Contents

Category - Schemes and Programmes ................................................................. 3
Category - Social Issues ..................................................................................... 7
Category - Polity & Governance ...................................................................... 8
Category - International Affairs ...................................................................... 19
Category – Judiciary .......................................................................................... 25
Category - Economics ....................................................................................... 26
Category - Geography ....................................................................................... 31
Category - Ecology & Environment ................................................................. 46
Category - Security Issues ................................................................................ 57
Category – National Institutions ...................................................................... 58
Category - International Institutions ............................................................... 59
Category - State Affairs .................................................................................... 62
Category - Science & Technology .................................................................. 63
Category – History ............................................................................................ 66
### Category - Schemes and Programmes

1. The Strategic Partnership model, sometimes seen in the news, is
   a) A model text for establishing future bilateral strategic partnerships.
   b) A policy aimed at manufacturing high-tech defence equipment in India by engaging Indian private sector companies.
   c) A model text for Bilateral Investment Treaty negotiations.
   d) A policy meant to promote government-to-government defence acquisition deals.

   **Solution:** b.

   The strategic partnership model was proposed by the *Dhirendra Singh Committee* in July, 2015. It will help build a domestic defence manufacturing base. The policy will give a boost to the ‘Make in India’ policy in the defence sector and set Indian industry on the path to acquiring cutting-edge capabilities which will contribute to building of self-reliance in the vital sector.

   The new model, which is a chapter under the Defence Procurement Procedure, has *four segments*—submarines, single-engine fighter aircraft, helicopters and armoured carriers/main battle tanks. Additional segments may be added in the future.

   From 2017 (DAC finalising SP Model): [TH: Defence deals await private firms; IE;]

   In the news: [TH;]

2. The SAATHI initiative will promote the use of energy-efficient equipment in
   a) The textile industry
   b) Irrigation
   c) Banking sector
   d) Petroleum refining sector

   **Solution:** a.

   Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of Power have joined hands under the initiative SAATHI(Sustainable and Accelerated Adoption of efficient Textile technologies to Help Small Industries) in order to sustain and accelerate the adoption of energy efficient textile technologies in the powerloom sector and cost savings due to use of such technology.

   [PIB;]

3. The “SwachhManch” platform under the Swachh Bharat Mission is primarily meant to enable
   a) Citizens to create, invite and/or participate in volunteering opportunities around neighborhoods.
   b) Citizen scientists across India to participate in the annual SwachhSurvekshan surveys.
   c) Any citizen to contribute ideas towards maintaining the ODF status of cities already declared to be so.
d) Citizens to share anecdotes about their experience of promoting cleanliness.

Solution: a.
SwachhManch will be a web-based platform which aims to bring together every stakeholder contributing to the Swachh Bharat Mission under a common platform. The platform will allow stakeholders to create/invite/participate in volunteering opportunities around neighborhoods. SwachhManch will enable uploads of pictorial evidence of citizens and organizations participating in the initiatives, as well as record the number of hours volunteered, as acknowledgement of citizens'/organisations' efforts and contributions to the cause of 'swachhata'. The SwachhManch will also be integrated with the existing Swachhata App to act as a citizens' grievance redressal platform.

PIB;

4. Recently in the news, ‘Smartnet’ is an initiative of the Union Government to
   a) Support the development of cities across India.
   b) Facilitate the connection of small, renewable energy-generating systems to power grids.
   c) Establish last mile broadband connectivity in rural areas.
   d) Promote rapid adoption of various digital payment systems by making them accessible and user-friendly.

Solution: a.
Smartnet is an initiative of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to support the development of cities across India and to create a resource-rich ecosystem of learning, sharing and disseminating for city managers and primary stakeholders in the urban transformation of India.

In the news(PIB): A data entry portal and a monitoring dashboard for real time update on progress (on Ease of Living Index) was established. Apart from presenting the overall national ranking of 111 cities, the dashboard will present ranking of the cities across pillars, category, geographical zone and population classifications. The dashboard will also have a comparison feature that will allow users to analyse the performance across cities on various liveability parameters. Ease of Living Index dashboard is available at https://smartnet.niua.org/.

5. Project Elephant was launched by the Government of India in the year 1992 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with the objective(s) to
   1. To protect elephants, their habitat & corridors.
   2. To address issues of human-elephant conflict.
   3. Promote the welfare of captive elephants.
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: d.
All are correct. In order to conserve Asian Elephants, Project Elephant was launched in 1992, with the objectives of

i. conservation and protection of viable population of wild elephants in their natural habitats in the country;

ii. restoration of natural habitats and traditional corridors/migratory routes or movement paths used by the elephants, wherever necessary, through eco-restoration, acquisition etc;

iii. ensuring safeguards against poaching and other threats;

iv. mitigation and control of human elephant conflicts;

v. welfare and management of captive elephants; and

vi. creating a viable mechanism to ensure inter-state and regional and national level coordination in protecting and conserving the elephant and its ranges.

PIB; MoEF;

6. PARIVESH, recently in the news, will enable India in the short term to improve its ranking in the
   a) Ease of Doing Business Index
   b) Human Development Index
   c) Environmental Performance Index
   d) Global Gender Gap Index

Solution: a.
In the news (PIB): The Prime Minister recently launched PARIVESH (Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous and Environmental Single-window Hub) on the occasion of World Biofuel Day.

In a series of tweets, the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change highlighted that PARIVESH automates the entire process of submitting the application and tracking the status of such proposals at each stage of processing. He emphasised that with the launch of PARIVESH, the vision of the Prime Minister for E-Governance and enhancing Ease of Doing Responsible Business is being translated into action by MoEF&CC.

7. Benefits accruing from the implementation of NABH Nirman scheme will help with the promotion of which one of the following?
   a) Project Sashakt
   b) UDAN scheme
   c) PM Jan Dhan Yojana
   d) PM Gram Sadak Yojana

Solution: b.
'NABH' is the acronym for NextGen Airport for Bharat. UDAN (UdeDeshke Aam Nagarik) is the regional connectivity scheme.
8. The “Pitch to MOVE” competition, recently in the news, is related to which one of the following summits?
   a) Global Entrepreneurship Summit
   b) Global Wind Summit
   c) Global Mobility Summit
   d) UN Wildlife Summit

Solution: c.
NITI Aayog is organising ‘MOVE’, the 1st of its kind Mobility Summit in India. As a part of the main Summit, many featured events are also being planned. One of the highlights of the featured events is ‘Pitch to Move’, being organized by NITI Aayog in collaboration with Invest India and Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM).

‘Pitch to Move’ - A Mobility Pitch event aims to provide the budding entrepreneurs of India, working in the various fields of mobility, a unique opportunity to pitch their business ideas to a distinguished jury consisting of Industry Leaders and Venture Capitalist for raising investments.

Niti Aayog: Mobility Pitch;
PIB;

9. ‘e-Aksharayan’ was recently launched by the
   a) Ministry of Information Technology
   b) Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
   c) Ministry of Home Affairs
   d) Ministry of Human Resource Development

Solution: a.
e-Aksharayan is desktop software for converting scanned printed Indian Language documents into a fully editable text format in Unicode encoding. The goal is to have real-time translation capability in each of the Indic languages.

PIB;
Vikaspedia: JULY

10. O-SMART is an umbrella scheme recently approved for implementation by the Union Cabinet. It will help address issues directly relating to
    a) SDG 11
    b) SDG 12
    c) SDG 13
    d) SDG 14

Solution: d.
Implementation of O-SMART will help in addressing issues relating to **UN SDG 14**, which aims to conserve use of oceans, marine resources for sustainable development.
Recognizing the importance of implementing schemes of highly multi-disciplinary in the ocean sector of national interests and international commitments, the ministry is proposing to continue the existing schemes in a focused way as a part of umbrella scheme of (O-SMART). As the resources on land are not adequate enough to meet the future demands, India is also embarking on blue economy for effective and efficient use of the vast ocean resources in a sustainable way, which would require a great deal of information on ocean science, development of technology and providing services.

PIB;

11. The ‘One District One Product’ scheme, recently in the news, was launched by the state of
   a) Karnataka
   b) Uttar Pradesh
   c) Gujarat
   d) Assam

Solution: b.
Under the One District One Product scheme, the state government of UP has set a goal of providing employment to 25 lakh people in five years through the financial assistance of Rs 25,000 crores.

UP is uniquely famous for product-specific traditional industrial hubs across 75 districts, including Varanasi (Banarasi silk sari), Bhadohi (carpet), Lucknow (chikan), Kanpur (leather goods), Agra (leather footwear), Aligarh (locks), Moradabad (brassware), Meerut (sports goods) and Saharanpur (wooden products).

The ODOP scheme seeks to promote traditional industries synonymous with their respective districts to spur local economy and create jobs. The state government will sign memorandum of understandings (MoUs) with e-retailer giant Amazon for marketing of products of artisans, and Quality Control of India (QCI) that will ensure quality of products. Amazon will also train the artisans and small entrepreneurs of several districts.

FE;
PIB;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category - Social Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Consider the following pairs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject matter of recently set up committee/task force – chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Mob lynching – Rajiv Gauba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reducing import dependence – Rakesh Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Standards for metro rail systems – YM Deosthalee</td>
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<td>Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) 2 and 3 only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c) 1, 2 and 3
d) None of the above

Solution: a.
Mob lynching – Rajiv Gauba;
Reducing import dependence – PK Sinha;
Standards for metro rail systems in the country – E Sreedharan;

Vikaspedia: JULY;
Vikaspedia: JUNE;

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**Category - Polity & Governance**

1. ‘D-Voters’, recently in the news, belong to a category of voters
   - a) Who are declared a foreigner by special tribunals under the Foreigners’ Act.
   - b) Whose names have not been included in the National Register of Citizens.
   - c) Who lack proper citizenship documents and have been disenfranchised by the government.
   - d) None of the above

Solution: c.

**TH:**

2. Consider the following statements:
   1. Following the economic reforms of 1991, no individual, body or institution can carry on by itself any trade, business, industry or service as a monopoly.
   2. The state can impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of citizens’ right to practice any profession in the interest of the general public.

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.

Freedom of Profession: All citizens are given the right to practise any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business. This right is very wide as it covers all the means of earning one’s livelihood.

The State can impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of this right in the interest of the general public. Further, the State is empowered to:

- a) prescribe professional or technical qualifications necessary for practising any profession or carrying on any occupation, trade or business; and
- b) carry on by itself any trade, business, industry or service whether to the exclusion (complete or partial) of citizens or otherwise.

Thus, no objection can be made when the State carries on a trade, business, industry or service either as a monopoly (complete or partial) to the exclusion of citizens (all or some only) or in competition with any citizen. The State is not required to justify its monopoly.

Improvisation: TH;

Fundamental Rights, Indian Polity by M Laxmikanth;

3. Consider the following statements:

1. The state can impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of right of assembly on two grounds, namely, sovereignty and integrity of India and decency or morality.
2. Under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, an assembly of five or more persons becomes unlawful if the object is to commit any mischief.

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: d.

Freedom of Assembly: Every citizen has the right to assemble peaceably and without arms. It includes the right to hold public meetings, demonstrations and take out processions. This freedom can be exercised only on public land and the assembly must be peaceful and unarmed. The State can impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of right of assembly on two grounds, namely, sovereignty and integrity of India and public order including the maintenance of traffic in the area concerned.

Under Section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code (1973), a magistrate can restrain an assembly, meeting or procession if there is a risk of obstruction, annoyance or danger to human life, health or safety or a disturbance of the public tranquillity or a riot or any affray.

Under Section 141 of the Indian Penal Code, as assembly of five or more persons becomes unlawful if the object is (a) to resist the execution of any law or legal process; (b) to
forcibly occupy the property of some person; (c) to commit any mischief or criminal trespass; (d) to force some person to do an illegal act; and (e) to threaten the government or its officials on exercising lawful powers.

Improvisation: TH;

3. Which one of the following statements is not correct?
   a) Equality of rights and status is one of the basic rights of citizenship.
   b) Equal rights for citizens need not mean that uniform policies have to be applied to all people.
   c) The meaning of citizenship cannot and does not change with time.
   d) Moral rights as human beings are meaningless without social-political recognition within a state.

Solution: c.
Changes in the world situation, the economy, and society demand new interpretations of the meaning and rights of citizenship. The formal laws regarding citizenship only form the starting point and the interpretation of laws is constantly evolving.

