkar** or the valour of **Rani Lakshmibai**, woman power has always inspired us. They have always brought glory to the Nation."

PM's 'Mann Ki Baat', January 2018: <http://pib.nic.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1517983>;

7. The Indian Council of Cultural Relations functions under the aegis of

- Ministry of External Affairs
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Tourism
- Ministry of Human Resource Development

Solution: a.

The **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)** objectives are to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes pertaining to India's external cultural relations; to foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries; to promote cultural exchanges with other countries and people; and to develop relations with nations.

<http://www.iccr.gov.in>;

Improvisation: Vikaspedia December 2017 Current Affairs

<http://vikaspedia.in/education/current-affairs/current-affairs-2017>;

8. The major centres of the Royal Indian Navy mutiny apart from Bombay was/were

1. Karachi
2. Calcutta
3. Madras

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: a.

“In the RIN revolt, **Karachi** was a major centre, second only to **Bombay**. The RIN revolt started on **18th February**. The news reached Karachi on the 19th, upon which the **HMIS Hindustan** went on a lightning strike. Sympathetic token strikes took place in military establishments in **Madras, Vishakhapatnam, Calcutta, Delhi...**”

‘Post-War National Upsurge’, India's Struggle for Independence, Bipan Chandra;

Improvisation: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/remembering-an-act-of-insurrection-royal-indian-navy-mutiny-ina-trial-5074578/>;

VIII. STATES

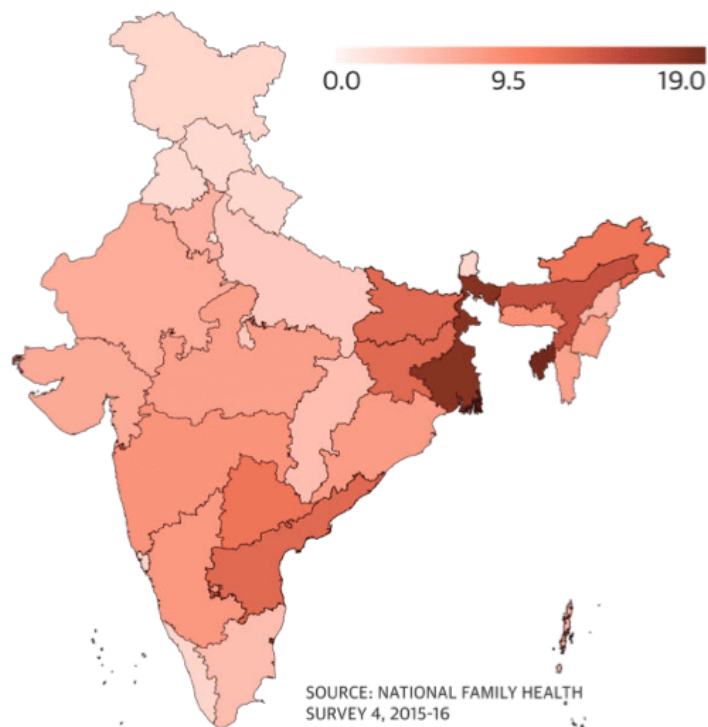
1. The percentage of girls in the 15-19 age group giving birth has halved from 16% in 2005-06 to 8% in 2015-16, reveals the National Health Family Survey 4. The worst faring states can be found in
- South India
 - North India
 - West India
 - East India

Solution: d.

DATA POINT

Teenage mothers

The percentage of girls in the 15-19 age group giving birth has halved from 16% in 2005-06 to 8% in 2015-16, reveals the National Family Health Survey 4. But there is considerable variation in the figures for different regions, with Tripura, West Bengal and Assam faring the worst.



2. Bhutan shares its borders with which among the following Indian states?
1. Arunachal Pradesh
 2. Sikkim
 3. Assam
 4. West Bengal

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.



Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/indias-growth-depends-on-northeastern-states/article22647763.ece>;

3. 'Transformation by Transportation', recently in the news, is
- The Budget 2018-19 theme
 - The Centre's development strategy for the northeast
 - The 2018-19 theme for the BBIN subregional grouping
 - The India-ASEAN Connectivity Enhancement Programme

Solution: b.

- At the international event Advantage Assam, Mr. Modi said "Connectivity is key to developing the region, the reason why the government has adopted the motto of 'transformation by transportation' to change the face of the northeast."

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/indias-growth-depends-on-northeastern-states/article22647725.ece>;

4. The first Pelican Bird Festival-2018 was recently organised at
- Pulicat lake
 - Kolleru lake
 - Ashtamudi wetland
 - Vembanad-Kol wetland

Solution: b.

- It was organised by the AP State Tourism Department.

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-andhrapradesh/pelican-festival-at-kolleru-a-huge-hit/article22653092.ece>

5. The budget recently included a proposal to take up construction of a tunnel under the Sela Pass which is located in
- Jammu and Kashmir
 - Himachal Pradesh
 - Sikkim
 - Arunachal Pradesh

Solution: d.

- The **Sela Pass** is a high-altitude mountain pass located on the border between the **Tawang** and **West Kameng** districts of **Arunachal Pradesh** state in India.
- The Army's presence in Arunachal Pradesh, specifically the western section leading to Tawang, had been scaled up since the Chinese aggression in 1962. This led to a land acquisition spree in Tawang and West Kameng districts.



Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-life/where-every-family-is-a-crorepati/article22696993.ece>

6. Which among the following places is located closest to Sri Lanka?
- Tuticorin
 - Point Calimere
 - Cape Comorin
 - Dhanushkodi

Solution: d.



The distance between the shore and the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) in the Palk Bay is 15 nautical miles from Point Calimere in Nagapattinam district, 29 nautical miles from Adirampatinam and 27 nautical miles from Mallipattinam in Thanjavur district, it is only 12 nautical miles from Rameswaram and just 9 nautical miles from Danushkodi in Ramanathapuram district. (See image; Katchatheevu is an island administered by SL.)

