Insights QUIZ

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I. ECONOMY

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. If a company’s operations can generate a higher rate of return than the interest rate on its loans, then debt is helping to fuel growth in profits.
2. A low debt level can be viewed as an indicator of tight operating margins of a firm/company.
3. The leverage ratio assesses the ability of a company to meet its financial obligations.

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: d.

- A **Leverage Ratio** is any one of several financial measurements that look at how much capital comes in the form of debt (loans), or assesses the ability of a company to meet its financial obligations. The leverage ratio is important given that companies rely on a mixture of equity and debt to finance their operations, and knowing the amount of debt held by a company is useful in evaluating whether it can pay its debts off as they come due.

- Too much debt can be dangerous for a company and its investors. However, if a company’s operations can generate a higher rate of return than the interest rate on its loans, then the debt is helping to fuel growth in profits. Nonetheless, uncontrolled debt levels can lead to credit downgrades or worse. On the other hand, too few debt can also raise questions. A reluctance or inability to borrow may be a sign that operating margins are simply too tight.

- A company’s **Operating Margin**, also known as return on sales, is a good indicator of how well it is being managed and how risky it is. It shows the proportion of revenues that are available to cover non-operating costs like paying interest — which is why investors and lenders pay close attention to it.

In the news (**TH**): As per a report prepared by the Ministry of Finance, leverage of the IL&FS Group was about 13 times, as the borrowing of about ₹91,000 crore was on the base of equity capital and reserves of about ₹6,950 crore. Incidentally, the Reserve Bank of India’s Capital to Risk weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) of 15% for Systemically Important Non-Degit Accepting Non-Banking Finance Company would peg the leverage ratio at 6-7 times, while a CRAR of 30% for core investment company would result in a leverage ratio of about 3-4 times.

A default by IL&FS could have significant repercussions, including widespread redemption pressures, sell-off in the debt market, liquidity crunch and smaller non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) shutting shop, according to the report.

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. The Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS) is a sub-component of the Price Support Scheme.
2. PDPS is presently applicable only to pulses.

Which of the statements given below is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
Solution: d.

THL: Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) has three components:

- The first part is the Price Support Scheme (PSS). Here, physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds and copra will be done by Central Nodal Agencies. Besides NAFED and Food Cooperation of India will also take up procurement of crops under PSS.
- The second part is the Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS). Under this, the Centre proposes to cover all oilseeds and pay the farmer directly into his bank account the difference between the MSP and his actual selling/modal price.
- The third part is the pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPSS). In the case of oilseeds, States will have the option to roll out PPSSs in select districts where a private player can procure crops at MSP when market prices drop below MSP. The private player will then be compensated through a service charge that will be up to a maximum of 15 per cent of the MSP of the crop.

Improvisation: TH: 

(Q) The highest increase this season over the previous season’s Minimum Support Price for Kharif and Rabi crops were respectively for

a) Paddy and wheat
b) Jowar and masur
c) Soyabean and gram
d) Ragi and safflower

Solution: d.

TH: “The latest hikes are generous, even if they are moderate compared to those fixed for the kharif crop. By way of comparison, the highest increase over the previous kharif season’s MSP was 52.5% for the cereal ragi. Now the highest season-on-season hike for the rabi crops is 20.6% for safflower.”

PIB: Kharif crops MSP; PIB: MSP Rabi crops;

(Q) Consider the following pairs:

<table>
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<th>Monetary policy stance of RBI</th>
<th>Likely implications on money supply in economy</th>
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<td>1. Calibrated tightening</td>
<td>— either decreases or keeps steady</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Accommodative</td>
<td>— increases, decreases or keeps steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Neutral</td>
<td>— neither increases nor decreases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

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

Solution: a.

- Accommodative monetary policy (Investopedia) occurs when a central bank attempts to expand the overall money supply to boost the economy when growth is slowing (as measured by GDP). Accommodative monetary policy is also known as “easy monetary policy” or “loose credit policy.” Thus there is no scope for money supply to decrease with such a stance.
• **A neutral stance** affords a central bank "the latitude to swing either way" (money supply thus may decrease, keep steady or increase, depending on what the central bank decisions are with respect to repo rates, etc.)

Improvisation (TH): "...what this stance indicates very clearly is that going forward there are only two actions in this particular rate cycle. Either we increase rate or we keep them steady."

**(Q)** Consider the following statements:

1. India is the third-biggest consumer of crude oil.
2. Globally, the share of natural gas as an energy resource has increased in the past few years.
3. Globally, the share of nuclear energy as an energy resource has increased in the past few years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

**Solution:** a.

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**Oil is still the king:** The share of renewables as an energy source has had a feeble increase in the past few years. While the dependence on oil has come down, coal and natural gas have both seen a rise.

In 2007, U.S. led the world consuming 25% of oil.

India (●), for long was the fourth-biggest consumer behind Japan (●). In 2017, it became the third-biggest, guzzling 5% of world oil.

While the U.S. has reduced consumption from 20.7 mn barrels a day in 2007 to 19.8 mn by 2017, China's rose from 7.8 mn to 12.7 mn in the same period.
(Q) Consider the following statements with reference to the Centres for Fourth Industrial Revolution:

1. They have been established under the aegis of the World Economic Forum.
2. There are four such centres established across the world.
3. In India, Bangalore hosts the fourth such centre.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: a.

The WEF established the first Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution Network in March 2017 to help co-design creative solutions to address the challenges associated with emerging technologies.

The Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution Network currently has offices in San Francisco (HQ), Tokyo, Beijing and most recently, Mumbai, and is continuing to expand around the globe. The Mumbai centre has selected drones, artificial intelligence and blockchain as the first three project areas.

(Q) The Bank for International Settlements (BIS) highlights some important characteristics that need to be in place for currency internationalisation. The most critical among these is

a) Exporters, whether from the country concerned or others, must be able to invoice their exports in that currency.
b) A range of entities including private and official companies and banks as well as individuals, should be able to hold the amounts they desire.
c) The issuing country must have no restrictions on purchase or sale of that currency by any entity.
d) Both domestic and foreign firms and institutions should be able to issue marketable instruments in that country’s currency, irrespective of place of issue.

Solution: c.

Currency internationalization is the widespread use of a currency outside the borders of its country of issue. The level of currency internationalization for a currency is determined by the demand other countries have for that currency. Such currencies will also tend to be held as reserve currencies.

The Bank for International Settlements (BIS) highlights some important characteristics (all options listed above) that need to be in place for internationalization. The most critical is that the government of the issuing country has no restrictions on purchase or sale of that currency by any entity.

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. Statutory Liquidity Ratio is a measure of the reserves that commercial banks are required to hold in the form of government bonds and gold only.
2. Cash Reserve Ratio is a measure of the reserves that banks need to hold with RBI in the form of cash.
3. Liquidity Coverage Ratio is a measure of highly liquid assets which can be easily converted into cash that banks are required to hold.
Which of the statements give above is/are correct?

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

Solution: c.

TH: SLR, or statutory liquidity ratio, is a measure of the reserves that commercial banks are required to hold in the form of government bonds, gold, and similar liquid assets. CRR, or cash reserve ratio, is a measure of the reserves that banks need to hold (with RBI) in the form of cash. LCR, or liquidity coverage ratio, is a measure of highly liquid assets which can easily be converted into cash that banks are required to hold. All three are policy tools used by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to influence the total amount of reserves held by banks at any point in time. These reserve requirements, in turn, influence the amount of loans that banks can extend to borrower.

Also refer: Macroeconomics, Class 12 NCERT;

(Q) In economics, ‘Rollover Risk’ is a risk associated with

   a) Hot money chasing arbitrage differentials
   b) Fiscal deficit
   c) The refinancing of debt
   d) Exchange rate volatility

Solution: c.

Rollover risk is a risk associated with the refinancing of debt. Rollover risk is commonly faced by countries and companies when their debt is about to mature and needs to be rolled over into new debt. If interest rates rise adversely, they would have to refinance their debt at a higher rate and incur more interest charges in the future.

Improvisation: TH:

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. The direct tax base has shown a growth of around 80% in terms of the number of returns filed in the last four financial years
2. The direct tax-GDP ratio in financial year 2017-18 is the highest it has been in the last ten fiscal 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: c.

TH: The direct tax base has significantly widened in the last few years, according to new back series data released by the government.
The data showed a growth of more than 80% in the number of returns filed in the last four financial years from 3.79 crore in financial year (FY) 2013-14 to 6.85 crore (these figures include revised returns) in FY 2017-18.

Further, the number of persons filing income tax returns also increased by about 65% during this period from 3.31 crore in FY 2013-14 to 5.44 crore in FY 2017-18.

The data also showed that the direct tax-GDP ratio rose to 5.98% in FY 2017-18, the highest it has been in the last 10 years.

(Q) The Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), which creates an enabling trading environment for developing countries, was instituted in 1971 under the aegis of

a) US Department of Commerce
b) Office of the US Trade Representative
c) UN Conference on Trade and Development
d) World Trade Organisation

Solution: c.

UNCTAD: The Generalized System of Preferences (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. The objective of UNCTAD’s support on GSP and other preferential arrangements 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.

In the news: TH1; TH2;

(Q) The Narasimhan Committee is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of affairs related to

a) Financial sector reforms
b) Cryptocurrency regulation
c) Defence indigenisation and modernisation
d) Structural reforms for Army overhaul

Solution: a.

CEC PDF: Several committees constituted to resolve problems of Commercial Banking in India, two important ones are-

a) Narasimham Committee I (1991) – aimed at bringing "operational flexibility" and “functional autonomy” so as to enhance efficiency, productivity and profitability
b) Narasimham Committee II (1998)- bringing structural changes so as to strengthen banking system to make it more stable.

TH: Former RBI governor YV Reddy said the RBI says that it does not have enough regulatory powers. The government, however, says that the RBI has enough regulatory powers, he said.

“If the regulator and government could not agree and cannot agree, what is the truth? The truth is that there is a problem of dual control. Narasimhan committee recommended 20 years ago, please end this. Till today, it has not ended,” he said.
II. GEOGRAPHY & ENVIRONMENT

(Q) Which one of the following processes threatens the survival of orcas the most?

a) Nutrient pollution
b) Depletion of corals due to global warming
c) Rise of sea level
d) Biomagnification of polychlorinated biphenyls

Solution: d.

TH: More than 40 years after the first initiatives were taken to ban the use of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), the chemical pollutants remain a deadly threat to animals at the top of the food chain, according to researchers at Aarhus University in Denmark.

- **Killer whales** (*Orcinus orca*), or simply orca, form the last link in a long food chain and are among the mammals with the highest level of PCBs in their tissue. Researchers have measured values as high as 1300 milligrams per kilo in the fatty tissue (blubber) of killer whales. Studies show that animals with PCB levels as low as 50 milligrams per kilo of tissue may show signs of infertility and affect the immune system.

BBC

(Q) Consider the following statements with reference to the Stockholm Convention:

1. Parties must take measures to restrict the production and use of the chemicals listed under Annex A.
2. Parties must take measures to reduce the unintentional releases of chemicals listed under Annex B into the environment.
3. Mercury is a persistent organic pollutant listed under this convention.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: d.

There’s an exclusive convention to address the adverse effects of mercury – the Minamata Convention. Mercury is **not** listed under the Stockholm Convention.

**POPs in Stockholm Convention:**

- **Annex A (Elimination):** Parties must take measures to eliminate the production and use of the chemicals listed under Annex A. Specific exemptions for use or production are listed in the Annex and apply only to Parties that register for them. PCBs are listed in Annex A.

- **Annex B (Restriction):** Parties must take measures to restrict the production and use of the chemicals listed under Annex B in light of any applicable acceptable purposes and/or specific exemptions listed in the Annex.
• **Annex C (Unintentional production):** Parties must take measures to reduce the unintentional releases of chemicals listed under Annex C with the goal of continuing minimization and, where feasible, ultimate elimination.

Improvisation: **TH:**

(Q) What is it that makes the Kuttanad Wetland Agriculture System unique?

a) Locals here practice the 2,000 year-old fish farming technique, which has obviated the need for application of fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides.

b) It is the only system in India that favours rice cultivation below sea level in the land.

c) The traditional farming systems of the local communities plays a role in conserving the rich floristic diversity consisting of about 2500 species of flowering plants.

d) The jasmines that are cultivated here today were introduced about 2,000 years ago from the Persian Gulf.

**Solution: b.**

**FAO:** Kuttanad Wetland Agriculture System is unique, as it is the **only system in India** that favours rice cultivation **below sea level** in the land created by draining delta swamps in brackish waters. As an approach to cope with the imminent climate impacts in coastal areas and evolve efficient methods, it aims to deal with soil availability and floods issues in agriculture.