Everything we need or desire, and any reasonable goal we pursue, depends today on our membership of a state. We may have moral rights as human beings but they are ineffective or meaningless without social-political recognition within a legal regime supported by the state. Thus, our life, family life, basic liberties, employment, education, mobility, even everyday security depends on the overall protection and support of the state. If we do not belong to a state, and carry no proof of it (ration card, driving license, Aadhaar card or passport), we have nothing. These passive citizenship rights cannot exist without authoritative, juridical backing. Nor can active citizenship rights that enable us to participate in the making and the remaking of our political community. In short, it is only as a member of a particular state (India, Bangladesh, the U.S.) that we are able to live well, indeed to live at all.

Chapter ‘Citizenship’, Political Theory, Class XI NCERT;
Source/improvisation: TH;

4. With regard to cab aggregators, there could be cases where state guidelines are at variance with the central guidelines. In such a scenario,
   a) The Supreme Court will have to resolve the conflict.
   b) The Inter-state Council will have the final say.
   c) Central guidelines will prevail.
   d) State guidelines will prevail.

Solution: c.
The central guidelines will prevail because motor vehicles laws fall under the Concurrent List (Entry 35 – “Mechanically propelled vehicles including the principles on which taxes on such vehicles are to be levied”) in the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution.
5. The Parliament recently passed the 123rd Constitutional Amendment Bill. Till now, the National Commission for Backward Classes could only
   1. Recommend inclusion and exclusion of castes from the OBC list.
   2. Recommend the level of income that cuts off the “creamy layer” from the benefits of reservation for the OBCs.
   3. Investigate all matters relating to the constitutional and other legal safeguards of OBCs.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
   a) 1 and 2 only
   b) 3 only
   c) 2 and 3 only
   d) 1, 2 and 3

Solution: a.
The present NCBC (a statutory body) can only recommend inclusion and exclusion of castes from the OBC list and the level of income that cuts off the “creamy layer” among these castes from the benefits of reservation.

Till now, it was the National Commission of Scheduled Castes that addressed the grievances of the OBCs. Article 338 of the Constitution, which provides for a “Special Officer for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes” to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards available to them under the Constitution, says categorically that SC/STs “shall be construed as including references to Other Backward Classes”, once a Commission decides who they are.

6. The Ismail Faruqi verdict of 1994, recently in the news, is related to which one of the following?
   a) Right to Equality
   b) Right to Freedom
   c) Right to Freedom of Religion
   d) Cultural and Educational Rights

Solution: c.
The importance of mosques in Islam has come into focus again. During the hearing of the Babri Masjid case, advocate Rajeev Dhavan asked the Supreme Court to reconsider its judgment in Ismail Faruqui v. Union Of India (1994). The Bench in that case had ruled by a majority that a mosque is not essential to Islam, and allowed the Central government to include the 2.77 acres (on which the Babri Masjid once stood) in the 67.7 acres of land to be acquired under the Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya (ACAA) Act, 1993.

Among the court’s arguments to justify the acquisition of Babri Masjid land was that “a mosque is not an essential part of the practice of... Islam and Namaz (prayer) by Muslims can be offered anywhere, even in open.”
7. Consider the following statements about the Public Accounts Committee:
   1. It was set up first in 1937 under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1935.
   2. All parties that have a presence in the Parliament get due representation in the PAC as members are elected by MPs according to the principle of proportional representation.
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.
This committee was setup first in 1921 under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1919 and has since been in existence. At present, it consists of 22 members (15 from the Lok Sabha and 7 from the Rajya Sabha). The members are elected by the Parliament every year from amongst its members according to the principle of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. Thus, all parties get due representation in it. The term of office of the members is one year. A minister cannot be elected as a member of the committee. The chairman of the committee is appointed by the Speaker from amongst its members. Until 1966–67, the chairman of the committee belonged to the ruling party. However, since 1967 a convention has developed whereby the chairman of the committee is selected invariably from the Opposition.

Indian Polity by M Laxmikanth;
Improvisation: TH;

8. Which one of the following statements with reference to the presiding officers of Rajya Sabha is not correct?
   a) The Chairman is not a member of the Parliament.
   b) The Deputy Chairman is not subordinate to the Chairman.
   c) When presiding over a sitting of the house, the Deputy Chairman has all the powers of the Chairman.
   d) Like the Panel of Vice-Chairpersons of the house, the Deputy Chairman cannot preside over a sitting of the house when the office of the chairman is vacant.

Solution: d.
The Deputy Chairman performs the duties of the Chairman's office when it is vacant or when the Vice-President acts as President or discharges the functions of the President. He also acts as the Chairman when the latter is absent from the sitting of the House. In both the cases, he has all the powers of the Chairman.

Under the Rules of Rajya Sabha, the Chairman nominates from amongst the members a panel of vice-chairpersons. Any one of them can preside over the House in the absence of the Chairman or the Deputy Chairman. He has the same powers as the Chairman when so presiding. He holds office until a new panel of vice-chairpersons is
nominated. It must be emphasised here that a member of the panel of vice-chairpersons cannot preside over the House, when the office of the Chairman or the Deputy Chairman is vacant. During such time, the Chairman’s duties are to be performed by such member of the House as the president may appoint for the purpose. The elections are held, as soon as possible, to fill the vacant posts.

9. The subject of flood management including erosion control falls within the purview of
   a) State governments
   b) Central government
   c) It depends on the severity of flooding
   d) Urban Local Governments

Solution: a.
The subject of flood management including erosion control falls within the purview of the States. The flood management & anti-erosion schemes are planned, investigated and implemented by the State Governments with their own resources as per priority within the State. The Union Government renders technical guidance and promotional financial assistance to States.

10. Consider the following statements about Article 35A, recently in the news:
    1. It is a provision incorporated in the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir.
    2. It enables the Jammu and Kashmir legislature to decide who all are the state’s ‘permanent residents’ and confer on them special rights and privilege.
    3. No act of the J&K legislature coming under Article 35A can be challenged for violating the Indian Constitution or any other law of the land.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
   a) 1 and 2
   b) 2 only
   c) 2 and 3
   d) 3 only

Solution: c.
What is Article 35A?
It is a provision incorporated in the Constitution through a Presidential Order, and not by parliamentary debate, giving the Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature a complete say in deciding who the ‘permanent residents’ of the State are. The State Legislature can grant its permanent residents special rights and privileges in public sector jobs, acquisition of property, scholarships and other public aid and welfare programmes within the State.

How did the Article come about?
It was incorporated into the Constitution in 1954 by an order of President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet. The Constitution (Application to Jammu and
Kashmir) Order of 1954 followed the 1952 Delhi Agreement entered into between Prime Minister Nehru and Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah extending Indian citizenship to the 'State subjects' of Jammu and Kashmir. Article 35A was added to the Constitution as a testimony of the special consideration the Indian government accorded the ‘permanent residents’ of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Presidential Order was issued under Article 370(1)(d), which allows the President to make certain “exceptions and modifications” to the Constitution for the benefit of Jammu and Kashmir. However Article 368(i) of the Constitution mandates that only the Parliament can amend the Constitution by introducing a new article.

From 2017: TH;
In the news: TH;

11. The ‘National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA)’, proposed to be established under the Dam Safety Bill, 2018 will
   1. Examine the cause of any major dam failure.
   2. Perform the role of a State Dam Safety Organization in cases where a dam extends over two or more States or if the dam of one State falls under the territory of another.
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 NDSA is also mandated to
   - maintain liaison with the State Dam Safety Organisations and the owners of dams for standardisation of dam safety related data and practices;
   - provide the technical and managerial assistance to the States and State Dam Safety Organisations;
   - maintain a national level data-base of all dams in the country and the records of major dam failures;
   - publish and update the standard guidelines and check-lists for the routine inspection and detailed investigations of dams and appurtenances;
   - accord recognition or accreditations to the organisations that can be entrusted with the works of investigation, design or construction of new dams; and
   - Resolve issue between the State Dam Safety Organisation of states, or between the State Dam Safety Organisation and the owner of a dam in that State.

Additional Information: Water is a state subject.

12. The dominant and most spoken language in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is
   a) Burmese
   b) English
c) Bengali

d) Tamil

Solution: c.

Hindi and English are the official languages of the islands. Bengali is the dominant and most spoken language, with 26% of the population speaking Bengali. The other major languages spoken in the islands are Hindi (18.23%), Tamil (17.68%), Telugu (12.81%), Malayalam (8.11%) and Nicobarese (8.05%) according to 2001 Census of India. Other minor spoken languages are Kurukh/Oraon, Munda and Kharia. Andaman Creole Hindi is widely used as a trade language in the Andamans.

Improvisation: TH;

Source: A&N Administration;

13. Apart from the state of Jammu and Kashmir, twelve other states of the Indian Union also enjoy special status but only in certain minor matters. For which of the following states were special provisions originally made by the constitution, and not by way of amendment?

a) Maharashtra and Gujarat
b) Manipur and Nagaland
c) Karnataka and Goa
d) None of the above

Solution: d.

Originally, the constitution did not make any special provisions for these states. They have been incorporated by the various subsequent amendments made in the context of reorganisation of the states or conferment of statehood on the UTs.

Improvisation: TH;

14. Consider the following statements about the MPLADS scheme:

1. The annual fund entitlement per Member of Parliament has remained unchanged since its inception.
2. Lok Sabha Members can recommend works only within their constituencies.
3. Rajya Sabha Members can recommend works only within the state they represent.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: d.

In 1993-94, when the Scheme was launched, an amount of Rs. 5 lakh per Member of Parliament was allotted which became Rupees one crore per annum per MP constituency from 1994-95. This was stepped up to Rs. 2 crore from 1998-99 and now it is Rs.5 crore from the financial year 2011-12.

Some features of the scheme:
Lok Sabha Members can recommend works within their Constituencies and Elected Members of Rajya Sabha can recommend works within the State of Election.

- Nominated Members of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country.
- In the event of “Calamity of severe nature” in any part of the country, an MP can recommend works up to a maximum of Rs.1 crore for the affected district.
- If an elected Member of Parliament finds the need to contribute MPLADS funds to a place outside that State/UT, or outside the constituency within the State, or both, the MP can recommend eligible works under these Guidelines up to a maximum of Rs. 25 lakh in a financial year. Such a gesture on the part of an MP will promote national unity, harmony, and fraternity among the people at the grassroots level.

**MPLADS Guidelines:**

**PIB:**

15. The National Crisis Management Committee is chaired by
   a) Secretary of Home Affairs
   b) Minister of Home Affairs
   c) Cabinet Secretary
   d) Vice-chairman, NITI Aayog

Solution: c.

As per the National Policy on Disaster Management, 2009, the National Crisis Management Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary deals with major crises that have serious or national ramifications.

**Current Affairs, Insights;**

Improvisation: **PIB:**

16. The NOTA symbol is
   a) A ballot paper struck off with a cross mark
   b) A solid black rectangle with ‘NOTA’ inscribed in white in the centre
   c) Only a cross mark
   d) A plain outline of a standing person

Solution: a.
17. When the the tenth schedule was introduced in the Constitution by amendment for the first time, it was related to
   a) The Anti-defection law  
   b) Sikkim’s association with India 
   c) Reservations in public employment 
   d) Fundamental Rights 

Solution: b.

In 1974, Sikkim expressed its desire for greater association with India. Accordingly, the 35th Constitutional Amendment Act (1974) was enacted by the parliament. This amendment introduced a new class of statehood under the constitution by conferring on Sikkim the status of an ‘associate state’ of the Indian Union. For this purpose, a new Article 2A and a new schedule (Tenth Schedule conserving the terms and conditions of association) were inserted in the Constitution.

18. All citizens are given the right to practise any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business. The state can impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of this right on the grounds of
   a) Interest of general public 
   b) Public morality 
   c) Sovereignty and integrity of India 
   d) a, b and c 

Solution: a.

**Article 19:** All citizens shall have the right to practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.

Nothing in the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, in the interests of the general public, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub clause, and, in particular, nothing in the said sub clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it relates to, or prevent the State from making any law relating to,

(i) the professional or technical qualifications necessary for practising any profession or carrying on any occupation, trade or business, or
(ii) the carrying on by the State, or by a corporation owned or controlled by the State, of any trade, business, industry or service, whether to the exclusion, complete or partial, of citizens or otherwise.
19. Consider the following statements:
   1. Though appointed by the President, the office of Governor of a States is not an employment under the Central Government.
   2. As per the Constitution, while appointing the Governor, the President is required to consult the Chief Minister of the State concerned.

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.
Statement 1 is correct.
The Constitution lays down **only two qualifications** for the appointment of a person as a governor. These are:
1. He should be a citizen of India.
2. He should have completed the age of 35 years.

Improvisation: PIB;
Indian Polity by. M Laxmikanth;

20. In a vehicle affixed with which one of the following registration plates are you most definitely going to find a foreign national as an occupant?
   a) Yellow plate with black text
   b) Black plate with yellow text
   c) Light blue plate with white lettering
   d) Green plate with white lettering

Solution: c.
In the news (PIB): All Battery Operated Vehicles shall now exhibit their registration mark in Yellow colour on Green background for transport vehicles and for all other cases, in White colour on Green background.