Trivia: Arichal Munai in Dhanushkodi is the extreme point of Indian soil closest to Sri Lanka.

RAMSAR SITES IN INDIA



<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/off-tn-coast-fishermen-in-troubled-waters/article22718726.ece>

7. According to the US-based Institute of Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, more than half of which Indian state's power will be generated by zero emissions technologies by 2027?
- Tamil Nadu
 - Uttar Pradesh
 - Karnataka
 - Gujarat

Solution: a.

India's southern state of **Tamil Nadu** is poised to become a **global leader in wind power**, according to a new report. The report – by the US-based Institute of Energy Economics and Financial Analysis – predicts that by 2027, **more than half** of Tamil Nadu's power will be generated by “**zero emissions**” technologies – notably **solar** and **wind**. The state's current capacity to generate wind power – **7.85 gigawatts (GW)** – is already impressive considering it is higher than that of Denmark or Sweden. It could prove to be an example of how emerging economies can grow while slashing their carbon emissions.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-42971504>;

8. As per the Forest Survey of India (ISFR 2017) assessment, mangroves are spread over an area of 4921 sq km in India only across twelve States/Union Territories. Which of the following UTs is not to be found among these twelve?
- Daman & Diu
 - Puducherry
 - Andaman & Nicobar Islands
 - Lakshadweep

Solution: d.

As per the ISFR 2017, the total mangrove cover stands at 4,921 sq km and has shown an increase of 181 sq km. All the 12 mangrove states have shown a positive change in the mangrove cover, as compared to the last assessment.

| Table 3.2 Mangrove Cover Assessment 2017 | | | | | | (Area in sq km) |
|--|----------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------|-------|----------------------------------|
| S. No. | State/UT | Very Dense Mangrove | Moderately Dense | Open Mangrove | Total | Change with respect to ISFR 2015 |
| 1. | Andhra Pradesh | 0 | 213 | 191 | 404 | 37 |
| 2. | Goa | 0 | 20 | 6 | 26 | 0 |
| 3. | Gujarat | 0 | 172 | 968 | 1,140 | 33 |
| 4. | Karnataka | 0 | 2 | 8 | 10 | 7 |
| 5. | Kerala | 0 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 0 |
| 6. | Maharashtra | 0 | 88 | 216 | 304 | 82 |
| 7. | Odisha | 82 | 94 | 67 | 243 | 12 |
| 8. | Tamil Nadu | 1 | 25 | 23 | 49 | 2 |
| 9. | West Bengal | 999 | 692 | 423 | 2,114 | 8 |
| 10. | A&N Islands | 399 | 169 | 49 | 617 | 0 |
| 11. | Daman & Diu | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| 12. | Puducherry | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| | Total | 1,481 | 1,480 | 1,960 | 4,921 | 181 |

http://fsi.nic.in/details.php?pgID=sb_64;

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176496;>

9. Forest cover as a percentage of a state's (or UT's) geographical area is the largest in which among the following group of states/UTs?
- Kerala, Sikkim and Uttarakhand
 - Nagaland, Tripura and Goa
 - Lakshadweep, Mizoram and Andaman & Nicobar Islands
 - Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Chhattisgarh and Assam

Solution: c.

- In terms of percentage of forest cover with respect to the total geographical area, **Lakshadweep** with (90.33 per cent) has the highest forest cover, followed by Mizoram (86.27 per cent) and Andaman & Nicobar Island (81.73 per cent).

- Additionally, **Madhya Pradesh** has the largest forest cover terms of **area** (absolute forest cover), followed by Arunachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

| Table 2.5 States/UTs with Forest Cover more than 33 percent of Geographic Area | | | | | | (area in sq km) | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| States/UTs | Geographic Area | 2017 Assessment | | | | Scrub | Forest Cover Percent |
| | | VDF | MDF | OF | Total | | |
| Lakshadweep | 30 | 0 | 17.04 | 10.06 | 27.10 | 0 | 90.33 |
| Mizoram | 21,081 | 131 | 5,861 | 12,194 | 18,186 | 0 | 86.27 |
| A & N Islands | 8,249 | 5,678 | 684 | 380 | 6,742 | 1 | 81.73 |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 83,743 | 20,721 | 30,955 | 15,288 | 66,964 | 247 | 79.96 |
| Manipur | 22,327 | 908 | 6,510 | 9,928 | 17,346 | 1,111 | 77.69 |
| Meghalaya | 22,429 | 453 | 9,386 | 7,307 | 17,146 | 505 | 76.45 |
| Nagaland | 16,579 | 1,279 | 4,587 | 6,623 | 12,489 | 503 | 75.33 |
| Tripura | 10,486 | 656 | 5,246 | 1,824 | 7,726 | 15 | 73.68 |
| Goa | 3,702 | 538 | 576 | 1,115 | 2,229 | 0 | 60.21 |
| Kerala | 38,852 | 1,663 | 9,407 | 9,251 | 20,321 | 23 | 52.30 |
| Sikkim | 7,096 | 1081 | 1,575 | 688 | 3,344 | 307 | 47.13 |
| Uttarakhand | 53,483 | 4,969 | 12,884 | 6,442 | 24,295 | 383 | 45.43 |
| Dadra & Nagar Haveli | 491 | 0 | 80 | 127 | 207 | 5 | 42.16 |
| Chhattisgarh | 135,192 | 7,064 | 32,215 | 16,268 | 55,547 | 552 | 41.09 |
| Assam | 78,438 | 2,797 | 10,192 | 15,116 | 28,105 | 217 | 35.83 |
| Total | 502,178 | 47,938 | 130,175 | 102,561 | 280,674 | 3,869 | 55.89 |

http://fsi.nic.in/details.php?pgID=sb_64;

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176496;>

10. The recent cabinet decision to set up a tribunal to settle the Mahanadi dispute will benefit, mainly, the states of
- Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand
 - Odisha and Chhattisgarh
 - Jharkhand and Odisha
 - Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh

Solution: b.