Improvisation: **TH:**

(Q) Consider the following statements with reference to the recent catastrophic tsunami event on Sulawesi island:

1. The two plates at the Palu-Koru fault line move horizontally, viz. earthquakes here are caused due to a strike-slip event, where the ground breaks horizontally.
2. Strike-slip events are considered benign, viz. they are not known to cause tsunami events.

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.**

**TH**, **BBC:** The magnitude 7.5 quake was certainly large – one of the biggest recorded anywhere on the globe this year. But it was what geophysicists call a strike-slip event, where the ground breaks horizontally. In this instance, the rock to the east of the fault running up through the island moved northwards relative to the rock to the west. **Strike-slip quakes can cause tsunami events** but the 6m-tall waves that crashed ashore at Palu city surprised everyone.

- Remember that to make the series of waves you need a big displacement of the sea-floor – a vertical movement that disturbs the entire water column, which then moves away in all directions. Some early calculations suggest a floor displacement of perhaps half a metre. Significant but generally insufficient to produce the waves that were recorded. So what happened? Two factors are emerging as possible culprits. They may even have worked hand in hand.

- The first is the suspicion that the quake triggered some sort of underwater landslide. A quake can destabilise large collections of sediment and cause them to break free of their footing and tumble
downslope. Underwater, these movements of sediment have the potential to generate tsunami events. When this happens, the waves that hit shorelines can be large, even if the effects are fairly localised. Second is the suspicion that perhaps the waves were then exacerbated by the shape of Palu bay itself. It has an elongated geometry, which could have focused and amplified the tsunamis as they approached the city’s Talise beach.

(Q) Consider the following statements about mass movements of weathered materials:

1. They may be gradual or sudden.
2. Solifluction or soil liquefaction is a slow, gradual but more or less continuous movement of soil down hill slopes.
3. Landslips and solifluction may be triggered by earthquakes.

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: c.

Statement 2 refers to Soil Creep. Solifluction occurs when soil is completely saturated with water, and individual soil particles are almost suspended in water and move easily over one another and the underlying rock.

Refer Chapter “Weathering, Mass Movement and Groundwater”, GC Leong;
Video: BBC; See image: THL; From 2001: THL;
Consider the following statements:

‘Climate Justice’

1. Compels us to understand the challenges faced by those people and communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
2. Informs how we should act to combat climate change.

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.

- Climate justice focuses our attention on people, rather than ice-caps and greenhouse gases. No world leader should have to plan for evacuation from the land of their ancestors. The world is unprepared for a situation where adaptation fails & people are displaced due to climate.
- Climate Justice is a moral argument in two parts. Firstly it compels us to understand the challenges faced by those people and communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Often the people on the front lines of climate change have contributed least to the causes of the climate crisis.
- Climate justice also informs how we should act to combat climate change. We must ensure that the transition to a zero carbon economy is just and that it enables all people to realise their right to development.

**Principles of Climate Justice:**

- Respect and Protect Human Rights
- Support the Right to Development
- Share Benefits and Burdens Equitably
- Ensure that Decisions on Climate Change are Participatory, Transparent and Accountable
- Highlight Gender Equality and Equity
- Harness the Transformative Power of Education for Climate Stewardship
- Use Effective Partnerships to Secure Climate Justice

Improvisation: TH1; TH2

The Global Pact for Environment, the resolution for which was recently adopted by the UN General Assembly, seeks to address which one of the following issues in our efforts to tackle the threats to our environment?

a) Wavering commitment of some countries to the Paris Agreement
b) Fragmented nature of international environment law
c) Climate finance
d) Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities

Solution: b.

France (UN): With threats to our environment increasingly impacting the survival of mankind and of our planet, it is urgent to act and build a sustainable future.
Experts have highlighted a clear legal challenge: international environment law is fragmented in many conventions and international declarations. That’s why France offers the international community an opportunity to develop a single and more coherent text.

The Global Pact for the Environment will be the first international legally binding document, gathering and harmonizing all environmental laws in one single document. Its objective is to be an essential tool for governments to help them implementing environmental rules and principles in their own country.

In the news (TH): Mr. Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron were among others conferred the Champions of the Earth Awards, the UN’s “highest environmental honour.” Mr. Modi and Mr. Macron’s prizes fall in the ‘Policy Leadership category’ for their “pioneering work in championing the International Solar Alliance and promoting new areas of cooperation on environmental action, including Macron’s work on the Global Pact for the Environment and Modi’s unprecedented pledge to eliminate single-use plastic in India by 2022.”

(Q) Consider the following statements about the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary:

1. It is a part of the Kaziranga National Park.
2. It is located to the east of Guwahati.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: b.

In the news: TH;

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. As per the recently released Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C India could annually experience conditions like the 2015 heatwave if the average global temperature rises by more than 1°C from the present.
2. The Paris Climate Pact calls for efforts to be pursued to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

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.

TH: If the average global temperature rises by more than one degree Celsius from the present, India could "annually" expect conditions like the 2015 heat wave that killed at least 2,000, according to the ‘Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C,’ commissioned by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The 2015 agreement in Paris, considered a landmark achievement, had the world agree to keep temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius and “pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.”
(Q) In order to limit global warming to 1.5°C, the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C sets which of the following targets?

1. By 2030, global emissions must decline by 45% from 2010 levels.
2. By 2040, global net zero emissions must be achieved.
3. By 2050, renewables must provide up to 85% of global electricity.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

**Solution: c.**

**BBC:** Five steps to 1.5 –

1. Global emissions of CO2 need to decline by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030
2. Renewables are estimated to provide up to 85% of global electricity by 2050
3. Coal is expected to reduce to close to zero
4. Up to 7 million sq km of land will be needed for energy crops (a bit less than the size of Australia)
5. Global net zero emissions by 2050

(Q) With reference to key takeaways from the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C released recently, consider the following statements:

1. Limiting warming to 1.5°C brings a lot of benefits compared with limiting it to 2°C.
2. Rapid and far-reaching changes must take place in energy generation, land use, cities and industry to limit warming to 1.5°C.
3. As opposed to previous approaches of IPCC’s study of warming, this report clearly links lifestyle choices with warming.

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.**

**BBC:** Where this new study from the IPCC differs from previous approaches is that it clearly links lifestyle choices with warming. The report’s authors say that rapid changes must take place in four key parts of society:

- energy generation
- land use
- cities
- industry
Despite the inevitable compromises, there are some key messages that come through loud and clear.

- “The first is that limiting warming to 1.5°C brings a lot of benefits compared with limiting it to 2 degrees. It really reduces the impacts of climate change in very important ways,” said Prof Jim Skea, who is a co-chair of the IPCC.
- “The second is the unprecedented nature of the changes that are required if we are to limit warming to 1.5°C – changes to energy systems, changes to the way we manage land, changes to the way we move around with transportation.”

(Q) Consider the following statements with reference to Eastern Ghats:

1. Starting from West Bengal, the Ghats pass through Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and end in Tamil Nadu.
2. They play an important role in the monsoon break of both North-East and South-West Monsoon.

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.

TH: “the Eastern Ghats .... play an important role in the monsoon break of both North-East and South-West Monsoon.”

ENVIS PDF: The Eastern Ghats, also known as Purva Ghat or Mahendra parvatam, are a discontinuous range of mountains (also known as Malyadri) running parallel to the Bay of Bengal along India’s eastern coast from West Bengal state in the north, through Odisha and Andhra Pradesh to Tamil Nadu in the south passing some parts of Karnataka is one of the important physiographic units with great environmental, socio-economic, cultural and spiritual significance in the peninsular region of our country.

(Q) Consider the following statements with reference to ecological succession:

1. It can occur in lifeless areas.
2. A climax community results when the web of biotic interactions becomes so intricate that no other species can be admitted.

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.

Ecological succession, the process by which the structure of a biological community evolves over time. Two different types of succession—primary and secondary—have been distinguished. Primary succession occurs in essentially lifeless areas—regions in which the soil is incapable of sustaining life as a result of such factors as lava flows, newly formed sand dunes, or rocks left from a
retreating glacier. Secondary succession occurs in areas where a community that previously existed has been removed; it is typified by smaller-scale disturbances that do not eliminate all life and nutrients from the environment.

In some environments, succession reaches a climax, which produces a stable community dominated by a small number of prominent species. This state of equilibrium, called the climax community, is thought to result when the web of biotic interactions becomes so intricate that no other species can be admitted. In other environments, continual small-scale disturbances produce communities that are a diverse mix of species, and any species may become dominant.

(Q) Recently in the news, where is the Serengeti National Park located?

a) Kenya  
b) Tanzania  
c) Zambia  
d) Zimbabwe

Solution: b.

Canine Distemper Virus, a highly contagious and airborne disease, is characterised by high fever, coughing and an inflammation of the eyes and nose. The virus has in the past infected several wild animals across the world: coyotes, foxes and pandas. And, most significantly, in 1994, it wiped out a third of the lions in Tanzania’s Serengeti National Park.

Context (TH): Death of 23 lions in Gir National Park;

(Q) The ‘Duar formations’ are important in the Darjeeling, Sikkim and Arunachal Himalayas. These formations, when compared to the other sections of the Himalayas, replace the

a) Shiwaliks  
b) Bugyals  
c) Cold deserts  
d) Karewas

Solution: a.

NCERT, Class 11, India: Physical Environment – As compared to the other sections of the Himalayas, these along with the Arunachal Himalayas are conspicuous by the absence of the Shiwalik formations. In place of the Shiwaliks here, the ‘duar formations’ are important, which have also been used for the development of tea gardens.

Improvisation: TH;

(Q) One of the rarest flowers in the world, the Kurinji blooms just once in a Jupiter year, when it covers the hills in a violet hue. The Paliyan tribe, a nomadic community in this region, calculates age by the number of Kurinji flowering cycles one has seen. These flowers can be found in

a) Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Park  
b) Nallamala Hills  
c) Southern Western Ghats  
d) Achanakmar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve
Solution: c.

In the news (BBC): One of the rarest flowers in the world, the Neelakurinji blooms just once every 12 years in India’s south-western state of Kerala, when it covers the hills in a violet hue. Munnar is known for its tea, coffee and spice plantations, which, along with the lush views and misty mountains, have made the town a beloved tourist destination. It is here where one of India’s best-kept secrets lives: the Neelakurinji, one of the world’s rarest flowers, which blooms only once every 12 years. And this year, it has bloomed again.

IE: The most famous relative of the karvi (once-in-8-years) is the neelakurinji (Strobilanthes kunthiana), which burst into flower every 12 years in the shola forests in southern India and gives the Nilgiri Hills (Blue Mountains”) its name.

(Q) The “Clean Up the World” engages an estimated 35 million volunteers in 130 countries each year, making it one of the largest community-based environmental campaigns in the world. This is the global outreach programme of

a) Clean Up England
b) Clean Up Australia
c) Clean Up South Africa
d) Clean Up Indonesia

Solution: b.

About CleanUpTheWorld: Clean Up the World was established in 1993 and is a not-for-profit, non-government apolitical event that unites communities with a common focus to protect the environment. We support local groups and organisations to plan and conduct various activities to clean up, fix up and conserve the environment. The the global outreach program for Clean Up Australia Ltd, Clean Up the World is held in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme.

In the news: BBC.

(Q) Sustainable cooling is at the intersection of three international multilateral agreements. These include

1. Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol
2. Paris Climate Agreement
3. Kyoto Protocol

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: a.

Draft India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP): It has been recognised that sustainable cooling is at the intersection of three international multilateral agreements viz. Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, Paris Agreement under United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2030.

The ICAP provides recommendations to address cooling requirements across sectors, and ways to provide access to sustainable cooling for all over a 20 year period (2017-18 to 2037-38).

Improvisation: PRS September MPR; PIB;
(Q) The Centrally Sponsored Scheme ‘Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats’ has three components. Which one of the following is not one among these three?

a) Support to Protected Areas such as National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries  
b) Protection of Wildlife Outside Protected Areas  
c) Recovery Programmes for Saving Critically Endangered Species  
d) Strengthening of Wildlife Division and Consultancies for Special Tasks

Solution: d.

Option ‘d’ is a separate, Central Sector Scheme.

MoEFCC: The Government of India provides financial and technical assistance to the State/UT Governments for activities aimed at wildlife conservation through the Centrally Sponsored Scheme viz. ‘Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats’. The scheme has following three components:

i. Support to Protected Areas (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves)  
ii. Protection of Wildlife Outside Protected Areas  
iii. Recovery programmes for saving critically endangered species and habitats.