ScoopWhoop:
- Commercial vehicles such as trucks and taxis have a yellow number plate with black text.
- Black number plate with yellow lettering - these are commercial vehicles available on rent for self-drive.
- Light blue number plate - **Vehicles belonging to foreign consulates** bear white lettering on a light blue background.
- Number plate with upward pointing arrow - Military vehicles.
- Red coloured plate - The President of India and governors of states travel in official cars without license plates. They have the Emblem of India in gold, embossed on a red coloured plate.
1. BRICS ‘PartNIR’ will be a partnership that will focus on
   a) Maximising the opportunities arising from the fourth industrial revolution.
   b) Democratisation of the United Nations.
   c) Building a new world order that accords equal value to every nation – whether
      belonging to the global south or the north.
   d) Institutionalisation of the BRICS-Plus mechanism.

Solution: a.

**MEA:** PartNIR aims at deepening BRICS cooperation in digitalisation, industrialisation,
innovation, inclusiveness and investment, to maximise the opportunities and address the
challenges arising from the 4th Industrial Revolution. It should enhance comparative
advantages, boost economic growth, promote economic transformation of BRICS countries,
strengthen sustainable industrial production capacity, create networks of science parks
and technology business incubators, and support small and medium-sized enterprises in
technology intensive areas.

**TH:**

2. C40 is focused tackling climate change. It is
   a) A network of the world’s megacities.
   b) A coalition of non-governmental organizations.
   c) A partnership of some MNCs that are climate ready.
   d) A collaboration among the world’s leading think tanks on climate change.

Solution: a.

About **C40**: The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group connects more than 90 of the world’s
greatest cities, representing over 650 million people and one quarter of the global
economy. Created and led by cities in 2005, C40 is focused on tackling climate change and
driving urban action that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks, while
increasing the health, wellbeing and economic opportunities of urban citizens.

Indian cities on the list include: Bangalore, Chennai, Jaipur, Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai.

**TH:**

3. Which one of the following cities is regarded as the birthplace of the Syrian uprising?
   a) Aleppo
   b) Deraa
   c) Ghouta
   d) Homs

Solution: b.

The Syrian government forces recently retook control of the rebel-held part of Deraa, the
birthplace of the revolt against President Bashar al-Assad.

**TH; BBC:**
4. Consider the following statements about the MAB Council, also known as the International Coordinating Council of the Man and Biosphere Programme:

1. Not all member states that have Biosphere Reserves, as designated by UNESCO, are members of this council.
2. Its sessions are normally biennial, viz. held every two years.
3. Some UN agencies and the IUCN are represented at its sessions as observers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: c.

The MAB Council (or just 'ICC'), consists of 34 Member States (there are way more states that have biosphere reserves declared under UNESCO's MAB programme) elected by UNESCO's biennial General Conference. In between meetings, the authority of the ICC is delegated to its Bureau, whose members are nominated from each of UNESCO’s geopolitical regions.

At each ordinary session of the UNESCO General Conference, normally held every two years, half of the Members of the Council end their terms of office and new Council members are elected. The outgoing members are replaced by members belonging to the same regional group. Council members can be re-elected.

In recent years, the MAB Council has met annually, usually at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris or in a MAB ICC Member State which offers to host the MAB Council. Although each Member State has only one vote, it can send as many experts or advisers as it wishes to the Council sessions. In addition, other Member States of UNESCO that are not members of the Council can send representatives as observers. UN Agencies such as UNEP, FAO, UNDP, WMO, WHO are also invited as well as representatives of the International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Social Sciences Council (ISSC) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

Among other important functions, the MAB ICC also decides upon new biosphere reserves and takes note of recommendations on periodic review reports of biosphere reserves.

To read more about its role: MAB Council;
Improvisation: th;

5. In the context of election of the President of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), which of the following statements are correct?

1. It follows the principle of geographical rotation.
2. The UNGA conducts informal interactive dialogues with the Presidential candidates.
3. The seventieth president was recently elected by UNGA.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
In 2017 the General Assembly decided to establish a new process for the selection of the President of the General Assembly. The Assembly decided to conduct informal interactive dialogues with candidates for the position of President of the General Assembly, thus contributing to the transparency and inclusivity of the process. Furthermore, the General Assembly called upon candidates to present to the Assembly their vision statements.

In accordance with the rules of procedure, the Assembly shall elect a President and twenty-one Vice-Presidents at least three months before the opening of the session over which they are to preside. The election of the President of the 73rd session of the General Assembly took place in the General Assembly Hall at United Nations Headquarters in New York on Tuesday, 5 June 2018.

**Election of 73rd President of UNGA:**

6. With which one of the following countries did the Rajya Sabha enter into an MoU for promoting inter-parliamentary dialogue?
   a) Israel
   b) USA
   c) Rwanda
   d) Greece

Solution: c.

Rajya Sabha has, for the first time in 76 years since it came into being, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a foreign counterpart (Rwanda) for promoting inter-parliamentary dialogue.

The MOU with 6 articles of cooperation seeks to promote Inter-Parliamentary dialogue, Capacity building of parliamentary staff, Organisation of conferences, forums, seminars, staff attachment programmes, workshops and exchanges, Collaboration in mutual interest in regional and international multilateral parliamentary bodies in furtherance of bilateral relations and friendship between the two countries.

**PIB; Vikaspedia: JULY**

7. Consider the following statements:
   1. India’s bilateral trade (in value) with Pakistan is a little more than half of India’s bilateral trade with Bhutan.
   2. While India has accorded Pakistan the WTO-mandated ‘Most Favoured Nation’ status to Pakistan, the latter has not yet reciprocated.
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.
Statement 2 is correct.

India’s trade with much smaller Bhutan is over half that with Pakistan (In 2016, total India-Bhutan bilateral trade was Rs 8,723 crore; with Pakistan, it was around Rs 17,200 crore.)

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8. Which one of the following countries will be the supplier of natural gas via the TAPI pipeline to India?
   a) Turkey
   b) Tajikistan
c) Iran
d) Turkmenistan

Solution: d.

TH: “India has sought re-negotiation of the natural gas price it is to source through a proposed $10 billion Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline due to slump in global energy markets, a top source said. The four nations had in 2013 signed a gas sale purchase agreement (GSPA) that bench-marked the price of natural gas that Turkmenistan is to export at 55% of the prevailing crude oil price.”

9. The war games Vostok 2018 will witness the participation of Russia, and
   1. China
   2. North Korea
   3. Mongolia

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.
10. Which nations from the following list – comprising of members of SAARC – are also members of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)?

1. Bangladesh
2. Bhutan
3. Nepal
4. Sri Lanka
5. Maldives
6. Afghanistan
7. Pakistan

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.
The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization comprising seven Member States lying in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity. This sub-regional organization came into being on 6 June 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration. It constitutes seven Member States: five deriving from South Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand. The regional group constitutes a bridge between South and South East Asia and represents a reinforcement of relations among these countries. BIMSTEC has also established a platform for intra-regional cooperation between SAARC and ASEAN members.

PIB;

11. Which one of the following countries is not a participant in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership talks?
   a) New Zealand
   b) Russia
   c) Brunei
   d) Myanmar

Solution: b.

10 ASEAN countries and six ASEAN FTA partners namely, India, China, Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand are members of the proposed RCEP.

ASEAN countries include Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Brunei.

PIB;

12. The first Asian Games were held in
   a) India
   b) Philippines
   c) Japan
   d) Indonesia

Solution: a.
The first Asian Games were held in Delhi, India, 4 – 11 March, 1951. With participants from 11 National Olympics Committees (Afghanistan, Burma Ceylon, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Nepal, The Philippines, Singapore and Thailand), this first Asian Games were officially opened by President Rajendra Prasad at the Dhyan Chand National Stadium, featuring 6 sports branches: athletics, aquatics (swimming, diving, and water polo), basketball cycling (road cycling and track cycling), football, and weightlifting.

Asian Games History
Improvisation: Ongoing Asian Games
13. ‘Exercise Peace Mission’ is a multi-nation counter-terror exercise that takes place under the framework of
   a) BRICS
   b) Warsaw Pact
   c) SCO
   d) SAARC

Solution: c.

In a first, arch rivals India and Pakistan will be part of a multi-nation counter-terror exercise in Russia in September, which will also be joined by China and several other countries.

The military exercise will take place under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a China-dominated security grouping which is increasingly seen as a counterweight to NATO.

From April: TH;
In the news: PIB;

**Category – Judiciary**

1. That ‘the Indian Constitution is founded on the bedrock of the balance between the Fundamental rights and the Directive Principles’ was held by the Supreme Court in
   a) Golaknath case (1967)
   b) Kesavananda Bharati case (1973)
   c) Maneka Gandhi case (1978)
   d) Minerva Mills case (1980)

Solution: d.

Chapter DPSP, Indian Polity by M Laxmikanth: In the Minerva Mills case (1980), the Supreme Court held that ‘the Indian Constitution is founded on the bedrock of the balance between the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles. They together constitute the core of commitment to social revolution. They are like two wheels of a chariot, one no less than the other. To give absolute primacy to one over the other is to disturb the harmony of the Constitution. This harmony and balance between the two is an essential feature of the basic structure of the Constitution. The goals set out by the Directive Principles have to be achieved without the abrogation of the means provided by the Fundamental Rights’.

The present position is that the Fundamental Rights enjoy supremacy over the Directive Principles. Yet, this does not mean that the Directive Principles cannot be implemented. The Parliament can amend the Fundamental Rights for implementing the Directive Principles, so long as the amendment does not damage or destroy the basic structure of the Constitution.

Improvisation: TH;
1. In India, the bulk of imported and exported agricultural commodities in the recent past have respectively been
   a) Pulses and buffalo meat
   b) Pulses and spices
   c) Vegetable oils and marine products
   d) Vegetable oils and basmati rice

Solution: c.

2. Letters of Undertaking and Letters of Credit have recently been in the news in the context of affairs related to
   a) Imports and exports
   b) Credit guarantees for MSMEs
   c) Non-Performing Assets in NBFCs
   d) e-NAM

Solution: a.
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.

Another definition: An LoU is an assurance given by one bank to another to meet a liability on behalf of a customer. The LoU is akin to a letter of credit or a guarantee. LoUs are used in international banking transactions. An LoU is issued for overseas import remittances and involves four parties — an issuing bank, a receiving bank, an importer and a beneficiary entity overseas.

From earlier: TH; IE;
In the news: TH;

3. The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is an end-to-end, one stop online marketplace for the ‘state’, for procurement of common use Goods & Services. It was launched two years ago, with the objective of creating an open, transparent and efficient procurement platform for government. In this context, which of the following statements is/are correct?
   1. More than 80 percent of transactions by volume are done with MSMEs registered on the platform.
   2. The Quality Council of India is responsible for ensuring quality compliance of goods and services offered through GeM.
   3. The average prices of goods and services on the platform are lower by 40 percent.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
   a) 1 and 2 only
   b) 2 only
   c) 1 and 3 only
   d) 1, 2 and 3

Solution: b.
Only statement 2 is correct.
In the news (PIB):

- Average savings of 25% achieved across transactions on the platform. (From 2017, PIB: Average prices on GeM are lower by at least 15-20%.)
- GeM has grossed over Rs. 10,000 Crores in Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) through more than 6.16 Lacs transactions on the platform.
- GeM has made over 4.2 lakh products available on its platform through a network of over 1.3 lakh sellers and service providers.
- These products and services are being bought by over 25,000 government organisations (Central, State Governments and PSUs) registered on the platform
- More than 40% of transactions by volume are done with MSMEs registered on the platform
- Buyers from across 36 States & Union Territories (UTs) are buying on the platform. 24 States & UTs have signed a formal MoU with GeM to adopt GeM as the core procurement portal in their respective territories.
- Training of over 40 thousand buyers and sellers has been conducted across 28 States & UTs to enable them to seamlessly operate the platform.
4. Which one of the following components of the All India General Consumer Price Index (combined, viz. rural + urban) is accorded the second largest weight?
   a) Housing  
   b) Food and beverages  
   c) Clothing and footwear  
   d) Pan, tobacco and intoxicants

Solution: a.
Food and beverages (45.86) > Housing (10.07) > Cereals and Products (9.67) > Transport and Communication (8.59).

Additional information: The Central Statistics Office (CSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation revised the Base Year of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from 2010=100 to 2012=100 with effect from the release of indices for the month of January 2015. All India Inflation rates are released on point to point basis i.e. current month over same month of last year, i.e., July 2018 over July 2017.