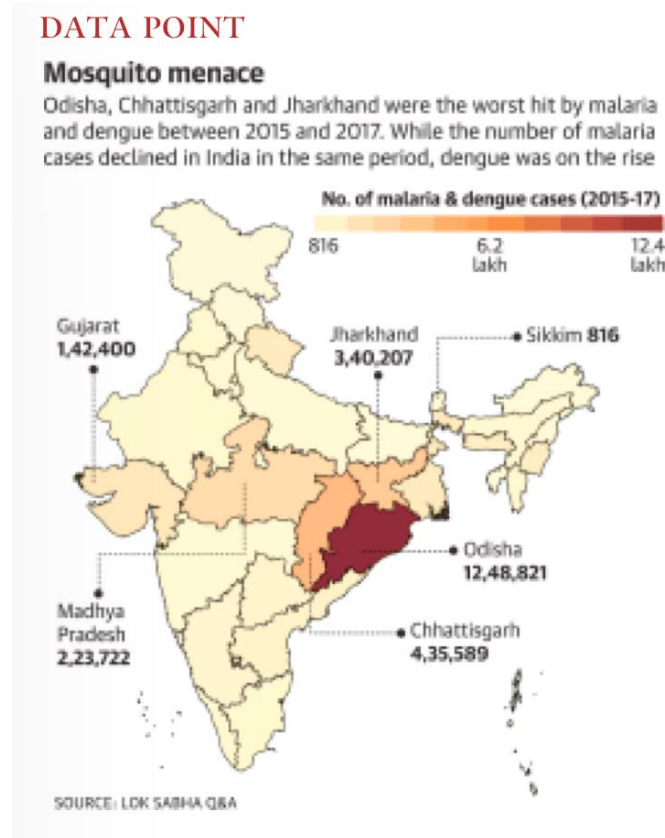
“It is expected that with adjudication of dispute by the Tribunal, the long-pending dispute between States of Odisha and Chhattisgarh on Mahanadi river will come to a final settlement..”

<http://pib.nic.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1521034;>

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/cabinet-approves-setting-up-tribunal-to-settle-mahanadi-water-dispute/article22805069.ece;>

11. Which among the following regions accounts for the largest number of malaria and dengue cases in recent years?
- Northern India
 - Southern India
 - Eastern India
 - Northeastern India

Solution: c.



12. The municipal corporation of which state's capital recently organised a 'Trash Mahotsav' to spread awareness about reusing waste creatively and recycling garbage?
- Chhattisgarh
 - Maharashtra
 - Jharkhand
 - Karnataka

Solution: a.

The objective behind this festival sponsored by Raipur Municipal Corporation was to generate awareness about cleanliness and the methods using which city's waste can be creatively used and inculcate awareness about various ways to recycle the garbage. A plethora of activities were organized during this festival, which found full participation of students and adults.

[PM's Mann Ki Baat;](#)

- 13.** The recent coal sector reform, touted to be the most ambitious one since the nationalisation of the sector in 1973, will in the near-term benefit especially the states of
- a) South India
 - b) West India
 - c) North India
 - d) East India

Solution: d.

As the entire revenue from the auction of coal mines for sale of coal would accrue to the coal bearing States, the recently approved methodology for auction of coal mines (opening up of commercial coal mining for private sector) shall incentivise them with increased revenues which can be utilised for the growth and development of backward areas and their inhabitants including tribals. States in Eastern part of the country will be especially benefited.

- This reform is expected to bring efficiency into the coal sector by moving from an era of monopoly to competition.
- It will increase competitiveness and allow the use of best possible technology into the sector.
- The higher investment will create direct and indirect employment in coal bearing areas especially in mining sector and will have an impact on economic development of these regions.
- It will also lead to energy security as 70% of India's electricity is generated from thermal power plants.
- This reform will ensure assured coal supply, accountable allocation of coal and affordable coal leading to affordable power prices for consumers.

[http://pib.nic.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1521019;](http://pib.nic.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1521019)

IX. DEFENCE & SECURITY

1. 'Operation Cactus', recently in the news, refers to
- a) The 2016 Turkish coup attempt
 - b) The United States' recent attempts at regime change in Venezuela
 - c) India's military intervention in the Maldives in 1988
 - d) India's 2016 surgical strikes on terror launch pads in PoK

Solution: c.

'**Operation Cactus**' is the code name for **India's military** intervention in the **Maldives** in **1988**, following an attempted coup d'état against the government of President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and his request for help.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/drama-on-the-high-seas-30-years-ago/article22682261.ece>

2. 'MILAN 2018', recently in the news, refers to
- a) Naval exercises encompassing participation by maritime forces of the Indian Ocean littoral nations
 - b) An international publicity event by the Ministry of Tourism to showcase the rich heritage and pristine natural beauty of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands
 - c) A track 2.5 dialogue between India and Pakistan
 - d) None of the above

Solution: a.

The second week of March will witness Andaman & Nicobar Command hosting a multinational mega event **MILAN 2018**. MILAN is a congregation of littoral navies conducted biennially by Indian Navy at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, under the aegis of the Andaman and Nicobar Command.

MILAN made modest beginnings more than two decades ago when it was first held in **1995**. The first edition saw participation of four littoral navies. From an event of sub-regional context, MILAN has now grown into a prestigious international event and encompasses participation by maritime forces from not just the Bay of Bengal and South East Asia but the larger **Indian Ocean Region**.

[http://www.pib.nic.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1521660;](http://www.pib.nic.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1521660)

3. DRDO's 'TAPAS-BH-201'
1. Is an extreme-altitude long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle
 2. Has an endurance of over 20 hours
 3. Can fly at an altitude of 50,000 feet

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| a) 1 and 2 only | b) 2 only |
| c) 1 and 3 only | d) None of the above |

Solution: b.

