

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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Important News Articles

GS II

1. No local body members in J&K from tomorrow - The Hindu

Relevance: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

News:

- The people of Jammu and Kashmir, who have not had **any Assembly representation since 2018**, will cease to have any electoral representation at the grassroots level as well.

Key Highlights

- The five-year term of almost 30,000 local representatives is set to expire
- There is no clarity on when the next election to municipal bodies and panchayats will be held
 - as the Union government has decided to first conduct a delimitation exercise.
- Panchayat elections **were last held in the erstwhile State of J&K in late 2018**.
- A total of 27,281 panches (panchayat members) and sarpanches (village headmen) were elected, and **took the oath of office on January 10, 2019**.
- There are **12,776 vacant sarpanch and panch seats in J&K**.

Delimitation proposals

- the Panchayati Raj Department sent letters to all block development officers in J&K, directing them to submit detailed proposals to redraw the boundaries of municipal wards and panch constituencies
 - in such a way that each will have an equal number of electors, as far as possible.
- On December 11, the Supreme Court directed the Election Commission of India to hold Assembly elections in J&K by September 30, 2024.
- In September 2018, the Union government transferred the functions of 29 subjects to the panchayats under the 73rd amendment to the Constitution.
- J&K had partially adopted the recommendations after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act**
 - providing a constitutional status to the panchayati raj institutions, was passed by the Parliament in 1993.
- In 2020, the Union Cabinet approved the adaptation of the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989 that was amended by the Ministry of Home Affairs the same year.
- This paved the way for the creation of District Development Councils in the UT, whose members are directly elected by the people
 - The elected members of the legislative Assembly have no say in this process.
- The move will help establish all the three tiers of grass root-level democracy like in other parts of the country

Prelims Takeaway

- District Development Councils
- 73rd amendment

2. India, Saudi sign Haj agreement, this year pilgrim quota 1.75 lakh - Indian Express

Relevance: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes

News:

- India and Saudi Arabia on Sunday signed a **bilateral agreement under which New Delhi has been allocated a quota of 1,75,025 pilgrims** for this year's annual Haj pilgrimage.
- The Government's **initiative for encouraging participation under the Ladies without Mehram (LWM) category** was also discussed and lauded, it added

Prelims Takeaway

- Mecca
- Haj pilgrimage

Haj Subsidy

- It refers to **discounted airfares given by government-owned airlines**.
- It also includes **assistance to Muslim pilgrims for domestic travel** to reach specially designed Haj departure airport terminals, lodging, medical care and meals.
- The Haj subsidy was first introduced in 1932 when the British government provided for a government-funded Haj committee and named Bombay and Calcutta as two ports from where Muslims could embark upon their pilgrimage.

The Haj pilgrimage

- The Haj is an **annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca**, Saudi Arabia, the holiest city for Muslims.
- It is considered to be a mandatory religious duty for all adult Muslims physically and financially capable of doing so.

3. Shah to take stock of generic drug plan - The Hindu

Relevance: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

News:

- The **Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)** are set to operate as **Jan Aushadhi Kendras**
- The Cooperation Minister will take stock of the new initiative at the “National PACS Mega Conclave” to be held here in the national capital.

Prelims Takeaway

- Jan Aushadhi Kendras
- PACS

Key Highlights

- Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs) **provide quality generic medicines to the general public**
 - which cost 50-90% less than the branded medicines available in the open market.
- More than 2,000 types of generic medicines and about 300 surgical items are made available through the kendras to common citizens at affordable prices.
- PACS were recently allowed to operate Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendras.
- More than 4,400 PACS/cooperative societies from 34 states/UTs have submitted their online applications on the Government of India’s Department of Pharmaceuticals portal for this initiative
- Out of which, more than 2,300 cooperative societies have **already received initial approval and 149 of them are ready to function as Jan Aushadhi Kendras**

More rural jobs

- It will also **help create employment opportunities** in rural areas, it said.
- The **government has taken several steps to strengthen the PACS** including their computerisation, diversify their business activities, and put in place model bye-laws.

4. Govt. to announce quality norms for 2,500 items soon - The Hindu/ Govt to bring more products under quality norm, says Piyush Goyal - Indian Express

Relevance: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

News:

- Union Commerce, Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal said that the **Centre will soon bring Quality Control Orders (QCO) for nearly 2,500 items**.

Key Highlights

- Addressing a meeting on the 77th foundation day of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), he pointed out that there had been only 14 QCOs for 106 products till 2014
 - but this increased to 156 QCOs for 672 products by 2024.

Prelims Takeaway

- National Education Policy (NEP)-2020
- PARAKH

Prime Minister's vision

- The Prime Minister had put forth the vision of '**zero defect, zero effect**' to ensure the making of high-quality products that are sustainable, eco-friendly and have zero climate impact
- The Union Minister said the youngsters can promote e-learning
 - They can upgrade performance assessment, review, and analysis of knowledge for holistic development (PARAKH) initiatives in colleges and universities.