PIB;

5. The Global Peace Index, the twelfth edition of which was released recently, is produced by
   a) International Stockholm Peace Research Institute  
   b) Institute for Economics and Peace  
   c) International Peace and Development Initiative  
   d) UNESCO

Solution: b.  
About Institute for Economics and Peace: It is the world’s leading think tank dedicated to developing metrics to analyse peace and to quantify its economic value. It does this by developing global and national indices, calculating the economic cost of violence, analysing country level risk and understanding positive peace.

In the news (June TH): India’s rank has marginally improved in “global peacefulness”, at a time when there is an overall decline of global peace owing to escalation of violence in West Asia and and North Africa. Pakistan too has improved marginally, according to the Global Peace Index (GPI), released by Australia-based Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP).

Vikaspedia: JUNE;

6. The annual Global Liveability Index is released by
   a) The World Bank  
   b) The Economist Intelligence Unit  
   c) The World Economic Forum  
   d) UN Habitat Secretariat
In the 2018 ranking, Mumbai and Delhi have been ranked 117 and 112 out of 140 countries respectively.

PIB: “..There has been a debate in public domain related to the rankings of Mumbai and Delhi between the Ease of Living Index of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MOHUA) released on 13th August, 2018 and the Global Liveability Index released by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), on 14 August, 2018.”

7. The Consolidated Fund of India is a fund to which
   1. All revenues received by the Government of India are credited.
   2. All remittances are credited.
   3. All loans raised by the Government by the issue of treasury bills are credited.
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: b.
Consolidated Fund of India: It is a fund to which all receipts are credited and all payments are debited. In other words, (a) all revenues received by the Government of India; (b) all loans raised by the Government by the issue of treasury bills, loans or ways and means of advances; and (c) all money received by the government in repayment of loans forms the Consolidated Fund of India. All the legally authorised payments on behalf of the Government of India are made out of this fund. No money out of this fund can be appropriated (issued or drawn) except in accordance with a parliamentary law.

Improvisation: (Previous question), TH:
Indian Polity by M Laxmikanth;

8. In value terms,
   1. Asia accounts for a greater share than Europe and America combined, of India’s annual total export.
   2. Asia accounts for a greater share than Europe and America combined, of India’s annual total import.
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.
These are trends that sustain throughout the year:
During the period 2017-18 (Apr-Oct) (P), the share of Asia comprising of East Asia, ASEAN, West Asia, Other West Asia, North East Asia and South Asia accounted for 49.39 per cent of India's total exports. The share of America and Europe in India's exports stood at 21.09 per cent and 19.24 per cent respectively.

Asia accounted for 60.49 per cent of India's total import during the period 2017-18 (Apr-Oct) (P), followed by Europe (14.78 per cent) and America (11.81 per cent).

Improvisation: PIB;
Source: Commerce Ministry Annual Report;

9. Under Price Support Scheme (PSS), the procurement of which of the following crops is undertaken?
   1. Copra
   2. Groundnut
   3. Pulses
   4. Cotton
   5. Tobacco

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
   a) 1, 3, 4 and 5
   b) 2 and 3 only
   c) 1, 4 and 5 only
   d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Solution: d.

Under Price Support Scheme (PSS), the procurement of oil seeds (this includes groundnuts), pulses and cotton through Central Nodal Agencies at the Minimum Support Price (MSP) is also undertaken. This scheme is implemented at the request of the concerned State Government which agrees to exempt the procured commodities from levy of mandi tax and assist central nodal agencies in logistic arrangements including gunny bags, provide working capital for state agencies, creation of revolving fund for PSS operations etc. as required under the Scheme guidelines. The basic objectives of PSS are to provide remunerative prices to the growers for their produce with a view to encourage higher investment and production and to safeguard the interest of consumers by making available supplies at reasonable prices with low cost of intermediation.

Further, Government of India also implements Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) for procurement of agricultural and horticultural commodities which are perishable in nature and are not covered under the Price Support Scheme (PSS).

PIB (2017): Mechanism to procure bumper crops;
Improvisation: PIB;
Category - Geography

1. Which among the following natural resources are most suited to provide drinking water to large populations in cities and towns on the basis of a ‘conserve and use’ principle?
   1. Mountain springs
   2. Flood-plains of rivers
   3. Forested hills

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.
A mains-oriented question.

Floodplains of rivers are exceptional aquifers where any withdrawal is compensated by gravity flow from a large surrounding area and can be used as a source of providing water to cities. Some floodplains, such as those of Himalayan rivers, contain up to 20 times more water than the virgin flow in rivers in a year. Since recharge is by rainfall and during late floods, the water quality is good.

Currently, mineral water is brought from faraway mountain springs, putting huge pressure on the mountains. It is packaged and consumed in plastic bottles that end up in landfills. Forested hills are a result of evolution over millions of years. They are not polluted and sit on a treasure of underground aquifers that contain natural mineral water comparable to that found in a mountain spring.

About PiSci: One of the objects of establishing PiSci is to undertake various non-invasive programmes and solutions that conserve and use living natural resources like water, rivers, forests, aquifers, renewable energy to provide health and economic benefits for the society and the planet as and to carry out scientific research in the above mentioned fields.

PiSci: Non-invasive solutions;
In the news: TH; From March: TH;

2. After Antarctica, the next largest store of frozen water on the planet is
   a) Siberia
   b) Alaska
   c) Greenland
   d) The Arctic

Solution: c.
USGS: Ice, Snow and Glaciers: The vast majority, almost 90 percent, of Earth's ice mass is in Antarctica, while the Greenland ice cap contains 10 percent of the total global ice mass.
NOAA: Cryosphere: There are places on Earth that are so cold that water is frozen solid. These areas of snow or ice, which are subject to temperatures below 32°F (0°C) for at least part of the year, compose the cryosphere. The term “cryosphere” comes from the Greek word, “krios,” which means cold.

Ice and snow on land are one part of the cryosphere. This includes the largest parts of the cryosphere, the continental ice sheets found in Greenland and Antarctica, as well as ice caps, glaciers, and areas of snow and permafrost. When continental ice flows out from land and to the sea surface, we get shelf ice.

The other part of the cryosphere is ice that is found in water. This includes frozen parts of the ocean, such as waters surrounding Antarctica and the Arctic. It also includes frozen rivers and lakes, which mainly occur in polar areas.

In the news: BBC.

3. Consider the following statements about the Sinai Peninsula:
   1. It is a raindrop-shaped peninsula.
   2. It links Asia with Africa.
   3. It adjoins Israel and Gaza Strip on the east.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
   a) 1 and 2 only
   b) 2 only
   c) 2 and 3 only
   d) 3 only

Solution: c.
Sinai Peninsula is a triangular peninsula linking Africa with Asia. The peninsula’s arid expanse is called the Sinai Desert. Usually regarded as being geographically part of Asia, the Sinai Peninsula is the northeastern extremity of Egypt and adjoins Israel and the Gaza Strip.
4. The island of Île aux Cochons, recently in the news, is located between
   a) Africa and Antarctica
   b) Falkland Islands and mainland South America
   c) Australia and New Zealand
   d) Norway and the Arctic polar ice cap

Solution: a.

The world's largest king penguin colony has shrunk nearly 90% since the 1980s, research suggests. Aerial and satellite images show breeding pair numbers have fallen 88% in the last three decades, an article in the journal Antarctic Science says. The colony lies on the France’s uninhabited Île aux Cochons between Africa and Antarctica in the Indian Ocean. Researchers say there is no clear reason for the decline.

5. A climate feedback happens when a change in our climate causes an impact which changes our climate further - a knock-on effect which feeds back into our climate. Which one of the following is a negative climate feedback?
   a) Ice albedo
   b) Clouds
   c) Methane hydrates
   d) Water vapour

Solution: a.

Climate feedbacks are processes that can either amplify or diminish the effects of climate forcings. A feedback that increases an initial warming is called a "positive feedback." A feedback that reduces an initial warming is a "negative feedback."

- Ice is white and very reflective, in contrast to the ocean surface, which is dark and absorbs heat faster. As the atmosphere warms and sea ice melts, the darker ocean absorbs more heat, causes more ice to melt, and makes the Earth warmer overall. The ice-albedo feedback is a very strong positive feedback.
- A warmer climate could cause more water to be held in the atmosphere leading to an increase in cloudiness and altering the amount of sunlight that reaches the surface of the Earth. Less heat would get absorbed, which could slow the increased warming.
- There are very large stores of methane locked away at depth in the ocean. We know the stability of these stores is dependent on temperature. As the oceans get warmer it’s possible that these stores get released. Methane is more than 20 times as potent as CO2 as a greenhouse gas.
**MetOffice**: Our atmosphere is getting warmer because of climate change and, as a result, is holding more water vapour. This is a potent greenhouse gas - when in the atmosphere, water vapour helps the Earth hold on to more energy from the sun. So a warming climate means more water vapour, which in turn warms the climate further - a classic positive feedback.

Improvisation/ in the news (BBC): What is a Hothouse Earth scenario? Crossing into a Hothouse Earth period would see a higher global temperature than at any time in the past 1.2 million years. The climate might stabilise with 4-5 degrees C of warming above the pre-industrial age. Thanks to the melting of ice sheets, the seas could be 10-60 metres higher than now. Essentially, this would mean that some parts of the Earth would become uninhabitable. The impacts would be “massive, sometimes abrupt and undoubtedly disruptive”. A study by an international team of climate researchers study shows this could happen if global temperatures rise by 2°C.

6. Which one of the following is not designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and also is not on the UNESCO World Network of Man and Biosphere Reserves?
   - a) Sunderbans
   - b) Khangchendzonga
   - c) Nanda Devi
   - d) Manas

Solution: d.

In the news (PIB): The Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve has become the 11th Biosphere Reserve from India that has been included in the UNESCO designated World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).

Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve in Sikkim is one of the highest ecosystems in the world, reaching elevations of 1,220 metres above sea-level. It includes a range of ecolines, varying from sub-tropic to Arctic, as well as natural forests in different biomes, that support an immensely rich diversity of forest types and habitats.

The core area of the Biosphere Reserve is a major transboundary Wildlife Protected Area. The southern and central landscape, which makes up 86% of the core area, is situated in the Greater Himalayas. The northern part of the area accounts for 14% is characterized by trans-Himalayan features.

UNESCO India MAB;
UNESCO India WHC;

7. Under the Foreigners (Restricted) Areas Order, 1963, which of the following areas have been declared as ‘Restricted’ areas?
   1. Parts of the state of Sikkim
   2. Andaman and Nicobar Islands
   3. Lakshadweep

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
In the news: 29 inhabited islands of Andaman and Nicobar have been excluded from the restricted area permit (RAP) notified under the Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963, till December 31, 2022, subject to certain conditions.

However, citizens of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan and foreign nationals having their origin in these countries would continue to require RAP to visit the Union Territory, the official said. For visiting Mayabunder and Diglipur, citizens of Myanmar will continue to require RAP, which shall be issued only with the prior approval of the ministry.

MHA: Protected and Restricted Areas;

8. The state with the most number of completed dams is
   a) Gujarat
   b) Madhya Pradesh
   c) Maharashtra
   d) Karnataka

Solution: c.
Such a straightforward question will not be asked by UPSC; this information though will be of help in some way or the other for this exam. Maharashtra has the largest number of dams (2069) followed by Madhya Pradesh (899), then Gujarat (620).

See table: PIB;

9. Consider the following statements:
   1. The Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP) was the world’s first to be inscribed as a “Mixed World Heritage Site”.
   2. The Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve (KBR) comprises nearly a quarter of the entire geographical area of Sikkim.

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: d.
KNP is India’s (not the world’s) first site to be inscribed as a “Mixed World Heritage Site”. KBR comprises around 41% of the entire geographical area of Sikkim.

In the news: th;
10. Which one of the following countries has the smallest coastline opening out to the Caspian Sea?
   a) Azerbaijan
   b) Kazakhstan
   c) Turkmenistan
   d) Iran

Solution: d.

**BBC**: “Because the deal does not define the Caspian as a lake, Iran - which has the smallest coastline - is viewed as a potential loser.”

Iran has a coastline that measures approximately 400 miles in length, whereas Azerbaijan’s coastline measures approximately 443 miles.

**WorldAtlas**;

11. Which of the Following Ocean and atmospheric phenomena are known to affect the Indian Monsoon system?
   1. Madden-Julian Oscillation
   2. El Nino
   3. Indian Ocean Dipole

Select the correct answer using codes given below:
   a) 1 only
   b) 2 and 3 only
   c) 1 and 3 only
   d) 1, 2 and 3 only

Solution: d.