- Rustom-2 belongs to a family of UAVs under development, besides Rustom-1 and Rustom-H. A medium-altitude long-endurance (MALE) unmanned aerial vehicle, the Rustom-2 or TAPAS-BH-201 has been developed by India on the lines of the American Predator drones.
- Having the capability to fly for 24 hours at stretch, the combat aerial vehicle can conduct sustained surveillance and can carry weapons along with surveillance equipment.
- The drone can fly up to an altitude of 22,000 feet.
- Currently, the three services employ hundreds of Israeli drones and have projected a requirement of hundreds of more UAVs, including armed variants, in the near future.

[IE: DRDO successfully carries out test flight of RUSTOM-2 drone;](#)

[TH: Rustom-2 UAV successfully test-flown;](#)

IIX. Miscellaneous

1. Consider the following statements about River Narmada:

1. It originates from a region that is an example of a radial drainage pattern
2. It flows in a rift valley
3. It flows through Bhopal and Surat

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: b.

- When the rivers originate from a hill and flow in **all directions**, the drainage pattern is known as '**radial**'. The rivers originating from the **Amarkantak** range present a good example of it.
- The Narmada originates on the western flank of the **Amarkantak** plateau at a height of about 1,057m. It flows in a **rift valley** between the **Satpura** in the south and the **Vindhyan** range in the north. It flows south of **Bhopal** and north of **Surat**. The mouth of River Narmada is located at **Bharuch**, north of Surat.



India Physical Environment, Class 11 NCERT;

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/gujarat-may-face-severe-water-crisis/article22695179.ece>;

2. Consider the following pairs:

| Sustainable Development Goal – | – | Issues addressed |
|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 1. SDG 6 | – | WASH |
| 2. SDG 8 | – | Human trafficking |
| 3. SDG 11 | – | Affordable housing |

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

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

Solution: d.

- **SDG 6** : 'Ensure access to water and sanitation for all' is the goal. WASH stands for Water, sanitation and Hygiene.
- **SDG 8.7** : Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking
- **SDG 11.1** : By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

This article dealt with studies related to WASH interventions: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/can-sanitation-reduce-stunting/article22756273.ece>;

SDG 8 was mentioned here: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/rethinking-trafficking/article22735835.ece>;

UN SDGs: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>;

3. Consider the following statements with reference to Mercer's Quality of Living Reports:

1. Hyderabad has been ranked as the top Indian city in the 'quality of living' ranking in the latest report
2. Indian cities that have been a part of the survey have made rapid progress on the quality of living scale since the previous assessment

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: a.

A mains-oriented question; the latest **Mercer's Quality of Living report** was released in March **2017**.

Improvisation (<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/2sEX5MD7aW1whVkxFlINCL/Rent-control-is-crippling-Indias-richest-city.html>):

- India's financial capital Mumbai is the 12th richest city in the world according to a report (released recently) by the **New World Wealth**. But the city does have a big challenge: the liveability level of the city, as flagged by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant.

The **Mercer Quality of Living Report 2017 findings**

(<https://www.mercer.co.in/newsroom/mercero-quality-of-living-report-2017.html>):

- India's traditional business centres Mumbai and New Delhi are ranked at 154 and 161 respectively (out of 230 cities worldwide that were surveyed). Both Hyderabad (rank 144) and Pune rank higher for quality of living than Mumbai and New Delhi. Hyderabad has been ranked as the top Indian city in the quality of living ranking for the third year in a row. The survey highlights that Indian cities that have been part of the survey haven't made much progress on the quality of living scale since last year (2016 assessment).

4. River Barak flows through the states of

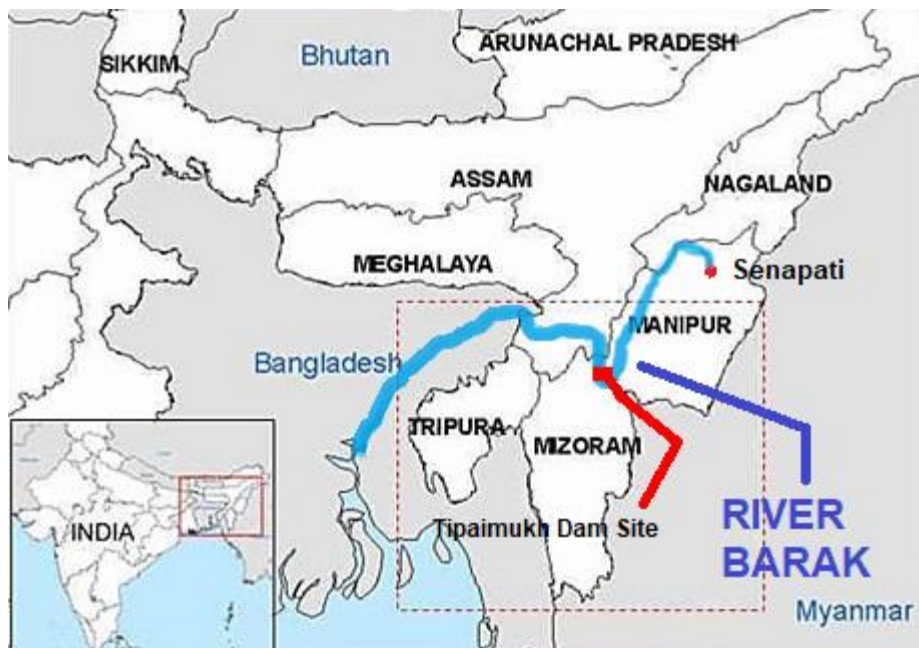
1. Assam
2. Tripura
3. Meghalaya

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) None of the above

Solution: a.

The Barak River rises from the **Manipur hills**, in Senapati district of Manipur. It flows then along Nagaland-Manipur border, the Manipur-Mizoram border and the Manipur-Assam border before it enters Assam and then Bangladesh.



<http://india-wris.nrsc.gov.in/wrpinfo/index.php?title=Barak;>

http://www.india-wris.nrsc.gov.in/wrpinfo/index.php?title=Barak_and_others;

Improvisation (Vikaspedia November 2017 Current Affairs): A 3-day **Namami Barak festival** was held in Assam last November.

