



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

- IAS SELF STUDY GUIDE -

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SL. NO.	TOPIC	PAGE NO.
I.	ECONOMY.....	2
II.	ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT	7
III.	GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AND PROGRAMMES	15
IV.	SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	24
V.	INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS	32
VI.	POLITY	44
VII.	HISTORY, ART & CULTURE.....	54
VIII.	STATES	60
IX.	DEFENCE & SECURITY	62
X.	REPORTS & INDICES	63
XI.	MAPS/ PLACES	67
XII.	Miscellaneous.....	82

I. ECONOMY

1. The 'Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)' helps create an enabling trading environment for developing countries. It has been instituted under the aegis of
- World Trade Organisation
 - World Bank
 - UN Conference on Trade and Development
 - UN Office for South-South Cooperation

Solution: c.

- The **GSP**, instituted in **1971** under the aegis of **UNCTAD**, has contributed over the years to creating an enabling trading environment for developing countries. The following 13 countries grant GSP preferences: Australia, Belarus, Canada, the European Union, Iceland, Japan, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Norway, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States of America.
- Following the **WTO Hong Kong Ministerial Decision** in 2005 in which members agreed that developed countries and developing countries in a position to do so would grant duty-free and quota-free market access for exports of LDCs, improvements were made to various GSP schemes and/or new schemes for LDCs were launched.
- The objective of UNCTAD's support on GSP is to help developing countries – particularly LDCs – to increase utilization of GSP and other trade preferences and in turn promote productive capacity development and increased trade.

[UNCTAD: GSP](#);

[USTR: GSP](#);

In the news ([TH](#)): The **USTR** is currently reviewing India's eligibility under its **Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)**, which **allows duty-free imports of certain goods**. **India** was the largest GSP beneficiary at \$5.6 billion, the USTR said in **April**.

2. Consider the following statements:

Currently,

- The Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) Is a non-government, private limited company
- The Centre individually and states collectively are the largest stakeholders of the GSTN

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: c.

- GSTN** is a Section 8 (under new companies Act, not for profit companies are governed under section 8), non-Government, private limited company. It was incorporated in 2013. The Government of India holds 24.5% equity in GSTN and all States of the Indian Union, including NCT of Delhi and Puducherry, and the Empowered Committee

of State Finance Ministers (EC), together hold another 24.5%. Balance 51% equity is with non-Government financial institutions.

About GSTN:

In the news ([TH](#)): The Goods and Services Tax Council in its latest meet decided to convert the GST Network into a 100% government enterprise.

Central Government	24.5%
State Governments & EC	24.5%
HDFC	10%
HDFC Bank	10%
ICICI Bank	10%
NSE Strategic Investment Co	10%
LIC Housing Finance Ltd	11%

3. The “Elephant Curve”, sometimes in the news, is related to

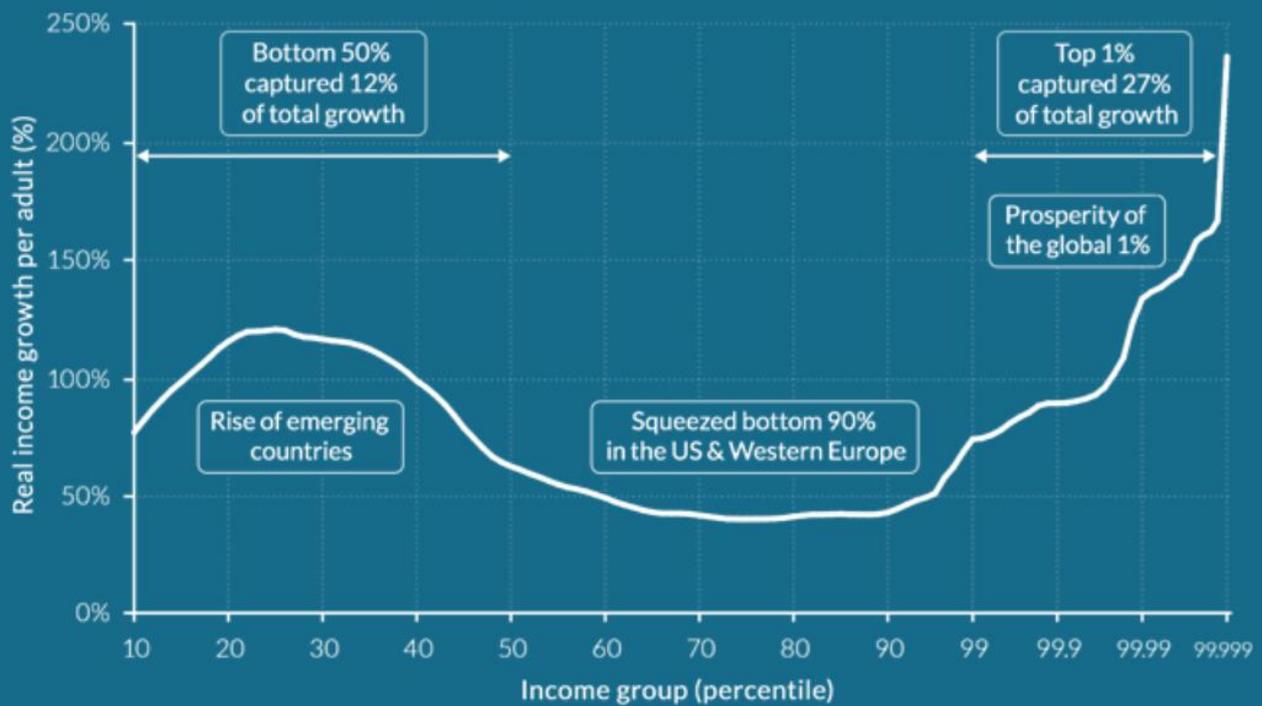
- a) Renewable energy
- b) Global inequality
- c) The great acceleration (Anthropocene epoch)
- d) Global gender gap

Solution: b.

General question, but relevant for prelims. It appears sometimes in the news while discussing global inequality.

Image source: wid.world;

THE ELEPHANT CURVE OF GLOBAL INEQUALITY AND GROWTH, 1980-2016



4. Which among the following was the latest to be added to the Harmonised Master List of Infrastructure Sub-Sectors?
- Affordable Housing
 - Tourism Infrastructure
 - Strategic storage (crude oil)
 - Logistics Infrastructure

Solution: d.

This was not currently in the news (it was, last November) but it is relevant for prelims.

The need for integrated Logistics sector development has been felt for quite some time in view of the fact that the logistics cost in India is very high compared to developed countries.

- High logistics cost reduces the competitiveness of Indian goods both in domestic as well as export market.
- Development of logistics would give a boost to both domestic and external demand thereby encouraging manufacturing and 'job creation'. This will in turn be instrumental in improving country's GDP.

It's inclusion in the harmonised list will enable the Logistics Sector to

- avail infrastructure lending at easier terms with enhanced limits,
- access to larger amounts of funds as External Commercial Borrowings (ECB),
- access to longer tenor funds from insurance companies and pension funds and
- be eligible to borrow from India Infrastructure Financing Company Limited (IIFCL).

Latest [Updated Harmonised Master List of Infra Sub-Sectors](#); [DEA: Infrastructure & Energy Division](#);

From November 2017: [PIB](#);

5. If India has an overall trade deficit in any financial year, it means India definitely has a
- Current account deficit
 - Capital account deficit
 - Balance of payments deficit
 - None of the above

Solution: d.

- The balance of payments (BoP) record the transactions in goods, services and assets between residents of a country with the rest of the world for a specified time period typically a year. There are two main accounts in the BoP – the current account and the capital account.
- The current account records exports and imports in goods and services and transfer payments. The trade balance is obtained by subtracting imports of goods from the exports of goods. When exports exceed imports, there is a trade surplus and when imports exceed exports there is a trade deficit. Trade in services denoted as invisible trade (because they are not seen to cross national borders) includes both factor income (net income from compensation of employees and net investment income, the latter equals, the interest, profits and dividends on our assets abroad minus the income foreigners earn on assets they own in India) and net non-factor income (shipping, banking, insurance, tourism, software services, etc.). Transfer payments are receipts which the residents of a country receive 'for free', without having to make any present or future payments in return. They consist of remittances, gifts and grants. They could be official or private. Adding trade in services and net transfers to the trade balance, we get the current account balance.
- The capital account records all international purchases and sales of assets such as money, stocks, bonds, etc. We note that any transaction resulting in a payment to foreigners is entered as a debit and is given a negative sign. Any transaction resulting in a receipt from foreigners is entered as a credit and is given a positive sign.
- It is thus clear that a trade deficit does not necessarily imply either current account deficit, capital account deficit or balance of payments deficit.

Improvisation: [TH](#);

Ch-6, Macroeconomics, Class XII NCERT;

6. Which of the following factors can have an adverse impact on Indian rupee valuation?
- A huge current account deficit (CAD).
 - Outflow of FPI.
 - Inflow of FDI
 - Low economic growth
 - High Inflation

Choose the correct code

- 1 and 4 only
- 1 and 2 only
- 1, 3 and 5 only
- 1, 2, 4 and 5.

Solution: d

There are six main reasons for the slump in the value of India's currency:

- Huge trade deficit

- Huge CAD
- Low capital flows
- Speculation
- Low growth
- High inflation

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/business/markets/whats-roiling-the-rupee/article23943869.ece>

II. ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

1. Consider the following statements about IUCN:

1. Its membership is composed of both government and civil society organisations
2. The IUCN World Conservation Congresses have produced key international agreements such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
3. It is the only environmental organisation with official United Nations Observer Status

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: d.

All statements are correct.

Created in 1948, IUCN has evolved into the world's largest and most diverse environmental network. IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. Our experts are organised into six commissions dedicated to

- species survival,
- environmental law,
- protected areas,
- social and economic policy,
- ecosystem management, and
- education and communication.

Through their affiliation with IUCN, Member organisations are part of a democratic process, voting Resolutions which drive the global conservation agenda. They meet every four years at the IUCN World Conservation Congress to set priorities and agree on the Union's work programme. IUCN congresses have produced several key international environmental agreements including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the World Heritage Convention, and the Ramsar Convention on wetlands.

<https://www.iucn.org/about>;

Improvisation: [TH](#);

2. The International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) is a collaboration between

1. CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) Secretariat
2. TRAFFIC (The Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network)
3. INTERPOL
4. World Customs Organisation
5. World Bank

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

Not in the news; a general but relevant question.

ICCWC is the collaborative effort of five inter-governmental organizations working to bring coordinated support to the national wildlife law enforcement agencies and to the sub-regional and regional networks that, on a daily basis, act in defense of natural resources. The ICCWC partners are

- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Secretariat,
- INTERPOL,
- the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,
- the **World Bank** and
- the World Customs Organization.

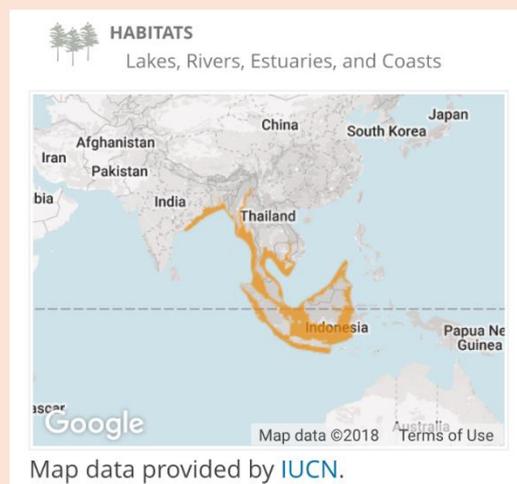
This powerful alliance was formally established in 2010 in St. Petersburg, Russia during the International Tiger Forum.

ICCWC's mission is to strengthen criminal justice systems and provide coordinated support at national, regional and international level to **combat wildlife and forest crime** to ensure perpetrators of serious wildlife and forest crime will face a formidable and coordinated response.

3. If you want to see Irrawaddy Dolphins in their natural habitat, which one of the following is the best place to visit?

- a) Ganges river
- b) Chilika lake
- c) Majuli
- d) Lakshadweep sea

Solution: b.



- The **Chilika lake** in Odisha has emerged as the single largest habitat of the **endangered Irrawaddy dolphins** in the world. The finding is based on the preliminary report of the first ever 'Annual Monitoring' of the lake held on Saturday, a Chilika Development Authority official said.
- Irrawaddy dolphins are found in coastal areas in South and Southeast Asia, and in three rivers: the Ayeyarwady (Myanmar), the Mahakam (Indonesian Borneo) and the Mekong.

[DD News](#);

[WWF](#);

Primary Source: [Vikaspedia: February Current Affairs](#);

4. Consider the following statements about National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG):

1. It is headed by the Union Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation
2. It is authorised to accord approval for all Ganga cleaning and rejuvenation projects

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.

- **NMCG** acts as the implementation arm of the National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga ('National Ganga Council') constituted under **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.
- NMCG has a two tier management structure and comprises of Governing Council and Executive Committee. Both of them are headed by Director General, NMCG. The executive Committee has been authorized to accord approval for all projects up to Rs.1000 crore. The DG of NMCG is an Additional Secretary in Government of India.

http://nmcg.nic.in/about_nmcg.aspx;

Improvisation: [TH](#);

5. 'SAWEN', an intergovernmental body, is the South Asian equivalent of

- a) Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
- b) TRAFFIC (Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network)
- c) Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
- d) World Water Council

Solution: b.

- **SAWEN**, a Regional network is comprised of **eight** countries in South Asia: **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka**. It aims at working as a strong regional inter-governmental body for **combating wildlife crime** by attempting common goals and approaches for **combating illegal trade** in the region. It was launched in Bhutan in 2011 and in 2016 the [Union Cabinet gave permission](#) to adopt the statute of SAWEN.

In the news ([TH](#)): The **South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN)**, an inter-governmental wildlife law enforcement agency, in its first ever meeting in India, adopted many resolutions to curb wildlife crime in the region. The members agreed on having an operational framework for strengthening the regional body to combat wildlife crime.

6. 'Suranga' and 'Madhaka' are terms related to

- a) Water harvesting in South India
- b) Handicrafts of Punjab
- c) Textile works of Odisha
- d) Wooden works of Uttar Pradesh

Solution: a.

- **Surangas** are related to an **ancient method of water harvesting** in **North Kerala**. These are tunnels that go into the very depths of the hard laterite rocks to groundwater, through which water flows **perennially** in a **small stream**, without the use of a pump. The water is collected in **mud reservoirs**, called **Madhaka**.

[TH](#);

7. Which among the following critically endangered species can you find in the Indian Himalayas and/or its foothills?

- 1. Jerdon's Courser
- 2. Pygmy Hog
- 3. Namdapha Flying Squirrel
- 4. White-bellied Heron

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

- The Indian Himalayas, which constitute about 12% of the country's landmass, is home to about 30.16% of its fauna, says a new publication from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI).
- The publication lists critically endangered species like the Pygmy Hog, the Namdapha flying squirrel, the White-bellied heron and the Siberian crane.

Improvisation: [TH](#); [CE animal species of India](#);

8. The 'Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice' and the term 'Loss and Damage', sometimes seen in the news, are associated with the

- a) Paris Agreement
- b) Outer Space Treaty
- c) Bonn Convention
- d) World Heritage Convention

Solution: a.

- “A two-week-long meeting was recently concluded in Bonn (April 30-May 10) where the operational guidelines for implementing the Paris Agreement were to be discussed and agreed upon by all parties... This meeting was the 48th session of the UNFCCC *Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA)*, referred to as SB48.... The issues related to loss and damage (L&D) are another thorn in the negotiations. L&D is a means to provide assistance to poor countries that experience severe impacts from climate change but have contributed very little to the greenhouse gases responsible for the warming and its effects. This is a very important issue for the least developed countries and for small islands, which are already experiencing the brunt of sea level rise...”

[TH](#);

9. The ‘Kigali Agreement’ amended the

- Montreal Protocol
- Kyoto Protocol
- Paris Agreement
- Rotterdam Convention

Solution: a.

- Scientists have detected an unexpected rise in atmospheric levels of CFC-11, a chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) highly damaging to the ozone layer. Banned by the Montreal Protocol in 1987, CFC-11 was seen to be declining as expected but that fall has slowed down by 50% since 2012. Researchers say their evidence shows it’s likely that new, illegal emissions of CFC-11 are coming from East Asia. These could hamper the recovery of the ozone hole and worsen climate change.
- **CFC-11** is also known as trichlorofluoromethane, and is one of a number of CFCs that were initially developed as refrigerants during the 1930s. They were also used as propellants in aerosol sprays and in solvents. However, it took many decades for scientists to discover that when CFCs break down in the atmosphere, they release chlorine atoms that are able to rapidly destroy ozone molecules.

Additional Information (From 2016 – [BBC](#)): “Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) are widely used in fridges, air conditioning and aerosol sprays.... Delegates meeting in Rwanda accepted a complex amendment to the Montreal Protocol that will see richer countries cut back their HFC use from 2019..”

- Greenhouse gases whose contribution passes unnoticed are dubbed ‘Cinderella’ gases. Examples include CFCs and Nitrous Oxide.