The **MJO** can be defined as an eastward moving 'pulse' of clouds, rainfall, winds and pressure near the equator that typically recurs every 30 to 60 days. It’s a traversing phenomenon and is most prominent over the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

The **Indian Ocean Dipole**(IOD), El Nino and MJO are all oceanic and atmospheric phenomena, which affect weather on a large scale. IOD only pertains to the Indian Ocean, but the other two affect weather on a global scale, up to the mid-latitudes.

**Improvisation**: **TH**;

12. Consider the following statements:
   1. Paithani sarees and fabrics have been accorded the GI tag.
   2. Paithan is located in Madhya Pradesh.

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.
Paithani is located in Maharashtra.

In the news (TH): Yeola is one of Maharashtra's biggest handloom centres, known particularly for its richly motifed silk-and-gold Paithani saris — part of a 200-year-old weaving tradition patronised by the Peshwas. The 2,300 looms in Yeola reportedly outnumber those in Paithan village, the birthplace of the Paithani sari.

IPIndia;

13. River Brahmaputra flows through which of the following National Parks?
   1. Kaziranga NP
   2. Intanki NP
   3. Balphakram NP
   4. Namdapha NP

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
   a) 1 and 4 only
   b) 1 only
   c) 2 and 4 only
   d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Solution: b.
IntankiNP - Nagaland;
Balphakram NP – Meghalaya;
Namdapha NP (River Noa-Dihing, a tributary of R.Brahmaputra flows through this NP) – Arunachal Pradesh;

Improvisation:TH;

14. Cyclone warning in India is one of the most important functions of the
   a) Central Water Commission
   b) India Meteorological Department
   c) Indian Institute of Tropical Metrology
   d) Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services

Solution: b.
With several incidents of tropical cyclones and severe weather events striking over Kerala and Karnataka coasts in the recent times, the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences is proposing to set up a Cyclone Warning Centre in Thiruvananthapuram. At present, IMD has cyclone warning centres only at Chennai, Vishakhapatnam, Bhubaneswar, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Mumbai. The Centre will cater to the needs of the states of Kerala and Karnataka.

IMD; PIB;

15. “Āṭṭhamahāṭhānāni” in Buddhism refers to
   a) The eight great places of Buddhist pilgrimage.
   b) The eight canonical texts.
c) The eight sects.

d) The eight-fold path to enlightenment.

Solution: a.
These include the four places of pilgrimage and the four places of miracles.

**PART II: The Four Places of Pilgrimage**

1. Lumbini, Birthplace of the Buddha
2. Bodhgaya, Place of the Supreme Enlightenment
3. Sarnath, Place of the First Sermon
4. Kushinagar, Place of the Mahaparinibbana (Great Decease)

**PART III: The Four Places of Miracles**

1. Sravasti, Place of the Twin Miracle
2. Sankasia, Place of Descent from Heaven
3. Raigir, Place of Taming the Drunken Elephant Nalagiri
4. Vaishali, Place of Renunciation of the Will to Live on

[Map of North East India showing the Locations of the Eight Great Places of Buddhist Pilgrimage](#)

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16. Four crops provide two-thirds of the world’s food supply. These include wheat, rice and maize. The fourth crop is

a) Soybeans
b) Peas
c) Tomatoes
d) Bananas

Solution: a.
Some of the most widely grown crops (apart from the four already mentioned) – Potatoes, Sweet potatoes, Cassava, sorghum, plantains and yam.
17. Which one of the following states fall roughly within the same latitudinal extent that the United Arab Emirates lies in?
   a) Kerala
   b) Karnataka
   c) Maharashtra
   d) Madhya Pradesh

Solution: d.
The UAE lies between 22°50′N and 26°N latitudes. The latitudinal extent of Madhya Pradesh is roughly from 21°N to 27°N.

Map sources: MoI; MoW;
In the news: India declining foreign assistance for relief and rehabilitation efforts in Kerala.

18. In traversing the Himalayan states by land from Daulat Beg Oldie to Kibithu, which one of the following rivers will you not cross?
   a) Satluj
   b) Teesta
   c) Subansiri
   d) BurhiDihing
Solution: d.

Kibithu lies on the right bank of River Lohit in Arunachal Pradesh.

River Burhi Dihing (mentioned also in the NCERT book) is a left bank tributary of River Brahmaputra. One will not have to cross it to get to Kibithu from Daulat Beg Oldie in J&K. You will cross river Satluj in Himachal Pradesh; Teesta in Sikkim; and Subansiri in Arunachal.

Improvisation (PIB): “. DBO and Kibithu are the two forward most outposts of India in the North and in the East with DBO being the highest Airfield at 16614 feet. The team will cover a distance of more than 4500 Km through mountain terrain of the states of J&K, HP, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.”

19. The gates of Idukki dam in Kerala were recently opened after 26 years. This dam is on the river
a) Kabini
b) Valapattanam
c) Bharatapuzha
d) Periyar

Solution: d.
The Idukki arch dam, 169 metres high, on the Periyar River, was completed in 1974. It connects two huge rocks—Kurathi (925 metres) high, and Kuravan, (839 metres) high. Together with the Cheruthoni dam (1976), on the Cheruthoni River, and the Kulamavu dam (1977), on the MuvattuPuzha River, the Idukki dam forms a large reservoir. The dam is used primarily for flood control and to generate hydroelectric power.

TH:

20. The Velavadar National Park is located in
a) Gujarat
b) Jharkhand
c) Kerala
d) Tamil Nadu

Solution: a.

**WIIENVIIS**: National Parks of Gujarat include:

- Vansda NP
- Blackbuck (Velavadar) NP
- Gir NP
- Marine (Gulf of Kachchh) NP

Source/improvisation: TH;

21. Nestled in the peaks of the Himalayas is this ancient village that has a unique democratic system said to be among the oldest in the world, and, similar to the Ancient Greek system of democracy – it consists of a lower and upper house. Cannabis has long been the backbone of this small village’s economy. The locals speak Kanashi, which is considered sacred and is not taught to outsiders. This village is

   a) Dhahanu, Jammu and Kashmir
   b) Malana, Himachal Pradesh
   c) Borong, Sikkim
   d) Ziro, Arunachal Pradesh

Solution: b.

Legend has it that some of Alexander the Great’s army took shelter in this isolated village in 326BC after they were wounded in a battle against Porus, a ruler in India’s Punjab region. These soldiers are often said to be the ancestors of the Malani people. Artefacts from that period have been found in the village, such as a sword that reportedly rests inside the temple. However, genetic ties to the soldiers have not been studied or established.

To read more about Malana, click HERE;

22. Spread across a mere 1km radius, this is a small town of about 200 houses where throngs of pilgrims come to offer their prayers to a Hindu god. The shrine of this God remains open 24 hours a day, year round. Due to a 300-year-old legend, no house in the town has doors. And this belief extends beyond the residential houses to nearly all the town’s civic establishments, from hotels to the police station and even the bank. This town is

   a) Jatinga, Assam
   b) Pushkar, Rajasthan
   c) ShaniShingnapur, Maharashtra
   d) Sabarimala, Kerala

Solution: c.

For years, ShaniShingnapur had no police station, as there was no need for one. It was only in 2015 that the police station of a nearby village was shifted to ShaniShingnapur to control the surge in the number of pilgrims during peak season. Until 2010, there were no known instances of theft or burglary, but recently, a few complaints – such as small amounts of stolen cash, jewellery and other items – have been registered. A police official stated that
small incidents sometimes go unreported as the economy of the village is centred on the
temple, and such reports can tarnish its reputation and traditions. He added that some
pilgrims who come to pray in the temple commit petty crimes like pickpocketing or vehicle
thefts in the surrounding areas. Still, villagers refuse to keep their valuables under lock and
key as their faith in Lord Shani remains absolute.

Although no-one wants to openly address the issue, it is evident that a few residents have
started using wooden sliding doors, plywood planks or even latches to safeguard their
homes. Adjacent villages have had several instances of robbery, and it seems that some
residents prefer to be safe than sorry.

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23. At an elevation of 4,440m, the tiny post office in the village of Hikkim connects a cluster
of small villages in this isolated region to the rest of the world. Villagers come here to post
letters or deposit money in their savings accounts; and intrepid travellers who make it this
far take pride in mailing their letters from the highest post office on Earth. This village is
located in

a) Himachal Pradesh
b) Uttarakhand
c) Sikkim
d) Arunachal Pradesh

Solution: a.

Postmaster RinchenChhering has been running the operations since its inception in 1983.
It’s difficult work: few motorable roads means the mail must be carried on foot, and the
post office is often forced to shut during winter months due to heavy snowfall.

Two postmen make the arduous 46km round-trip journey on foot each day across high
mountain passes and rolling pastures to deliver mail to Kaza, the capital of the Spiti Valley,
which is connected by road to other larger towns in the state of Himachal Pradesh. From
Kaza, the outbound mail is dispatched via buses along often treacherous mountain roads,
while inbound letters are carried back on foot to Hikkim.

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24. Consider the following statements:

1. Port Blair is closer to Kolkata than it is to Chennai.
2. The Duncan passage separates Middle Andaman from South Andaman.

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.
25. The distance by sea between which of the following pairs of islands is the least?
   a) Little Andaman and Little Nicobar  
   b) Little Andaman and Car Nicobar  
   c) Great Nicobar and Barren Island  
   d) Great Nicobar and Landfall Island

Solution: b.
The Andamans and Nicobars are separated by a channel (the Ten Degree Channel) some 150 km wide.
About Andaman:
Map source: Maps of India;
Improvisation (TH): “Bullfrogs have reached little Andaman, the next frontier is Nicobar. There are other islands they are yet to invade, and we must do everything to stop that. Signs at jetties about the adverse economic impact of bullfrogs and the need to check contamination of fish stocks could be useful.”

26. Countries that open out to the Caspian Sea include
   1. Kazakhstan
   2. Turkmenistan
   3. Uzbekistan
   4. Russia
   5. Azerbaijan
   6. Georgia
   7. Iran
Select the correct answer using the code given below:

a) 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7 only
b) 3, 5 and 6 only
c) 1, 2 and 3 only
d) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7

Solution: a.

27. The Caspian Sea
   1. Is treated as a sea under the UN Law of the Sea.
   2. Has vast oil and gas reserves.
   3. Supplies most of the world’s demand for caviar.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: c.
Statements 2 and 3 are correct.

The Caspian Sea has a number of different species of sturgeon, the fish that yields the highly prized delicacy caviar. Between 80-90% of the world’s caviar is sourced from the Caspian, but the numbers have been falling over the past few decades. For those of you who want to read more about caviar, click HERE.
In a landmark deal that has been more than two decades in the making, Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan - all bordering the Caspian Sea - have agreed in principle on how to divide it (the Caspian) up. Until 1991, the Caspian was known as a lake. But the dissolution of the USSR complicated this issue. Iran had argued it was a lake and not a sea, but none of the other four littoral states agreed.

If it was treated as a sea, then it would be covered by international maritime law, namely the United Nations Law of the Sea. This binding document sets rules on how countries can use the world’s oceans. It covers areas such as the management of natural resources, territorial rights, and the environment. And it is not limited to littoral states, meaning others can seek access to its resources. But if it is defined as a lake, then it would have to be divided equally between all five countries.

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**Category - Ecology & Environment**

1. An estimated 35 to 41 leopards live in this National Park. As leopard habitats shrink and they move into the city to survive, some communities are afraid to leave their houses. Children in affected areas must walk around in groups of six or more. However, a recent study suggested that the leopards may be protecting their human neighbours from rabies. Around 40 per cent of the leopards’ diet is feral dogs, which is the main source of the deadly virus. The national park in question is
   a) Nagarhole National Park, Mysore
   b) Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, Dibrugarh
   c) Van Vihar National Park, Bhopal
   d) Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai

Solution: d.
Mumbai is home to the highest concentration of leopards anywhere in the world. They capitalise on hunting the animals that man brings into the city.

Source: BBC;

2. Why is a plant called ‘Lantana camara’ often mentioned in news?
   a) Its extract is widely used in cosmetics.
   b) It tends to reduce the biodiversity in the area in which it grows.
   c) Its extract is used in the synthesis of pesticides.
   d) It is grown in urban water bodies that are contaminated with heavy metals.

Solution: b.
Lantana (Lantana camara) is one of the world’s most invasive weeds. Aggressive extermination measures taken by the government over the last 200 years have largely failed. These measures include fire, mechanical, chemical, biological and combinations of these approaches. Lantana continues to spread and occupies 13 million hectares in India.
3. A practice that has existed since the Mughal era, this community of water carriers continues to quench the thirst of vendors and the devout, and passersby with their water-filled goat hide canteen known as ‘mashaq’. This statement refers to which one of the following communities?
   a) Bhishti  
   b) Thamud  
   c) Alavi Bohra  
   d) Dafer  

Solution: a.