PRS September MPR;

(Q) Doyang lake near Pangti village in Nagaland and Umru village on the Assam-Meghalaya border are visited by flocks of Amur falcons, the world's longest travelling raptors, during winter. These places serve as a stopover for the falcons during their annual migration from

a) Indonesia to Central Asia  
b) Mongolia to South Africa  
c) Japan to the Arabian peninsula  
d) Thailand to Iran

Solution: b.

Image source: TH;
(Q) The Graded Response Action Plan, sometimes in the news, has been prepared for implementation in

a) The ten most polluted cities in India according to the World Health Organisation.
b) Every city where average PM2.5 concentration values exceed five times the WHO threshold.
c) Haryana, Delhi and Western Uttar Pradesh only.
d) Only the National Capital Region.

**Solution: d.**

**TH:** Apart from Delhi, in most cities the online monitoring was happening with less than 4 monitoring stations and Srinagar had none. Delhi has close to 40 monitoring stations that display data online every day. Most cities, unlike Delhi do not have an emergency response plan to tackle air pollution. While some of the cities like Patna and Varanasi have recently formulated action plans, there are none in place to issue advisories or mitigate the pollution at the source level instantly as in the case of the Graded Response Action Plan.
III. GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AND PROGRAMMES

(Q) Consider the following statements in the context of the recently released Ministry of Road Transport and Highways’ annual report:

1. Overall fatalities in road accidents declined marginally.
2. Pedestrians and cyclists suffered the biggest spike in fatalities in road accidents across the country.
3. One of the SDG targets is to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2020.

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.

Two of the targets are specifically related to road safety: SDG 3 target 3.6 aims to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2020 and SDG 11 target 11.2 seeks to provide access to sustainable and safe transport systems.

Pedestrians and cyclists suffered the biggest spike in fatalities in road accidents across the country in 2017, even as overall fatalities in road accidents and the total count of such incidents declined marginally. The total number of accidents dropped 3.3% in 2017 to 4.64 lakh, with the overall number of lives lost in these crashes declining 1.9% to 1.47 lakh, from 1.5 lakh in 2016. However, the number of pedestrians killed in road accidents jumped by 29.9% to 20,457 and the number of cyclists killed surged by 37.7% to 3,559. Pedestrians and cyclists together accounted for 16.2% of the total fatalities in road accidents during 2017.

**SDG target 3.6:** by 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.

**SDG target 11.2:** by 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, people with disabilities and older people.
(Q) The success of the JAM Number Trinity solution is based on the premise that

  e) Employment data of workers in both formal and informal sectors across the country will be recorded and updated in real time.
  f) An individual’s Aadhaar number will be linked to his/her mobile number and bank account number.
  g) The Financial Resolution and Insurance Deposit Bill will be passed by the Parliament.
  h) An individual’s Aadhaar number will be linked to his/her voter ID and bank account number.

Solution: b.

Economic Survey 2014-15: “Eliminating or phasing down subsidies is neither feasible nor desirable unless accompanied by other forms of support to cushion the poor and vulnerable and enable them to achieve their economic aspirations. The JAM Number Trinity – Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar and Mobile numbers – allows the state to offer this support to poor households in a targeted and less distortive way."

In the news: Aadhaar judgment; IE:

(Q) The recent gap analysis of more than 3.5 lakh villages by the Ministry of Rural Development was based on six broad parameters. These parameters include:

1. Women empowerment
2. Financial inclusion
3. Irrigation infrastructure
4. Nutrition and sanitation

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

As per wikipedia, "In management literature, gap analysis involves the comparison of actual performance with potential or desired performance."

TH: The Rural Development Ministry has done a gap analysis of more than 3.5 lakh villages, in more than 1.6 lakh panchayats under the Mission Antyodya convergence scheme. A team of officials surveyed and scored village level facilities and amenities using parameters related to infrastructure, economic development and livelihood, irrigation facilities, health, nutrition and sanitation, women's empowerment, and financial inclusion.

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. India’s ethanol production has been lagging consumption for the past few years.
2. India’s ethanol production and consumption have consistently been rising for the past decade.

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.**

- For the past four years, India's ethanol production has been lagging consumption.

  Both consumption (orange line, Left hand side graph) and production (purple line, right hand side graph) have not been following consistent trends over the past decade.

*Image source: TH;*

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(Q) Consider the following statements about the progress made by Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana:

1. Shishu loans account for majority of all MUDRA loans.
2. The scheme has been supported by almost all financial sector entities except private sector banks.
3. Over six lakh crore rupees has been disbursed under the scheme till date.

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: c.**

In the news: 1st October TH;
launched in April 2015 to provide loans up to ₹10 lakh to small borrowers and enterprises in the informal sector. Over ₹6 lakh crore has been disbursed under the scheme till date.

Small is big: Shishu loans (up to ₹50,000) account for majority of all MUDRA loans testifying to the small business nature of the borrowers.

The scheme has been supported by almost all financial sector entities, including private sector banks.

Lending support:
The major impetus has come from public sector banks, followed by private banks and micro-finance institutions.

The PMMSY is a flagship scheme of this government.
IV. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. P2 or the type-2 strain of the wild poliovirus was eradicated in India in 2014.
2. In 2016, India stopped administering the Trivalent Oral Polio Vaccine and replaced it with the bivalent vaccine that does not contain any live attenuated P2 strain.

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.

TH: A type 2 strain of polio virus (P2) was recently found in a sewage sample from Mumbai. It was found during a routine environmental surveillance which involves collecting sewage samples from high-risk sites on a weekly basis. P2 was eradicated globally in 1999. In April 2016, India stopped the Trivalent Oral Polio Vaccine (TOPV) containing live attenuated (weakened) P1, P2 and P3 strains and replaced it with bivalent vaccine containing P1 and P3. Finding the P2 strain in its vaccine form (not wild form) thus raised concerns as the virus was no more in circulation even through the vaccines.

TH: The last case due to type-2 wild poliovirus globally was reported from Aligarh in India in 1999.

(Q) Canine Distemper Virus has recently been in the news in the context of

a) Pest infestation of maize farms
b) Death of Asiatic lions
c) Increasing deaths due to dog bites
d) Resurfacing of polio type 2 virus

Solution: b.

In 1994, the Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) was responsible for an epidemic in the Serengeti region of Africa, where 1,000 lions died in 3 weeks. While the virus abounds in local tiger populations in Gujarat and is linked to deaths of lions every year, this year it has seen a spike. This is the first time in years, that so many deaths have been attributed to the virus (around 20 lions in under a month).

TH: TH:

(Q) This plant which contains a number of types of alkaloids and some non-alkaloidal medicinal compounds is widely used in native medicinal compositions and in the treatment of gout and as a pain killer in allopathic medicine. Its cultivation, though confined to a few pockets in this state, has started to spread in the recent years. Its export was once banned as it was listed as an endangered species. Farmers of this state contribute the major share of global consumption of it. Known as Gloriosa superba, it is the state flower of

a) Tamil Nadu  b) Maharashtra
   c) Himachal Pradesh d) Jammu and Kashmir
Solution: a.
Source: TH;

(Q) NASA’s premier X-Ray Observatory was named the Chandra X-Ray Observatory in honour of
a) An Indian-American Nobel laureate
b) The creator of medieval Indian astronomical observatories – the Jantar Mantars
c) Ancient Indian astronomers
d) None of the above

Solution: a.

About Chandra: NASA’s premier X-ray observatory was named the Chandra X-ray Observatory in honor of the late Indian-American Nobel laureate, Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar. Known to the world as Chandra, he was widely regarded as one of the foremost astrophysicists of the twentieth century.

Chandra immigrated in 1937 from India to the United States, where he joined the faculty of the University of Chicago, a position he remained at until his death. He and his wife became American citizens in 1953.

Improvisation: TH;

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. The first confirmed case of the Zika virus infection in India occurred a few years after independence.
2. The Zika virus infection remains asymptomatic in about 80% of cases.

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.

TH: Some evidence that Zika has been in India for long comes from a 1954 survey, which found several Indians with Zika antibodies. However, this evidence wasn’t conclusive, because other flaviviruses, like dengue, can also trigger Zika-neutralising antibodies. The first confirmed Indian case occurred in 2016 in Gujarat.

TH: “Controlling the spread becomes even harder as the mosquito is widely prevalent in India, and the infection remains asymptomatic in about 80% of cases, allowing the virus to silently spread from one person to another. It can also spread from a pregnant mother to the foetus. Even when the infection manifests itself, the symptoms are very mild and non-specific, making it difficult to correctly and easily diagnose it.”

(Q) Ghost nets, a term sometimes in the news, is most closely related to

a) Space debris
b) CO₂ capture and storage
c) Green mobility
d) Fishing
**Solution: d.**

**TH:** “The problem of ghost gear (any fishing equipment that has been lost, discarded or abandoned in water bodies) has grown from a fishing fallout that people had not heard of to one that is now difficult to ignore.”

**TH:** Ghost nets are classified under Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG), which includes lines, traps, hooks, dredges and buoys. Ghost nets can kill marine wildlife, including vulnerable species, and destroy the benthic ecosystems that exist at the lowest level of a body of water. The problem has been worsening with the global expansion in fishing operations, and the availability of more durable gear. High quality synthetic nets can last in the oceans for centuries, and lead to micro-plastic ingestion by aquatic life.

(Q) The GenomeAsia 100K initiative will

1. Help accelerate medical advances and precision medicine for the Indian population.
2. Make available the data collected for the public.
3. Sequence the genes of 50,000 Indians.

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.**

About GenomeAsia100K (http://www.genomeasia100k.com): “We are a mission driven non-profit consortium collaborating to sequence and analyze 100,000 Asian individuals genomes to help accelerate Asian (all Asia, including India) population specific medical advances and precision medicine. Through an unprecedented commitment to open information, the data from GenomeAsia100K will be made available to the public.”

In the news (TH): A group of Indian scientists and companies are involved with a 100k GenomeAsia project, led out of the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, to sequence the whole genomes of 100k Asians, including 50,000 Indians.

(Q) There is one planet that doesn’t really fit with our theories for how the Solar System formed, and we can’t understand our planet fully unless we’re able to explain this planet as well. The planet in question is

a) Mercury
b) Mars
c) Jupiter
d) Saturn

**Solution: a.**

In the news (BBC): Europe and Japan are set to launch their joint mission to Mercury, the planet closest to the Sun. The partners have each contributed a probe to be despatched on an Ariane rocket from French Guiana. The duo, together known as BepiColombo, are bolted to one another for the seven-year cruise to their destination, and will separate once they arrive. It’s hoped their parallel observations can finally resolve some
of the many puzzles about the hot, oddball planet. One of the key ones concerns the object’s outsized iron core, which represents 60% of its mass. Science cannot yet explain why the planet only has a thin veneer of rocks.

(Q) BepiColombo, recently in the news, is a joint mission between

a) NASA and ESA
b) ESA and JAXA
c) JAXA and NASA
d) ESA and ROSCOSMOS

Solution: b.

BepiColombo is Europe's first mission to Mercury. It has set off recently 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. BepiColombo is a joint mission between ESA and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), executed under ESA leadership.

(Q) Consider the following statements about monkey pox, a new and emerging contagious disease threat:

1. The WHO says it is a rare viral zoonotic disease that occurs primarily in tropical South East Asian forests.
2. Prior smallpox vaccination is highly effective in preventing monkeypox.

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 new and emerging contagious disease threat, caused by monkey pox, has been declared a “public health threat” in parts of central Africa.

• The World Health Organisation says monkeypox is a rare viral zoonotic disease that occurs primarily in remote parts of central and west Africa, near tropical rainforests. The virus is mostly transmitted to people from various wild animals such as rodents and primates, but has limited secondary spread through human-to-human transmission.

• It is similar to human smallpox, a disease that was eradicated in 1980. Although monkeypox is much milder than smallpox, it can be fatal. Fatality has been recorded as occurring in younger age groups. There is no specific treatment or vaccine available although prior smallpox vaccination was highly effective in preventing monkeypox as well’.

• Human monkeypox was first identified in humans in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2017, Nigeria experienced the largest documented outbreak. Since May this year, the virus has been spreading in parts of Africa. Cases have been recorded in the western world for some time now.
(Q) The term ‘Directed Evolution’ was recently in the news. It is most appropriately associated with

a) Viruses
b) Proteins
c) Fats
d) Bacteria

**Solution: b.**

*LiveScience*: Enzymes are biological molecules (typically proteins) that significantly speed up the rate of virtually all of the chemical reactions (catalysts) that take place within cells.

The 2018 chemistry Nobel prize was awarded for “putting the power of evolution into chemists’ hands”. Frances Arnold was recognised for inventing directed enzyme evolution. Arnold herself summed it up nicely: “In directed evolution we provide a new niche in the laboratory, so to speak, and encourage evolution of enzymes to catalyse commercially useful reactions.”