Improvisation: [TH](#); [BBC](#);

10. The ‘CarbFix’ project in Iceland, recently in the news, aims to

- Accelerate the pace of incorporation of carbon into organic compounds by living organisms
- Capture and convert carbon dioxide into stone forever
- Utilise carbon dioxide captured from air for the purpose of enhanced oil recovery
- Accelerate a naturally occurring process of carbon mineralisation in surface peridotite rocks

Solution: b.

- The Hellisheidi power station, outside Reykjavik, is Iceland’s main geothermal plant, and is one of the largest in the world. This is a volcanic area. The volcano’s internal heat is harnessed to generate electricity and provide hot water for the city’s heating systems. Hellisheidi is not just an accomplished provider of green energy. It is also the site for a scientific breakthrough; an experiment to capture carbon dioxide (CO₂) and turn it into stone – forever.
- Called CarbFix, the project is pioneered by an international consortium led by Reykjavík Energy, the French National Centre for Scientific Research, the University of Iceland and Columbia University. It stands out among CCS experiments because the capture of carbon is said to be permanent – and fast.
- The process starts with the capture of waste CO₂ from the steam, which is then dissolved into large volumes of water. The fizzy liquid is then piped to the injection site where it is pumped 1,000m beneath the surface. In a matter of months, chemical reactions will solidify the CO₂ into rock – thus preventing it from escaping back into the atmosphere for millions of years. However, this project is very water intensive. Over 25 tonnes of water per tonne of CO₂ is needed.

Image: Basalt is “carbon’s best friend”, because it is a porous rock that contains high amounts of calcium, magnesium and iron, which bind with the pumped CO₂ to help it solidify into a mineral.

[BBC](#);

11. Consider the following statements:

1. The density of the material at the earth’s surface is much lower than the average density of the whole earth
2. The partially molten core of earth is responsible for earth’s powerful magnetic field that shields us from harmful solar radiation

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.

- Both statements are correct. For details regarding structure of the earth, refer chapter 2, Fundamentals of Physical Geography Class 11 NCERT.

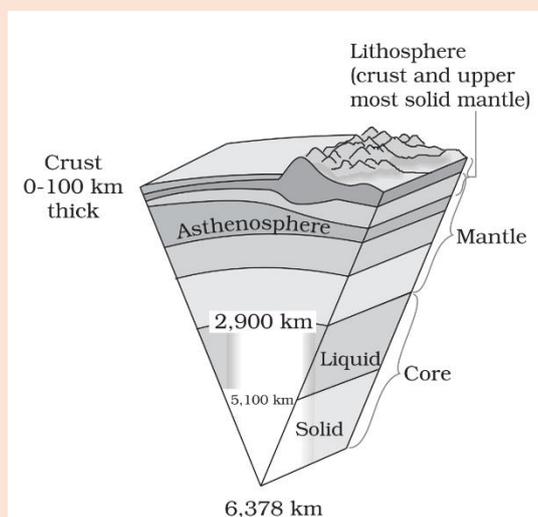


Figure 3.4 : The interior of the earth

12. 'Vog', and 'laze', terms recently seen in the news, are related to

- a) Sea swells
- b) Glacial erosion
- c) Volcanic eruptions
- d) Surface trade winds

Solution: c.

- **Vog** (Volcanic air pollution) is a hazy mixture of SO₂ gas and aerosols, which are primarily composed of sulfuric acid droplets and other sulfate (SO₄) compounds. Aerosols are created when SO₂ and other volcanic gases combine in the atmosphere and interact chemically with oxygen, moisture, dust, and sunlight over periods of minutes to days. The exact composition of vog depends on how much time the volcanic plume has had to react in the atmosphere.

[USGS: Gas hazards from Volcanoes](#);

In the news: Mount Kilauea volcanic eruption;

13. Consider the following statements:

1. Shield volcanoes are formed from basic lavas are highly fluid
2. Volcanic plugs are formed due to prolonged exposure of shield volcanoes to erosion

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.

Statement 2: Acid lavas are highly viscous with a high melting point. Sometimes the lavas are so viscous that they form a spine or plug at the crater. Some spines are very resistant and while most of the material of very old volcanoes is removed by erosion the spine may remain.

Improvisation: [BBC](#);

14. Of which celebration is India the host this year, whose theme is 'Beat Plastic Pollution'?

- a) World Water Day
- b) World Environment Day
- c) Earth Day
- d) World Oceans Day

Solution: b.

- India is the global host of **2018 World Environment Day** which will take place on June 5, 2018. With “**Beat Plastic Pollution**” as the theme for this year’s edition, the world is coming together to combat single-use plastic pollution.
- The Government of India has committed to organizing and promoting the World Environment Day celebrations through a series of engaging activities and events generating strong public interest and participation. From pan-Indian plastic clean-up drives in public areas, national reserves and forests to simultaneous beach clean-up activities – India will lead the initiative by setting an example.

[WED](#);

[PIB](#);

15. Consider the following statements about the all-India ‘Gaj Yatra’:

1. It was recently launched in Karnataka
2. The campaign aims at securing elephant corridors across 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.

- In 2014, villagers in Meghalaya’s Garo Hills set aside a part of their community-owned land to create village reserve forests, giving right of passage to elephants. In acknowledgement of that gesture, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) recently rolled out the ‘Gaj Yatra’ from Tura, the principal town of Garo Hills.
- ‘**Gaj Yatra**’, a “journey celebrating India’s national heritage animal”, aims at securing 100 elephant corridors across India.

[TH](#);

III. GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AND PROGRAMMES

1. A village would be declared as electrified, if

1. Electricity is provided to public places such as schools and health centres
2. At least 90% of the total number of households in the village is electrified

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: a.

Definition: A village would be declared as electrified, if :

- Basic infrastructure such as Distribution Transformer and Distribution lines are provided in the inhabited locality as well as the Dalit Basti hamlet where it exists.
- Electricity is provided to public places like Schools, Panchayat Office, Health Centers, Dispensaries, Community centers etc.
- The number of households electrified should be at least 10% of the total number of households in the village.

Improvisation: [TH](#);

2. The Rural Electrification Corporation Limited, a Navratna enterprise of Government of India, is the

1. Nodal agency for the Saubhagya Yojana
2. Nodal agency for the Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana
3. Coordinating agency for rolling out Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

- Statements are self-explanatory.

About REC; Improvisation: [TH](#);

3. The Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana was announced in 2003 with the objectives of

1. Early identification of defects at birth, development delays and early intervention for children
2. Augmenting facilities for quality medical education in the country

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

The **Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)** was announced in 2003 with objectives of **correcting regional imbalances** in the availability of **affordable/ reliable tertiary healthcare services** and also to augment facilities for **quality medical education** in the country. PMSSY has two components:

1. Setting up of AIIMS like institutions
2. Upgradation of Government Medical Colleges/Institutions.

[PIB](#);

4. 'Unnat Bharat Abhiyan' is a scheme of the Centre aimed at

- a) Electrifying every household in remote areas with standalone solar systems
- b) Screening more than 50 million people in high-focus districts for vaccine-preventable diseases
- c) Making higher education institutions provide solutions for problems of villages
- d) Devolving powers of planning and development to panchayat samitis and gram panchayats

Solution: c.

- While just 143 premier institutions like IITs and NITs took part in the first stage, **Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0** will see open and much wider participation from many higher educational institutions.
- **Unnat Bharat Abhiyan** is a flagship programme of the **Ministry of Human Resources Development**, with the intention to enrich Rural India. The knowledge base and resources of the Premier Institutions of the country are to be leveraged to bring in **transformational change in rural developmental process**. It also aims to create a vibrant relationship between the society and the higher educational institutes, with the latter providing the knowledge and technology support to improve the livelihoods in rural areas and to upgrade the capabilities of both the public and private organisations in the society.

[TH](#);

[PIB](#);

5. Consider the following statements:

1. The 'Vidya Lakshmi Portal' on education loans has been developed and is maintained by NSDL e-Gov
2. NSDL e-Gov is a fully central government-owned enterprise

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.

- **Vidya Lakshmi Portal** (by **NSDL e-Gov**) is a first of its kind portal for students seeking Education Loans. It provides a single window electronic platform for students to access information and access applications for Educational Loans and Government Scholarships.
- NSDL e-Gov works closely with various Government agencies for designing, managing and implementing e-Governance Projects. It has also established the Service Centre network across the country which serve as access points for the general public and are efficiently used by Governments to deliver quality services in a user friendly and transparent manner to the citizens. It is not a government-owned enterprise.
- The company was established in 1996, when it started out as the country's first depository. In 2013, the company was demerged into two entities — National Securities Depository Limited and NSDL e-Governance. While NSDL handles the depository activities, NSDL e-Governance manages a host of corporate and retail services.
- NSDL e-Governance is also at the forefront for issuing Aadhaar cards and is the largest non-state registrar for the unique identity number. Till date, it has processed more than 900 million Aadhaar cards.

[Pradhan Mantri Vidya Lakshmi Karyakram;](#) [About Vidya Lakshmi Portal;](#)

[About NSDL e-Gov;](#) [TH;](#)

6. The 'e-ILA' or 'e-Incremental Learning Approach' capacity-building courses have been initiated for the purpose of

- a) Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation's GOBAR-Dhan scheme
- b) Ministry of Women and Child Development's POSHAN Abhiyaan
- c) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission
- d) None of the above

Solution: b.

Improvisation/In the news ([PIB](#)): The Government of India signed a loan deal worth \$ 200 million with the World Bank today for the National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyaan).

From March ([PIB](#)): **e-ILA** is an online system where programme functionaries will become more effective by learning to plan and execute each task correctly and consistently through methodical and ongoing capacity building... Under POSHAN Abhiyaan, 'Swasth Bharat Preraks' will be deployed one in each district for coordinating with district officials and enabling fast and efficient execution of the Abhiyaan across the country.

Recap: POSHAN Abhiyaan was launched in March 2018. It aims to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively. The target of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.

7. Construction of the Zojila tunnel, the Silkyara Bend-Barkot Tunnel, and some other strategic roads in India is the responsibility of
- National Highways Authority of India
 - National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd.
 - Border Roads Organisation
 - None of the above

Solution: b.

- National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (NHIDCL) is a fully owned company of the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Government of India. The company promotes, surveys, establishes, designs, builds, operates, maintains and upgrades National Highways and Strategic Roads including interconnecting roads in parts of the country which share international boundaries with neighbouring countries.
- The Corporation, based on the idea of e-governance, will be an instrument for creation and management of infrastructure of the highest standard in the country with focus on the North-East and border areas.

[PIB](#); From 2015: [PIB](#); Improvisation: [Vikaspedia: February Current Affairs](#);

8. The day of formation of the 'National Productivity Council' is celebrated every year as the 'National Productivity Day' and the following seven days as the 'National Productivity Week'. Consider the following statements in this context:
- NPC is an autonomous organisation under the administrative control of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry
 - NPC is a constituent of the intergovernmental Asian Productivity Organisation, of which India is a founder member

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: c.

- NPC is a national-level autonomous organization under the administrative control of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion to promote productivity culture in India.
- Established as a registered society in 1958 by the Government of India, it is a tripartite non-profit organization with equal representation from the government, employers and workers' organizations, apart from technical and professional institutions including members from local productivity councils and chamber of commerce on its Governing Body.
- Besides providing training, consultancy and undertaking research in the area of productivity, NPC also implements the productivity promotion schemes of the Government and carry out the programmes of the Tokyo based Asian

Productivity Organization (APO), an inter-governmental body of which the Government of India is a founder member.

“Industry 4.0 Leapfrog Opportunity for India” was the theme for the National Productivity Week-2018.

PIB; [DIPP: NPC](#); Improvisation: [Vikaspedia: February Current Affairs](#);

9. Consider the following statements about the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC):
1. It updates regularly the standards of drugs commonly required for treatment of diseases
 2. It is India’s National Coordination Centre for ‘Pharmacovigilance’
 3. It approves new testing methods for drug manufacturers

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: d.

In the news ([TH](#)): In a step that would spare animals from suffering due to drug experiments, the IPC has approved modern, animal-free tests for drug manufacturers. In the 2018 edition of Indian Pharmacopoeia, that provides guidelines on tests for drugs manufactured and marketed in India, the IPC has replaced the pyrogen test carried out on rabbits and the abnormal toxicity test carried out on guinea pigs and mice with tests that can be done in test tubes.

About IPC: It is an autonomous Institution of the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, Govt. of India. IPC is created to **set standards of drugs** in the country. It’s basic function is to update regularly the standards of drugs commonly required for treatment of diseases prevailing in this region. It publishes official documents for improving **Quality of Medicines** by way of adding new and updating existing monographs in the form of **Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP)**. It further promotes **rational use of generic medicines** by publishing **National Formulary of India**.

Justification for Statement 2 – [PIB \(from 2015\)](#): The Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission is India’s National Coordination Centre for **pharmacovigilance**. **Pharmacovigilance** can be defined as the practice of monitoring the effects of medical drugs after they have been licensed for use, especially in order to identify and evaluate previously unreported adverse reactions.

10. Which of the following statements about the recently issued ‘National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy’ by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is/are correct?

1. In a ‘hybrid project’, the rated power capacity of any one of the components must be at least 40 percent of the total power capacity of the project
2. The policy seeks to promote new hybrid projects as well as hybridisation of existing wind/solar projects

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

- On technology front the policy provides for integration of both the energy sources i.e. wind and solar at AC as well as DC level.
- It also provides for flexibility in share of wind and solar components in hybrid project, subject to the condition that, rated power capacity of one resource be at least 25% of the rated power capacity of other resource for it to be recognised hybrid project.
- It seeks to promote new hybrid projects as well as hybridisation of existing wind/solar projects.
- It permits use of battery storage in the hybrid project for optimising the output and further reduce the variability.
- It mandates the regulatory authorities to formulate necessary standards and regulations for wind-solar hybrid systems.

[PIB](#);

11. ‘Village Level Entrepreneurs’, often in the news, are key stakeholders of the

- a) Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme by the Ministry of Rural Development
- b) Common Service Centre Scheme by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
- c) Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme by the Ministry of Women and Child Development
- d) DARPAN (Digital Advancement of Rural Post Office for A New India) by the Ministry of Communications

Solution: b.

- The key stakeholder of the CSC scheme is the [Village Level Entrepreneur \(VLE\)](#), as the CSC operators are known. A network of 2.70 lakh VLEs, of which 1.63 lakh are in Gram Panchayats, are actively providing various online public utility and financial services to citizens, quality healthcare, apart from boosting entrepreneurship and employment in villages and smaller towns across the country.

About [CSC Scheme](#): These are access points for delivery of various electronic services to villages in India, thereby contributing to a digitally and financially inclusive society.

Key Features of [CSC 2.0 Scheme](#):

- A self-sustaining network of 2.5 lakh CSCs in Gram Panchayats
- Large bouquet of e-services through a single delivery platform
- Standardization of services and capacity building of stakeholders
- Localised Help Desk support
- Sustainability of VLEs through maximum commission sharing
- Encouraging more women as VLEs

Improvisation: [PIB](#);

12. The 'Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP)' is an initiative of
- Centre for Science and Environment India
 - Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
 - Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
 - Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change

Solution: d.

- The image below provides information regarding both, the ENVIS platform and GSDP.

Green Skill Development Programme

The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has been implementing a Central Sector Scheme titled Environmental Information System (ENVIS) since 1982-83. ENVIS, by providing scientific, technical and semi- technical information on various environmental issues, has served in facilitating policy formulation and environment management at all levels of Government as well as in decision-making aimed at environment protection and its improvement for sustaining good quality of life for all living beings. ENVIS is a decentralized network of 66 centres of which 31 Centres dealing with "State of the Environment and Related Issues" are hosted by State Government /UT Administrations, called ENVIS Hubs and remaining 35 Centres are hosted by environment-related governmental and non-governmental organisations/ institutes of professional excellence, with varied thematic mandates pertaining to environment, called the ENVIS Resource Partners (RPs).

Utilising the vast network and expertise of our ENVIS Hubs/RPs, the Ministry has taken up an initiative for skill development in the environment and forest sector to enable India's youth to get gainful employment and/or self employment, called the **Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP)**. The programme endeavours to develop green skilled workers having technical knowledge and commitment to sustainable development, which will help in the attainment of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs).

In the news: Launch of Mobile App of [GSDP](#);

Image Source: [ENVIS Brochure](#);

13. The institutional mechanism to update the Harmonised Master List of Infrastructure Sub-Sectors is a Committee chaired by
- Minister of Finance
 - Governor, RBI
 - Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs
 - Chief Economic Adviser

Solution: c.

- The institutional mechanism to update the Master List and for revisiting the sub-sectors outside the Master List, will be a Committee chaired by Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs with Member-Secretary, Planning Commission, Secretary, Department of Revenue, Chief Economic Adviser, and one representative each of RBI, SEBI, IRDA, PFRDA and the Secretary of the concerned Administrative Ministry/Department, as members. The Committee will be serviced by DEA and will make recommendations to the Finance Minister for his decision.