Bhishitis have been supplying businesses, pilgrims and passersby with swigs from their swollen canteens since the Mughals ruled India, an era before piped water sounded the death knell for their trade.

From 2017: **Th: Country's last water men fight the tide of history**;
In the news: **TH**;

4. Consider the following statements:
   1. The Fall Armyworm (FAW) is native to Africa.
   2. FAW can feed on over fifty species of plants.
   3. Inter-cropping is known to protect crops against attack by FAW.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
   a) 1 only  
   b) 2 and 3 only  
   c) 1 and 3 only  
   d) 1, 2 and 3  

Solution: b.
The Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) has sounded the alarm after the invasive agricultural pest Fall Armyworm (Spodoptera frugiperda) was discovered in Karnataka this July.

5. Hoplobatrachustigerinus, sometimes in the news, has been designated by the IUCN as
   a) Least concern
   b) Vulnerable
   c) Endangered
   d) Critically endangered
Solution: a.

The Indian bull frog (*Hoplobatrachustigerinus*), a recent arrival from the mainland, is steadily occupying the ecosystem in the Andamans and threatening the local economy. The voracious animal gulps down anything that would fit in its jaws: centipedes, leeches, native frogs, lizards, small snakes, and even chicks and ducklings, which are an important source of food for the islanders.

They breed by the hundreds, with each female able to lay between 3,500 and 20,000 eggs. Not all survive, but enough live to breed again, ensuring that the horde extends their range. With an average life span of seven years, and time to sexual maturity of 10-12 months, their population can dramatically shoot up in a very short time, which is precisely what happened once they landed in the islands.

6. Among the following species that are found in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, alien invasive species include the
   1. Elephant
   2. Chital
   3. Hog deer
   4. Barking Deer
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
   a) 1, 2, 3 and 4
   b) 1 and 2 only
   c) 3 and 4 only
   d) 2, 3 and 4 only
Solution: a.

Unlike the mainland, resources on the islands are scarce for big animals, while natural calamities are more frequent. The wildlife here has evolved in a miniature setting: there are no large herbivores (the largest is the Andaman wild pig) or large carnivores.

Islands have fewer species, but their nature make them irreplaceable. They are found nowhere else in the world. This makes the entire food web in the islands very different from that of the mainland.
The bullfrog is only the latest entrant in the Andamans’ 150-year-old history of invasives, with alien species introduced in waves by the British, Japanese, and ‘mainland’ Indians having gradually colonised many parts of the island territory. These include the elephant (introduced for logging and later abandoned), chital (spotted deer), hog deer, and barking deer (all three for game meat).

7. ‘Vegetable oil’, commonly found as an ingredient in several packaged food products and other articles in a supermarket, more often than not refers to which one of the following oils?
   a) Soybean oil
   b) Rapeseed oil
   c) Soy oil
   d) Palm oil

Solution: d.
Palm oil is the most widely used vegetable oil on the planet and is believed to be in about 50% of products found in supermarkets and shops. It comes from the reddish pulp of the fruit found on oil palms, particularly the African oil palm - known as Elaeisguineensis. The top two producers of palm oil are Indonesia and Malaysia, generating tens of millions of tonnes annually in an industry worth upwards of $40bn. Over the past 20 years, growing demand has seen thousands of hectares of old, tropical forests chopped down to make way for the oily palm tree plantations.

The oil is important for lipstick for example because it holds colour well, has no taste and doesn’t melt at high temperatures. It’s found in shampoos, soaps, ice cream and instant noodles amongst thousands of others.
8. Palm oil comes from the reddish pulp of the fruit found on oil palms, particularly the African oil palm - known as *Elaeisguineensis*. Their plantations presently are considered to pose a significant threat to the survival of which one of the following species?
   a) Lemur
   b) Orangutan
   c) Pangolin
   d) African forest elephant

Solution: b.

Palm oil comes from the oil palm tree, which is native to West Africa. However, *most palm oil is currently grown in Indonesia and Malaysia*. Environmentalists say the region’s forests have paid the price, with native trees cut down to make way for palm trees. Oil palm expansion is a major driver of deforestation, which in turn threatens wildlife, such as the critically endangered orangutan of Borneo.

9. Consider the following statements:
   1. The Greater Adjutant is known to breed in Bihar.
   2. The whale shark – world’s largest living species of fish – is found in Indian waters.

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 Greater Adjutant (endangered, *IUCN*) is known to breed in Assam and Bihar. The Whale Shark (endangered, *IUCN*) has a circumtropical distribution through all tropical and warm temperate seas, apart from the Mediterranean.

Improvisation (THI): “...the feelings of inter-species kinship aren’t traditional for many communities but can be taught. The work of Aaranyak (greater adjutant storks), Mumbaikars for SGNP (leopards), and Wildlife Trust of India (whale sharks) show the way.”

10. Consider the following statements with reference to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO):
   1. Nearly 50% of global palm oil production is certified by it.
   2. It is an initiative under the UN Environment Programme.

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
The RSPO is a not-for-profit that unites stakeholders from the 7 sectors of the palm oil industry: oil palm producers, processors or traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, banks/investors, and environmental and social non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to develop and implement global standards for sustainable palm oil. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) help set up the RSPO.

About RSPO; Infographics source: RSPO (PDF);

11. It was one of the first domesticated food crops and is today the world’s most widely cultivated crop. The crop can be grown from equatorial regions to within the Arctic Circle; it has also been recorded growing as high as 4.5km above sea level. Recently, after nearly
13 years of research, this crop’s genome has been fully annotated for the first time. This crop is
   a) Maize
   b) Barley
   c) Wheat
   d) Rice

Solution: c.
The International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium (IWGSC) published recently in the international journal *Science* the first fully annotated reference genome of bread wheat, the world’s most widely cultivated crop. This work will pave the way for the production of wheat varieties better adapted to climate challenges, with higher yields, enhanced nutritional quality and improved sustainability.

**PIB:** “In an article published in ‘Science’, the authors said, the DNA sequence has been ordered and it represents the highest quality genome sequence generated to date for the bread wheat. The reference genome covers 94% (14.5 Gb) of the entire wheat genome. The bread wheat has a complex hexaploid genome which is 40 times larger than that of the rice genome and 5 times larger than the human genome. The research article was authored by more than 200 scientists – including 18 from India – from 73 research institutions in 20 countries.”

*WheatGenome.org; BBC (2012);*

12. Which one of the following is promoted by groups/organisations such as ICRISAT, CFF and Bioversity International?
   a) Agricultural biodiversity
   b) Irrigation infrastructure
   c) Biofortification of staple crops
   d) Vegetarianism

Solution: a.
Other than Crops For the Future (CFF), which bills itself as the world’s first research centre dedicated solely to underutilised crops, there are other key groups championing agricultural diversity including Crop Trust, Slow Food, Icrisat and Bioversity International. Add to that more middle-income consumers searching for nutritious foods and others eager to try the unprocessed foods their grandparents once ate. There is a growing global momentum around forgotten foods.

Crops which have been farmed for centuries but are virtually unknown outside the places where they grow are known as forgotten crops (or orphan crops, or simple ‘under-used’ or ‘alternative’ crops). By investing in neglected local plants, countries can reduce their reliance on imported crops and their carbon-heavy supply chains. Reclaiming the variety of crops humans once ate also boosts food security at a time warming climates threaten existing crops.
13. "Hothouse earth", a term recently seen in the news, most appropriately refers to a scenario in which
   a) Carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere crosses 400ppm.
   b) Earth is 2°C warmer than pre-industrial times.
   c) The rate of species extinction far exceeds the normal or "background" rate.
   d) Both b and c

Solution: b.
Statement ‘a’ happened in 2015. Statement ‘c’ is the present scenario.

BBC: The world has experienced many periods of mass extinction caused by a variety of natural factors, but the greatest period of mass extinction the world has ever seen is occurring right now. It is reckoned that the current rate of extinction is between a hundred and a thousand times faster than the average historical extinction rate for the planet.

BBC: "Hothouse Earth" is a deadly serious concept. Researchers believe we could soon cross a threshold leading to boiling hot temperatures and towering seas in the centuries to come. Even if countries succeed in meeting their CO2 targets, we could still lurch on to this "irreversible pathway". Their study shows it could happen if global temperatures rise by 2°C. An international team of climate researchers, writing in the journal, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, says the warming expected in the next few decades could turn some of the Earth’s natural forces - that currently protect us - into our enemies.

In the news: TH;

14. Consider the following statements:
Beeswax is
   1. A by-product of beekeeping.
   2. Used as an ingredient in the manufacture of cosmetics, and furniture polish.
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 regulator FSSAI has come out with food safety standards for honey and its products, in a bid to curb adulteration. With regard to by-products, the FSSAI has fixed standards for 'Bees wax' and 'royal jelly' also.

Beeswax is obtained from the honeycombs of bees of Apidae family after the honey has been removed by draining or centrifuging. The combs are melted with hot water, steam or solar heat and the melted product is filtered and cast into cakes of yellow bees wax.
Beeswax is used for candles, for artificial fruit and flowers, and for modeling wax. It is also an ingredient in the manufacture of furniture and floor waxes, leather dressings, waxed paper, lithographic inks, cosmetics, and ointments.

FP: Insights Current Affairs;
Britannica;

15. Compensatory Afforestation Funds have been established only under the
   a) Public Account of each state
   b) Public Account of India and of each state
   c) Consolidated Fund of each state
   d) Consolidated Fund of India and of each state

Solution: b.
The Compensatory afforestation Fund Act, 2016 is an Act to provide for the establishment of funds under the public accounts of India and the public accounts of each State and crediting thereto the monies received from the user agencies towards compensatory afforestation, additional compensatory afforestation, penal compensatory afforestation, net present value and all other amounts recovered from such agencies under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

Improvisation: TH;
PRS: CAF Act 2016;

16. Apart from harbouring the single largest population of the one-horned rhinoceroses, Kaziranga also harbours significant populations of other threatened species including
   1. Tigers
   2. Elephants
   3. Wild water buffaloes
   4. Hoolock Gibbons
   5. Ganges River dolphins

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
   a) 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
   b) 4 and 5 only
   c) 1, 2 and 3 only
   d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Solution: d.
All species listed in the options above are threatened and found in Kaziranga National Park.

Kaziranga.co.in;
UNESCO;
Improvisation: TH;

17. Fewer than 300 of this Bustard species remain in India, according to a recent Wildlife Institute of India (WII) report. The country’s two other resident Bustard species are equally
imperilled and classified as 'Critically Endangered' in IUCN's Red List. The smallest bustard in the world, it is found only in India. It is the

a) Great Indian Bustard
b) Bengal Florican
c) Lesser Florican
d) Little Bustard

Solution: c.

This is a sharp drop from less than 20 years ago, when the population was about 3,500. Lead author of the WII study, scientist Sutirtha Dutta, finds the plunge alarming and stresses the urgent need for a conservation plan if we are to save the bird. “A species is considered critically endangered if it sees a 75-80% population decline in three to four generations, as might be the case of the Lesser Florican,” he writes.

Historically, the lesser florican’s habitat spanned from Gujarat and Rajasthan to West Bengal and Odisha, from eastern Uttar Pradesh to Kerala. It was once also found in Nepal, and there were occasional reports of sightings from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Today, its viable population is restricted mainly to just two locations: Velavadar, with 96 to 115 territorial males, and Shokaliya-Bhinai villages of Rajasthan with 110 to 136 territorial males.

IUCN classifies the Lesser Florican as ‘Endangered’. The “two other bustard species... classified as ‘Critically Endangered’...” are the Great Indian Bustard and the Bengal Florican.

Source: TH;
MoEF Critically Endangered Species PDF;

18. Why is the Varadero reef – off the shore of the city of Cartagena, recently in the news, important for marine biologists to be studied?

a) It is the first successful relocation of a coral colony by humans.
b) This is the first such extensive coral reef to be found at the mouth of a river.
c) This reef thrives in a highly polluted environment.
d) None of the above

Solution: c.

Cartagena is a port city on Colombia’s Caribbean coast.
**BBC:** The Varadero reef, located in Cartagena Bay, has survived against the odds to thrive in a highly polluted environment. The Caribbean Sea bay, a major waterway for shipping vessels and cruise ships, is contaminated by industrial and sewage waste. According to marine biologists, the reef should not be alive, and yet it has flourished, providing a home to a large number of coral, fish and urchin species.

Current plans to dredge part of Varadero ... could hinder researchers' ability to gain insight into the factors that have allowed corals to thrive under such unusual conditions. With further study, scientists hope the enigmatic reef could provide clues to recovering the world's bleached and dying corals.