*Nobel prize*: One half of this year’s Nobel Prize in Chemistry is awarded to Frances H. Arnold. In 1993, she conducted the first directed evolution of enzymes, which are proteins that catalyse chemical reactions. Since then, she has refined the methods that are now routinely used to develop new catalysts. The uses of Frances Arnold’s enzymes include more environmentally friendly manufacturing of chemical substances, such as pharmaceuticals, and the production of renewable fuels for a greener transport sector.
V. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

(Q) With reference to the ‘International Civil Aviation Organisation’, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It is a United Nations Specialised agency.
2. It manages the administration and governance of the Chicago Convention.

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.

About ICAO: ICAO’s headquarters is located in Montreal, Canada.

➢ The ICAO is a UN specialized agency, established by States in 1944 to manage the administration and governance of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention).

➢ ICAO works with the Convention’s 191 Member States and industry groups to reach consensus on international civil aviation Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and policies in support of a safe, efficient, secure, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible civil aviation sector. These SARPs and policies are used by ICAO Member States to ensure that their local civil aviation operations and regulations conform to global norms.

➢ ICAO also coordinates assistance and capacity building for States in support of numerous aviation development objectives and audits States’ civil aviation oversight capabilities in the areas of safety and security.

In the news (TH): The Air Passengers Association of India (APAI) has expressed concern over India’s low ‘air safety oversight score’, which is lower than that of Myanmar, Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and North Korea in the Asia-Pacific region. The ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme seeks to identify if countries have consistently implemented a safety-oversight system. India is one of the 15 countries that are below the minimum target rates

(Q) To “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” is Sustainable Development Goal #6. Some targets under it include

1. By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers aquifers and lakes.
2. By 2025, end open defecation.
3. By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.

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: c.
Among others, targets under SDG #6 include:

- By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.
- By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation.
- By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.
- By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity.
- By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels.
- By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.

UN SDG6: In the news: Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, UN Champions of Earth Award;

(Q) The recently-adopted Tashkent Declaration, which India has expressed its readiness to implement, calls for

a) A multi-pronged approach by Asian countries to tackle the relatively recent phenomenon of online indoctrination and lone-wolf attacks.

b) A politico-military strategy by Afghanistan – assisted by SCO nations – to end the menace of Taliban.

c) Afghanistan to hold direct negotiation and political dialogue with the Taliban, without any preconditions.

d) None of the above.

Solution: c.

TH: India on Monday expressed “readiness” to work towards implementing the Tashkent Declaration of March 2018 that called for direct talks with the Taliban without preconditions.

In a joint statement at the end of official discussions with the visiting Uzbek President, both sides pledged to work on the goals of the Tashkent Declaration. “...They expressed full readiness to a close partnership for the implementation of the Tashkent Declaration adopted at the end of the International Conference on Afghanistan on the theme ‘Peace process, cooperation in the field of security and regional cooperation’ in Uzbekistan on March 26-27, 2018,” the statement declared.

(Q) Consider the following pairs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Strategy to diversify economic interdependence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Australia</td>
<td>Free and Open Indo-Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. South Korea</td>
<td>New Southern Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Taiwan</td>
<td>New Southbound Policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

a) 1 only  
b) 2 and 3 only  
c) 2 only  
d) None of the above
Solution: b.

Japan – Free and Open Indo-Pacific

Australia – India Economic Strategy (with the goal of making India its third-largest investment and export destination by 2035.)

TH: Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Australia have all unveiled strategies to diversify their economic interdependence, away from mainland China and towards Southeast Asia and India.

The motivations appear to be manifold.

- The most recent is the ongoing trade and tariff war between the U.S. and China.
- A longer-term concern is Beijing's use of its economic muscle for political purposes, whether in suspending rare earth metal exports to Japan in 2010 or punishing a major South Korean corporation for Seoul's decision to install a missile defence system in 2017.
- China's limited market growth potential and questions of access and reciprocity are additional considerations.

(Q) Which one of the following countries is not among the G4 or Group of Four nations?

a) Brazil
b) Japan
c) Germany
d) South Africa

Solution: d.

- India, Germany, Japan and Brazil form the G4.

TH1: TH2:

(Q) The “Moscow format”, and “Tashkent Declaration”, sometimes in the news, both appear in the context of affairs related to

a) Denuclearisation
b) International North-South Transport Corridor
c) Turkistan Islamic Movement
d) Taliban

Solution: d.

TH: On Afghanistan, India expressed support for the “Moscow format”, in which Russia involves regional countries and major powers in an effort to draw the Taliban into negotiations with the Afghan leadership. The U.S. has boycotted this initiative, but has initiated its own dialogue with the Taliban.

TH: In a joint statement at the end of official discussions with the visiting Uzbek leader, both sides pledged to work on the goals of the Tashkent Declaration. The Tashkent Declaration had called for “direct negotiation with the Taliban without any preconditions.”

(Q) Consider the following statements in the context of India-China relations:

1. As per the 2012 Common Understanding, boundary points between India, China and a third country would be determined in consultation with the third country.
2. At the Wuhan informal summit, it was decided that China and India would coordinate their approaches for engaging a third country or set of countries in South Asia and beyond.

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.

**PRS Standing Committee Report Summary:** The Chinese intrusion at Doklam (in Bhutan) was a violation of two agreements between China and Bhutan. These agreements stipulated that there would be no change in the status quo while boundary negotiations were still in progress. Further, it was also in violation of the 2012 Common Understanding, to determine boundary points between India, China and a third country, in consultation with the third country.

**TH:** Ahead of the BRICS summit in Johannesburg in July, when Mr. Xi and Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Rwanda almost at the same time, Chinese Foreign Ministry put out the message that New Delhi and Beijing should vigorously pursue the 'China-India Plus One' or 'China-India Plus X' model in engaging with Africa. The mandarins in Beijing were referring to the mechanism yielded by the Wuhan informal summit in April between Mr. Xi and Mr. Modi, where it was decided that China and India would coordinate their approaches for engaging a third country or set of countries in South Asia and beyond.

(Q) The Bern Treaty of 1874, recently in the news, established the

a) Universal Postal Union
b) Organisation of American States
c) International Chamber of Commerce
d) Medecins Sans Frontieres

Solution: a.

**BBC:** The US has announced plans to withdraw from a 144-year-old postal treaty, which the White House says lets China ship goods at unfairly low prices. Under the treaty, a UN body sets lower international rates for packages from certain countries, a move originally designed to support poorer nations. But the US says the discounts put American businesses at a disadvantage.

Officials said they hoped the notice of withdrawal would set the stage to agree a better deal.

**Britannica:**

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. Theoretically, only one country can truly possess strategic autonomy in a unipolar world.
2. In our world today, India is not truly strategically autonomous.

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.

TH: Strategic autonomy is simply India's ability to take relatively autonomous decisions on matters of vital interest to us. Not 100% autonomous, but on those decisions that are critical for India, we ensure that they are taken here [New Delhi], not in some other capital. From that point of view, there is continuity today in our foreign policy with how it has always been.

IDSA: In its pure form, strategic autonomy presupposes the state in question possessing overwhelmingly superior power. This is what would enable that state to resist the pressures that may be exerted by other states to compel it to change its policy or moderate its interests. Theoretically, therefore, only a lone superpower in a unipolar international order truly possess strategic autonomy since it is the only country that would wield overwhelming economic, industrial, military and technological capabilities and thus the power to resist pressure from all other states. Even superpowers become susceptible to the pressures exerted by their superpower peers in bipolar or multipolar orders, which means that their ability to be strategically autonomous is not absolute but only relative.

- It follows from this that regional powers like India are destined to be even less strategically autonomous. While they may express the aspiration to be strategically autonomous, their ability and willingness to practice it are likely to be inconsistent and variable. They will resist external pressure to change their policy or moderate their interest on core issues of national security irrespective of the costs involved.

(Q) The ‘India Remembers’ project, recently in the news, is an effort to raise awareness of certain individuals and events since

a) The Great Revolt of 1857
b) The Swadeshi Movement
c) World War 1
d) The formation of Azad Hind Fauj

Solution: c.

Big Ideas works in partnership with Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the United Service Institution of India to develop and deliver the India Remembers project. India Remembers is an India-wide initiative designed to raise awareness of the contribution and sacrifices made by India's servicemen and women since 1914. The project encourages diverse groups across India to discover, explore and remember the stories of India's war dead. As a result of India Remembers, the saffron marigold has been adopted as India's new symbol of remembrance. It is hoped it will become as recognisable within India as the red poppy is in the United Kingdom.

In the news: TH:

(Q) The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), is a nuclear arms-control accord that was reached in 1987 by

a) USA and Russia only
b) NPT-designated nuclear states only, except China
c) All countries party to the NPT treaty
d) Members of the NSG only

Solution: a.
**Britannica:** Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), is a nuclear arms-control accord reached by the United States and the Soviet Union in 1987 in which those two nations agreed to eliminate their stocks of intermediate-range and shorter-range (or “medium-range”) land-based missiles (which could carry nuclear warheads). It was the first arms-control treaty to abolish an entire category of weapon systems. In addition, two protocols to the treaty established unprecedented procedures for observers from both nations to verify firsthand the other nation’s destruction of its missiles.

The INF Treaty defined intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) as those having ranges of 1,000 to 5,500 km (620 to 3,400 miles) and shorter-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) as those having ranges from 500 to 1,000 km.

In the news: USA announces withdrawal from INF treaty;

**(Q)** The #Caravanmigrante hashtag was recently in the news in the context of affairs related to

a) Venezuela  
b) Italy  
c) Australia  
d) USA

**Solution:** d.

**BBC:** For more than a week, thousands of migrants from Central America have been trudging north towards the US. They say they are fleeing persecution, poverty and violence in their home countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

Unlike previous smaller convoys of migrants, this one has drawn the attention of US President Donald Trump. He criticised a number of Central American countries for allowing people to leave the region and come “illegally” to the US. Mr Trump also threatened to cut off foreign aid to these countries, but he has not specified what money will be cut and it is unclear how he would do so.
VI. POLITY

(Q) The Great Indian Migration, a term recently seen in the news, is closely related to the

a) Demographic dividend
b) Economic reforms of 1991
c) Partition of India
d) Migration of indentured labour from pre-independent India

Solution: a.

- Most of the current and future demographic potential is locked in the northern States, and largely located in Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. As per population projections, these five States will account for more than 55% of population growth in India till 2030. Those who are under 15 years of age today will become India’s working population in the coming decades, and almost every second person in this age group resides in these five States.

- The proportion of the elderly started increasing in the southern States several years ago. Now, the phenomenon has extended to the western, extreme northern and eastern States. In the coming decades, they will require a young workforce to keep institutions functioning efficiently, and also to take care of the elderly. This need is likely to be met by people from the youthful north, with many moving to the ageing States. Already, the migration trend is evident, with established flows of young
people from these States to other parts. The divergent demographic transition in the high-low TFR States will add further impetus to this movement in the coming decades.

From 2017: **TH:** Map source: [Medium.com](https://www.medium.com);

Improvisation: **TH** (Reference to the term Great Indian Migration, though this is with reference to Census 2011 figures);

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. The President can nominate Anglo-Indians to the Rajya Sabha if they have special knowledge or practical experience in art, literature, science and social service.
2. The Constitution is silent on representation of Anglo-Indians in state legislative assemblies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

**Solution:** a.

- The president nominates 12 members to the Rajya Sabha from people who have special knowledge or practical experience in art, literature, science and social service. (Such eminent persons can be Anglo-Indians too.)

**Article 333:** “... notwithstanding anything in Article 170, the Governor of a State may, if he is of opinion that the Anglo Indian community needs representation in the Legislative Assembly of the State and is not adequately represented therein, nominate one member of that community to the Assembly.”

Improvisation: **TH:**

(Q) “Malikapurnams” was a term recently seen in the news in the context of affairs related to which one of the following categories of fundamental rights?

a) Right Against Exploitation  
b) Cultural and Educational Rights  
c) Right to Freedom of Religion  
d) None of the above

**Solution:** c.

**TH:** Judges should not impose their personal views, morality or rationality with respect to the form of worship of a deity, Justice Indu Malhotra on Friday wrote in her judgment, dissenting with the majority verdict to open up the Sabarimala temple for women of all age groups. “The manifestation is in the form of a Naishtik Brahmacari. The belief in a deity, and the form in which he has manifested himself is a fundamental right protected by Article 25(1) of the Constitution,” she held.