From 2012: [PIB](#);

14. Consider the following statements:

1. Rural sanitation coverage has more than doubled since the launch of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)
2. Around 90% of households in rural India that have access to a toilet use it

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.

Statement 1 ([PIB](#)): The Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) has made significant progress in the three and a half years since its launch. The rural sanitation coverage has more than doubled since the launch of the mission from 39% to nearly 84%. Over 7 crore toilets have been built across rural India under the Mission.

Statement 2 (From March 2018 – [PIB](#)): The National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) 2017-18, conducted by an Independent Verification Agency (IVA) under the World Bank support project to the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-G), has found that 93.4% of the households in rural India who have access to a toilet use it.

15. Under the Saubhagya Yojana, households located in remote and inaccessible areas will be provided with

1. A battery pack
2. LED light bulbs
3. A fan
4. A power plug

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

General question, relevant for prelims.

For households located in remote and inaccessible areas, solar power packs of 200 to 300 Watt and battery back with 5 LED light, 1 DC Fan, 1 DC power plug along with repair and maintenance for 5 years would be provided.

[FAQs on Saubhagya Yojana;](#)

IV. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. NASA's "Orion" is

- a) A human spacecraft for deep-space exploration
- b) The first probe that will attempt to orbit the closest star to our solar system
- c) USA's exclusive National Space Station
- d) A planetary explorer that will bring back atmospheric samples from all the rocky planets (except earth) of our solar system

Solution: a.

- Orion (named after one of the largest constellations in the night sky) will take us farther than we've gone before, including to the vicinity of the Moon and Mars.
- It will serve as the exploration vehicle that will carry the crew to space, provide emergency abort capability, sustain astronauts during their missions and provide safe re-entry from deep space return velocities. Orion missions will launch from NASA's modernized spaceport at Kennedy Space Center in Florida on the agency's new, powerful heavy-lift rocket, the Space Launch System.

[BBC](#);

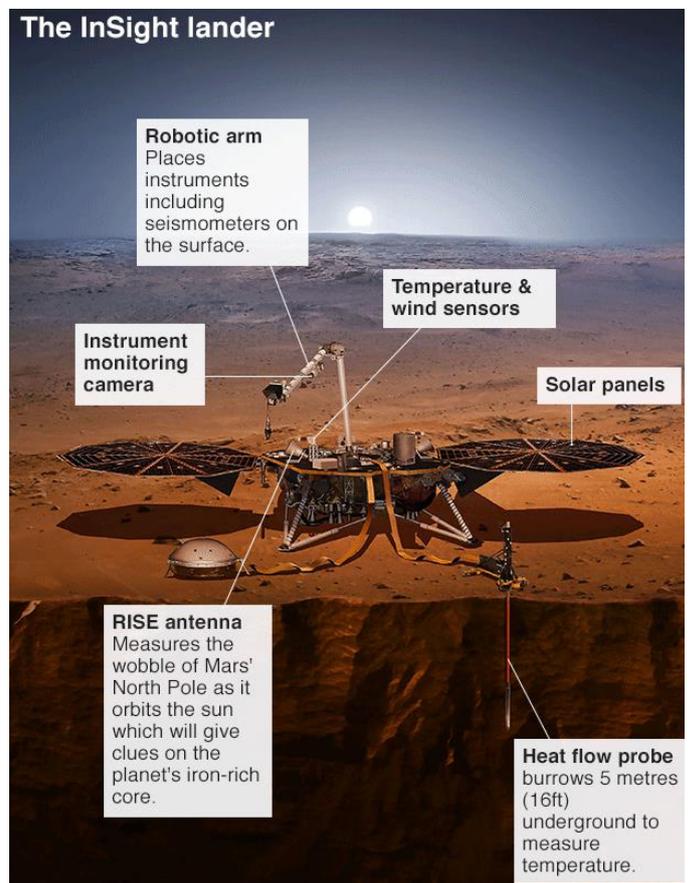
2. "Seven minutes of terror", a phrase recently seen in the news, is related to

- a) The chemical attack in Syria
- b) Mars entry, descent and landing
- c) Collision of black holes
- d) The Big Bang and parallel universes

Solution: b.

- Like all surface missions before it, InSight will have to endure the "seven minutes of terror" – the time it takes for a spacecraft entering the top of Mars' atmosphere at 6km/s to slow itself to a standstill at the touchdown point.
- NASA's latest mission to Mars, InSight, will be the first probe to focus its investigations predominantly on the interior of the Red Planet. The lander – due to touch down in November – will put seismometers on the surface to feel for "Marsquakes". These tremors should reveal how the underground rock is layered – data that can be compared with Earth to shed further light on the formation of the planets 4.6 billion years ago.

[BBC](#);



3. “Armstrong’s mixture”, recently in the news, is related to

- a) Explosives
- b) Fertilisers
- c) Rocket propellant
- d) Food additives

Solution: a.

TH: In a dampener for celebrants, the Central Pollution Control Board has banned party poppers — a popular decorative used at parties and celebrations, including at IPL matches — on the grounds that the devices posed a health risk.

What are 'party poppers'?

Party poppers work akin to the popping of a champagne bottle

- Sometimes they are shaped like bottles but, in most instances, they are sealed cardboard cases, about as big as a rolled-up newspaper, and stuffed with shredded paper and glitter
- Pulling an attached string sets off a mild, chemical explosive, which 'pops' open the container and releases a confetti of coloured paper and fine glitter
- There have been reports of injury, even in India, when party poppers exploded. Majority of them being eye injuries
- Armstrong's mixture, which is used to create the explosive, consists of:
 - Red phosphorus** ▪ Very small quantities of these chemicals—less than a 1000th of a gram—is used in poppers
 - Potassium chlorate**
 - Potassium perchlorate**
 - Sulphur**

INPUTS:
JACOB KOSHY

4. The ‘chytrid fungus’, with possible origins in east asia, has caused a decline worldwide in the population of

- a) Cheetah
- b) Frogs
- c) Redwood trees
- d) Pigeons

Solution: b.

- The **chytrid fungus** – which has caused amphibian declines worldwide and has been recorded in India too – possibly originated in east Asia, shows a study published in the international journal Science.
- The team behind the study also find that the disease is not many thousands of years old as previously thought, but expanded greatly between 50 and 120 years ago, coinciding with the rapid global expansion of intercontinental trade. Thus, the movement of amphibians by humans – such as through the pet trade – has directly contributed to spreading the pathogen around the world.
- The chytrid fungus has affected around 700 amphibian species worldwide and caused frog declines and even extinctions in many areas.

TH; [The Atlantic](#);

5. 'M-Sand', sometimes in the news, refers to

- A manufactured alternative to natural sand for construction purposes
- A novel ingredient created by ISRO, used in the manufacture of heat-resistant space shuttle tiles
- A novel ingredient created by ISRO, used in the manufacture of heat-resistant space shuttle tiles
- Powdered diamond, used in the manufacture of bullet-proof vests

Solution: a.

- **Manufactured sand (M-Sand)** is a substitute of river sand for concrete construction. Since manufactured sand is produced from **hard granite stone by crushing**, it can be made readily where there is demand, **reducing the cost of transportation** otherwise for sand procured from far-off river beds.
- The other advantage of using M-Sand is, it can be **dust free**, and the **size of m-sand grains can be controlled** easily so that it meets the **required grading** for the given construction.

Improvisation: [TH](#);

6. Hydrazine, recently in the news, is

- Used as a rocket propellant
- Used to make pesticides and pharmaceuticals
- A chemically inert compound

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: a.

Hydrazine: In its anhydrous form, it damages the central nervous system, producing symptoms as extreme as tumours and seizures. It is so powerful a reducing agent that it is highly explosive.

- The most common use of hydrazine is to make foaming agents like azodicarbonamide that are used in production of foamy plastics.

- Hydrazine is also used to make pesticides and pharmaceuticals. Although it is toxic to us directly, hydrazine rapidly breaks down in oxygen, making release into the environment low risk.
- Hydrazine can even be found in fossil fuels and nuclear power stations. As a powerful reducing agent, it acts as an oxygen scavenger, reducing metal oxides back into metals, and literally turning the chemical clock back on corrosion processes.

A greener alternative

Is hydrazine, the much-used monopropellant, on its way out?

• Hydrazine has one of the highest specific impulses (kilograms of thrust obtained by the consumption of one kilogram of propellant in one second). Thus, despite its hazardous nature, it is preferred as a propellant

Drawbacks of hydrazine:

- Highly corrosive
- Carcinogenic and toxic
- Storage, handling issues

Replacing Hydrazine:

- ISRO is working on a hydroxylammonium nitrate-based monopropellant (HAN) to replace hydrazine

Low toxicity: HAN is less toxic than hydrazine

Performance: HAN has a density of 1.4 to 1.5 g/cm³, much higher than 1.0 g/cm³ of hydrazine propellants

Safety: HAN is known to not be combustible, thus is a safer alternative

7. A genetically modified crop, 'DMH-11' refers to a variety of

- Brinjal
- Tomato
- Mustard
- Cotton

Solution: c.

- The Centre has demanded more tests for genetically modified mustard (DMH-11 or Dhara Mustard Hybrid-11), a year after clearing the crop for "commercial cultivation.".. The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee, the apex regulator of genetically modified crops, in a March meeting said that in light of several representations both "for and against" the release of GM mustard, there was need for more tests."

[TH;](#)

8. Nipah virus recently in news is transmitted through

- Animal to human only.
- Human to human only.
- Both Animal to human and human to human .
- Can't be transmitted.

Solution : c

- **Nipah** is a **zoonotic disease** spread by **fruit bats** and is named after a Malaysian village Sungai Nipahl where the encephalitis, caused by viral infection, was first reported among pig farmers. Subsequently, it also began to be transmitted from humans to human.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-may-look-for-help-to-battle-nipah/article23953518.ece>

9. The Ebola virus has reared its head again, this time in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Which among the following countries were frequently in the news for the 2014-16 epidemic?
- a) Guatemala, Honduras and Panama
 - b) Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia
 - c) Philippines and Papua New Guinea
 - d) Brazil and Argentina

Solution: b.

- This is the ninth Ebola outbreak in Congo since 1976, when the deadly disease was first identified.
- None of the Ebola cases in Congo have been connected to the massive outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in West Africa that began in 2014 and left more than 11,300 dead.

[CS\(P\) 2015](#); [BBC](#); [TH](#);

10. You will find the label “Not for Phenylketonurics” on the packaging of food products containing
- a) Gluten
 - b) Monosodium Glutamate
 - c) High levels of saturated fats
 - d) Aspartame

Solution: d.

- There has been lots of negative press about artificial sweeteners. Some studies have claimed they might make people more hungry and upset blood-sugar levels, but there is no convincing evidence of harm.
- There are some people who cannot or should not consume artificial sweeteners, however. Children up to the age of three should not have them, but pregnant women can. People born with a rare genetic condition called phenylketonuria should avoid aspartame because it can be harmful to them (This condition stops their body from properly breaking down the amino acid phenylalanine – one of the building blocks of proteins, which is also found in aspartame. In such persons, high levels of phenylalanine can cause nerve damage and mental retardation). For the rest of us, it is worth noting that consuming lots of them may cause flatulence and diarrhoea.

[FSSAI Labelling regulations](#); Improvisation: [BBC](#);

11. Unlike most other objects in our solar system, one that is in a ‘retrograde orbit’

- a) Moves around the sun at an extremely slow pace
- b) Moves in a highly elliptical orbit
- c) Moves around the sun in the opposite direction to the eight planets
- d) Moves in an orbital plane parallel to earth’s

Solution: c.

- The word retrograde literally means ‘moving backwards’.
- All of the planets in our solar system orbit the Sun in the same direction (anti-clockwise, if you’re viewing from a position floating somewhere above the Sun’s North pole). These general-consensus orbits are known as ‘prograde’ orbits (literally ‘moving forwards’). Most of the objects in our solar system are in prograde orbits around their parents (for earth, ‘parent’ is sun, for our moon, ‘parent’ is earth), but a handful are on retrograde orbits.
- This simply means that, when viewed from our imaginary vantage point ‘above’ the solar system, these objects orbit their parents in a clockwise direction, instead of the more mainstream anti-clockwise choice.

In the news ([BBC](#)): An asteroid in Jupiter’s orbit may have come from outside our Solar System, according to a new study. Unlike ‘Oumuamua, the interstellar object which briefly visited the Solar System earlier this year, 2015 BZ509 (known as BZ) seems to have been here for 4.5 billion years. This makes it the first known interstellar asteroid to have taken up residence orbiting the Sun. It is not yet known where the object came from. BZ is in a retrograde orbit, moving around the Sun in the opposite direction to the eight planets, and the majority of other objects in the Solar System.

- This immediately makes it stick out, as almost everything which formed from the disk of gas and debris around the Sun follows the direction of the star’s rotation.

12. The European Union’s ‘Galileo’ is an alternative to

- a) NASA’s TESS
- b) JAXA’s JWST
- c) CNSA’s QUESS
- d) None of the above

Solution: d.

- **Galileo** is a satellite navigation system. It is an alternative to the US GPS system.
- **NASA’s TESS** is a successor to the Kepler Space Telescope. The Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) will discover thousands of exoplanets in orbit around the brightest stars in the sky.
- **JWST** (NASA, ESA and CSA) is a successor to the Hubble Space Telescope. The James Webb Space Telescope (JWST or Webb) will be a large infrared telescope with a 6.5-meter primary mirror. It will be the premier observatory of the next decade (2020-30).
- **China’s QUESS** is the world’s first quantum-enabled satellite. It is also known as ‘Micius’.

[BBC](#);

13. The joint US-German GRACE mission will

- a) Weigh the water on earth
- b) Predict volcanic eruptions
- c) Aid the discovery of oil shale reserves
- d) Help shield earth from solar storms

Solution: a.

NASA: **GRACE stands for 'Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment'**. GRACE consists of two identical spacecraft that fly about 220 kilometres apart. GRACE maps Earth's gravity field by making accurate measurements of the distance between the two satellites, using GPS and a microwave ranging system. It is providing scientists from all over the world with an efficient and cost-effective way to map Earth's gravity field with unprecedented accuracy. The results from this mission are yielding crucial information about the distribution and flow of mass within Earth and its surroundings.

BBC: A joint US-German mission has gone into orbit to weigh the water on Earth. The Grace satellites are replacing a pair of highly successful spacecraft that stopped working last year. Like their predecessors, the new duo will circle the globe and sense tiny variations in the pull of gravity that result from movements in mass. These could be a signal of the land swelling after prolonged rains, or of ice draining from the poles as they melt in a warming climate.. What the Grace concept is brilliant at sensing is the big changes that occur in the hydrological cycle.. These could, for example, be major movements of water from the ocean to the land during precipitation events.. Grace data can show whether agriculture is using groundwater in a sustainable way.. One of the great contributions from the first Grace mission was to confirm the scale of change at the poles – to essentially weigh the ice sheets year on year.

- Another goal of the mission is to create a better profile of Earth's atmosphere.

14. Magma contains dissolved gases, which provide the driving force that causes most volcanic eruptions. By far the most abundant volcanic gas is

- a) Water vapour
- b) Carbon dioxide
- c) Sulphur dioxide
- d) Hydrogen sulphide

Solution: a.

- By far the most abundant volcanic gas is water vapor, which is harmless. However, significant amounts of carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, hydrogen sulfide and hydrogen halides can also be emitted from volcanoes.

[USGS: Volcanic gases;](#)

In the news: Mount Kilauea volcanic eruption;

15. The world's first optical telescope linked to a radio telescope, combining "eyes and ears" to try to unravel the secrets of the universe, which forms a part of the Square Kilometre Array project, was recently launched in

- a) Chile
- b) South Africa
- c) Australia
- d) Hawaii

Solution: b.

- Scientists in South Africa on Friday launched the world's first optical telescope linked to a radio telescope, combining "eyes and ears" to try to unravel the secrets of the universe. The latest move combines the new optical telescope MeerLITCH — Dutch for 'more light' — with the recently-completed 64-dish MeerKAT radio telescope, located 200 kilometres away.
- The device forms part of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project in the remote Karoo desert, which will be the world's most powerful radio telescope system.
- Astronomers have previously had to wait for a cosmic incident to be picked up by a radio telescope and then carry out optic observations afterwards. But combining MeerLITCH with MeerKAT will allow simultaneous study of cosmic events as they occur. The project has been six years in the making by a joint-team of South African, Dutch and British scientists.

In the news: [TH](#);

About [Square Kilometre Array](#);

V. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

1. “Blue House” is a term that appears in the news related to the affairs of
- Germany
 - China
 - Japan
 - South Korea

Solution: d.

- The Blue House is the executive office and official residence of the South Korean head of state, the President of the Republic of Korea, and is located in the capital city of Seoul.

Learning:

- “Wolesi Jirga” refers to the Lower House of the bicameral National Assembly of Afghanistan for which elections are due this year.
- “Capitol Hill” is a metonym for U.S. Congress.

[TH:](#)

2. “Peace Mission” is a multi-nation counter-terror exercise that will witness the participation of
- All Central Asian Republics
 - India, USA and Afghanistan
 - India, Russia, China and Pakistan
 - USA, UK, France and Germany

Solution: c.