19. Each year, at least 20,000 African elephants are illegally killed for their tusks. This rampant poaching epidemic is the result of a resurgence in demand for ivory, particularly in

   a) Russia
   b) China
   c) West Asia
   d) Venezuela

Solution: b.

Promisingly, we have a historic opportunity to stop the African elephant poaching crisis: China has taken the remarkable step of closing its legal domestic ivory market at the end of 2017; Hong Kong has also agreed to a market closure by 2021.

China’s ivory ban is a historic milestone in the ongoing effort to save an iconic species. But as China’s markets close, markets elsewhere remain open and continue to attract consumers. And as more and more Chinese travel internationally—nearly 200 million Chinese tourists travel abroad each year—incidents of ivory smuggling are on the rise. This access to ivory outside China could seriously undermine the effectiveness of China’s 2017 ivory ban unless we address it. Closing the most troublesome legal and illegal markets that largely exist to serve Chinese nationals—those in Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Laos, for example—will help dry up demand.
20. Consider the following statements:
   1. The Environmental Performance Index is a biennial report by the World Economic Forum, Yale University, and Columbia University only.
   2. India’s ranking has deteriorated since 2014.
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.
The Environmental Performance Index is a biennial report by the World Economic Forum, Yale University, and Columbia University only.

**2014 EPI:** India was ranked 155 out of 178.
In the news (IE): Seven months after India found itself among the bottom five countries on the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2018 (177/180), the Union Environment Ministry on Tuesday said that “changes made” to the index, which saw India drop 36 points from 141 in 2016 to 177 this year, “have not been explained or backed by scientific arguments”, and seem to be “arbitrary.”

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**Category - Security Issues**

1. Rohingya migrants in India are mostly found in the states of
   a) Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal and Assam
   b) Tripura, Telangana, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir
   c) West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Tripura
   d) Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur and Odisha

Solution: b.
The Union Home Ministry has sent an advisory to State governments to enumerate, observe and collect biometric data of Rohingya migrants living in India, and told the Lok Sabha that the government had received reports of their involvement in illegal activities. The government also made it clear that Rohingyas were “illegal migrants” and not “refugees.” The 40,000 or so Rohingya in India were mostly found in Jammu and Kashmir, Hyderabad (Telangana), Mewat in Haryana and Tripura.

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2. The ‘CLOUD Act’, signed into law earlier this year by the US President, is related to
   a) Cross-border data sharing
   b) Defence partnerships
   c) Intellectual Property Rights
   d) Work Visas
Solution: a.
From April 2018 (TH): The Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act (CLOUD Act), will enable the U.S. government to enter into executive agreements with like-minded states for cross-border data sharing. This will allow law enforcement agencies only from these states to directly obtain electronic data, held by communication service providers headquartered in the U.S., to combat crime.

TH:

3. The indigenously developed Anti-Tank Guided Missile ‘HELINA’ is meant to be launched from
   a) Helicopters
   b) The Light Combat Aircraft (Tejas)
   c) Mobile autonomous land-based launchers
   d) Tanks

Solution: a.
HeliNa stands for ‘Helicopter-launched NAG’, where NAG refers to DRDO’s anti-tank Guided Missile.

PIB;
NIE:

4. The general superintendence, direction and control of the National Disaster Response Force is vested in and will be exercised by the
   a) National Disaster Management Authority
   b) State Disaster Management Authority of the state affected by a disaster
   c) National Institute of Disaster Management
   d) National Crisis Management Committee

Solution: d.
The general superintendence, direction and control of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) is vested in and will be exercised by the NDMA (which is chaired by the PM).

Improvisation: PIB;
National Policy on Disaster Management;

Category – National Institutions
1. As per the India Wage Report published recently by the ILO,
   1. The average daily wage has nearly doubled in absolute terms from early 90s to recent years.
   2. An urban worker earns around twice his rural counterpart.
   3. Gender gap in daily wages has been on the decline since the 1990s.
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

Category - International Institutions

1. The Innocenti Declaration signed in 1990 has a bearing on
   a) Infant nutrition security
   b) Youth sport
   c) Language conservation
   d) Freedom of speech and expression

Solution: a.

World Breastfeeding Week (August 1-7) is celebrated every year to encourage breastfeeding and improve the health of babies around the world. It commemorates the Innocenti Declaration signed in August 1990 by government policymakers, the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF and other organisations to protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding, says WHO, is the best way to provide infants with the nutrients they need, which recommends exclusive breastfeeding starting within one hour after birth until a baby is six months old. Nutritious complementary foods should then be added while continuing to breastfeed for up to two years or beyond.

TH:

2. The Organization of American States, the world’s oldest regional organization, uses a four-pronged approach to effectively implement its essential purposes, based on its main pillars. Which of the following is *not* one among these pillars?
   a) Democracy
b) Human Rights

c) Security

d) Non-alignment

Solution: d.

**OAS:** The Organization was established in order to achieve among its member states “an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence.”

Today, the OAS brings together all 35 independent states of the Americas and constitutes the main political, juridical, and social governmental forum. The Organization uses a four-pronged approach to effectively implement its essential purposes, based on its main pillars: democracy, human rights, security, and development.

In the news (TH): The IACHR is an independent, multinational court that handles the human rights cases of people affected by the laws of countries that are members of the Organisation of American States (OAS).

3. Xingkong-2, launched recently by China, is unique in the sense that
   a) It is the first spacecraft to be quantum communications-enabled.
   b) It is an outer space-based gravitational wave observatory.
   c) It is hypersonic aircraft that can carry nuclear warheads.
   d) None of the above

Solution: c.

China recently announced that it has successfully tested its first cutting-edge hypersonic (more than five times the speed of sound) aircraft which could carry nuclear warheads and penetrate any current generation anti-missile defence systems. The Xingkong-2 or Starry Sky-2, was launched in a target range located in Northwest China on Friday last, the state-run China Academy of Aerospace Aerodynamics said in a statement.

TH:

4. Consider the following statements:
   1. India’s financial assistance to SAARC countries, with the exception of Myanmar, has been declining in recent years.
   2. The Salma dam, constructed by India, is located in Bangladesh.

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: d.
Myanmar is not a SAARC member, therefore statement 1 is incorrect.

The Salma Dam, constructed by India, is in Afghanistan.

5. Consider the following statements about the International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium:
1. It was set up in the wake of India’s green revolution.
2. It has members across several countries including India.
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.
The IWGSC, with 2,400 members in 68 countries, is an international, collaborative consortium, established in 2005 by a group of wheat growers, plant scientists, and public and private breeders. The vision of the IWGSC is a high quality genome sequence of bread wheat that serves as a foundation for the accelerated development of improved varieties and that empowers all aspects of basic and applied wheat science.

In the news [PIB]: Scientists at the Punjab Agricultural University and ICAR-National Research Centre on Plant Biotechnology, New Delhi, contributed to the decoding of the bread wheat genome. This project was financially supported by the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India.

https://www.wheatgenome.org/About;

6. Consider the following statements:
1. The term of the Australian House of Representatives is three years.
2. Australia does not have a formal written constitution.

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.
Statement 1 is correct. Australia is a federation; it has a written constitution. In addition to the national Constitution, each Australian state has its own constitution.

Australian PEO; Australian Parliament;
In the news: BBC;

7. The European Commission and European Space Agency's 'Galileo' will be akin to NASA's
   a) Solar Parker Probe
   b) Global Positioning System
   c) James Webb Space Telescope
   d) X-plane

Solution: b.
Europe's Galileo system (BBC):

- A project of the European Commission and the European Space Agency;
- 24 satellites constitute a full system but it will have six spares in orbit also
- 22 spacecraft are in orbit today; the figure of 30 is likely to be reached in 2021;
- Will work alongside the US-owned GPS and Russian Glonass systems
- Promises eventual real-time positioning down to a metre or less

Category - State Affairs

1. In Gamaka, a gamaki (singer) reads a stanza of a poem with a high emphasis on meaning, in a raga (melody) that matches the emotion of the poem. Another person then explains the meaning of the stanza through examples and anecdotes. This art form is well-developed in
   a) Uttar Pradesh
   b) Uttarakhand
   c) Karnataka
   d) Kerala

Solution: c.
Mattur and its sister village, Hosahalli, are also known for their efforts to support the ancient tradition of gamaka, a unique form of singing and storytelling in Karnataka.

In gamaka, also known as “Kaavya Vaachana”, a gamaki (singer) reads a stanza of a poem with a high emphasis on meaning, in a raga (melody) that matches the emotion of the poem. Another person then explains the vyakyana or meaning of the stanza through
examples and anecdotes. The ragas are drawn from traditional Kannada folk tunes and Carnatic music while the poems are mostly from old Kannada epics.

Improvisation: PIB;  
Source: TBI;

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**Category - Science & Technology**

1. The Flash Flood Guidance System (FFGS) project with global coverage is being implemented by the
   a) UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
   b) NASA
   c) World Meteorological Organisation
   d) Global Atmospheric Research Programme

Solution: c.  
Recognizing that flash floods have a particularly disastrous impact on lives and properties of the affected populations, the Fifteenth WMO Congress (2016) had approved the implementation of a Flash Flood Guidance System (FFGS) project with global coverage that had been developed by the WMO in collaboration with the US National Weather Service, the US Hydrologic Research Center and USAID/OFDA.

WMO; TH;

2. ‘ISROSENE’, recently in the news, refers to
   a) A handheld (portable device) for the detection of adulteration in PDS kerosene.
   b) The latest innovation in road construction technology involving the utilisation of dry solid waste.
   c) Rocket-grade kerosene.
   d) None of the above.

Solution: c.  
PIB: ISRO has already begun the move towards environment-friendly and green propellants with the acceptance of Liquid Oxygen (LOX)/ Liquid Hydrogen (LH2) and LOX/Kerosene based propulsion systems for launch vehicles, and use of electric propulsion for spacecraft. The LOX/LH2 combination is already being used in the cryogenic upper stages of GSLV and GSLV Mk-III launch vehicles. ISRO has successfully developed ISROSENE, which is a rocket grade version of kerosene as an alternative to conventional hydrazine rocket fuel.

3. The Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL), which manufactures EVMs, is under the
   a) Ministry of Science and Technology
   b) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
   c) Ministry of Defence
   d) Department of Atomic Energy

Solution: d.
ECIL was setup under the Department of Atomic Energy on 11th April, 1967 with a view to generate a strong indigenous capability in the field of professional grade electronics. The initial accent was on total self-reliance and ECIL was engaged in the Design, Development, Manufacture and Marketing of several products.

PIB;
ECIL Mass manufacturing facilities;

4. Consider the following pairs:
Recently launched Mobile Application – under ministry
1. ReUnite – Ministry of Women and Child Development
2. Khan Prahari – Ministry of Coal
3. Niryat Mitra – Ministry of Finance
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
   a) 1 and 2 only
   b) 2 only
   c) 2 and 3 only
   d) 3 only

Solution: b.
ReUnite (PIB) – BachpanBachaoAndolan and Capgemini
This app helps to track and trace missing and abandoned children in India. Parents and citizens can upload pictures of children, and provide detailed description like name, birth mark, address, report to the police station, search and identify missing kids.

Khan Prahari(PIB) – Ministry of Coal
It is a tool for reporting any activity taking place related to illegal coal mining like rat hole mining, pilferage etc. One can upload geo-tagged photographs of the incident along with textual information directly to the system. The complainant can also track his complaint through the system.

Niryat Mitra (PIB) – Ministry of Commerce and Industry
It provides wide range of information required to undertake international trade right from the policy provisions for export and import, applicable GST rate, available export incentives, tariff, preferential tariff, market access requirements.

5. Recently in the news, ‘iCRAFPT’ is related to
   a) Literature
   b) Food processing
   c) Disaster risk reduction
   d) Data protection framework

Solution: b.
P IB: “The International Conference on Recent Advances in Food Processing Technology (iCRAFPT) got underway today at Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology, Thanjavur in Tamilnadu.”
6. The Peto’s Paradox was first noticed about 70 years ago. This paradox refers to an inverse relationship that is related to
   a) Cancer
   b) High denomination banknotes
   c) Urban population densities
   d) Renewable energy

Solution: a.

**TH**: If every cell has an equal chance of going cancerous, elephants which have many billions of cells in their bodies would be expected to have greater chances of getting cancer than us humans. But it turns out that elephants (with a typical body mass of around 4,800 kg) are found to have a cancer rate of 5–8%, compared to 11–25% in us humans. This is also true of whales (40,000 kg); they seldom get cancer. And the 600 kg manatees, also called sea ‘cows’ (because they are vegetarians, and live on water plants in tropical seas) too seldom get cancer. On the other hand, a mouse, which hardly weighs a few grams, is 3 times more likely to get cancer than us humans. Thus, there seems more an inverse correlation between body mass and cancer probability. This inverse relationship was first noticed by Dr. Richard Peto of Oxford University about 70 years ago, and has come to be known as Peto’s Paradox.