Justice Malhotra upheld the status of Ayyappa devotees as a separate religious denomination. She banked on the notifications issued by the Travancore Devaswom Board in 1955 and 1956, which refer to the devotees as “Ayyappans”. The worshippers constitute a religious denomination, or sect thereof, as the case maybe, following the “Ayyappan Dharma”. They are designated by a distinctive name wherein all male devotees are called “Ayyappans”; all female devotees below the age of 10 and above the age of 50 are called “Malikapurams”. A pilgrim on his maiden trip is called a “Kanni Ayyappan”. The devotees are referred to as “Ayyappa Swamis”.

www.insightsias.com 36 www.insightsonindia.com
Consider the following pairs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPC Section</th>
<th>Offence it deals with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>153A</td>
<td>Promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>295A</td>
<td>Malicious or deliberate acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

Solution: c.

- **153A**: Promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony.
- **295A**: Deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs.

In the news: TH;

Which of the following details are necessary to be filled up in Form 26 – the affidavit to be submitted by candidates along with their nomination papers to stand for elections?

1. Details of Permanent Account Number and Aadhaar number
2. Social media account(s) of the candidate
3. Cases of conviction
4. Details of assets of candidate, his/her spouse and all dependents

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

TH: Pursuant to the recent Supreme Court directive on candidates with criminal antecedents, the Election Commission on Wednesday released an amended ECI Form 26 for those contesting polls to declare and publicise details of the cases against them.

The candidates are required to file an affidavit as part of the form, along with the nomination papers, declaring information about criminal cases, assets, liabilities and educational qualifications. Convictions, if any, also have to be mentioned.
(Q) As per section 33 of Representation of People’s Act 1951, a candidate can simultaneously contest from no more than two constituencies in the case of a

1. General election to the House of People.
2. General election to the Legislative Assembly of a State.
3. Biennial election to the Council of States.
4. Biennial election to the Legislative Council of a State having such a council.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

A candidate can simultaneously contest from no more than two constituencies also in the case of by-elections to any of the above-mentioned houses/councils.

Article 33, RPA 1951; Improvisation: TH;

(Q) As per Section 151A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, by-elections

1. Are to be held within six months of occurrence of the vacancy in any House of Parliament.
2. Need not be held upon the occurrence of a vacancy in any House of Parliament if the remainder of the term of the member whose vacancy is to be filled is less than one year.

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.

By-elections are to be held within six months of occurrence of the vacancy in any House of Parliament or a state legislature. But, this condition is not applicable in two cases:

(i) Where the remainder of the term of the member whose vacancy is to be filled is less than one year
(ii) When the Election Commission in consultation with the Central Government, certifies that it is difficult to hold the by-elections within the said period.

Indian Polity by M Laxmikant; In the news: PIB;

(Q) As per Article 279(A)(4)(f) of the Constitution, with the permission of the GST Council a special rate can be imposed

a) Only in the affected states – to raise additional resources during any natural calamity or disaster.
b) Only in the states not affected – to raise additional resources during any natural calamity or disaster.
c) For a specified period to raise additional resources during any natural calamity or disaster.
d) To raise additional resources during any natural calamity or disaster.
Article 279(A)(4)(f): The Goods and Services Tax Council shall make recommendations to the Union and the States on any special rate or rates for a specified period, to raise additional resources during any natural calamity or disaster.

In the news (TH): “Mr. Jaitley said that the GST Council had agreed to set up a seven-member Group of Ministers (GoM) to look into the various aspects of such an additional rate, including whether it should be levied only on Kerala's taxpayers, or on the entire country. The issues of concern, which the GoM would look into, will include a) whether the special rate would be applicable only in Kerala, thereby taxing those who are already recovering from the disaster, or would it be applied across the country; b) whether it would be applied on all goods or only on the sin and luxury goods. c) setting rules specifying what kinds of natural disasters would qualify for the special rate since there are already budgetary allocations made to the NDRF and SDRF every year.” Read the source to understand what the concerns regarding the imposition of such an additional rate are.

(Q) The Narasu case, recently in the news, is most closely associated with the issue of

a) Uniform Civil Code
b) Personal laws
c) Gender equality
d) Individual liberty

Solution: b.

TH: The unchallenged 67-year reign of a Bombay High Court judgment that personal law, religious customs, usages and beliefs are outside the ambit of fundamental rights of equality, life and dignity came to an end with the Sabarimala judgment. The Bombay High Court had held that personal law is not ‘law’ or ‘laws in force’ under Article 13. This 1951 judgment was never challenged in the Supreme Court.

Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, in his separate opinion, held that the reasoning given in the Narasu Appa Mali judgment of the Bombay High Court in 1951 was based on flawed premises. Immune customs and usages, like the prohibition of women in Sabarimala, takes away the primacy of the Constitution.

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. In the USA, the President has the power to make a nomination to the Supreme Court, which must be approved by the Senate.
2. In the United Kingdom, as in the USA, judges appointed to the Supreme Court serve lifetime terms.

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.

BBC: Under Article 2 of the constitution of USA, the president has the power to make a nomination. There’s no clear view as to why the president was granted this power. The Senate has the task to approve a candidate – a method that enforces the concept of checks and balances between the powers envisioned by the Founding Fathers. Candidates do not have to meet any qualifications and serve lifetime terms. In the UK, the Supreme
Court justices are nominated by an independent commission. Unlike in the USA, political positions of nominees in UK are often unknown or irrelevant in the appointment process.

There is no limit to UK justices’ terms but they must retire when they are 75 years old. Similar age restrictions are in place in other Western European countries too. Lifetime appointments in the US were originally designed to isolate them from political pressure. But given the current climate, critics argue that, in fact, the opposite is happening and some have defended the introduction of fixed terms.

Recently in the news: Brett Kavanaugh’s appointment to the SC in USA;

**Q** In decriminalising homosexuality, the Supreme Court declared that Section 377 violated the

1. Right to equality  
2. Right to privacy  
3. Right to freedom of speech and expression

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

**Solution: d.**

The Court found the provision to be arbitrary and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution (right to equality) since it distinguished between heterosexual and homosexual adults, solely on the basis of their sexual orientation. The Court further stated that the provision violates the right to dignity, privacy and sexual autonomy guaranteed to homosexual persons under Article 21 of the Constitution (right to life). The Court also found the provision to violate Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution (freedom of speech and expression).

**PRS September MPR:**

**Q** Which of the following sections of certain laws or of the Indian Penal Code has the Supreme Court struck down in recent past?

1. Some sections of the Aadhaar Act  
2. Section 377 of the IPC  
3. Section 497 of the IPC

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: c.**

“Reading down”: Where a court gives an over-inclusive statute (or a section of it) a sufficiently narrow interpretation to bring it into line with the demands of the constitution. “Striking down” on the other hand annuls it entirely.

**PRS September MPR:** The Court held the provision (Section 377) to be unconstitutional to the extent that it criminalises sexual acts between two consenting adults. The provision will continue to govern sexual acts
against minors, animals, and in respect of non-consenting adults. Section 377 thus has been read down, not struck down.

**PRS September MPR:** The Court held the provision (Section 497 – adultery law) to be unconstitutional and **struck it down entirely.**

(Q) The Vineet Narain case, sometimes in the news, is related to the affairs of the

- a) Central Information Commission
- b) Reserve Bank of India
- c) National Human Rights Commission
- d) Central Bureau of Investigation

**Solution: d.**

**TH:** Mr. Singhvi said that since the Lokpal Act mandates that the CBI Director be chosen by a committee comprising the Prime Minister, Chief Justice of India and the Leader of the Opposition or the largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha, the same procedure ought to have been followed for his removal. "The government post midnight takes the decision and now puts the onus on the CVC. But was the Leader of Opposition or the CJI called? Moreover, it is also in gross violation of the Supreme Court judgment in the Vineet Narain case wherein a tenure of a minimum of two years was fixed for the CBI Director," he said.

Journalist Vineet Narain had moved the Supreme Court to ensure autonomy for the CBI, Enforcement Directorate and the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). The landmark judgment in Vineet Narain v. Union of India in 1997 laid out several steps to secure the autonomy of CBI. The CVC was accorded statutory status in 2003 only after a directive in this judgment.

(Q) The Justice A.N. Mulla Committee and the Justice Krishna Iyer Committee, both appointed in the 1980s dealt with certain issues, that, which one of the following committees set up recently will deal with?

- a) KS Radhakrishnan Committee
- b) Amitava Roy Committee
- c) MB Shah Committee
- d) Lodha Committee

**Solution: b.**

**TH:** In an acknowledgment that the more than a century-old system of prisons in India needs repair, the Supreme Court, late last month, formed a committee on prison reforms. Headed by former Supreme Court judge, Justice Amitava Roy, it is to look into the entire gamut of reforms to the prison system. But this is not the first time that such a body is being set up, examples being the Justice A.N. Mulla committee and the Justice Krishna Iyer committee on women prisoners (both in the 1980s).

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. Public Interest Litigations in India can be filed only by individuals who have completed 18 years of age.
2. The recent Supreme Court order on firecrackers addresses the problems of air, noise and light pollution caused by fireworks.
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.

TH: A Bench of Justices A.K. Sikri and Ashok Bhushan held that only green or improved crackers would be used during religious festivals and other occasions, including weddings. In nationwide curbs, the judgment reduced the time for bursting crackers during Deepavali and other festivals.

The ban came on the basis of a petition filed by two infants — a six-month-old and 14-month-old — through their fathers in 2015. They said the air pollution caused by various factors, especially firecrackers, made Delhi a gas chamber. They pleaded for their right to life.

Diwali is a Festival of Lights. The Supreme Court order does not seek to curb light pollution. The ban on barium nitrate based fireworks is because of the health complications barium salts can cause, and not because of lights that are emitted by its burning.

Full judgment:

(Q) What are some of the issues that arise from the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 in its present form?

1. It violates Article 14 of the Constitution.  
2. It could hurt relations with Bangladesh.  
3. It allows cancellation of Overseas Citizen of India registration for violation of any law which could be minor offences.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

- The Bill makes illegal migrants eligible for citizenship on the basis of religion. This may violate Article 14 of the Constitution which guarantees right to equality.
- The Bill allows cancellation of OCI registration for violation of any law. This is a wide ground that may cover a range of violations, including minor offences (eg. parking in a no parking zone).
- One of the members of the JPC raised concerns if acknowledging the minorities from Bangladesh as “persecuted minorities” would hurt relations with the neighbouring country.
- Another member said the draft legislation had unnecessarily led to a volatile situation in the northeast as Assam faced violent protests on Tuesday.
(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. The decision to send a Cabinet Mission to India was taken when the threat of Japanese invasion of India seemed real.
2. The Cabinet Mission Plan rejected the demand for a full-fledged Pakistan.

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 first statement refers to the Cripps Mission. (Britain had suffered losses in SE Asia, and it was crucial to have Indian support to ward off the Japanese threat to invade India.)

The Cabinet Mission rejected the demand for a full-fledged Pakistan, because—

- the Pakistan so formed would include a large non-Muslim population—38% in the North-West and 48% in the North-East;
- the very principle of communal self-determination would claim separation of Hindu-majority Western Bengal and Sikh- and Hindu-dominated Ambala and Jullundur divisions of Punjab (already some Sikh leaders were demanding a separate state if the country was partitioned);
- deep-seated regional ties would be disturbed if Bengal and Punjab were partitioned;
- partition would entail economic and administrative problems, for instance, the problem of communication between the western and eastern parts of Pakistan; and
- the division of armed forces would be dangerous.

Improvisation: TH; Spectrum’s History of Modern India;

(Q) The first country in the world where women were allowed to vote was

a) Netherlands
b) Britain
c) France
d) New Zealand

Solution: d.

BBC: Meghan Markle has praised the first women in the world to win the right to vote during a speech in New Zealand about feminism and fairness. She was speaking at an event to mark the 125th anniversary of universal female suffrage in New Zealand. It was the first country in the world where all adult women were allowed to vote.

Table source: Democratic Politics Class 9 NCERT;
Consider the following statements:

1. The term of the Prime Minister is not fixed and he holds office during the pleasure of the President.
2. So long as the Prime Minister enjoys the majority support in the Parliament, he cannot be dismissed by the President.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: a.

- The term of the Prime Minister is not fixed and he holds office during the pleasure of the President. However, this does not mean that the president can dismiss the Prime Minister at any time. So long as the Prime Minister enjoys the majority support in the Lok Sabha, he cannot be dismissed by the President. However, if he loses the confidence of the Lok Sabha, he must resign or the President can dismiss him.

- Under the Constitution, the Parliament of India consists of three parts viz, the President, the Council of States and the House of the People. So long as the Prime Minister enjoys the majority support in the Lok Sabha, he cannot be dismissed by the President.