[TH:](#) 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.
- It will be for the first time since Independence that India and Pakistan will be part of a military exercise, though the armies of the two nations have worked together in U.N. peacekeeping missions.

3. Key focus areas of the World Economic Forum include
1. Mastering the Fourth Industrial Revolution
 2. Solving the problems of the Global Commons
 3. Creating greater opportunities for women to decent employment and income
 4. Addressing global security issues

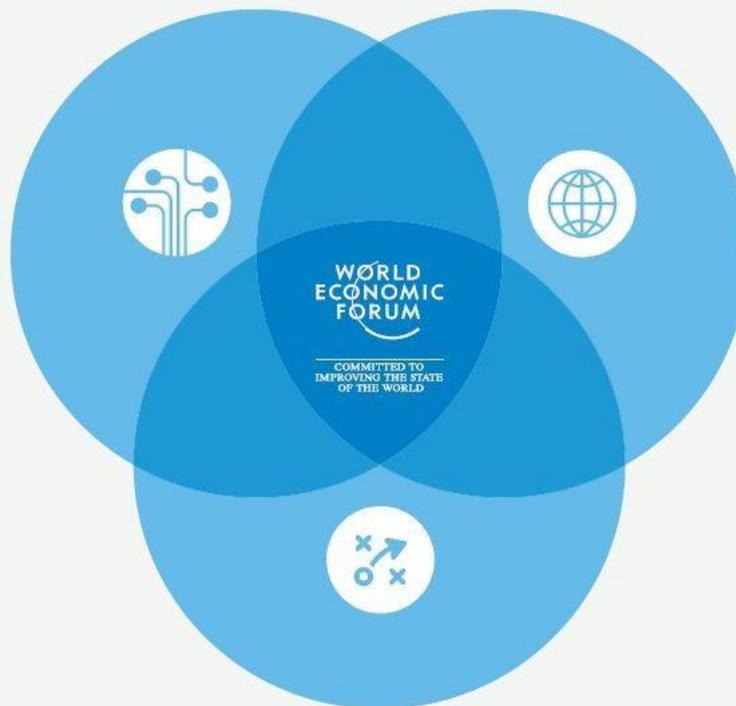
Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

General question, but relevant for prelims.

[WEF key areas of focus;](#)



Forum activities take place at the intersection of three focus areas



Mastering the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Over the next decade, we will witness changes tearing through the global economy with an unprecedented speed, scale and force. They will transform entire systems of production, distribution and consumption. Our activities address the ways these changes affect our lives, their impact on future generations, and how they are reshaping economic, social, ecological and cultural contexts.



Solving the problems of the Global Commons

There are more challenges that require global consensus than ever before. Meanwhile that consensus becomes ever more difficult to achieve. Our communities tackle global problems with new models of public-private cooperation and the application of breakthrough science and technology solutions.



Addressing global security issues

We are seeing the world's worst refugee crisis since the Second World War, violent terrorist acts driven by extremism, increasing geostrategic competition, regionalism and new antagonists eroding global solidarity. The Forum works to develop strategies for leaders to respond to the rapidly changing security landscape.

4. Consider the following statements about the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute:

1. It is an independent institute that receives a substantial part of its funding from the Swedish Government
2. It updates the Global Military Expenditure Database annually

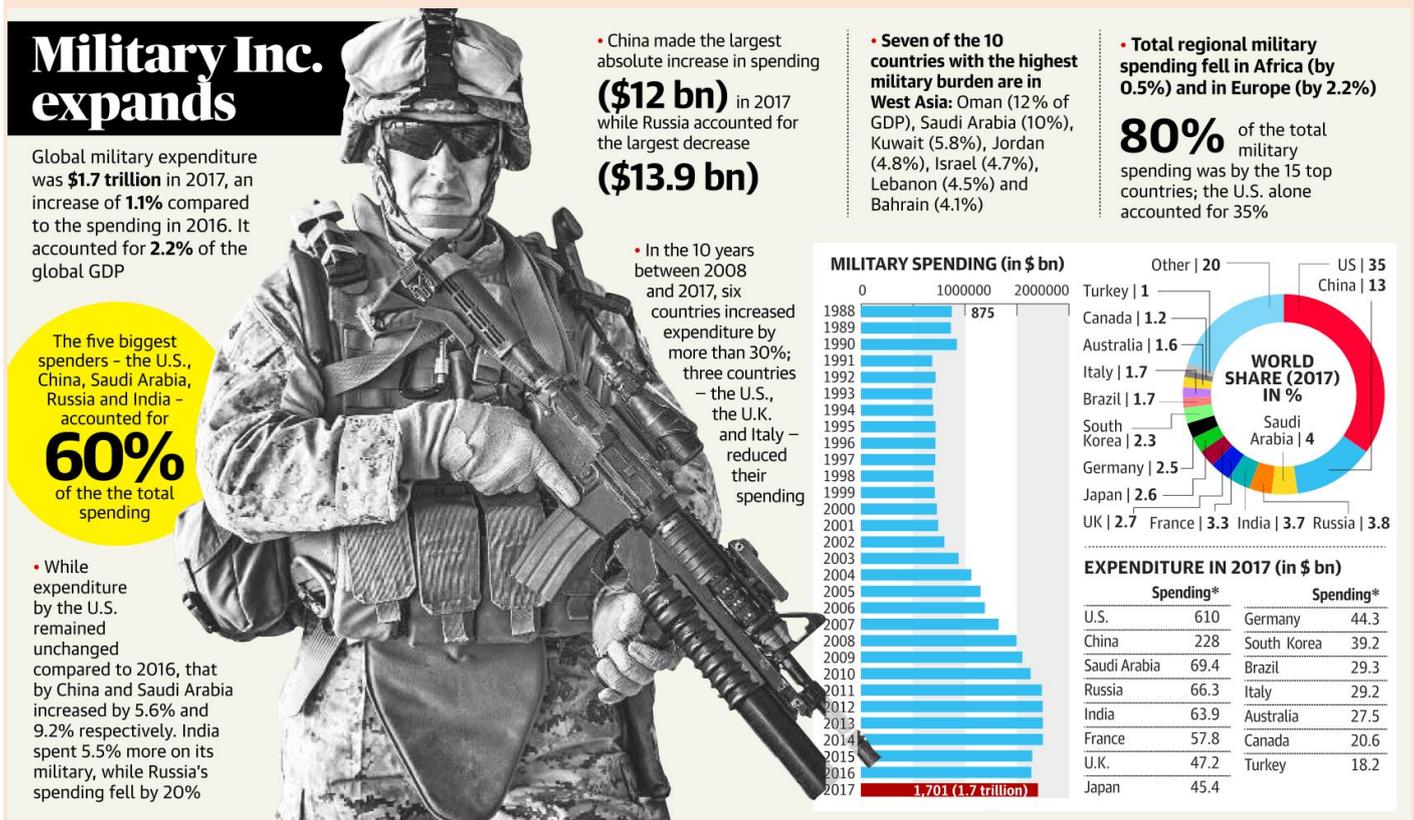
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: c.

- The Swedish Parliament established the Institute in 1966 with the legal status of an independent foundation.
- SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- It receives a substantial part of its funding in the form of an annual grant from the Swedish Government. The Institute also seeks financial support from other organizations in order to carry out its research.

TH (March);



5. The 'Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission' was set up to decide on the fate of prisoners of war belonging to which two nations?

- a) North and South Korea
- b) India and Pakistan
- c) France and Germany
- d) China and Japan

Solution: a.

- The Armistice Agreement which brought to a halt the Korean conflict was drafted in part by the Americans and India's V.K. Krishna Menon.
- One of the follow-up actions to the Armistice Agreement was the establishment of a Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) which was to decide on the fate of over 20,000 prisoners of war from both sides (North and South Korea). India was chosen as the Chair of the NNRC, with Poland and Czechoslovakia representing the Communist bloc and Sweden and Switzerland representing the Western world.

[TH](#);

6. 'BreatheLife' is a joint global campaign to mobilise cities and individuals to protect our health and planet from the effects of air pollution. It is **not** led by

- a) World Health Organisation
- b) UN Environment
- c) Climate & Clean Air Coalition
- d) UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network

Solution: d.

BreatheLife is a joint campaign led by the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Environment and the Climate & Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) to mobilize cities and individuals to protect our health and planet from the effects of air pollution. The BreatheLife Campaign seeks to achieve its objective by

- Connecting cities
- Increasing monitoring
- Accelerating solutions and
- Empowering individuals.

Learning: UN SDSN has been operating since 2012 (before the SDG framework came into existence) under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General.

To read more: [BreatheLife2030](#); Improvisation: [TH](#);

7. Consider the following statements:

1. All African countries have recently signed a deal to create the African Continental Free Trade Area
2. Presently, trade between African countries accounts for only 25% of all commerce on the continent

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.

- The leaders of 44 African countries have signed a deal to create one of the world's largest free trade blocs. 10 countries, including Nigeria – Africa's largest economy, have refused to sign the deal, and it will need to be ratified by all the signatories' national parliaments before the bloc becomes a reality.
- The **African Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA)** would remove barriers to trade, like tariffs and import quotas, allowing the free flow of goods and services between its members.
- Trade between African countries is relatively low. It accounts for only 10% of all commerce on the continent – compared with 25% in south-east Asia – according to news agency Reuters.

[TH](#); [BBC](#);

8. People belonging to the 'Windrush generation' refer to those originally from the countries of

- South Asia
- The Caribbean
- Africa
- South America

Solution: b.

- Those arriving in the UK between 1948 and 1971 from Caribbean countries have been labelled the Windrush generation. This is a reference to one of the many ships – MV Empire Windrush – which brought workers from Caribbean countries, as a response to post-war labour shortages, to the UK.
- "Along with others from the Commonwealth, they and their families were encouraged to Britain to help meet acute labour shortages, whether in the National Health Service (NHS) or beyond... Toughening of immigration rules has led to them being penalised and wrongly treated as undocumented illegal immigrants. Shocking stories of families being separated, unable to return to Britain from holidays abroad, denials of life-saving treatment have abounded in recent weeks. While the stories have mostly centred on those from the Caribbean, there are fears that migrants from across the Commonwealth will inevitably have been impacted."

[TH](#); [TH](#);

9. Where is the 'World Hindi Secretariat' located?

- USA
- Mauritius
- India
- Fiji

Solution: b.

The Secretariat was set up in Mauritius in 2008. Recently, our President inaugurated a new building that will house the Secretariat there. Going by Wikipedia, the World Hindi Secretariat membership comprises of India, Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname and Nepal.

[PIB](#); Primary Source: [Vikaspedia: March Current Affairs](#);

10. The 'Neemrana Dialogue', sometimes in the news, is a Track-2 dialogue that brings together former diplomats and military officials of India and
- Pakistan
 - China
 - Russia
 - Bangladesh

Solution: a.

- India and Pakistan recently held the dialogue after a long gap, indicating a probable shift in views on both sides towards such an initiative. The initiative this time was taken by Pakistan, which wanted this dialogue to happen in Islamabad. These dialogues have for some time been happening in third countries.

[ET](#); Source: [TH](#);

11. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – the Iran nuclear deal – was signed in 2015 by Iran with
- Japan
 - Germany
 - European Union
 - China

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: c.

- On July 14, 2015, the P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), the European Union (EU), and Iran reached a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to ensure that Iran's nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful.

[US DoS: JCPOA](#); [TH](#);

12. India will **not** attract sanctions under the CAATSA for doing military business with
- Cuba
 - Iran
 - Russia
 - North Korea

Solution: a.

In 2017, the U.S. President signed into law the “Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act” (CAATSA), which among other things, imposes new sanctions on Iran, Russia, and North Korea. It also penalises countries that do military trade with them.

[TH](#); [TH](#); CAATSA has frequently been appearing in the news over the past few weeks.

13. Consider the following statements about the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights:

1. The international media relies on information such as daily casualty figures released by it
2. It is a UK-based organisation that was established in an effort to raise awareness of freedom of speech in Syria
3. ‘The Syria Campaign’, a global movement working towards a peaceful future for all Syrians, was launched by it

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: c.

- **SOHR** (UK-based) was started in 2006 by a businessman, Rami Abdul Rahman, in an effort to raise awareness of human rights and freedom of speech in a country where those who spoke out frequently found themselves arrested. When the Syrian uprising broke out in 2011, the Observatory switched its focus to report developments on the ground, rapidly building up its network to do so.
- Those in Syria work to confirm casualty reports of people that have come from activists or been cited in the media, checking with family members, witnesses or medics on the ground. As foreign journalists are unable to operate freely in Syria to verify reports themselves, the media are increasingly reliant on such information. The group says it is impartial in its reporting, recording the deaths of soldiers as well as civilians and protesters. The names of all those killed are carefully documented, along with the circumstances surrounding their death, including videos if they are available.
- ‘**The Syria Campaign**’ aims to build a global movement of solidarity and action working toward a peaceful and dignified future for all Syrians. It is an initiative that is independent of the SOHR as well as the White Helmets (also known as the [Syrian Civil Defense](#)).

Often in the news. Most recently: [TH](#);

14. The ‘International Institute of Strategic Studies’ is well-known for its association with the

- a) Raisina dialogue
- b) Shangri-La dialogue
- c) Munich Security Conference
- d) West Asia and North Africa Security Summit

Solution: b.

The [IISS](#) was founded in the UK in 1958 with a focus on nuclear deterrence and arms control. Today, it is also renowned for The Military Balance, its annual assessment of countries' armed forces and for its high-powered security summits, including the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue and IISS Manama Dialogue.

In the news: [TH](#);

15. 'BepiColombo', recently in the news, is

- a) A joint mission to Mercury between the European Space Agency and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency
- b) A CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research) and IISc (Indian Institute of Science) joint project dedicated to solar and heliospheric physics
- c) NASA's successor to the Hubble Space Telescope
- d) ISRO's proposed exploratory mission to Jupiter's icy moon Europa

Solution: a.

[ESA](#): BepiColombo is a joint mission between ESA and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), executed under ESA leadership. It will set off in 2018 on a journey to the smallest and least explored terrestrial planet in our Solar System. When it arrives at Mercury in late 2025, it will endure temperatures in excess of 350 °C and gather data during its 1 year nominal mission, with a possible 1-year extension. The mission comprises two spacecraft: the Mercury Planetary Orbiter (MPO) and the Mercury Magnetospheric Orbiter (MMO).

Additional Information: BepiColombo will be looking to deepen and extend the knowledge gained at Mercury by the US space agency's recent Messenger mission. The American probe, which ceased operations in 2015, took some 270,000 images of the planet's surface and acquired 10 terabytes of other scientific measurements. It provided remarkable new insights on the composition and structure of the smallest terrestrial planet, and it made the amazing discovery that, despite those high temperatures, there are shadowed craters where it is still cold enough to support water-ice. Esa and the Japanese space agency (Jaxa) hope that the more advanced, higher-resolution technology on their satellites will be able to answer questions that Messenger could not.

[BBC](#);

16. The 'Shanghai Five Mechanism' appears sometimes in the news in the context of affairs related to

- a) The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
- b) The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
- c) China's One Belt, One Road project
- d) Denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula

Solution: b.

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation, the creation of which was announced in 2001 in Shanghai (China) by the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan. It was preceded by the Shanghai Five mechanism that consisted of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.
- Presently, membership of the SCO includes Pakistan and India.

[TH](#);

17. Which of the following nation is not a member of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

- a) Myanmar
- b) Thailand
- c) Indonesia
- d) Sri Lanka

Solution: c

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (**BIMSTEC**) is an international organization of seven nations of South Asia and South East Asia, housing 1.5 billion people and having a combined gross domestic product of \$2.5 trillion (2014). The BIMSTEC member states—**Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, and Nepal**—are among the countries dependent on the Bay of Bengal.

Source : <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/on-the-great-asian-highway/article23953480.ece>

18. With reference to the recently formed Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), consider the following statements:

1. The goal of the coalition is to focus on low-cost manufacturing of vaccines for vaccine-preventable diseases
2. It is an alliance between the Indian Pharmaceutical Association, the US Agency for International Development and the World Health Organisation only

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

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

Solution: d.

CEPI is a new alliance between governments, industry, academia, philanthropy, intergovernmental institutions, such as the World Health Organization, and civil society.

- “We exist to finance and coordinate the development of new vaccines to prevent and contain infectious disease epidemics.”
- The coalition will not focus on diseases that already have sufficient attention, but will be guided by [WHO's Blueprint](#), which lists certain illnesses to focus on. The goal of the coalition is to focus on diseases which do not have a large market in global terms.
- India is represented by the Ministries of Science and Technologies and Health and Family Welfare.

Improvisation: [BBC](#); [CEPI](#); From 2016: [TH](#);

19. Which one of the following diseases is **not** included in the WHO's latest list of Blueprint Priority Diseases?

- a) Nipah virus disease
- b) Chikungunya
- c) Zika fever
- d) Middle East respiratory syndrome corona virus (MERS-CoV)

Solution: b.