7. Which of the following demonstrations/technologies associated with the proposed Gaganyaan programme have been successfully tested?
   1. Space Capsule Recovery Experiment
   2. Crew module Atmospheric Reentry Experiment
   3. Pad Abort Test
   4. GSLV MkIII

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
   a) 1, 2 and 3 only
   b) 2 and 3 only
   c) 1 and 4 only
   d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Solution: d.

ISRO has developed some critical technologies like re-entry mission capability, crew escape system, crew module configuration, thermal protection system, deceleration and floatation system, sub-systems of life support system etc. required for this programme. Some of these technologies have been demonstrated successfully through the Space Capsule Recovery Experiment (SRE-2007), Crew module Atmospheric Reentry Experiment (CARE-2014) and Pad Abort Test (2018). These technologies will enable ISRO in accomplishing the programme objectives in a short span of 4 years.

GSLV Mk-III launch vehicle (already in use for developmental flights), which has the necessary payload capability for this mission, will be used to launch Gaganyaan.

FP: PIB
8. Scientists say they have definitive evidence for water-ice on the surface of the Moon. The ice deposits are found at both the north and south poles. The result comes from an instrument that is/was aboard
   a) NASA’s Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter
   b) ISRO’s Chandrayaan-1
   c) JAXA’s Kaguya
   d) ESA’s SMART-1

Solution: b.

The result comes from an instrument on India's Chandrayaan-1 spacecraft, which explored the Moon between 2008 and 2009. The Moon Mineralogy Mapper (M3) instrument aboard Chandrayaan identified three specific signatures of water-ice at the lunar surface. M3 not only picked up the reflective properties one would expect from ice, but was able to directly measure the distinctive way its molecules absorb infrared light. This meant that it could differentiate between liquid water and vapour and solid ice.

BBC; TH;

Category – History

1. Deeply affected by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, s/he joined the Non-Cooperation Movement as a 15-year-old. Disheartened by its suspension in 1922, s/he began leaning towards more aggressive revolutionary ideals and joined the Hindustan Republican Association. S/He was a master of disguises, and was given the moniker 'Quick Silver' by a fellow-revolutionary. S/he was also known for his/her organisational skills, and played a key role in reorganising the HRA as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. These statements refer to
   a) Ram Prasad Bismil
   b) Ashfaqulla Khan
   c) Durgawati Devi
   d) Chandrashekhar Azad

Solution: d.

When apprehended by the police at age 15 while participating in Mohandas K. Gandhi’s noncooperation movement, he gave his name as Azad and his address as “prison.” Although because of his age he was not imprisoned, he was given a severe flogging by the police. The Indian National Congress (Congress Party) soon lionized him, and he gained popularity among the Indian people.

Azad was disappointed by Gandhi’s suspension of the noncooperation movement. Joining the radical Hindustan Republican Association (HRA), Azad participated in several violent crimes, notably the Kakori train robbery (1925) and the revenge killing of a British police officer (1928).
Known for his organizational skills, Azad played a key role in reorganizing the HRA as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association after most of the HRA’s members had been killed or imprisoned. His crimes had made him a wanted man, but Azad was able to elude the police and its informants for several years. It was Bismil who gave the moniker ‘Quick Silver’ to Azad, in the honour of the revolutionary’s agility, restlessness and ever-present enthusiasm for new ideas.

TBI; Britannica; Improvisation: PIB; Information about Durgawati Devi: TBI;

2. Consider the following statements about the Kailasa temple at Ellora:
   1. At its entrance is a double-storey gopuram.
   2. There are five subsidiary shrines around the main temple.
   3. A lotus has been carved on the roof of the sanctum which is crowned by a finial with four mythical elephants.

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.

The construction of the temple began during the rule of the Rashtrakuta king, Dantidurga (735-757 AD). A group of skilled artisans cut and carved the vertical face of the basalt rock of a hill in Elapura, known today as Ellora, near Aurangabad. Unlike the Buddhists who made carvings inside the rock to construct cave temples, this group cut the rock internally and externally, with exquisite precision, to build a monolithic rock temple. The result is the magnificent Kailasa temple, one of the largest rock-cut temples in the world. Major work on the temple was done by King Dantidurga’s successor, Krishna I (757-773 AD), although work continued under many successive kings for more than a century.

- The double-storey gopuram has exquisitely carved sculptures on the walls. Goddesses Ganga and Yamuna flank the entrance gateway.
- There are five subsidiary shrines around the main temple in the circumambulatory path that runs along the side of the hill.
- The lotus on the roof of the sanctum is crowned by a finial with four mythical lions, each facing one cardinal direction.
Consider the following statements:

1. Although E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker opposed the dominance of Brahmins in the bureaucracy, he believed temples could only have Brahmins as priests.
2. Sant Kabir’s teachings were based on a vehement rejection of the major religious traditions and they openly ridiculed the pre-eminence of the priestly classes.

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.

Our Pasts-II (NCERT Class 7): Kabir’s teachings were based on a complete, indeed vehement, rejection of the major religious traditions. His teachings openly ridiculed all forms of external worship of both Brahmanical Hinduism and Islam, the pre-eminence of the priestly classes and the caste system.

From March 2018 (IE): Periyar resigned from the Congress in 1925, and associated himself with the Justice Party and the Self Respect Movement, which opposed the dominance of Brahmins in social life, especially the bureaucracy.

TH: The wheel for the appointment of non-Brahmin priests in temples was set in motion by E.V. Ramasamy, called as Periyar, in 1970. Periyar, who called the caste discrimination in temple priesthood as a thorn in his heart, threatened to stage a mass demonstration on the Republic Day in 1970 against this. It was in response to this that the then DMK government issued an order that enabled the appointment of people from all castes as priests.
The reason why religious but nonconforming thinkers, like Kabir, railed against rituals was that they perceived how rituals are used, in the name of religion, to control, influence and exploit people. They also felt that rituals are worldly matters and have nothing to do with the divine.

4. Calligraphy, the art of handwriting, was considered a skill of great importance in Mughal India. It was practised using different styles. Akbar’s favourite script was the
   a) Shikaste
   b) Nastaliq
   c) Brahmi
   d) Devanagari

Solution: b.

Akbar’s favourite was the nastaliq, a fluid style with long horizontal strokes. It is written using a piece of trimmed reed with a tip of five to 10 mm called qalam, dipped in carbon ink (siyahi). The nib of the qalam is usually split in the middle to facilitate the absorption of ink.

Improvisation: [Image]

5. The English East India Company’s monopoly in tea imports from China ended with the passage by the British Parliament of the
   a) Charter Act of 1793
   b) Charter Act of 1813
   c) Charter Act of 1833
   d) Charter Act of 1853

Solution: c.

British Library: In 1833, the jealously-protected monopoly of the East India Company was finally abolished and the China trade was opened to the competition of dozens of British companies, who had been petitioning the government and lobbying members of Parliament for free trade for years.

6. Monumentality, majesty and grandeur, integral aspects of the architectural experience in India, are associated with buildings of this medieval capital city. An unfinished structure here symbolises the magnificence and splendour of Indo-Islamic architecture, and is a fine convergence of many styles located in medieval India. Commissioned by Muhammad Adil Shah, this structure is
   a) The Gol Gumbaz (Bijapur)
b) The Jama Masjid (Fatehpur Sikri)
c) The Hindola Mahal (Mandu)
d) Humanyun’s tomb (Delhi)

Solution: a.
The Gol Gumbad (Deccani style of Indo-Islamic Architecture) is situated in Bijapur, Karnataka. It is the mausoleum of Muhammad Adil Shah (1626-1656) of the Adil Shahi dynasty of Bijapur (1489-1686). Built by the ruler himself, it is a striking edifice in spite of being unfinished.

Gol Gumbad is a fine convergence of many styles located in medieval India. Monumentality, majesty and grandeur, integral aspects of the architectural experience in India, are associated with buildings of Bijapur. While its structural particularities of dome, arches, geometric proportions and load bearing techniques suggest Timurid and Persian styles, it is made of local material and is decorated with surface embellishments popular in the Deccan. Four towers at the corners are reminiscent of turrets attached to mosques such as the PuranilaQila in Delhi.

TH;
Chapter 8 – Some Aspects of Indo-Islamic Architecture, An Introduction to Indian Art, Class XI NCERT;

7. The circle we know as “zero” was invented in India, and on the walls of this medieval temple, you can find the oldest known representation of the circular symbol. This is the
   a) Chaturbhuj temple, Gwalior
   b) Hazara Rama temple, Vijayanagara
   c) Sun temple, Konark
   d) Dashavatara temple, Deogarh

Solution: a.
Gwalior Fort is one of India’s largest forts; but look among the soaring cupola-topped towers, intricate carvings and colourful frescoes and you’ll find a small, 9th-Century temple carved into its solid rock face.

Chaturbhuj Temple is much like many other ancient temples in India – except that this is ground zero for zero. It’s famous for being the oldest example of zero as a written digit: carved into the temple wall is a 9th-Century inscription that includes the clearly visible number ‘270’.
Right in the centre of the image the characters “270” stand out, surprisingly modern numerals etched in a wall of the Chaturbhuj Temple.

Dr Peter Gobets, secretary of the Netherlands-based ZerOrigIndia Foundation, or the Zero Project, which researches the origins of the zero digit, noted in an article on the invention of zero that “Mathematical zero (‘shunya’ in Sanskrit) may have arisen from the contemporaneous philosophy of emptiness or Shunyata [a Buddhist doctrine of emptying one’s mind from impressions and thoughts].”

Image Source: Smithsonianmag.com; BBC.

8. The Bakhshali manuscript was recently in the news because of which one of the following discoveries related to it?
   a) It has the earliest recorded origin of the Brahmi script.
   b) It is the first chronological history we have of events related to the Nanda and Mauryaempire.
   c) It is India’s first and only illustrated manuscript which utilises the Indus Valley Civilisation’s pictographic script.
   d) None of the above.

Solution: d.

BBC: Although Gwalior has long been thought to be the site of the first occurrence of the zero written as a circle, an ancient Indian scroll called the Bhakshali manuscript, which shows a placeholder dot symbol (see bottom row, seventh character when read from right to left), was recently carbon dated to the 3rd or 4rd Centuries. It is now considered the earliest recorded occurrence of zero.
From 2017 (BBC): The Bakhshali manuscript is now believed to date from the 3rd or 4th Century, making it hundreds of years older than previously thought. It means the document, held in Oxford, has an earlier zero symbol than a temple in Gwailor, India. The zero symbol evolved from a dot used in ancient India and can be seen throughout the Bakhshali manuscript. Other ancient cultures like the Mayans and Babylonians also used zero symbols, but the dot the Bakhshali manuscript developed a hollow centre to become the symbol we use today.

9. Consider the following statements:
   1. In ancient India, the use of Sanskrit language for compositions was restricted to the Hindu religion.
   2. There exists no village in India today whose residents converse in Sanskrit.

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: d.
Sanskrit is not restricted to Hindu compositions. It has also been used by Jaina and Buddhist scholars, the latter primarily Mahāyāna Buddhists (who emerged in the post-mauryan phase, around the beginning of the Common Era).

Mattur (Karnataka) is one of the very few places in the India where residents still converse in the classical language of Sanskrit.

Improvisation: PIB; TBI; Britannica;

10. With reference to art and archaeological history of India, which one among the following was made earliest?
   a) Rani kivav, Patan
   b) Brihadeshwara temple, Thanjavur
   c) Kailash temple, Ellora
   d) Qutb Minar, Mehrauli

Solution: c.
Kailash temple – around 8th century
Rani kivav, Patan and Brihadeshwara temple, Thanjavur – 11th century
Qutb Minar – 13th century

Improvisation: PIB;

11. Having quit active politics a few years after independence, he became a Gandhian and was involved in the Bhoodan movement. He was involved in negotiations with the Naga rebels, the peace initiative in Kashmir and ensured the surrender of dacoits in Chambal. He
was born in Ballia, a district that was famous for its contribution to India’s freedom struggle especially during the Quit India movement. A Marxist in his youth, he was

a) Morarji Desai
b) Jayaprakash Narayan
c) Chaudhary Charan Singh
d) Deen Dayal Upadhyaya

Solution: b.
The given statements refer to Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan.

PM’s remarks on election of Shri Harivansh as Dy. Chairman;
TH;
Politics in India since Independence, NCERT Class XII;