Indian Polity by M Laxmikanth; Improvisation: Crisis in Sri Lanka;

Consider the following statements with reference to provisions of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act:

2. The CBI director cannot be transferred without the previous consent of a high-powered committee chaired by the Chief Justice of India.
3. The CVC has no role, whatsoever, in curtailing or extending the tenure of the CBI director.

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: c.

The CVC and the government both agree they have the power to divest Alok Verma of his office to save the credibility of the institution.

- For this, they bank on Section 4(1) of the DSPE Act, which allows the commission to supervise investigation of offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. The DSPE Act gives the Centre the power of superintendence over the CBI “in all other matters.” But the moot point is whether these provisions allow the government and the commission to strip the CBI Director of his job.

- In this regard, legal experts refer to Section 4B(2) of the DSPE Act, which mandates that the CBI Director cannot be “transferred” without the previous consent of a high-power committee chaired by the Prime Minister. Firstly, they argue, the CBI Director is appointed on the recommendation of this
committee which has the Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Justice of India as members. Relieving the CBI chief of his post would, as a natural corollary, require taking the consent of this committee.

- Experts further point to Section 4C of the DSPE Act. This provision clearly says that the CVC has no role, whatsoever, in curtailing or extending the tenure of the CBI Director.

[DPSE, 1946 (PDF);]
VII. HISTORY, ART & CULTURE

(Q) The first tomb to be built on the Persian charbagh plan of paradisiacal tombs was
   a) Firuz Shah Tughluq’s tomb
   b) Sher Shah Suri’s tomb
   c) Humayun’s tomb
   d) Taj Mahal

Solution: c.

TH: “The first tomb to be built on the Persian charbagh plan of paradisiacal tombs was Humayun's Tomb in Delhi. According to that plan, the tomb is placed squarely in the centre of the charbagh. The Taj Mahal, also modelled on the same theme, is at an edge of the garden.”

(Q) Consider the following statements about Kamangari art:
   1. It is a form of wall-painting that originated in 18th century Kutch.
   2. It does not have a consistent style, viz. no two paintings are treated in a similar manner.

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.

TH: For all its beauty, says Zaveri, Kamangari does not appear to have a consistent style. If you look at two paintings, you will see the difference in the treatment and rendering. For example, the lines on wall paintings are thicker than those in the scrolls. In some places, flowers are used to fill gaps — like in a temple in Anjar — but in other places this is missing.

Kamangari bhint chitro or wall paintings was once a thriving art form in 18th century Kutch, used to embellish the palaces and homes of the affluent. The themes were as diverse as the patron’s tastes, but were predominantly mythological, with scenes from the Ramayana or Krishna Leela. Royal processions was another favourite. The landscape was another rich source of material, and date palms and peacocks and scenes from everyday life were common.
(Q) Consider the following historical descriptions of some Indian cities:

1. The older name was how it was referred to by the British. One theory states it is derived from the Portuguese term for 'Mother of God', whereas another says it is the shortening of the name of a fishing village. The current name comes from the name of a Telugu ruler from whom the British acquired the town in the 17th century.

2. Called the Queen of the Arabian Sea, this city was an important spice trading centre on the west coast of India. The name is believed to have come from either the local word for 'small lagoon' or 'harbour'.

3. The oldest reference of this city’s name is found on a copper plate dating back to the Rashtrakuta Dynasty. The name means 'city of virtue' and it is referred to as ‘Oxford of the East’ due to the presence of several educational institutions.

In sequence, these descriptions refer to the present-day cities of

a) Vishakhapatnam, Mangalore and Nagpur
b) Chennai, Kochi and Poona
c) Kolkata, Surat and Indore
d) Puri, Panaji and Aurangabad

Solution: b.
- Chennai, Kochi and Poona.

Sunday Quiz -> Easy like Sunday morning, TH Magazine;

(Q) The pioneer Bhakti saint of Maharashtra, he wrote an extensive commentary on the Bhagavad Gita which was one of the earliest works of Marathi literature and served as the foundation of Bhakti ideology in Maharashtra. He was the author of many hymns called abhangs. These statements refer to

a) Lal Ded
b) Vidyapati
c) Tukaram
d) Jnaneshwar

Solution: d.

TH: Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday inaugurated the world’s largest dome at the Maharashtra Institute of Technology (MIT)’s World Peace University (MIT-WPU) campus at Loni Kalbhor on the occasion of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The dome is built atop the MIT World Peace Library and the World Peace Prayer Hall, which are named after the 13th century poet-saint and philosopher Dnyaneshwar — a pivotal figure of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra.

Jnaneswar (1275-1296) was the pioneer bhakti saint of Maharashtra. He wrote an extensive commentary on the Bhagavad Gita popularly called Jnanesvari. This was one of the earliest works of Marathi literature and served as the foundation of bhakti ideology in Maharashtra. He was the author of many hymns called abhangs. He taught that the only way to attain God was bhakti and in bhakti there was no place for caste distinctions.

Image source: IGNOU booklet "Socio-religious movement: Bhakti movement";
(Q) Which among the following structures has India’s second largest dome?

a) Taj Mahal
b) World Peace Monument, Maharashtra Institute of Technology
c) Gol Gumbaz
d) Tomb of Sher Shah Suri

Solution: c.

➢ Gol Gumbaz dome diameter – 125 feet;
➢ World Peace Monument dome diameter – 160 feet;

Improvisation: TH;

(Q) Why is Wardha important in the study of India’s struggle for Independence?

1. The resolution to boycott the Simon Commission was passed at the INC annual session here.
2. Starting from here, Mahatma Gandhi conducted a Harijan tour of the country in 1933-34.
3. The INC had organised a National Conference on Education here in 1937.
4. This is where Mahatma Gandhi had given the Quit India call.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: a.

o Resolution to boycott Simon Commission was passed in December 1927, at the INC annual session in Madras.

o While in jail, Gandhiji had set up the All India Anti-Ungouchability League in September 1932 and had started the weekly Harijan in January 1933. After his release, he shifted to the Satyagraha Ashram in Wardha as he had vowed in 1930 not to return to Sabarmati Ashram unless swaraj was won. Starting from Wardha, he conducted a Harijan tour of the country in the period from November 1933 to July 1934, covering 20,000 km, collecting money for his newly set up Harijan Sevak Sangh, and propagating removal of untouchability in all its forms.

o The Congress had organised a National Conference on Education in October 1937 in Wardha. In the light of the resolutions passed there, Zakir Hussain committee formulated a detailed national scheme for basic education. The main principle behind this scheme was ‘learning through activity’. It was based on Gandhi’s ideas published in a series of articles in the weekly Harijan.

o After Cripps departure, Gandhi framed a resolution calling for British withdrawal and a non-violent non-cooperation movement against any Japanese invasion. The CWC meeting at Wardha (July 14, 1942) accepted the idea of a struggle.

Improvisation: TH; Source: Spectrum’s ‘A brief history of modern India’;
"Taken from legend, this work tells of the seduction of a beautiful young woman by a King, his rejection of the girl and his child, and their subsequent reunion in heaven. The child that is born is Bharata, the eponymous ancestor of the Indian nation. As in all of the author's works, the beauty of nature is depicted with an inimitable elegance of metaphor. The work and its author in question refer to

a) *Svapnavasavadatta* by Bhasa  
b) *Mrichhakatika* by Shudraka  
c) *Ratnavali* by Harsha  
d) *Abhijnanashakuntala* by Kalidasa  

**Solution: d.**

- *Abhijnanashakuntala*, ("The Recognition of Shakuntala") drama by Kalidasa composed about the 5th century CE that is generally considered to be the greatest Indian literary work of any period.
- Taken from legend, the work tells of the seduction of the nymph Shakuntala by King Dushyanta, his rejection of the girl and his child, and their subsequent reunion in heaven. The child that is born is Bharata, the eponymous ancestor of the Indian nation (Bharatavarsha, "Subcontinent of Bharata"). As in all of Kalidasa's works, the beauty of nature is depicted with an inimitable elegance of metaphor.

**TH:**

"Pandavani is a form of rustic entertainment, sung, partly improvised, narration of stories from the Mahabharata. A 61-year old exponent of this art form recently was bestowed with one of Japan's greatest honours, the Fukuoka Arts and Culture Prize. In India, Pandavani is popular in the state of"

a) Chattisgarh  
b) Rajasthan  
c) Bihar  
d) Uttarakhand  

**Solution: a.**

**TH:** A sung, partly improvised, narration of stories from the Mahabharata, *Pandavani* is rustic entertainment, popular in the tribal areas of Chattisgarh and neighbouring States. There is perhaps no greater exponent of it than Teejan, who was awarded a Padma Bhushan for her art in 2003. But the Fukuoka Prize is her first international recognition, and for the moment at least, she thinks it has trumped every other award that she has received in her long and storied career.

"The idea of the Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauj) was first conceived in Malaya by"

a) Subhas Chandra Bose  
b) Anand Kumar  
c) Mohan Singh  
d) Rashbehari Bose  

**Solution: c.**
• The idea of the Indian National Army (INA) was first conceived in Malaya by Mohan Singh, an Indian officer of the British Indian Army, when he decided not to join the retreating British Army and instead turned to the Japanese for help.

Spectrum’s A brief history of Modern India; Improvisation: TH;

(Q) Which of the following developments in India were associated with World War 1?

1. Income tax was introduced.
2. There was forced recruitment for the army in rural areas.
3. Crop failure resulted in acute shortages of food.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

Pg 54, ‘The 1st WW, Khilafat and Non-Cooperation’, India and the Contemporary World Class X: First of all, the war created a new economic and political situation. It led to a huge increase in defence expenditure which was financed by war loans and increasing taxes: customs duties were raised and income tax introduced. Through the war years prices increased – doubling between 1913 and 1918 – leading to extreme hardship for the common people. Villages were called upon to supply soldiers, and the forced recruitment in rural areas caused widespread anger. Then in 1918–19 and 1920–21, crops failed in many parts of India, resulting in acute shortages of food. This was accompanied by an influenza epidemic. According to the census of 1921, 12 to 13 million people perished as a result of famines and the epidemic.

Improvisation: TH;

(Q) Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose laid down the foundation for equal opportunity for women in armed forces, through the formation of a women’s regiment named in honour of

  a) Rani Rudramma Devi
  b) Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar
  c) Rani Lakshmi Bai
  d) Mata Jijabai

Solution: c.

Addressing the gathering, Prime Minister said that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose laid down the foundation for equal opportunity for women in armed forces, through the formation of Rani Jhansi Regiment. Prime Minister said that the government is carrying forward this legacy in true means and reiterated that women will be given equal opportunity for permanent commission in armed forces.

PIB;

(Q) The only theatre of the Second World War in the Indian subcontinent was

  a) Kohima  b) Imphal  c) Port Blair  d) Chittagong
Solution: a.

TH: Kohima, the only theatre of the Second World War in the Indian subcontinent, is gearing up for the centenary of an ethnic club moulded by events during the First World War in faraway France... The British government had during the First World War recruited 2,000 labourers and porters from some 15 Naga tribes and sent them to fight in France between 1914 and 1918. Alienated from other British Indian troops on European soil, the Nagas developed a sense of unity. Many of them returned, and under the leadership of R.S. Ruichumhao, formed the Naga Club along with some British officials in 1918. The club provided the foundation for the Naga nationalist movement. In 1929, members of the club submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission, proposing self-rule by the Nagas after the departure of the British from India.... The Nagaland capital today is divided over who has the right to celebrate the special day of the club that unified disparate Naga tribes and laid the foundation of an armed movement for secession from India.
VIII. STATES

(Q) Kokborok is predominantly spoken in the Indian state of

a) Bihar
b) Tripura
c) West Bengal
d) Meghalaya

Solution: b.

TTAADC (PDF): Kokborok is a language of Borok people who are geographically known as Tripuris. It is one of the state languages of Tripura notified in 1979.

TH: The fear of being swamped by Bengalis led to tribal extremism, first in the 1960s, and with more intensity two decades later. Tribal groups killed 1,400 Bengalis in 1980, but counter-insurgency operations made most outfits declare truce by the late 1990s. The scars remained, so much so that tribal NGOs pushed for switching the script of their Kokborok language from Bengali to Roman. The demand for Twipraland, a state for tribal people, gained ground.
IX. DEFENCE & SECURITY

(Q) Consider the following statements about the S-400 “Triumph” missile defence system:

1. It has a range of 400km.
2. It can track up to 80 targets simultaneously.
3. It can hit targets at a height of up to 30km.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only  

b) 1 and 3 only  

c) 2 and 3 only  

d) 1, 2 and 3  

Solution: d.