As per the latest review of the list, there is an urgent need for accelerated research and development for:

- Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF)
- Ebola virus disease and Marburg virus disease
- Lassa fever
- Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)
- Nipah and henipaviral diseases
- Rift Valley fever (RVF)
- Zika
- Disease X

Disease X represents the knowledge that a serious international epidemic could be caused by a pathogen currently unknown to cause human disease, and so the R&D Blueprint explicitly seeks to enable cross-cutting R&D preparedness that is also relevant for an unknown "Disease X" as far as possible.

[WHO Blueprint](#); Improvisation: [BBC](#); [CEPI](#);

20. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a regulation that intends to strengthen and harmonise data protection law frameworks across the

- a) European Union
- b) CPTPP countries
- c) OECD countries
- d) WTO members

Solution: a.

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

What is the GDPR: [IBM](#); [EUGDPR](#); [TH](#);

21. 'Repeal the 8th' and 'Save the 8th', phrases that recently appeared in the news, are related to

- a) Conflict minerals in DR Congo
- b) Presidential powers in Turkey
- c) Women's rights in Ireland
- d) Gun control in the USA

Solution: c.

- The Republic of Ireland has voted overwhelmingly to overturn the abortion ban by 66.4% to 33.6%. A referendum held recently resulted in a landslide win for the repeal side. Currently, abortion is only allowed when a woman's life is at risk, but not in cases of rape, incest or fatal foetal abnormality. The Eighth Amendment, which grants an equal right to life to the mother and unborn, will be replaced.

[BBC](#); [TH](#);

22. Consider the following statements about Taiwan:

1. India maintains economic, commercial and people-to-people links with the country, but not diplomatic relations
2. Most of the world's countries recognise and maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan

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

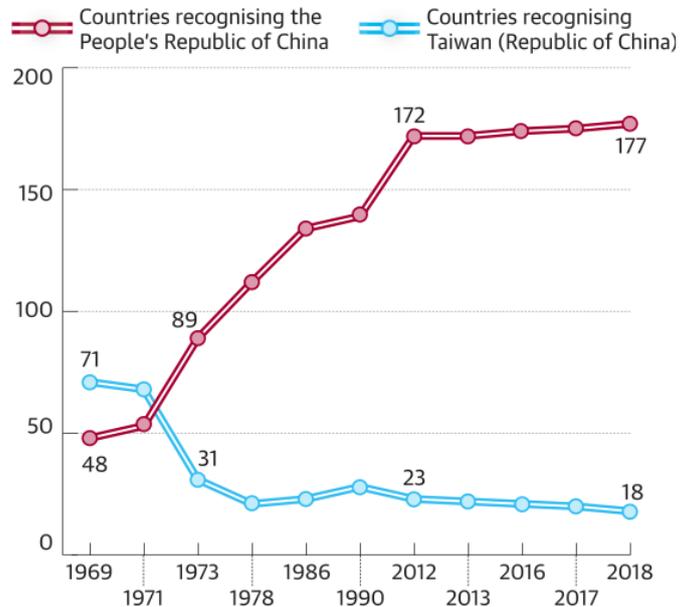
Solution: a.

- (From 2016) [BBC](#): Over the last two decades, India-Taiwan relations have progressed considerably despite not having diplomatic status to their ties. Their trade and economic contacts have improved. Taiwanese investments have been promoted in India and educational linkages have also expanded between the two.

DATA POINT

More lonely

In the last month, two countries – the Dominican Republic and Burkina Faso – severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan in favour of relations with the People's Republic of China, which claims the self-governing Taiwan as its own province. This is a setback to Taiwan, which is recognised only by 18 countries today, down from 71 in 1969



Source (there is no need to go through this): [IDSA Report](#);

Improvisation: [TH](#);

23. India is **not** a member of which of the following export control regimes:

1. Missile Technology Control Regime
2. Australian Group
3. Wassenaar Arrangement
4. Nuclear Suppliers Group

Select the correct code

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

Answer: d

- India became 43rd member of the **Australian Group** ON 19th January 2018. In December, 2017 India was admitted as 42nd member of **Wassenaar Arrangement**. India had already been admitted into MTCR in 2016.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/charting-its-own-path/article24039848.ece>

VI. POLITY

1. The first Indian law to mandate social audit as a statutory requirement was the
- Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act
 - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
 - Environment (Protection) Act
 - National Food Security Act

Solution: b.

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was the first law to mandate social audit as a statutory requirement.

Improvisation: [TH](#);

2. 'Electricity', under the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution, is on the
- Union List
 - State List
 - Concurrent List
 - Residuary List

Solution: c.

- Entry 38, Concurrent List.

[7th Schedule PDF](#); Improvisation: In the news, 100% village electrification.

3. Consider the following statements:

- The Communal Award was an extension of the scheme of representation of the minorities that began under the Indian Councils Act of 1892
- The Government of India Act, 1935 provided separate electorates for depressed classes, women and labour (workers)

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: b.

- Indian Councils Act of 1909** – Introduction of system of communal representation for Muslims by accepting the concept of 'separate electorate'.

- **Government of India Act, 1919** – Extension of the principle of communal representation by providing separate electorates for Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans.
- **Communal Award – In August 1932**, Ramsay MacDonald, the British PM, announced a scheme of representation of the minorities, which came to be known as the Communal Award. Separate electorates were now extended to the depressed classes (Scheduled Castes). Gandhiji was distressed over this extension of the principle of communal representation to the depressed classes and undertook fast unto death in Yeravada Jail (Poona) to get the award modified. At last, there was an agreement between the leaders of the Congress and the depressed classes. The agreement, known as Poona Pact, retained the Hindu joint electorate and gave reserved seats to the depressed classes.
- **The Government of India Act, 1935** – It further extended the principle of communal representation by providing separate electorates for depressed classes (scheduled castes), women and labour (workers).

Improvisation: [TH](#); Indian Polity by M Laxmikanth;

4. The Directive Principles of State Policy direct the State to secure, to all workers, a

- Minimum wage
- Average wage
- Fair wage
- Living wage

Solution: d.

Polity by M Laxmikanth: 'Living wage' is different from 'minimum wage', which includes the bare needs of life like food, shelter and clothing. In addition to these bare needs, a 'living wage' includes education, health, insurance, etc. A 'fair wage' is a mean between 'living wage' and 'minimum wage'.

Article 43: The State shall endeavour to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organisation or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural, industrial or otherwise, work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to promote cottage industries on an individual or co-operative basis in rural areas.

Improvisation: [TH](#);

5. 'DAKSH', recently in the news, most appropriately refers to

- A project for the ICT enablement of district and subordinate courts
- An all-India digitisation project of court records
- A national action plan to reduce Union Government litigation
- A civil society organisation that measures judicial performance

Solution: d.

- **DAKSH** is a civil society organisation (founded in 2008) that undertakes research and activities to promote accountability and better governance in India. Its two main activities are measuring political and judicial performance.
- They have designed, developed, and deployed a variety of measures to assess and analyse performance in the political space, such as conducting physical surveys to gather data on people's perceptions of their elected representatives.

- They embarked on the Rule of Law Project in 2014 in order to evaluate judicial performance and in particular, to study the problem of pendency of cases in the Indian legal system. This project is based on quantitative research that will map the administration of justice in India.

The latest Economic Survey (Ch-9, Volume 1) has utilised data generated by DAKSH. The organisation's findings were also in the news some time ago.

[http://dakshindia.org/about/;](http://dakshindia.org/about/)

6. Article 35A was incorporated into the Indian Constitution by

- a) A presidential order
- b) A constitutional amendment
- c) The Constituent Assembly
- d) A supreme court order

Solution: a.

- Article 35A was incorporated into the Indian Constitution in 1954 by an order of President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet.
- It gives the State Legislature carte blanche to decide who all are the "permanent residents" of the State and grant them special rights and privileges in public sector jobs, acquisition of property within the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare programmes. The provision mandates that no act of the State legislature coming under the ambit of Article 35A can be challenged for violating the Indian Constitution or any other law of the land.

TH; To read more about Article 35A, refer: [IE;](#)

7. The Lokpal Selection Committee led by the Prime Minister does NOT comprise of the

- a) Chief Justice of India
- b) Central Vigilance Commissioner
- c) Speaker, Lok Sabha
- d) Leader of Opposition, Lok Sabha

Solution: b.

- The Chairperson and the members of the Lokpal shall be appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Selection Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, Lok Sabha Speaker, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Chief Justice of India or a Supreme Court judge nominated by him and an eminent jurist to be nominated by the President of India on the basis of recommendations of the first four members of the selection committee.

TH; [PRS;](#)

8. Related to which of the following issues did the Sarkaria Commission make recommendations?

1. All-India Services
2. Governor's role and responsibilities
3. Seventh Schedule to the Constitution

Select the correct answers using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

- 1983, the Central government appointed a three-member Commission on Centre–state relations under the chairmanship of R S Sarkaria, a retired judge of the Supreme Court. The commission was asked to examine and review the working of existing arrangements between the Centre and states in all spheres and recommend appropriate changes and measures. The Commission made 245 recommendations to improve centre-state relations.

Refer chapter 'Centre-State Relations', Indian Polity by M Laxmikanth;

In the news: [IE](#);

9. Consider the following statements:

1. Appointment of Prime Minister when no party has a clear majority in the Lok Sabha is a constitutional discretion of the President
2. Appointment of Chief Minister when no party has a clear majority in the legislative assembly is a situational discretion of the Governor

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 governor has constitutional discretion in the following cases:

1. Reservation of a bill for the consideration of the President.
2. Recommendation for the imposition of the President's Rule in the state.
3. While exercising his functions as the administrator of an adjoining union territory (in case of
4. Determining the amount payable by the Government of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram to an autonomous Tribal District Council as royalty accruing from licenses for mineral exploration.
5. Seeking information from the chief minister with regard to the administrative and legislative matters of the state

In addition to the above constitutional discretion (i.e., the express discretion mentioned in the Constitution), the governor, like the president, also has situational discretion (i.e., the hidden discretion derived from the exigencies of a prevailing political situation) in the following cases:

1. Appointment of chief minister when no party has a clear-cut majority in the state legislative assembly or when the chief minister in office dies suddenly and there is no obvious successor.
2. Dismissal of the council of ministers when it cannot prove the confidence of the state assembly

3. Dissolution of the state legislative assembly if the council of ministers has lost its majority.

In the news: Karnataka government-formation issues;

- 10.** As provided by the Constitution, the Speaker Pro Tem of a state legislature
1. Is selected by the leader of the single largest party in the state legislative assembly
 2. Has all the powers of the Speaker
 3. Presides over the first sitting of the newly-elected popular house

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) 3 only

Solution: b.

- As provided by the Constitution, the Speaker of the last Lok Sabha vacates his office immediately before the first meeting of the newly-elected Lok Sabha. Therefore, the President appoints a member of the Lok Sabha as the Speaker Pro Tem. Usually, the seniormost member is selected for this. The President himself administers oath to the Speaker Pro Tem. The Speaker Pro Tem has all the powers of the Speaker. He presides over the first sitting of the newly-elected Lok Sabha. His main duty is to administer oath to the new members. He also enables the House to elect the new Speaker. When the new Speaker is elected by the House, the office of the Speaker Pro Tem ceases to exist. Hence, this office is a temporary office, existing for a few days.

Indian Polity by M Laxmikant;

In the news: Karnataka government-formation issues;

- 11.** The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 grants citizenship to minorities-Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis (after 6 years of residence in India) from which of the following countries.
- (a) Pakistan only.
 - (b) Pakistan and Afghanistan only.
 - (c) Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh only.
 - (d) Pakistan and Bangladesh only.

Solution: c

- The Bill amends the **Citizenship Act, 1955** to make illegal migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from **Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan**, eligible for citizenship.
- Under the Act, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, and for 11 of the previous 14 years. The Bill relaxes this 11 year requirement to six years for persons belonging to the same six religions and three countries.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/aggp-confronts-amit-shah-on-citizenship-bill/article23941235.ece>

12. Consider the following statements related to Census towns in Indian.

1. They are settlements which have population larger the 5,000 people.
2. Density of population should be more that 400 people per square.km
3. Three fourth of their male population should be not working in agriculture sector.
4. They are governed by urban local bodies.

Which of the above statements are correct .Choose the correct code

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

Solution: c

In India, a census town is one which is not statutorily notified and administered as a town, but nevertheless whose population has attained urban characteristics. They are characterized by the following:

1. Population exceeds 5,000
2. At least 75% of main working population is employed outside the agricultural sector
3. Minimum population densityof 400 persons per km
4. They are administratively rural and governed by panchayats.

Sources: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/census-2021-likely-to-have-2231-new-census-towns/article23944620.ece>

13. Consider following statements regarding ‘social audit ‘in India. Which of the following are correct statements?

1. It is one of the social accountability mechanisms.
2. Meghalaya is the first state in the country to pass social audit legislation.
3. Social audit is an effective tool of good governance.
4. MNREGA mandates social audit by Gram Sabha.

Choose the correct code?

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

Solution: d

- The **Social Audit Gram Sabha** is a special forum and not included in the 6 mandatory Gram Sabhas. The Social Audit Gram Sabha is **mandated under Section 17 of the MGNREG Act**. Social Audit Gram Sabha is the primary forum for wage seekers to raise their voices, make demands and validate the findings of social audit.
- In April 2017, Meghalaya became the first state in India to operationalise a law that makes social audit of government programmes and schemes a part of government practice. The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017 mandates social audit across 21 schemes and 11 departments.

- Social accountability is accountability directly to the people ensured by their involvement .Social audit ensures that.
- Social audit strengthens transparency and accountability which are pillars of good governance.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-meghalaya-example/article23953492.ece>

14. Which of the following are the features of democracy?

1. Rulers elected by people take all the major decisions.
2. Elections offer choice and opportunity to the people to change their current rulers.
3. Each adult citizen has one vote and each vote has equal value.
4. The government in a democracy has limitless power.

Choose the correct code.

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

Solution: c

- A democratic government rules within limits set by constitutional law and citizen’s rights.

Source : <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/whats-in-an-election/article23953489.ece>

15. In order to ensure that overriding power remained with the British, the Government of India Act of 1935 retained the post of Governor and vested him with “special responsibilities” that, in essence, allowed for intervention at will. What reasons did the Constituent Assembly cite to retain this post?

1. There was a dearth of competent legislators in the states
2. A certain amount of centralisation of power was necessary in a newly-formed state of India

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.

- Through the course of the early 20th century, the Indian nationalist movement managed to extract gradual and incremental reforms towards responsible government from the British rulers. These reforms culminated in the Government of India Act, 1935 which established provincial legislative assemblies elected from a limited franchise.
- However, in order to ensure that overriding power remained with the British, the Act retained the post of Governor (a holdover from the old, “diarchy” system), and vested him with “special responsibilities” that, in essence, allowed for intervention at will. In a searing critique, K.T. Shah (who was later one of the most articulate members of the

Constituent Assembly, or CA), wrote that the Governor would inevitably be biased in his functioning, and his actions would remain at odds with those of popularly elected Ministers.

- Despite the nationalist movement's bitter experience with Governors over almost three decades, the CA chose to retain the post, and continue to vest it with discretionary power. During CA debates, it was pointed out that the Articles dealing with the powers of the Governor were almost verbatim reproductions of the 1935 Act. Defenders of the office raised two broad arguments: first, that there was a dearth of competent legislators in the States; and second, that a certain amount of centralisation of power was necessary in a nascent state such as India. Concerned members of the CA were assured that the Governor would remain only a constitutional post, and would have no power to interfere in the day-to-day administration of the State.

[TH](#);

16. A Report titled 'A 21st century institutional architecture for India's water reforms: Restructuring the CWC and CGWB' was prepared recently by

- a) Vinay Sheel Committee
- b) Mihir Shah Committee
- c) Umesh Sinha Committee
- d) Y.M. Deosthalee Committee

Solution: b.

- The report was prepared by **Mihir Shah Committee**. For details, refer to [Insightsonindia](#).

In the news: [TH](#);

17. In the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT machine), a paper slip is generated bearing the

1. Polling station identification number
2. Name of the candidate
3. Symbol of the candidate

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.

- In the VVPAT machine, a paper slip is generated bearing the name and symbol of the candidate (earlier, the serial number of the candidate too was to be printed on the slip, but this is not the case at present) to whom the vote has been cast and remains visible to the Voter through a transparent window for 7 seconds. Thus, the VVPAT enables the voter to verify instantly that the vote cast by him has been recorded correctly in favour of the candidate of his choice, thereby injecting greater transparency and credibility to the whole voting process. The slip automatically gets cut and falls down into a sealed drop box. In this process, the slip will not go into the hands of the voter nor will others be able to see it.

[PIB](#); Source/improvisation: [TH](#);

18. Consider the following statements about Cantonment Boards:

1. These are created by notification in the gazette and administered by the Central Government
2. Members of the cantonment board are partly elected and partly nominated

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.