5. In which among the following sub-indices/indicators of the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business does India perform well?

- a) Starting a business
- b) Enforcing contracts
- c) Dealing with construction permits
- d) Protecting minority investors

Solution: d.

The ten sub-indices are:

1. Starting a business
2. Dealing with construction permits
3. Getting electricity
4. Registering property
5. Getting credit
6. Paying taxes
7. Enforcing contracts
8. Trading across borders
9. Protecting minority investors
10. Resolving insolvency

India still lags in performance in the areas of Starting a Business, Dealing with Construction Permits and Enforcing Contracts. India performs well in the areas of Protecting Minority Investors (globally ranked 4th), Getting Credit, and Getting Electricity.

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/10/31/india-jumps-doing-business-rankings-with-sustained-reform-focus>;

Improvisation: <http://pib.nic.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PMO=3&PRID=1520874>;

6. Consider the following statements about the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) in large states with reference to Niti Aayog's 'Healthy States, Progressive India' report:

1. For most of the states, SRB has declined between what the report regards as the base and reference year
2. Measured as the number of number of girls born for every 1,000 boys born during a specific year, the SRB is not 1,000 or above in any state

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Both 1 and 2

Solution: c.

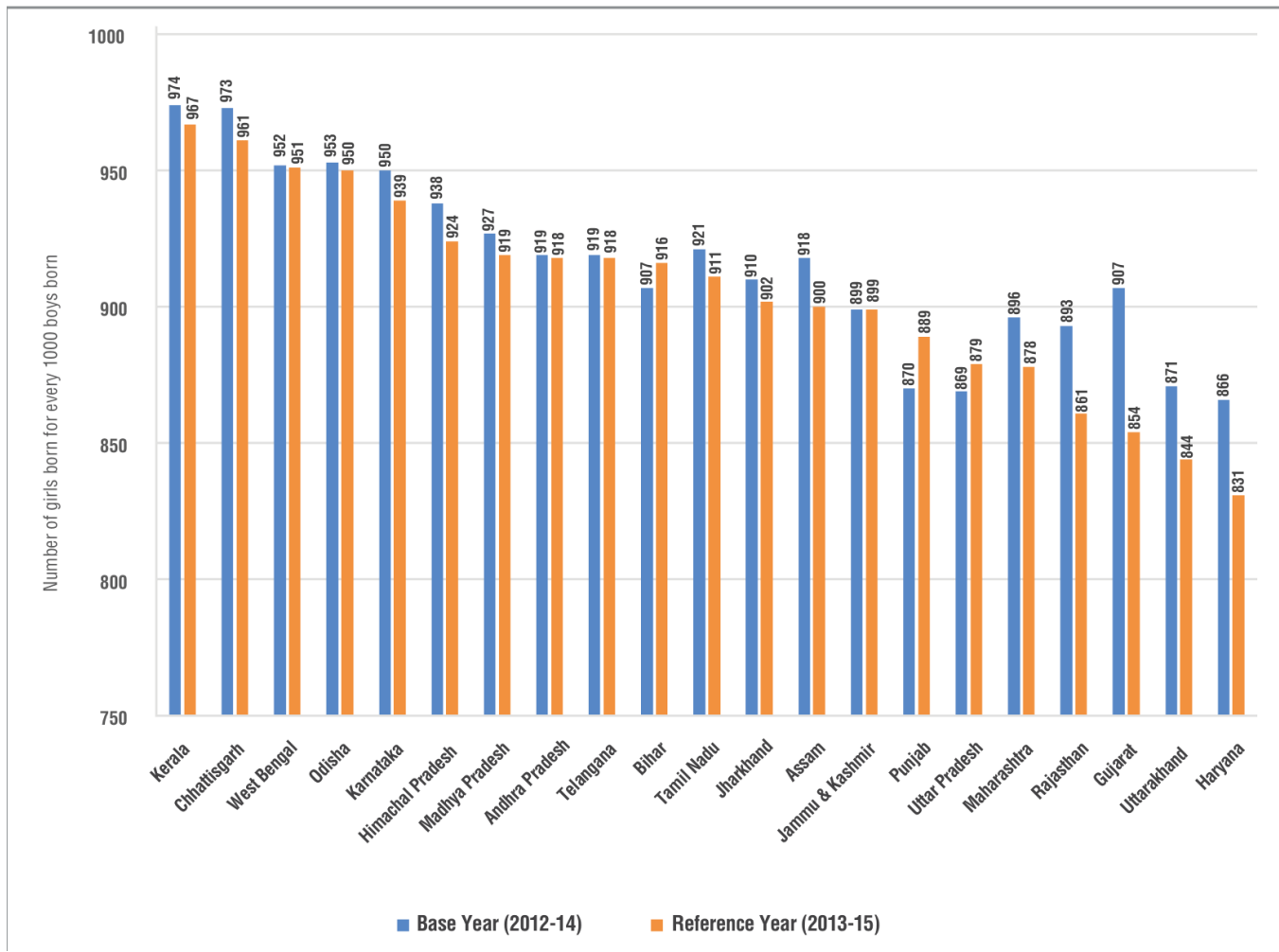
Both statements are correct.

Sex Ratio at Birth or the number of girls born for every 1000 boys born during a specific year is an important indicator and reflects the extent to which there is reduction in the number of girl children born by sex-selective abortions. This indicator was only available for the category of Larger States. The SRB is substantially lower in almost all Larger States – 17 out of 21 States have SRB of less than 950 females per 1000 males. Further, in most States, SRB has declined between the base year (2012-14) and reference year (2013-15), except for Bihar, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh where improvements in SRB were noted, and Jammu & Kashmir where it stagnated.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/sex-ratio-at-birth-dips-in-17-large-states-gujarat-tops-list/article22785970.ece>;

<http://niti.gov.in/content/healthy-states-progressive-india-report-ranks-states-and-union-territories;>

Figure 4.23 - Indicator 1.1.5: Sex Ratio at Birth - Larger States



7. Consider the following pairs:

Mountain range – **Found in country**

1. Zagros – Iran
2. Carpathian – Italy
3. Andes – Colombia

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) None of the above

Solution: b.