(Q) Apart from India, which of the following countries have bought/concluded deals with Russia for procuring the S-400 Triumph surfaced-to-air missile defence system?

1. China  
2. Pakistan  
3. Turkey  
4. Ukraine
Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: c.

China was the first foreign buyer to seal a government-to-government deal with Russia in 2014 to procure the lethal missile system and Moscow has already started delivery of an undisclosed number of the S-400 missile systems to Beijing. Last year Moscow signed a contract to sell the systems to Turkey, raising criticism from Ankara's NATO allies, notably Washington, which has threatened to block delivery of its F-35 stealth aircraft to Turkey. Other than India, Russia is also negotiating with Qatar and Saudi Arabia to sell its S-400 Triumf.

ToI;

(Q) Consider the following statements with reference to the period 2013–17:

1. India was the world's largest importer of major arms and accounted for around 10 per cent of the global total.
2. Russia accounted for more than 50 per cent of India's arms imports.
3. Israel was India's second largest arms supplier.

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) None of the above

Solution: a.

SIPRI: India was the world's largest importer of major arms in 2013–17 and accounted for 12 per cent of the global total (Pakistan accounted for 2.8 per cent of global arms imports in 2013–17). Its imports increased by 24 per cent between 2008–12 and 2013–17. Russia accounted for 62 per cent of India's arms imports in 2013–17. However, arms imports from the USA rose by 557 per cent between 2008–12 and 2013–17, making it India's second largest arms supplier.

- The tensions between India, on the one side, and Pakistan and China, on the other, are fuelling India's growing demand for major weapons, which it remains unable to produce itself. China, by contrast, is becoming increasingly capable of producing its own weapons and continues to strengthen its relations with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar through arms supplies.

In the news: Defense purchases by India;

(Q) The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) enables USA to impose sanctions on any country carrying out significant defence and energy trade with sanctioned entities in

1. Russia
2. Iran
3. North Korea
Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

From April (TH): Testifying before a Senate panel, Mr. Mattis asked lawmakers to change CAATSA and empower the Secretary of State. “There are nations in the world which are trying to turn away from formerly Russian-sourced weapons and systems like this. We only need to look at India, Vietnam and some others to recognise that, eventually, we’re going to paralyse ourselves,” Mr. Mattis said about the law.

- Pressing Mr. Mattis to elaborate further, Senator Tom Cotton asked: “You mentioned two specific countries, India and Vietnam, that have legacy Russian systems. They might face real challenges going cold turkey, so to speak, under CAATSA...So, you’re suggesting the national security waiver as a way that this Congress can empower Secretary (Mike) Pompeo to address the concerns that you have with those two countries, is that right?.”

- “That’s correct. And there are other countries. Indonesia, for example is in the same situation, trying to shift to more of our airplanes, our systems. But they’ve got to do something to keep their legacy military going,” Mr. Mattis replied.

From July (TH): The US law enables its administration to impose sanctions on any country carrying out significant defence and energy trade with sanctioned entities in Russia, Iran and North Korea.

In the introduction of the Presidential waiver clause under the CAATSA act, Indian delegations led by the Foreign Secretary had played a role – they had made a three-fold case for the waiver:

- that no weapons India bought would be used against the U.S.;
- that the U.S., which wants to partner with India in the Indo-Pacific, would hamper India’s military abilities by applying the sanctions or denying the country crucial technology; and
- that India has significantly reduced its dependence on Russian military hardware while increasing defence purchases from the U.S., and it would be unfair if the U.S. rewarded the effort with punitive measures.

In the news: Defence purchases by India;

(Q) Consider the following statements about the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System:

1. It was recently deployed along a small stretch of the Line of Control between India and Pakistan.
2. It has the capability to detect any type of movement on ground, water, or even below the ground.

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.
**TH**: Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh recently inaugurated the first phase of hi-tech 'smart fencing' of a **11 km stretch on the International Border (IB)** in Jammu.

In the news (**TH**): The 740-km Line of Control in Kashmir is under the operational control of the Army and the 192-km International Border in Jammu is manned by the BSF.

"Through advanced sensors and radars, the CIBMS has the capability to detect any type of movement on ground, water or below the ground. The CIBMS is a new mode of guarding the border without exposing the jawans to bullets from the other side. We will soon be shifting to quick reaction teams that will take action as soon as any intrusion occur. Men will get respite from standing guard in inclement weather and this will be an effective and cheaper way of protecting the border also," an official said.

(Q) The terms Heron, Wing Loong, MQ-9 Reaper and Sea Guardian, recently seen in the news, are

a) Asteroid landers
b) Drones
c) Autonomous Seabed Surveyors
d) Artificial Intelligence Systems

**Solution: b.**

**TH**: China will sell 48 high-end armed drones (the Wing Loong II) to its "all-weather ally" Pakistan in what a military observer said will be the largest deal of its kind. The Wing Loong II is roughly equivalent to the American MQ-9 Reaper drone.

The Trump administration has agreed to sell 22 Sea Guardian drones to India. India is reported to have received 10 advanced Heron drones from Israel as well.

(Q) Sometimes in the news, ShinMaywa is often seen in the context of the

a) Gaganyaan
b) US-2 Amphibious aircraft
c) Beyond Visual Range Missiles
d) NISAR Mission

**Solution: b.**

**TH**: "Despite repeated attempts, talks for the sale of the US-2i amphibious aircraft have been deadlocked over issues of price and technology transfer. The deal has been hanging fire since 2014 when Indian officials raised objections over the platform's high cost... Of greater concern has been Japan's unwillingness to let India license produce the US-2i, insisting on delivering all aircraft in flyaway condition. The hard-bargaining, say observers, hasn't been worthwhile, not least since the plane does little other than search and rescue."

**TH** (2017):

(Q) IFCs play an important role in strengthening Maritime Domain Awareness and maritime safety and security. Where in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is there an Information Fusion Centre?

a) Madagascar
b) Indonesia
c) Oman
d) There is none in the IOR
Solution: a.

TH: “Japan also wants to assist India in improving the state of maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean, where India is keen to set up an ‘information fusion centre’.”

CarnegieIndia: India at the 2017 Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Summit announced its initiative to host an IFC. While details on the fusion centre remain unclear, it will perhaps be modelled on the fusion centre hosted by Singapore. The centre facilitates information and collaboration among 23 countries. The IFC in Singapore ‘fuses and disseminates accurate and timely maritime security information.’

If to the East we have a fusion centre in Singapore, we also have a fusion centre in Madagascar in the West. The IFC in Madagascar covers the maritime domain in eastern and southern Africa, including the Indian Ocean region. With a new fusion centre in India, there will now be better coverage of the Indian Ocean from North to South and East to West.

(Q) With which one of the following countries has India not held or agreed to hold tri-services military exercise?

a) Russia  
b) USA    
c) United Kingdom  
d) France

Solution: c.

TH: “We have agreed on a bilateral tri-service exercise with France. The modalities are being worked out and it is likely to be held next year,” an official source said.

This will be India’s third such joint exercise. The first joint tri-service exercise was held with Russia in October last year and has finalised one with the U.S. to be held next year.

(Q) Participants of the annual joint army exercise ‘Hand-in-Hand’ include India and

a) China  
b) Japan  
c) Sri Lanka  
d) Russia

Solution: a.

TH: India and China will resume the annual joint Army exercise ‘Hand-in-Hand’ in December in China’s Chengdu region, an Army official said. The drill was cancelled last year due to tense relations in the aftermath of the Doklam standoff. The scope of the exercise is to understand transnational terrorism and evolve joint drills for the conduct of counter terrorism operations, in addition to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations.

(Q) Dharma Guardian 2018 will be the first ever joint military exercise involving the armies of India and

a) Israel  
b) Japan  
c) Uzbekistan  
d) Myanmar
Solution: b.

PIB: To promote Military cooperation, India and Japan are all set to hold the first ever joint military exercise ‘DHARMA GUARDIAN-2018’ involving the Indian Army and Japan Ground Self Defence Force. Exercise ‘DHARMA GUARDIAN-2018’ will be yet another step in deepening strategic ties including closer defence cooperation between the two countries. It will contribute immensely in developing mutual understanding and respect for each other’s militaries and also facilitate tracking the worldwide phenomenon of terrorism.

(Q) The only fighter aircraft repair depot of the Indian Air Force is located in

a) Maharashtra
b) Odisha
c) Uttar Pradesh
d) Karnataka

Solution: a.

In the news: TH;

(Q) Infantry Day is a commemoration of an event that also marks

a) The setting up of Azad Hind Fauj.
b) The first of many contributions of British Indian armed forces in World War 1.
c) The first time that independent India was engaged in operations against an aggressor.
d) None of the above

Solution: c.
IE: Infantry Day is commemorated in remembrance and honour of all those members of the Infantry who made the supreme sacrifice fighting Pakistani Raiders in Jammu and Kashmir in 1947. Another significance of this date, October 27 1947, is that India as an independent nation was first time engaged in operations against an aggressor.

PIB:
(Q) Nearly half the Indians surveyed in the Goalkeepers Global Youth Outlook Poll said their biggest worry was unemployment. This poll was conducted by

a) Ipsos and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
b) World Economic Forum
c) Commonwealth Youth Council
d) International Youth Rights

Solution: a.

The World Development Report is an annual publication of

a) World Bank
b) World Economic Forum
c) G20
d) Devex

Solution: a.

(Q) Consider the following statements:

As per the latest Agricultural Census

1. The total number and cumulative area of small land holdings showed an increase in 2015-16 compared to 2010-11.
2. The total number and area of medium as well as large landholdings declined in 2015-16 compared to 2010-11.

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.

DATA POINT

Smaller farms on the rise

The total number and cumulative area of small land holdings showed an increase in 2015-16 compared to 2010-11, according to the latest Agricultural Census. Further, the number and area of large holdings decreased by over 15%. A look at the trend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>2010-11 (mn)</th>
<th>2015-16 (mn)</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small (&lt;1 hectare)</td>
<td>117.25</td>
<td>125.86</td>
<td>7.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (1 - 4 ha)</td>
<td>19.72</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>-2.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large (4 - 10 ha)</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>-15.31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>2010-11 (million ha)</th>
<th>2015-16 (million ha)</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>70.71</td>
<td>74.39</td>
<td>5.20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>71.52</td>
<td>68.52</td>
<td>-4.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>-15.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Agricultural Census 2015-16

Data Point, 4th October 2018;

(Q) ‘Operational land’ is used wholly or partly for agricultural production. As per the Agriculture Census 2015-16, since 1970-71

1. The number of landholdings have more than doubled.
2. The average size of landholdings have more than halved.
3. There is a higher involvement of women in farm activities but the number of female landholders has remained relatively the same.
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: a.

ToI: The figures show landholdings have doubled in past 45 years (from 71 million in 1970-71 to 146 million in 2015-16), resulting in decline in average size of farms by more than 50%. There is a rise in the number of female land holders, a possible indicator of higher involvement in farm activities, the provisional agriculture census 2015-16, has revealed.

(Q) Consider the following statements about the Agriculture Census carried out by the States/Union Territories under the overall technical and administrative support from the Ministry of Agriculture:

1. The first such census was conducted in India in 1955-56.  
2. They are carried out at five-year intervals.  
3. It is a part of the World Agriculture Census Programme, managed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2  
b) 2 only  
c) 1 and 3  
d) 2 and 3
Solution: d.

AgriCensus: In view of the importance of agriculture, the basic data on structure and characteristics of agricultural holdings, Govt. of India has been conducting comprehensive Agriculture Census every five years as part of the World Agriculture Census Programme (FAO). The first comprehensive Agriculture Census was carried out with Agriculture year 1970-71 as the reference.

The Census is carried out by the States/Union Territories under the overall technical and administrative support from the Ministry of Agriculture. It is a Central Sector Scheme being financed completely by the Govt. of India.

ToI;

(Q) Around 20% of crop residue in India is burnt annually. Which of the following is/are some of the reasons for this, despite the practice being banned?

1. Shortage of agricultural labour
2. Short interval between crops
3. Mechanisation of farming

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

Justification for statement 1 (DTE): Asks a farmer, “If I can clear my farm using a one-rupee matchbox, why will I spend thousands?”. According to him, the village had some 400 labourers a decade ago who would do this job. But all of them have migrated for better options. “Labour costs are very high now,” he laments.

Justification for statement 2: There is widespread burning post-paddy harvest because farmers in Punjab and Haryana are caught in a vicious time-cycle—they have to harvest rice and cultivate wheat in a space of 10-15 days.