- A cantonment board is established for municipal administration for civilian population in the cantonment area. It is set up under the provisions of the Cantonments Act of 2006—a legislation enacted by the Central government. It works under the administrative control of the defence ministry of the Central government.
- A cantonment board consists of partly elected and partly nominated. The elected members hold office for a term of five years while the nominated members (i.e., ex-officio members) continue so long as they hold the office in that station. The military officer commanding the station is the ex-officio president of the board and presides over its meetings.
- The functions performed by a cantonment board are similar to those of a municipality. These are statutorily categorised into obligatory functions and discretionary functions. The sources of income includes both, tax revenue and non-tax revenue.
- The executive officer of the cantonment board is appointed by the president of India. He implements all the resolutions and decisions of the board and its committees. He belongs to the central cadre established for the purpose.

Improvisation: [TH](#); [TH](#);

19. The Citizenship Act of 1955 prescribes which one of the following ways of acquiring citizenship in India today?

- a) By birth, irrespective of the nationality of a person's parents
- b) By registration, if the person is an illegal migrant
- c) By descent, if the birth of a person born outside India is registered at an Indian consulate within one year of date of birth
- d) By naturalisation, if he has an adequate knowledge of any language spoken in India

Solution: c.

Statements a, b and d are incorrect. Refer Citizenship chapter from Laxmikant's Polity for details.

- Corrected statement 1: By birth, only if both of the person's parents are citizens of India or one of whose parents is a citizen of India and the other is not an illegal migrant at the time of their birth.
- Corrected statement 2: By registration, so long as the person is not an illegal migrant.
- Corrected statement 3: By naturalisation, if he has an adequate knowledge of any eighth schedule language.

Improvisation: [TH](#);

20. Which of the followings are rights exclusively enjoyed by only Indian citizens and not by aliens.

1. Right to vote.
2. Right to contest elections.
3. Right to equality before law.
4. Right to life and liberty.

Select the correct code

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1, 2 and 3 only
- c) 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
- d) None

Answer: a

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/rajnaths-advice-to-assam-cm-on-bill/article24038625.ece>

21. National Company Law Appellate Tribunal can hear appeals against the orders of which of the following agencies

1. National Company Law Tribunal
2. Insolvency Bankruptcy Board of India
3. Competition Commission of India

Select the correct code

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

Answer: d

- **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)** was constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 for hearing appeals against the orders of National Company Law Tribunal(s) (NCLT), with effect from 1st June, 2016.
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by NCLT(s) under Section 61 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC), with effect from 1st December, 2016. NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India under Section 202 and Section 211 of IBC.
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction issued or decision made or order passed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) – as per the amendment brought to Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 by Section 172 of the Finance Act, 2017, with effect from 26th May, 2017.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/business/indias-bankruptcy-appeal-court-defers-rcom-ericsson-case-hearing/article24021981.ece>

VII. HISTORY, ART & CULTURE

1. Which among the following important events of Buddha's life did **not** occur within the borders of present-day India?

- a) Birth
- b) Enlightenment (Nirvana)
- c) First sermon (Dhammachakraparivartan)
- d) Death (Parinirvana)

Solution: a.

The Lord Buddha was born in 623 BC in the sacred area of [Lumbini](#) located in the Terai plains of southern Nepal, testified by the inscription on the pillar erected by the Mauryan Emperor Asoka in 249 BC.

- Enlightenment – Bodh Gaya, Bihar;
- First sermon – Deer Park, Sarnath, UP;
- Death – Kushinagar, UP;

Improvisation: [TH](#); [PIB](#);

2. Consider the following statements with reference to Raja Ravi Varma:

1. He was one of the first artists who tried to create a style that was both modern and national
2. He was influenced by Rajput miniatures and Japanese paintings
3. His work deeply influenced Dadasaheb Phalke

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: c.

- He mastered the western art of oil painting and realistic life study, but painted themes from Indian mythology. He dramatised on canvas, scene after scene from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.
- In Bengal, a new group of nationalist artists gathered around Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951). They rejected the art of Ravi Varma as imitative and westernised, and declared that such a style was unsuitable for depicting the nation's ancient myths and legends. They felt that a genuine Indian style of painting had to draw inspiration from non-Western art traditions, and try to capture the spiritual essence of the East. So they broke away from the convention of oil painting and the realistic style, and turned for inspiration to medieval Indian traditions of miniature painting and the ancient art of mural painting in the Ajanta caves. They were also influenced by the art of Japanese artists who visited India at that time to develop an Asian art movement.

Source/Improvisation: [Google Doodle](#); Our Past III Part 2, Class 8;

3. Rani-ki-Vav, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is/was

1. A stepwell in Rajasthan
2. Initially built as a memorial to a king
3. Designed as an inverted temple

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.

Rani-ki-Vav, on the banks of the Saraswati River (Patan, **Gujarat**), was initially built as a memorial to a king in the 11th century AD.

- Stepwells are a distinctive form of subterranean water resource and storage systems on the Indian subcontinent, and have been constructed since the 3rd millennium BC. They evolved over time from what was basically a pit in sandy soil towards elaborate multi-storey works of art and architecture.
- Rani-ki-Vav was built at the height of craftsmens' ability in stepwell construction and the Maru-Gurjara architectural style, reflecting mastery of this complex technique and great beauty of detail and proportions.
- Designed as an inverted temple highlighting the sanctity of water, it is divided into seven levels of stairs with sculptural panels of high artistic quality; more than 500 principle sculptures and over a thousand minor ones combine religious, mythological and secular imagery, often referencing literary works.

[UNESCO: Rani-ki-Vav;](#)

[Mann Ki Baat;](#)

4. The National Committee for Commemoration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the first meeting of which was recently held, is chaired by

- a) The President
- b) A former UN Secretary General
- c) The Minister of State of Culture
- d) The Vice President

Solution: a.

The Committee has a total of 125 members, including 116 from India and encompasses the **President** (as chair), the Vice-President, Prime Minister, Union Ministers, former Prime Ministers, Chief Ministers, senior MPs and political leaders from across party lines, and eminent Gandhians, social thinkers and activists representing a cross-section of Indian society and regional diversity. The Committee also has nine international members, including two former Secretaries General of the United Nations – Mr Kofi Annan and Mr Ban Ki-moon – and Nobel laureates Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa and former US Vice-President Al Gore.

[List of Members of the Committee;](#)

[PIB;](#)

5. The Tiwa tribe – that celebrates the ‘Yangli’ festival in which they seek protection for their crops from natural calamities – belong to the state of
- Rajasthan
 - Assam
 - Odisha
 - Jharkhand

Solution: b.

- The tribe is present in Meghalaya as well.

Image: [TH](#);

6. The Taj Mahal was commissioned by Shah Jahan in
- Early 16th century
 - Late 16th century
 - Early 17th century
 - Late 17th century

Solution: c.

- The [Taj Mahal](#) was built in Agra between 1631 and 1648.

Mughal emperors:

- Babur 1526-1530
- Humayun 1530-1540, 1555-1556
- Akbar 1556-1605
- Jahangir 1605-1627
- Shah Jahan 1627-1658
- Aurangzeb 1658-1707

Improvisation: [TH](#);

7. Among the following, *Silappadikaram* – one of the five great epics of Tamil literature – deals with the theme of
- Ideals of Jainism
 - Statecraft
 - Justice
 - Foreign relations

Solution: c.

- The [Silappadikaram](#) tells of the young merchant Kovalan’s marriage to the virtuous Kannagi, his love for the courtesan Madhavi, and his consequent ruin and exile in Madurai, where he is unjustly executed after trying to sell his wife’s anklet to a wicked goldsmith who had stolen the queen’s anklet and charged Kovalan with the theft.

The widow Kannagi comes to Madurai, proves Kovalan's innocence, then tears off one breast and throws it at the kingdom of Madurai, which goes up in flames.

- The five great Tamil epics: Silappadikaram, Manimekalai, Valayapathi, Kundalakesi and Cīvaka Cintāmaṇi.

Improvisation: [TH](#);

8. Consider the following statements about the 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme:

1. It primarily focuses on providing basic amenities around heritage structures
2. 'Monument Mitras' can be individuals, public sector or private sector entities

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 '**Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan**' scheme is an initiative of the Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Archaeological Survey of India.
- Under it, the government invites entities, including **public sector companies, private** sector firms as well as **individuals**, to **develop** selected monuments and heritage and **tourist sites across India**. Development of these tourist sites calls for providing and maintaining basic amenities
- The sites/monument are selected on the basis of tourist footfall and visibility and can be adopted by private and public sector companies and individuals — known as **Monument Mitras** — for an initial period of **five years**.
- Monument Mitras are selected by the 'oversight and vision committee,' co-chaired by the Tourism Secretary and the Culture Secretary, on the basis of the bidder's 'vision' for development of all amenities at the heritage site. There is no financial bid involved. The oversight committee also has the power to terminate a memorandum of understanding in case of non-compliance or non-performance.
- The corporate sector is expected to use corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds for the upkeep of the site. Monument Mitras, in turn, will get limited visibility on the site premises and on the Incredible India website.

[PIB](#); [TH](#);

9. *Ashtapadiyattam* is a traditional dance drama based on

- a) Vedas
- b) Gita Govinda
- c) Natya Shastra
- d) Abhinaya Darpana

Solution: b

- The dance-drama **Ashtapadiyattam** celebrating the mythological Radha-Krishna love is based on Gita Govinda of Jayadev.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/honour-classical-indian-art-forms-vice-president/article23951763.ece>

10. In March 1942, a mission headed by Stafford Cripps was sent to India with constitutional proposals to seek Indian support for the war. In this context, the official negotiators for the Congress included who among the following?

- a) Acharya J.B. Kripalani
- b) Motilal Nehru
- c) Subhash Chandra Bose
- d) Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

Solution: d.

- Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad were the official negotiators for the Congress.

Improvisation: [TH](#); Spectrum's 'A brief history of Modern India';

11. Consider the following statements about Maulana Abul Kalam Azad:

1. He was once associated with the revolutionaries of Bengal
2. 'Al-Hilal' and 'Al-Balagh' were publications started by him

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.

- In the 1900s, he did not approve of the Congress movement on account of its 'slowness'; also he could not join the Muslim League whose political goal he found unpredictable.
- Thus he associated himself with the Hindu revolutionaries of Bengal in spite of their 'exclusive' and indifferent attitude to the Muslims. He managed, however, to convince them that the systematic exclusion of Muslims from the group would ultimately make political struggle much more difficult.
- In order to politicise his community, Maulana Azad started from 13 July 1912 an Urdu weekly the Al-Hilal from Calcutta. Its influence was prodigious. He was politically and religiously radical. The paper shocked the conservatives and created a furore; but there were many Muslims ready to follow him.
- In the pages of the Al-Hilal Maulana Azad began to criticize the 'loyal' attitude of the Muslims to the British, and the 'hostile' attitude of the British to the Muslim world in general. The Government of Bengal unhappy with its editorial policy, put pressure on the paper.
- Meanwhile World War I broke out and the publication was banned in 1914 by the Bengal Government. On 12 November 1915 Maulana Azad started a new weekly, the Al-Balagh from Calcutta, which continued till 31 March 1916.
- The publication of the Al-Balagh was also banned by the Government of Bengal and Maulana Azad was exiled from Calcutta under the Defence of India Regulations.

[INC Party Presidents: Azad](#);

Statement 1 is also found in Spectrum.

Improvisation: [TH](#);

12. Raja Ram Mohan Roy is often remembered for his role in abolishing Sati. Under the tenure of which Governor-General was this reform passed?

- a) Lord Minto II
- b) Lord Canning
- c) Lord Dalhousie
- d) Lord William Bentinck

Solution: d.

- Due to fierce campaign and lobbying of **Raja Rammohan Roy** and others, Sati practice was formally banned in all the lands under Bengal Presidency by **Lord William Bentinck** on 4 December 1829. By this regulation, the people who abetted sati were declared guilty of “culpable homicide.”

[GKToday](#); Improvisation – [Google Doodle: Raja Ram Mohan Roy](#);

13. He took the view that the Indian Mutiny of 1857 was the first expression of Indian mass rebellion against the British colonial rule. He believed in a democratic and secular state where every individual has the same rights irrespective of caste, creed, race or religion. He also had been the President of the Hindu Mahasabha. These statements refer to which one of the following personalities?

- a) Bal Gangadhar Tilak
- b) Vinayak Damodar Savarkar
- c) Sher Ali Afridi
- d) Sachindra Nath Sanyal

Solution: b.

- **Vinayak Damodar Savarkar**, byname Vir or Veer, was a Hindu and Indian nationalist and leading figure in the Hindu Mahasabha (“Great Society of Hindus”), a Hindu nationalist organization and political party.
- While a student of law in London (1906–10), Savarkar helped to instruct a group of Indian revolutionaries in methods of sabotage and assassination that associates of his had apparently learned from expatriate Russian revolutionaries in Paris. During this period he wrote *The Indian War of Independence, 1857* (1909), in which he took the view that the Indian Mutiny of 1857 was the first expression of Indian mass rebellion against British colonial rule.
- He is often recognized as an early exponent of militant Hindu nationalism. Many also continue to hold him responsible for the assassination of Gandhi despite his acquittal in the case.. But Savarkar, the Hindutva ideologue, had a tenuous relationship at best with the Hindu religion.. Gandhi’s challenge to outdated religious practices was much more muted than Savarkar’s... . Savarkar believed in a democratic and secular state where every individual has the same rights irrespective of caste, creed, race or religion, as he mentioned in his several presidential speeches at the Hindu Mahasabha. But Savarkar entered contentious territory while defining Hindutva. To him, Hindutva, which helped forge a uniform national identity, was predicated on individuals locating both their pitrabhu (fatherland) and punyabhu (holy land) within the territorial confines of the Indian state. Savarkar could never reconcile his idea of a secular nation with his definition of Hindutva.

[Livemint](#); [Britannica](#); Improvisation: [TH](#);

VIII. STATES

1. Which among the following states was the first in the country to pass a social audit law ?

- a) Meghalaya
- b) Odisha
- c) Rajasthan
- d) Kerala

Solution: a.

Meghalaya recently became the first state in India to operationalise a law 'The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017' that makes social audit of government programmes and schemes a part of government practice.

- First, it will make it easier to correct course as the scheme is rolling along; the audit is not after all the money has been spent.
- Two, it gives people a direct say in how money will be spent and fills an information gap for officers as they are directly in touch with the ground.
- Third, social audits have been civil society initiatives rather than government-mandated. They are now part of the system (they are institutionalised).

From December 2017: [IE](#) Improvisation: [TH](#);

2. Where has India's first 'Insect Museum' come up?

- a) Nagaland
- b) Chattisgarh
- c) Tamil Nadu
- d) Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Solution: c.

Established at the Department of Agricultural Entomology of TNAU (Tamil Nadu Agricultural University) at a cost of ₹ 5 crore, the museum displays insects as preserved specimens, live specimens depicting their life cycle, images, videos and models on their behaviour, habits and habitat.

[TH](#); Primary Source: [Vikaspedia: March Current Affairs](#);

3. Home to India's longest limestone cave system and the world's longest sandstone cave, this state has more caves than any other in India. This state is

- a) Karnataka
- b) Maharashtra
- c) Odisha
- d) Meghalaya

Solution: d.

- **Meghalaya is now known to be home to some of the world's most complex cave systems;** and has more caves than any other place in India. The hills are home to India's longest general cave – the 31.1km-long **Liat Prah** limestone cave system.
- **Krem Puri**, or Cave Fairy is a sandstone cave system that is 24.5km long. It is an incredibly complex maze of hundreds of short passages and long stretches of corridors that are interconnected in a big network. The pattern of the maze is quite unique, and makes the cave a real labyrinth. It has some fine stalactites and stalagmites. There's also abundant fauna – frogs, fish, giant Huntsman spiders, bats. Scientists believe that they may have stumbled on to some geological riches here.
- What makes this cave unusual though, is that it has been formed in sandstone. Caves are usually formed by the dissolution of limestone. Rainwater picks up carbon dioxide from the air, turns into feeble acid and dissolves the rock. Caves in sandstone are not common because the rock has low solubility. Therefore, they need high amounts of water to dissolve and erode to create underground voids. Meghalaya experiences some of the highest amounts of rainfall in the world, so experts say it is not entirely surprising that caves in sandstone can develop in such an impressive way in the state.

[BBC](#); Primary Source: [Vikaspedia: March Current Affairs](#);

4. The first Union Territory to run entirely on solar power is

- a) Diu
- b) Chandigarh
- c) Mahe (Puducherry)
- d) Lakshadweep

Solution: a.

- The harnessing of solar energy has made Diu the country's first energy surplus Union territory and a model for an effective way for people to harness this renewable energy source.

[ToI](#); Primary Source: [Vikaspedia: March Current Affairs](#);

IX. DEFENCE & SECURITY

1. 'SCO-RATS', sometimes in the news, was established to combat

1. Terrorism
2. Separatism
3. Extremism

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.

- The [SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure](#), established by the member states of the Shanghai Convention to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism in 2001 and located in Bishkek (the Kyrgyz Republic) shall be a standing SCO body.
- The Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (**RATS**) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (**SCO**) is the permanent body of the SCO RATS based in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan.