- **Zagros Mountains** (<https://www.britannica.com/place/Zagros-Mountains>) is a mountain range in southwestern Iran, extending northwest-southeast from the border areas of eastern Turkey and northern Iraq to the Strait of Hormuz.

- **Carpathian Mountains** (<https://www.britannica.com/place/Carpathian-Mountains>), a geologically young European mountain chain forming the eastward continuation of the Alps.
- **The Andes** (Andes Mountains – <https://www.britannica.com/place/Andes-Mountains>) consist of a vast series of extremely high plateaus surmounted by even higher peaks that form an unbroken rampart over a distance of some 5,500 miles (8,900 kilometres)—from the southern tip of South America to the continent's northernmost coast on the Caribbean.



Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/search-for-missing-iranian-plane-hit-by-bad-weather/article22800201.ece>;

8. Which among the following is the only country to share a border with both Iran and Iraq?
- Turkey
 - Syria
 - Jordan
 - Armenia

Solution: a.

General map question.

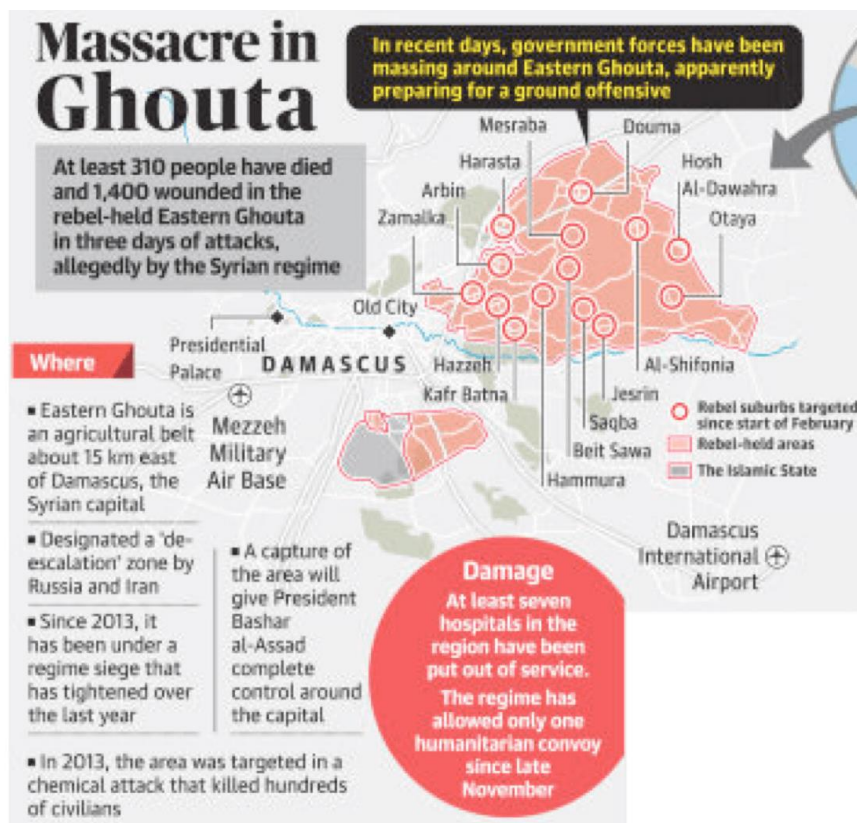
There have been plenty of issues frequently appearing in the news related to the happenings in West Asia. UPSC will not ask such a direct question, but knowing such small details (with regard to both – the map of India and the World) will help you answer map-based questions in preliminaries.



9. 'Ghouta', recently in the news, is a city in

- Myanmar
- Colombia
- Venezuela
- Syria

Solution: d.



<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/fire-and-fury/article22818648.ece;>

10. Which of the following countries are have territorial boundaries with Myanmar?

1. Bangladesh
2. Vietnam
3. Laos
4. Cambodia

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 1 and 3
- c) 2 and 3
- d) 3 and 4

Solution: b.

PM Sheikh Hasina reiterated that all countries having territorial boundaries with Myanmar should play a role in finding a solution to the Rohingya crisis. "India, China, Bangladesh, Laos, and Thailand have land borders with Myanmar but only Bangladesh gave them refuge. So all sides should be consulted in finding a solution," she said.



<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-international/ask-myanmar-to-take-back-rohingya-hasina/article22811117.ece>;