Justification for statement 3: Farm mechanisation has killed the practice of using paddy stalk and straw as fodder, and burning is the only way out. “The cuttings left by the machines are too sharp. Not only do they injure us, even animals find it difficult to graze on,” says a farmer.

In the news: TH; PRS Report Summary; IE (2017);

(Q) As per the National Crime Records Bureau’s Prison Statistics India 2015 report

1. Occupancy rates at the all India level was more than 100 per cent.
2. Two-thirds of the people in Indian jails are people not convicted of any crime and currently on trial in a court of law.

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.

TH: The report calls overcrowding as “one of the biggest problems faced by prison inmates.” It results in poor hygiene and lack of sleep among other problems. “Keeping in view the human rights of the prisoners, it is essential that they are given reasonable space and facilities in jails,” the report says. The occupancy rate at the all India level at the end of 2015 was 114.4 per cent. Sixty-seven per cent of the people in Indian jails are undertrials — people not convicted of any crime and currently on trial in a court of law.

In the news: TH1; TH2;
XI. MAPS/ PLACES

(Q) Consider the following statements:

1. No person in India can see the sun set over the Bay of Bengal.
2. The Lakshadweep atolls form part of the submarine Maldive Ridge, which form the atolls of the Maldives.

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 second statement was a hint, for you to think reconsider the first statement. Persons on the west coast of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands can witness the sun set over the Bay of Bengal.

Britannica: To the southeast of the Arabian Sea the Lakshadweep atolls form part of the submarine Maldive Ridge, which extends farther south into the Indian Ocean where it rises above the surface to form the atolls of the Maldives.

Improvisation (TH: a mistake in the first sentence; see Sunday Magazine; it has been corrected online): "As the evening sun begins its descent into the Bay of Bengal off Chennai's coast."

(Q) Consider the following statements about the Lonar crater, classed as a national geo-heritage site since 1979:

1. It is about 88-million years old.
2. It is earth's largest and only hyper velocity impact crater in basaltic rock.
3. It lies to the west of Ajanta caves.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: c.

NatGeo: Lonar is one of Maharashtra's best-kept secrets. Home to the Earth's largest and only hyper-velocity impact crater in basaltic rock, Lonar is named after the demon, Lonasura, and is ringed by fascinating temples, including one with erotic sculptures reminiscent of Khajuraho. The crater was formed fifty-two thousand years ago, when a meteor crashed into the earth at an estimated speed of 90,000kmph, weighing 2 million tonnes. It gouged a hole that was 1.8km wide and 150m deep. Over time, the jungle took over, and a perennial stream transformed the base into a tranquil, green locale. It lies about 150km southeast of Ajanta caves.
**SWS:** Hypervelocity is a velocity in excess of about 4 kilometres per second. An asteroid or comet colliding with the Earth has a minimum velocity of about 11 km/sec, and is thus well in the hypervelocity regime. The important fact about a hypervelocity impactor is that its kinetic energy is in excess of the energy that the body would release in an explosion if its mass were entirely composed of high explosive! The apparent diameter of a hypervelocity impact crater on Earth is very roughly given by multiplying the impactor diameter by a factor of 10 to 20.

Improvisation: **TH:**

(Q) Declared a national geo-heritage site in 1975, this island is estimated to be geological formation that goes back to a time when Greater India broke away from Madagascar. It is renowned for its unique hexagonal columns of basaltic lava. This is

a) St. Mary’s Island, Karnataka
b) Divar Island, Goa
c) Umananda Island, Assam
d) Munroe Island, Kerala

**Solution: a.**

In the news (TH): An ancient circular lake created by a meteorite strike in Maharashtra and a hexagonal mosaic of basaltic rocks in an island off Udupi are poised to become global geoparks, under a Geological Survey of India (GSI) plan. Lonar Lake in Maharashtra and St. Mary’s Island and Malpe beach in coastal Karnataka are the GSI’s candidates for UNESCO Global Geopark Network status.

➢ St. Mary’s Island, declared a national geo-heritage site in 1975, is estimated to be an 88-million-year-old formation that goes back to a time when Greater India broke away from Madagascar.

(Q) There are four fundamental features to a UNESCO Global Geopark. These features are an absolute prerequisite for an area to become a UNESCO Global Geopark. Which of the following are among these four features?

1. The area must have geological heritage of international value.
2. The area must be managed by a body having legal existence recognised under national legislation.
3. The area must have visibility, viz. visitors as well as local people need to be able to find relevant information on the area.

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.**

**Fundamental Features of UNESCO Global Geopark:** The fourth feature is **Networking:** A UNESCO Global Geopark is not only about cooperation with the local people living in the UNESCO Global Geopark area, but also about cooperating with other UNESCO Global Geoparks through the Global Geoparks Network (GGN), and regional networks for UNESCO Global Geoparks, in order to learn from each other and, as a network, improve the quality of the label UNESCO Global Geopark. Working together with international partners is the main reason for UNESCO Global Geoparks to be a member of an international network such as the GGN. Membership of the GGN is obligatory for UNESCO Global Geoparks.

Improvisation: **TH:**
(Q) Sinjar mountains, recently in the news, is a mountain range found in
a) Afghanistan  
b) Iran  
c) Iraq  
d) Turkey

Solution: c.

TH: “I first met Murad in 2016 in New York, and subsequently in London and Davos. I couldn’t help but recall how far the world had come since the plight of the Yazidis first hit the headlines. Most people hadn’t heard of this tiny, pre-Islamic minority community of Iraqis living in the Sinjar mountains, until the ISIS came along to terrorise, kidnap and essentially annihilate them.”

(Britannica) North-west Iraq, near Iraq-Syria border.

(Q) Mount Vesuvius, sometimes in the news due to excavations of an ancient city that was buried under volcanic debris and lava following its eruption, is situated in
a) Italy  
b) Japan  
c) Greece  
d) Chile

Solution: a.

In the news (BBC): Archaeologists in Italy have uncovered an inscription they say may show that the history books have been wrong for centuries. Historians have long believed that Mount Vesuvius erupted on 24 August 79 AD, destroying the nearby Roman city of Pompeii. But now, an inscription has been uncovered dated to mid-October – almost two months later.
Consider the following statements:

Brazil has borders with every South American country except Chile only.

The virus strain in the recent outbreak of Zika Virus Fever in Rajasthan is closely related to the Brazilian strain from 2015.

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.

TH1; TH2: In Rajasthan, where 72 have been infected, Zika is causing fever, rash, muscle and joint pain. But the French Polynesian and Brazilian outbreaks were linked to deadlier conditions such as microcephaly, in which the child of a Zika-infected mother is born with an abnormally small head. In rare cases, patients also developed Guillain-Barre syndrome, which causes potentially fatal muscle weakness. Indian officials are watching out for these complications, since the Rajasthan strain is closely related to the Brazilian strain.
(Q) The Migingo Island, considered to be a fisherman’s paradise, is claimed by which two countries?

a) Kazakhstan and Russia  
b) Turkey and Greece  
c) Kenya and Uganda  
d) China and Philippines

Solution: c.

TH: The densely populated Migingo Island in the waters of Lake Victoria is barely a quarter of a hectare large. There’s little else but a few bars, brothels and a tiny port. Nevertheless, for over a decade, Migingo has been a source of tension between Uganda and Kenya, who have been unable to decide to whom it really belongs. They were once pushed to the brink of what some said would have been Africa’s “smallest war” over the island. While fishing communities around Lake Victoria have seen their catches slowly diminish over the years, the deep waters surrounding Migingo abound with catch such as Nile perch.

(Q) Recently inaugurated by the Chinese President, the world’s longest cross-sea bridge crosses the sea of

a) Pearl River Delta  
b) Gulf of Bo Hai  
c) Kiungchow Strait  
d) Formosa Strait
Solution: a.

BBC:

Including its access roads, the bridge spans 55km and connects Hong Kong to Macau and the mainland Chinese city of Zhuhai. Designed to withstand earthquakes and typhoons, it was built using 400,000 tonnes of steel, enough to build 60 Eiffel Towers. About 30km of its total length crosses the sea of the Pearl River delta. To allow ships through, a 6.7km section in the middle dips into an undersea tunnel that runs between two artificial islands.

(Q) Why was the Bangaram coral Island of Lakshadweep recently in the news?

a) It houses the planet's most unique corals: ones that can survive global warming.

b) The island hosted the International Conference on Status and Protection of Coral Reefs.

c) Chemicals present in sunscreens used by tourists were identified to be the cause for the death of corals here.

d) India’s first International Atoll Research Centre has been established here.

Solution: b.

PIB: The International Conference on Status and Protection of Coral Reefs (STAPCOR – 2018) with the theme "Reef for Life" was inaugurated by the Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on 22nd
October at Bangaram coral Island of Union Territory of Lakshadweep. 2018 is the third decadal International Year of Reefs (IYOR).

About IYOR: 1997 was declared the first International Year of the Reef (IYOR) in response to the increasing threats on coral reefs and their associated ecosystems, such as mangrove forests and seagrass beds. IYOR was a global effort to increase awareness and understanding on the values and threats to coral reefs, and to support related conservation, research and management efforts. Recognising that, ten years later, there continued to be an urgent need to increase awareness and understanding of coral reefs, and to further conserve and manage these valuable ecosystems, the International Coral Reef Initiative designated 2008 as the second International Year of the Reef.

(Q) With which of the following Central American countries does Mexico have borders?

1. Belize
2. Honduras
3. Guatemala
4. El Salvador

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: a.

Map Source: Britannica; Improvisation: TH.
(Q) Which one of the following Central American countries does not open out to the Pacific Ocean?

a) Nicaragua  
b) Belize  
c) Honduras  
d) El Salvador

Solution: b.

Map source: Britannica; Improvisation: TH;

(Q) Formosa Strait, often in the news, extends from

a) Southwest to Northeast between the Java and Celebes Seas  
b) South to North between the Black and Azov Seas  
c) West to East between Timor and Arafura Seas  
d) Southwest to Northeast between the South and East China Seas

Solution: d.

Taiwan Strait, also called Formosa Strait, lies between the coast of China’s Fukien province and the island of Taiwan (also known as Formosa). The strait extends from southwest to northeast between the South and East China seas.

In the news: TH;
The Yucatan Peninsula forms a divider between the

- a) Gulf of California and the Pacific Ocean
- b) Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea
- c) Korea Bay and the Bohai Sea
- d) Gulf of Carpentaria and the Coral Sea

**Solution:** b.

**Yucatan Peninsula:** A northeastern projection of Central America, lying between the Gulf of Mexico to the west and north and the Caribbean Sea to the east.

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**BBC:** It is hard to imagine billions of tonnes of rock suddenly start to splosh about like a liquid – but that is what happened when an asteroid struck the Earth 66 million years ago. Scientists have now put together a detailed picture of the minutes following the giant impact. This is the colossal event that wiped out the dinosaurs. The analysis of rocks drilled in 2016 from the leftover Chicxulub crater show they underwent a process of fluidisation. The pulverised material literally began to behave as if it were a substance like water. When everything had settled down, a crater roughly 200km wide and 1km deep would remain. This is the feature (the Chicxulub crater) that is now buried under sediments in the Gulf of Mexico, close to the port of Chicxulub.
XII. Miscellaneous

(Q) In 1997, some 40,000 Brus got displaced from

a) Assam to Mizoram
b) Mizoram to Tripura
c) Tripura to Assam
d) Mizoram to Manipur

Solution: b.

TH: “The displacement of some 40,000 Bru people from Mizoram in 1997 got much less traction than that of the Kashmiri Pandits seven years before. But making them return home from relief camps in adjoining Tripura has been equally frustrating for the Centre and the north-eastern States for almost 21 years now. A few families have accepted the package offered by the Centre and returned; but most of the internally displaced refugees have refused to budge unless they get a better deal.”

(Q) The metric system – the universal system of measurement – was created by

a) India
b) France
c) USA
d) CERN

Solution: b.

BBC: “We don’t generally notice measurement because it’s pretty much the same everywhere we go. Today, the metric system, which was created in France, is the official system of measurement for every country in the world except three: the United States, Liberia and Myanmar, also known as Burma. And even then, the metric system is still used for purposes such as global trade. But imagine a world where every time you travelled you had to use different conversions for measurements, as we do for currency. This was the case before the French Revolution in the late 18th Century, where weights and measures varied not only from nation to nation, but also within nations. In France alone, it was estimated at that time that at least 250,000 different units of weights and measures were in use during the Ancien Régime. The French Revolution changed all that.”

(Q) Of the five Nobel prizes, four are given by Sweden and one by

a) Norway
b) Finland
c) Denmark
d) All five are given by Sweden

Solution: a.

The Nobel Peace Prize is given by Norway.

Q1, TH Sunday Quiz;