In the news ([TH](#)): India is likely to send senior representatives to discuss legal modalities of counter-terrorism for a meeting that Pakistan will host along with the members of the SCO. The event will be the first such time Pakistan will host India and other members of SCO to discuss a response to terrorism.

[IDSA: Insurgency, militancy and extremism;](#)

[IDSA: Terrorism and militancy;](#)

2. Under Non-Proliferation Treaty which of the following countries are designated as Nuclear Weapon State:

- a) US, China ,Russia only
- b) US, China, Russia and France only
- c) US, China, Russia France and UK only
- d) US, China ,Russia ,UK ,France and India only

Answer: c

- Five countries are considered to be nuclear-weapon States (NWS) under the terms of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In order of acquisition of nuclear weapons these are: the United States, Russia (the successor state to the Soviet Union), the United Kingdom, France, and China.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/charting-its-own-path/article24039848.ece>

X. REPORTS & INDICES

1. The latest Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS 2) in India was conducted by
- Tata Institute of Social Sciences
 - Indian Council for Medical Research
 - Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation
 - World Health Organisation

Solution: a.

- GATS 2** was conducted between August 2016 and February 2017 by TISS, Mumbai for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- The GATS (under the aegis of the World Health Organisation) is a global standard for systematically monitoring adult tobacco use (smoking and smokeless) and tracking key tobacco control indicators.

Improvisation ([TH](#)): Contrary to tobacco companies' claims, there is now empirical evidence that large, graphic pictorial warnings on tobacco products have a telling effect on consumer behaviour. From 38% in 2009-10, the proportion of cigarette smokers in India who thought of quitting due to pictorial warnings increased sharply to nearly 62% in 2016-17. Though not dramatic, the proportion of bidi smokers who wanted to quit also increased from about 30% to 54%, according to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS), undertaken in 2009-10 and 2016-17, respectively. The increase among adults wanting to quit smokeless tobacco was also significant — 34% to 46% during the two periods.

2. The World Press Freedom Index is published annually by
- International Federation of Journalists
 - International Freedom of Expression Exchange
 - PEN International
 - Reporters Without Borders

Solution: d.

- The Index ranks 180 countries according to the level of freedom available to journalists. India's ranking has fallen two places to 138th position in the latest report.

[World Press Freedom Index](#); [TH](#);

Silencing the messenger

Ten journalists were killed in Afghanistan, nine of them in the same attack, on Monday. This makes it the worst attack on media personnel globally since 2009, when 31 reporters and photographers were killed in a massacre in The Philippines

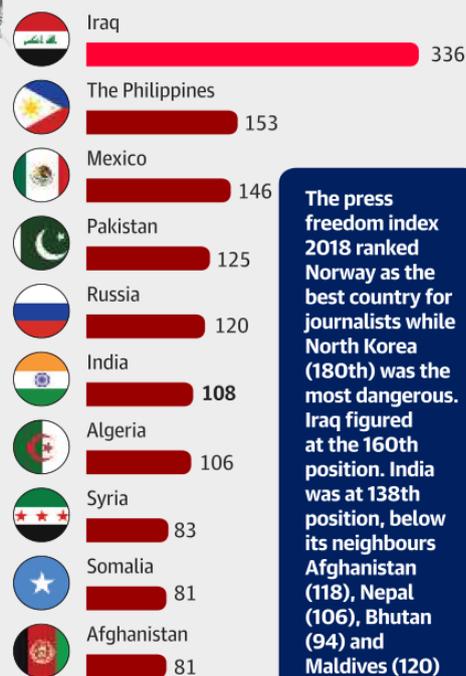
Recommendations for safety

- The International Federation of Journalists listed 2,297 fatalities between 1990 and 2015
- It documented 122 deaths in 2016, 82 in 2017 and 32 in 2018 till date

- Equipping the media staff with tools like first-aid material, communication facilities and protective clothing
- Providing risk awareness training to those working in conflict zones

- Educating public authorities on the need to respect the rights of journalists
- Provision of social protection, including insurance, by media organisations
- Provision of medical facilities by media groups
- Protecting freelance and part-time journalists

Iraq has seen the maximum number of journalist deaths in the 1990-2018 period followed by The Philippines. India is at the sixth position



The press freedom index 2018 ranked Norway as the best country for journalists while North Korea (180th) was the most dangerous. Iraq figured at the 160th position, below its neighbours Afghanistan (118), Nepal (106), Bhutan (94) and Maldives (120)

The year 2006 was the deadliest for journalists, with 155 deaths, while 2000 was the least dangerous. Here is a look at the year-wise break-up of the number of deaths, which recorded a significant fall last year



SOURCE: INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF JOURNALISTS, REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS | PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

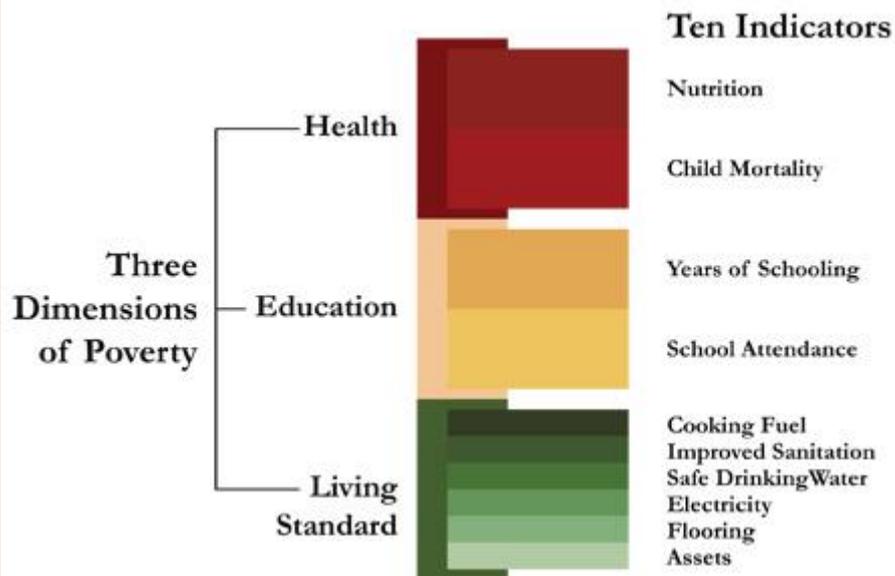
GRAPHIC: L.BALAMURUGAN

3. Which among the following is **not** one of the indicators used to calculate the Multidimensional Poverty Index?

- Annual income
- School attendance
- Improved sanitation
- Cooking fuel

Solution: a.

- The global **Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)** is an international measure of acute poverty covering over 100 developing countries. It complements traditional income-based poverty measures by capturing the severe deprivations that each person faces at the same time with respect to education, health and living standards.
- The global MPI was developed by OPHI (Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative) with the UN Development Programme (**UNDP**) for inclusion in UNDP's flagship Human Development Report in 2010. It has been published in the HDR ever since.



[MPI](#);

[OPHI: Why is income not included?](#);

Source: [TH](#);

4. The parameters that are measured for the purpose of the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index does **not** include
- Timeliness of deliveries
 - Ability to track and trace consignments
 - Competence and quality of logistics services
 - Safety and security of cargo movement

Solution: d.

Option 'd' is certainly not one of the exclusive/main parameters. There, perhaps, could be a sub-parameter that measures safety/security of cargo movement in some way or the other (we have not checked this as it is unnecessary), but from the list given above, the most appropriate answer is option 'd'.

What is important for us to know is the main parameters that do make up the LPI:

- Efficiency of customs and border management
- Quality of trade and transport infrastructure
- Ease of arranging competitively priced shipments
- Competence and quality of logistics services
- Ability to track and trace consignments
- Timeliness of deliveries

Once again, a general question that is relevant for preliminaries.

5. As per a recent study published in the Lancet Global Health,
1. Only around 20% of the current overall mortality burden of under-five females in India is preventable
 2. India's sex ratio at birth has increased to 935 in 2015-16

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: d.

As per the study, around 22% of the overall mortality burden of under-five females in India is due to gender bias.

- This amounts to around 2.4lakh deaths per year of girls under the age of five in India.
- 29 out of 35 States contributed to this mortality; these 'additional' deaths were spread across 90% of districts in the country.

The National Family Health Survey in 2017 said that India's sex ratio at birth has increased to 919 in 2015-16 from 914 in 2004-05. This study, however, focuses on mortality after birth and says that the problem is most pronounced in northern India, where the four largest States in the region, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, accounted for two thirds of the total excess deaths of females under five.

Many deaths of females under five are partly due to unwanted child bearing and subsequent neglect. The sustained fertility decline currently observed in north India is likely to lead to a reduction in postnatal discrimination. Unless son preference diminishes, lower fertility, however, might bring about a rise in gender-biased sex selection.

[TH](#);

6. Consider the following statements about the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' "World Urbanisation Prospects" report:

1. It provides estimates and projections only of urban population
2. It is revised once every twenty years

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.

[WUP FAQs](#): The 2018 Revision is the most recent revision of World Urbanization Prospects which are the official United Nations estimates and projections of urban and rural population as well as urban agglomerations. The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations issues a new Revision every four years. The next one is due in the first half of 2022.

[TH](#): Forecasting for the year 2050, the UN agency estimates that the percentage of urban residents in India would be 52.8, compared to 34 today, while Delhi would edge past Tokyo as the world's most populous city by 2028.

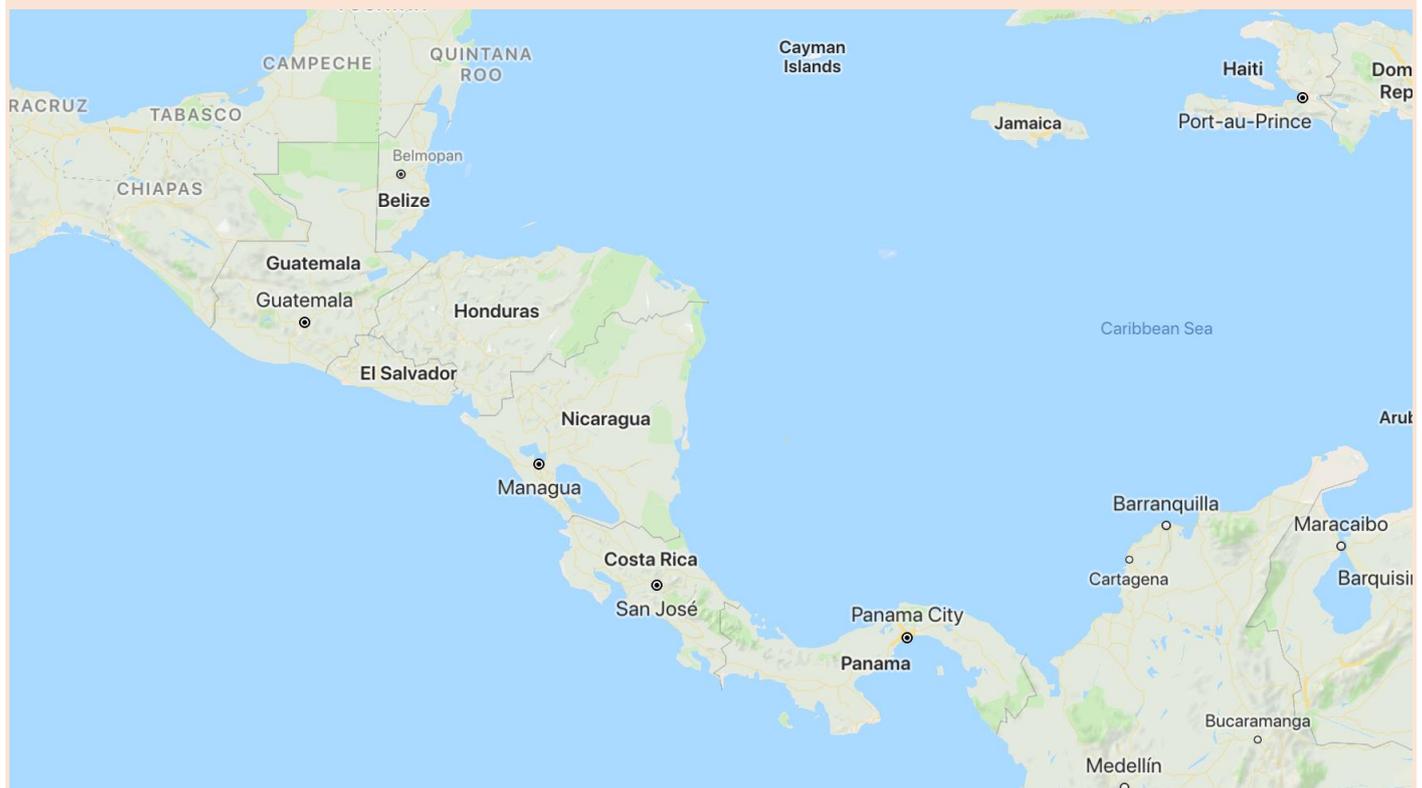
Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

- The options were such that you could have eliminated two options (statements 1 and 3 cannot go together). Every Central American country except El Salvador opens out to the Caribbean Sea.

Improvisation: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/nicaragua-rocked/article23741026.ece>;



3. Armenia

- 1. Opens out to the Black Sea
- 2. Opens out to the Caspian Sea
- 3. Shares borders with Afghanistan

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

In the news: [BBC](#); [TH](#);



4. Why was the village of Leisang recently in the news?
- It is the first plastic-free village in India
 - It is India's first village to receive an ISO certification for its cleanliness
 - It was the last village to be brought on the national power grid under the Deendayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana
 - It is the first village in India with every household having access to power under the Saubhagya Yojana

Solution: c.

"The village of **Leisang** is hoping that the fame brought by the PM's "powered and empowered" tweet means it won't fall off the map again. It is also getting ready for other changes with electricity, in how their children study, and from access to technology like computers and satellite TV..."

[Twitter;](#) [IE;](#)

5. Consider the following pairs:

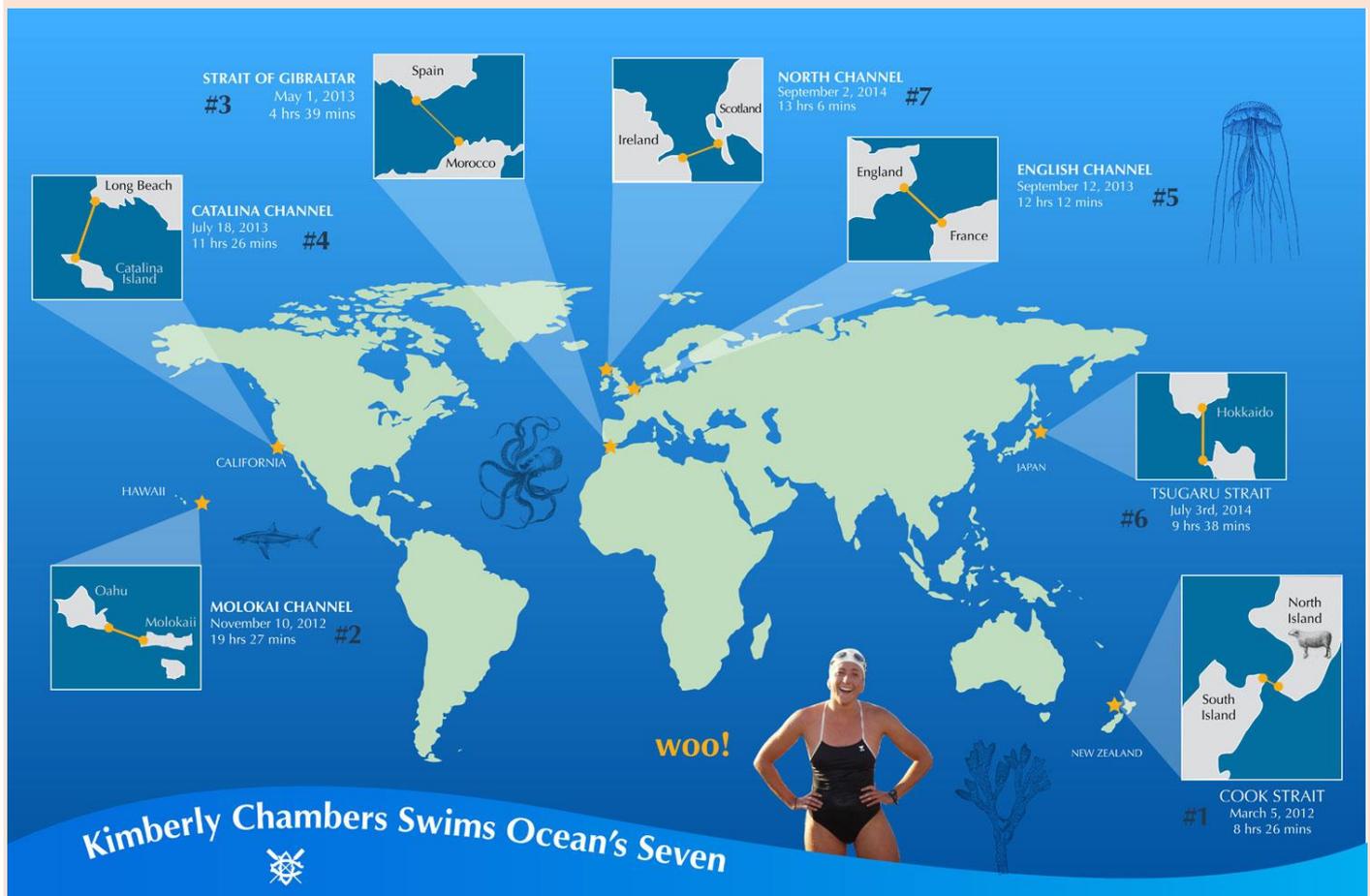
<i>Water channel</i>	<i>between land masses</i>
1. Catalina Channel	: Spain and Algeria
2. North Channel	: Scotland and Northern Ireland
3. Tsugaru Strait	: South Korea and North Korea
4. Cook Strait	: Mainland Australia and Tasmania

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

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

Solution: c.