11. Mahanadi's main tributaries include the

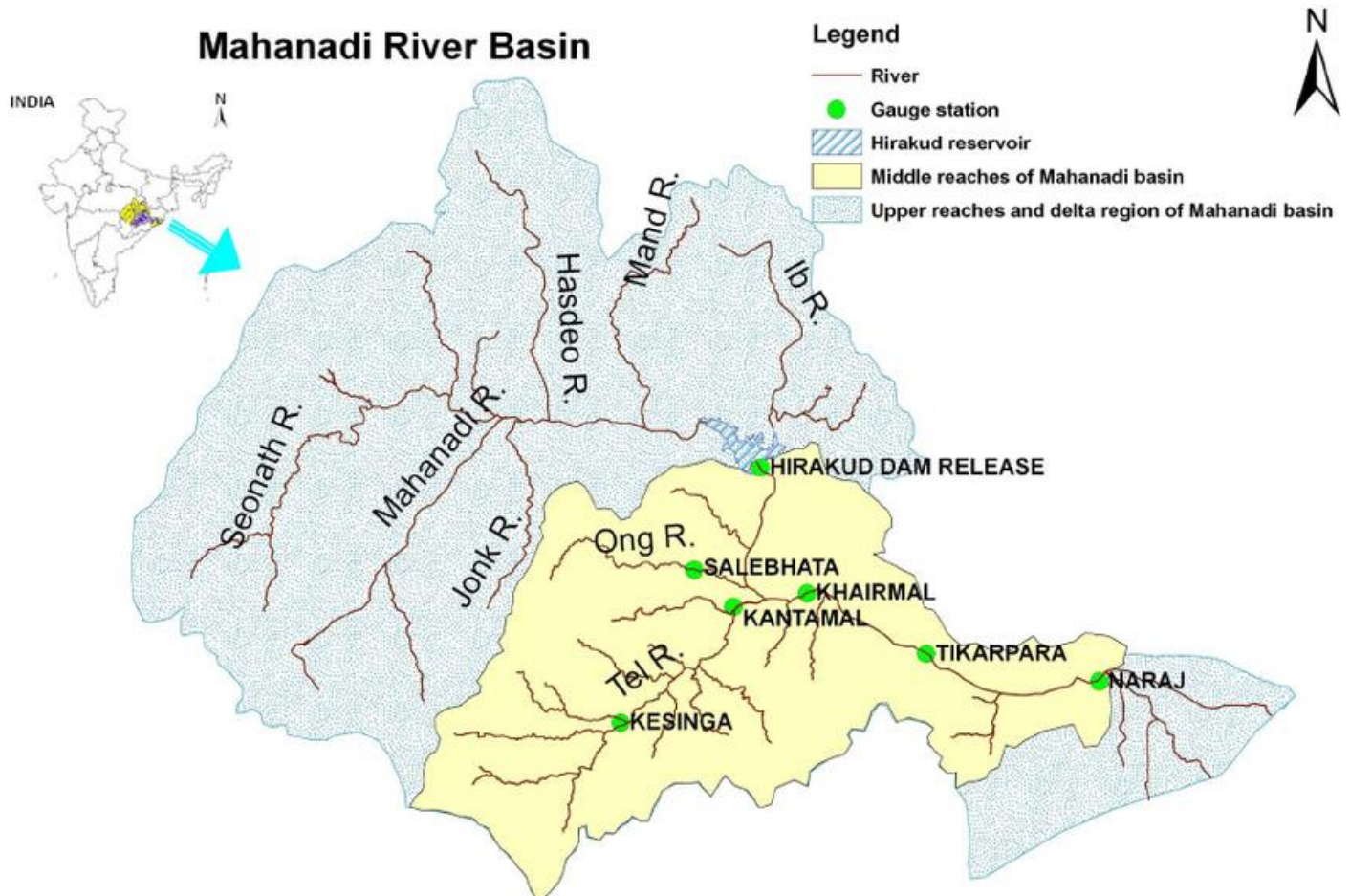
1. Waiganga
2. Hasdeo
3. Jonk
4. Sankh

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

The main tributaries of River Mahanadi include the **Seonath**, the **Hasdeo**, the **Mand** and the **Ib** (which join from the **left**) and the **Ong**, the **Tel** and the **Jonk** (which join from **right**).



<http://www.india-wris.nrsc.gov.in/wrpinfo/index.php?title=Mahanadi;>

Improvisation: [http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/cabinet-approves-setting-up-tribunal-to-settle-mahanadi-water-dispute/article22805069.ece;](http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/cabinet-approves-setting-up-tribunal-to-settle-mahanadi-water-dispute/article22805069.ece)

12. Which of the following are tributaries of River Cauvery?

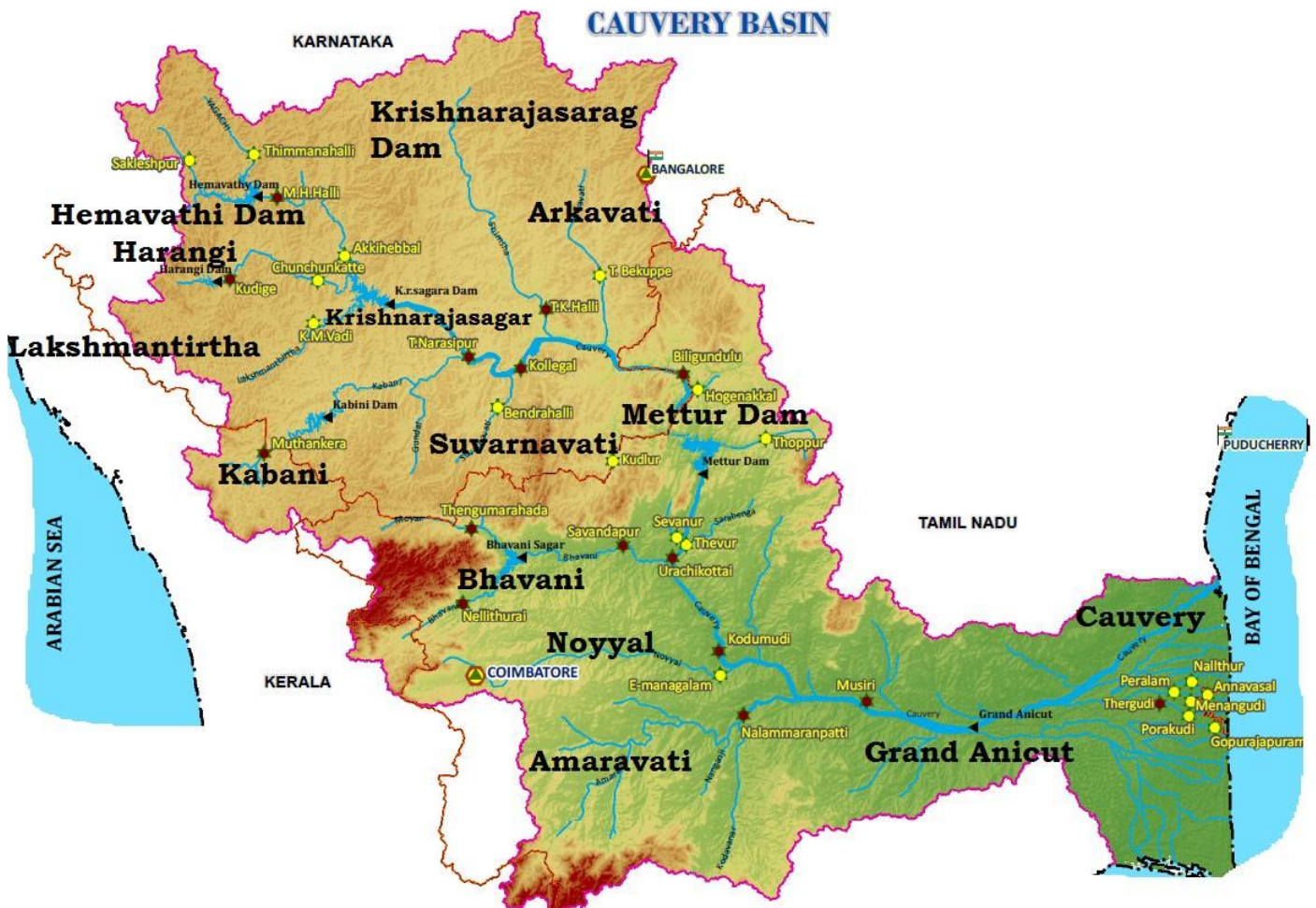
1. Hemavathi
2. Bhavani
3. Noyil
4. Amravati