Improvisation: Ocean Seven.



6. Which among the following cities does **not** open out to the oceans?

- a) Buenos Aires
- b) Johannesburg
- c) Xiamen
- d) Qingdao

Solution: b.

2018 summits –

- SCO – Qingdao
- BRICS – Johannesburg
- G20 – Buenos Aires

2017 summits –

- SCO – Astana
- BRICS – Xiamen
- G20 – Hamburg



Improvisation: [TH](#);

7. If you travel by road to get to the Arabian Gulf from the Caspian Sea, what is the minimum number of countries through which you can travel?

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

Solution: a.



- The Persian Gulf is also called the Arabian Gulf.

[TH](#);

8. Consider the following statements:

1. The Ganga basin is spread across more than six states
2. River Ganga flows through Lucknow
3. The Godavari basin is spread across more than three states
4. River Godavari flows through Rajahmundry

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: a.

- In India, the [Ganga basin](#) covers the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh and Union Territory of Delhi draining an area of 8,61,452 Sq.km which is nearly 26% of the total geographical area of the country.
- The [Godavari basin](#) extends over states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha in addition to smaller parts in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Union territory of Puducherry having a total area of 3,12,812 Sq.km.
- River Godavari after **Rajahmundry** splits into several branches forming a large delta.

Source/Improvisation: [TH](#); India Physical Environment, Class XI NCERT;

9. On which river is the proposed Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project to be constructed?

- a) Ramganga
- b) Mahakali
- c) Kosi
- d) Ghaghra

Solution: b.

The Pancheshwar Dam is proposed on Mahakali river, at about 2.5 km downstream of confluence of Saryu with Mahakali along the India (Uttarakhand)-Nepal border.

Improvisation: [TH](#); [SANDRP](#)

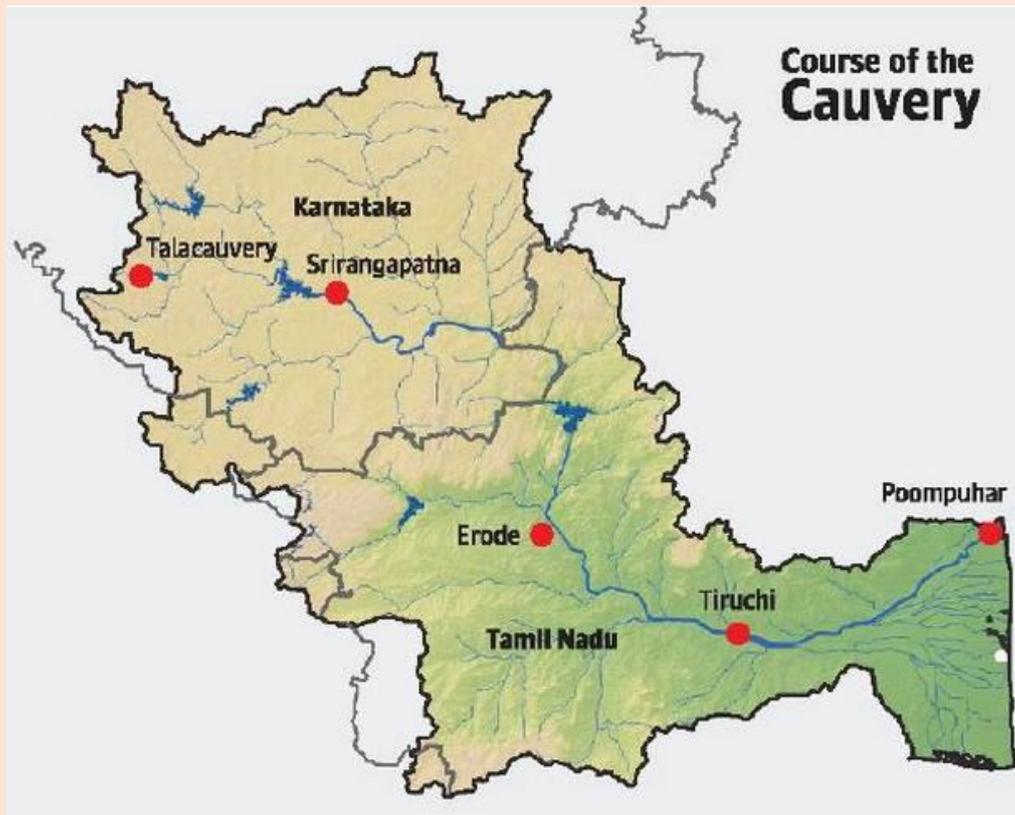
10. Through which one of the following towns/cities does River Cauvery **not** flow?

- a) Srirangapatna
- b) Bangalore
- c) Tiruchirappalli
- d) Erode

Solution: b.

- The river does not flow through Bangalore.

Source/Improvisation: [TH](#); [Cauvery](#);



11. The Daranghati Wildlife Sanctuary is located in

- Goa
- Telangana
- Mizoram
- Himachal Pradesh

Solution: d.

- "It was a seven-hour trek to sight a rare bird in the wild that led nature enthusiast David Raju to an even more uncommon encounter: spotting a **Scarce Siren butterfly** in the **Daranghati Wildlife Sanctuary** in **Himachal Pradesh** in 2012. The species was being photographed for the first time in history, and being sighted for the first time in India since 1917."

[TH](#);

12. The 'Ram-Janki Marg' will link

- Jharkhand and Bihar
- Bihar and Uttar Pradesh
- Uttar Pradesh and Nepal
- Nepal and Uttarakhand

Solution: c.

- “PM Modi and his Nepalese counterpart K.P. Sharma Oli on Friday jointly inaugurated a direct bus service between Janakpur and Ayodhya, the two sacred cities for Hindus, as part of a “Ramayan Circuit” to promote religious tourism in Nepal and India.. ‘Janakpur and Ayodhya are being connected. This is a historic moment,’ Prime Minister Modi said, inaugurating the bus service, connecting Lord Rama’s birthplace Ayodhya with goddess Sita’s birthplace Janakpur..”

TH; TH;

13. With which among the following countries does Lebanon **not** share its borders?
- a) Syria and Israel
 - b) Israel and Saudi Arabia
 - b) Israel and Saudi Arabia
 - d) Jordan and Syria

Solution: c.



Improvisation: TH;

Image Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Lebanon>;

14. With which of the following countries does Peru share its borders?
1. Ecuador
 2. Colombia
 3. Panama
 4. Brazil

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: a.



Map Source: [Britannica](#); Improvisation: [PIB](#);

15. 'Abu Ghraib', a term that sometimes appears in the news, is associated with events related to
- Cuba
 - Syria
 - Iraq
 - Yemen

Solution: c.

- During the war in Iraq that began in March 2003, personnel of the United States Army and the Central Intelligence Agency committed a series of human rights violations against detainees in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

[Wikipedia](#); [BBC](#);

16. The territorial dispute over the 'Diaoyu' or 'Senkaku' islands in the East China Sea is between
- Japan and South Korea
 - South Korea and China
 - China and Japan
 - China and Taiwan

Solution: c.

TH;



- “Japan and China have one of the most tense, yet economically intertwined relationships. Beijing believes Japan is yet to properly atone for its brutal invasion of China in the run-up to and during the Second World War. In the post-War alignment Japan has remained firmly tethered to the U.S., often putting it in an adversarial position vis-à-vis China. Perhaps the most challenging point of contention is the territorial dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands as they are known in China and Japan, respectively, in the East China Sea.”

17. Chile is regarded as an ‘astronomer’s paradise’. Some of the world’s most powerful telescopes here are located in

- a) The North, close to Peru and Bolivia
- b) The South, close to the Drake Passage
- c) The Centre, roughly along the latitude on which lies Buenos Aires
- d) Santiago, the capital city

Solution: a.

Chile: Much of northern Chile is desert; the central part of the country is a temperate region where the bulk of the population lives and where the larger cities, including Santiago, are located. South-central Chile, with a lake and forest region, is temperate and humid; the southernmost third of the country, cut by deep fjords, is an inhospitable region.

Why Chile is an astronomer’s paradise: By some calculations, by 2025 the country will be home to more than half the image-capturing capacity in the world. Much of the reason for that lies in the desert skies, which are among the clearest on earth. In some parts of the Atacama Desert, rainfall has never been recorded.

- Altitude is also important, particularly for **ALMA** (Atacama Large Millimetre/Submillimetre Array). Radio telescopes pick up wavelengths from outer space, but the signals are often distorted by water vapour in the earth’s atmosphere. By building at altitude (altitudes in the Atacama desert at some places such as the Chajnantor plateau are 5,000m), in dry air, engineers can get above some of that moisture.

- Being in the southern hemisphere, its observatories are not in direct competition with those in the United States and Europe, which gaze out at different skies. Politics and infrastructure are also factors. Chile has emerged as one of the most stable, prosperous countries in the region since its return to democracy in 1990. That stability is essential for long-term investment projects like these.

Improvisation: [BBC](#);

The [ALMA radio telescope](#) is often in the news for discoveries that astronomers make using data collected by it.

18. The famous Banihal Pass is situated on which of the following range of Himalayas in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

- Ladakh range.
- Pirpanjal range.
- Zaskar range
- Karakoram Range

Solution: b

- **Banihal** is a mountain pass across the **Pir Panjal Range** at 2,832 m (9,291 ft) maximum elevation. This mountain range connects the Kashmir Valley in the Indian state Jammu and Kashmir to the outer Himalaya and plains to the south. In the Kashmiri language, “Banihāl” means blizzard.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/crucial-jk-tunnel-getting-ready/article23945234.ece>

19. Consider the following statements regarding Schengen area. Which of the following statements are correct?

- All EU states are part of it.
- Countries which are part of it do not carry out border checks at their internal borders.

Choose the correct code.

- 1 only
- 2 Only
- Both 1 and 2
- None

Solution: b

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/india-fourth-on-list-of-most-applications-for-schengen-visas/article23944881.ece>

- **Schengen Area** is an area comprising **26 European states** that have **officially abolished passport** and all other types of **border control** at their **mutual borders**. Twenty-two of the twenty-eight European Union (EU) member states participate in the Schengen Area.
- Under the Schengen agreement, transiting from one country to another within the Schengen area is done without border controls. In fact, the Schengen visa makes it possible to visit all the countries in the Schengen area and to cross internal borders without further formalities.

Please be aware that the European Union and the Schengen area are two different zones! The list below will enable you to see the difference and check that the countries where you are planning to stay are all in the Schengen area.



20. Which one of the following African countries was recently in the news due to the Lassa fever?

- a) Western Sahara
- b) Nigeria
- c) South Africa
- d) Mozambique

Solution: b.

- Since the beginning of the year, Nigeria has been gripped by an outbreak of a deadly disease. Lassa fever (the disease was first identified in the Nigerian town of Lassa in 1969) is one of a number of illnesses which can cause dangerous epidemics, but for which no vaccine currently exists. Lassa fever is not a new disease, but the current outbreak is unprecedented, spreading faster and further than ever before.
- Lassa fever normally has a fatality rate of about one per cent. But in the Nigerian outbreak it is thought to be more than 20% among confirmed and probable cases.

Early March, 2018: [BBC](#);

21. Which among the following capes is situated in the northern hemisphere?

- a) Cape Farewell
- b) Cape Horn
- c) Cape of Good Hope
- d) Cape Leeuwin

Solution: a.

- In the course of its voyage, the indigenously built vessel **INSV Tarini** met all the criteria of circumnavigation, including crossing the equator twice, crossing all the longitudes and touching the three great capes – Cape Leeuwin (Australia), Cape Horn (Chile) and Cape of Good Hope (South Africa).



[TH](#);

22. Mount Kilauea volcano, recently in the news due to its explosive eruption, is located in

- a) DR Congo
- b) Japan
- c) USA
- d) Italy

Solution: c.

- Mount Kilauea volcano is in Hawaii. It is one of the world's most active volcanoes and has been in constant eruption for 35 years.

[BBC](#);

23. The Russian city of Sochi is littoral to

- a) Caspian Sea
- b) Aral Sea
- c) Black Sea
- d) Lake Baikal

Solution: c.



[TH;](#)

24. Which one of the following National Parks is on the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves list and is located in Meghalaya?

- a) Balpakram
- b) Manas
- c) Dibru-Saikhowa
- d) Nokrek

Solution: d.

- Both Balpakram and Nokrek National Parks are in the state of Meghalaya. Nokrek National Park is on the UNESCO WBNR list.

Improvisation: [TH;](#) [UNESCO WBNR ASIA;](#)

25. Consider the following statement related to Indonesia

1. It shares maritime boundary with India.
2. It is the largest archipelagic State in the world.
3. It is the founding member of Non Aligned Movement.
4. Java Island located in Indonesia is the world's most populous island.

Select the correct code

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

Answer: d

- India has more than 7000 km maritime border shared with 7 nations (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, Srilanka, Pakistan and Maldives).
- It is the world's largest island country. Java, the world's most populous island. Indonesia is the founding member of Non Aligned Movement.

Source:

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-indonesia-elevate-ties/article24039667.ece>

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-maritime-stretch/article24027337.ece>

XII. Miscellaneous

1. 'Ocean Seven', recently in the news, refers to
- A swimming marathon challenge
 - The world's first all-woman crew to circumnavigate the globe on a sail boat
 - An underwater rover that is the world's first to reach the seven deepest known points of the Earth's oceans
 - The seven-most critically endangered keystone species in the oceans

Solution: a.

- 'Ocean Seven' is a swimming marathon consisting of seven channel swims and is considered to be on par with the Seven Summits (mountaineering challenge). The arduous task challenges a swimmer to swim across world's most difficult seas.
- Indian swimmer Rohan More created history after becoming the youngest individual in the world to complete the Ocean Seven challenge. He is also the first Asian to complete the challenge.

List of Ocean's Seven Channel Swims

- The **Irish or North Channel**: between Ireland and Scotland
- The **Cook Strait**: between New Zealand's North and South Islands
- The **Moloka'i or Kaiwi Channel**: between Hawaiian islands of Moloka'i and O'ahu
- The **English Channel**: between England and France
- The **Catalina Channel**: between Santa Catalina Island and Los Angeles
- The **Tsugaru Strait**: between the Japanese islands of Honshu and Hokkaido
- The **Strait of Gibraltar**: between Spain and Morocco

IE; Improvisation: [Vikaspedia: February Current Affairs](#);

2. In the context of recent sports-related developments, the 'Independent Review Panel' is associated with the sport of
- Cricket
 - Football
 - Hockey
 - Tennis

Solution: d.

- The Independent Review Panel (IRP) was set up by the governing bodies of professional tennis in 2016 after investigations by BBC and BuzzFeed claimed that there was widespread match-fixing and illegal betting in tennis. Reports had also suggested that the governing bodies such as the International Tennis Federation (ITF), the Association of Tennis Professionals, the Women's Tennis Association, the Grand Slams and the Tennis Integrity Unit did little to combat the problem. The panel published a draft report last month, titled the "Independent Review of Integrity in Tennis", after surveying more than 3,200 tennis players and interviewing 200 others, over a span of two years.

[TH](#);

3. Recently in the news, the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)

- a) Is an India-based policy research institute
- b) Works under the aegis of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation
- c) Both a and b
- d) Neither a nor b

Solution: a.

- [RIS](#) is a New Delhi-based autonomous policy research institute (under the Ministry of External Affairs) that specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. RIS is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues.
- The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. RIS is engaged across inter-governmental processes of several regional economic cooperation initiatives. Through its intensive network of think tanks, RIS seeks to strengthen policy coherence on international economic issues and the development partnership canvas.

Improvisation: [PIB1](#); [PIB2](#);

4. Where in India will you come across the Sabori people?

- a) Riverine islands of Brahmaputra
- b) Rann of Kutch
- c) Thar desert
- d) Eastern Ghats

Solution: a.

- Riverine islands of the Brahmaputra are known locally as 'saporis' or 'chars'. About 8% of Assam's population call these islands home.

[BBC](#);

5. Earth's closest solar system neighbour is

- a) Venus
- b) Mars
- c) Mercury
- d) Jupiter

Solution: a.

- Going by NASA, the answer is Venus (although this [BBC article](#) states it is Mars, which we will deem to be incorrect).