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

Its important tributaries joining from **left** are the **Harangi**, the **Hemavathi**, the **Shimsha** and the **Arkavati** whereas the **Lakshmantirtha**, the **Kabbani**, the **Suvarnavati**, the **Bhavani**, the **Noyil** and the **Amaravati** joins from **right**.



India Physical Environment Class XI NCERT;

<http://www.india-wris.nrsc.gov.in/wrpinfo/index.php?title=Cauvery;>

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/why-the-cauvery-verdict-may-impact-other-disputes/article22846069.ece;>

13. Consider the following pairs:

| 2018 Padma Bhushan /Padma Shri awardee | – | Reason for the award |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Sitavaa Jodatti | – | Welfare of Devadasis |
| 2. Lakshmikutty | – | Fostering an indigenous knowledge system |
| 3. Subhashini Mistry | – | Building the charitable Humanity Hospital |

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

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

Solution: d.

“...these days you must be hearing a lot about the Padma Awards. These awards also attract attention in newspapers and television also. But if you observe, then you will be proud of the fact that there many loftier personalities amidst us and you will naturally be proud of the very fact that today the common man is being cited for Padma awards without any recommendations. There was a certain methodology of awarding Padma Awards every year, but this entire process has been changed for the past three years. Now any citizen can nominate any person in our country. Transparency has been brought about in the entire process by making it operable online. In a way, the selection of these awards has been transformed completely. You may have noticed that many ordinary people not visible in big cities, in newspapers or on TV are being awarded with Padma citations. Now the identity of the awardee is not the deciding factor of the award, rather the importance of his work is increasing.”

“Sitavaa Jodatti from Karnataka has not been hailed as Goddess of women empowerment just for nothing! For the past three decades, in Belagavi, she has made a great contribution towards changing the lives of countless women. At the age of seven she had dedicated herself as a Devadasi but in a turnaround, for the welfare of the Devdasis, she has spent her entire life.. You will be pleasantly surprised listening to the story of Kerala’s tribal lady Lakshmikutty. She is a teacher in Kallar and still resides in a hut made of palm leaves in a tribal tract amidst dense forests. She has created five hundred herbal medicines relying solely on her memory. She has mastery in synthesizing medicines used for treatment of snake bites. Lakshmi Ji is continuously serving society with her knowledge of herbal medicines.. I would like to mention another name today, that of 75 year old Subhasini Mistri, hailing from West Bengal.. At the age of 23 she lost her husband due to lack of proper treatment, and this incident inspired her to build a hospital for the poor. For this, she cleaned utensils in the homes of others and also sold vegetables. Today, thousands of poor people are treated free of cost in this hospital that has come up through her hard-work..”

These names (and a few others) were mentioned in the January edition of the [PM’s Mann Ki Baat](#) programme.

Clarifications

From January 2018:

- Q4 (<http://www.insightsonindia.com/2018/01/31/quiz-2017-insights-current-affairs-quiz-31-january-2018/>); (Page 69 of [January Quiz Doc](#), Q38): Typo; The explanation provided is clear – answer must be option ‘a’. For the purpose of Article 108, the President only summons both the Houses; the Speaker of the Lok Sabha presides over a joint sitting called for under this article.

In this Document:

- Q4, 13th February (<http://www.insightsonindia.com/2018/02/13/quiz-2017-insights-current-affairs-quiz-13-february-2018/>); (Q18, ECONOMY): Typo; Solution must be option ‘a’, viz. interest payments. This is clear from the info graphic provided, as well as the Hindu article whose link has been provided.
- Q4, 14th February (<http://www.insightsonindia.com/2018/02/14/quiz-2017-insights-current-affairs-quiz-14-february-2018/>); (Q6, ENVIRONMENT): Typo; Solution must be option ‘c’, viz. both statements are correct, as is apparent from the explanation. Though Odisha is included in the top 5 states, southern Indian states account for the major chunk of the increased forest cover.
- Q1 (<http://www.insightsonindia.com/2018/02/22/quiz-2017-insights-current-affairs-quiz-22-february-2018/>); (Q25, ECONOMY): Regarding option 2, “Arable land remaining fallow” – The explanation provided is incomplete; to understand NITI Aayog’s role in this respect, read the following extract from the budget speech: “Presently, lessee cultivators are not able to avail crop loans. Consequently, a significant proportion of arable land remains fallow and tenant cultivators are forced to secure credit from usurious money lenders. NITI Aayog, in consultation with State Governments, will evolve a suitable mechanism to enable access of lessee cultivators to credit without compromising the rights of the land owners.”