PARAKH

- It has been launched as part of the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020
 - that envisaged a standard-setting body to advise school boards regarding new assessment patterns and latest research, and promote collaborations between them.
- It will act as a constituent unit of the NCERT.
- It will also be tasked with holding periodic learning outcome tests like the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and State Achievement Surveys.
- It will work on three major assessment areas: large-scale assessments, school-based assessment, and examination reforms.

5. Centre notifies revised rules for quality control of pharma products - The Hindu/ Govt notifies new drug-making standards after overseas deaths - Indian Express

Relevance: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

News:

- The Union Health Ministry has announced **updated rules under Schedule M of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945**
- It aimed at **ensuring robust quality control for pharmaceutical** and biopharmaceutical products.

Prelims Takeaway

- Schedule M
- drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945

Background

- **Schedule M outlines Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)** for pharmaceutical products.
- **GMP was first introduced in 1988**, with the last amendment in June 2005.
- The revised Schedule M replaces '**Good Manufacturing Practices**' with '**Good Manufacturing Practices and Requirements of Premises, Plant and Equipment for Pharmaceutical Products.**'
- **Its aim is to align with global standards**, particularly those of the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Notified changes include:
 - the introduction of a pharmaceutical quality system (PQS)
 - quality risk management (QRM)
 - product quality review (PQR)
 - qualification and validation of equipment
 - A computerised storage system for drug products.

Manufacturer Responsibilities

- **Manufacturers are mandated to ensure the quality of pharmaceutical products**, compliance with licensing requirements, and avoidance of risks to patients.
- **Market release is allowed only after satisfactory test results of ingredients**, with retention of sufficient product samples for verification.

Categories and New Guidelines

- **Revised Schedule M includes 13 parts** with guidelines for manufacturing pharmaceutical drugs.
- **Introduces five new categories of drugs**, including those with hazardous substances (sex hormones, steroids, cytotoxic substances, biological products, and radiopharmaceuticals)

GS III

6. GST revenues reveal a dissonance in consumption growth across States - The Hindu

Relevance: Economy

News:

Uneven growth

Eight States, including Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, saw more than 15% growth in GST collections so far this year. While Gujarat and West Bengal are among the top 10 contributors with slower growth



Major States with higher growth		Major States with lower growth	
Madhya Pradesh	18.80%	Gujarat	9.50%
Maharashtra	18.20%	West Bengal	9.80%
Karnataka	18.10%	Odisha	10.70%
Haryana	17.60%	Rajasthan	10.90%
Uttar Pradesh	17.30%	Bihar	11.50%
Tamil Nadu, Telangana	16.90%	Andhra Pradesh	12.50%

Source: Ministry of Finance, Bank of Baroda research

Prelims Takeaway

- Goods and Service Tax (GST)
- GST Council

7. Aditya-L1 reaches destination, in orbit around L1 - The Hindu/ Aditya-L1, ISRO's first mission to study Sun, in final orbit; another landmark: PM - Indian Express

Relevance: Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

News:

- ISRO has achieved a significant milestone as the **Aditya-L1 spacecraft** reached its destination, the **Lagrangian point L1** recently.
- This solar mission marks **India's first observatory** dedicated to **studying the sun**.

Aditya-L1 Mission

- Launched by **ISRO** to the **L1 orbit** which is about **1.5 million km from the Earth**.
- **Objectives**
 - To study the **Sun's corona, Sun's photosphere, chromosphere, solar emissions, solar winds and flares and Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs)**.
 - To carry out **round-the-clock imaging of the Sun** without occultation, providing vital information on solar activities.

- **Mission Lifetime:** 5 years

Launch Vehicle and Payloads

- Launched using the **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)**
 - PSLV also launched the Chandrayaan-1 (2008) and the Mars Orbiter spacecraft (2013).
- **Seven payloads** on board viz.
 - Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC)
 - Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT)
 - Solar Low Energy X-ray Spectrometer (SoLEXS)

Prelims Takeaway

- Aditya L1 Mission
- Lagrange Points

- Aditya Solar wind Particle Experiment (ASPEX)
- High Energy L1 Orbiting X-ray Spectrometer (HEL10S)
- Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA)
- Advanced Tri-axial High Resolution Digital Magnetometers
- The L1 allows four payloads to directly view the sun, while three payloads conduct in-situ studies of particles and fields at the L1 point.

Future Prospects

- Aditya-L1's observations will **provide crucial information** on coronal heating, coronal mass ejections, flare activities, space weather dynamics, and particle and field propagation.
- The satellite is expected to spend its entire mission life orbiting around L1, contributing to a **deeper understanding of solar phenomena**.

Lagrange Points

- Lagrange Points are positions in space where a **small object tends to stay in a two-body gravitational system**.
- These points in space can be used by the spacecraft to **remain at these positions** with **reduced fuel consumption**.
- For two-body gravitational systems, there are a total of **five Lagrange points**, denoted as L1, L2, L3, L4 and L5.

L1 Point

- The L1 point lies between the **Sun-Earth line**, approximately 1.5 million km from Earth.
- The distance of L1 from earth is approximately **1% of the earth-sun distance**.
- This provides a unique advantage for **continuous solar observations** without occultation or eclipse.
- Currently, **four operational spacecraft** are positioned at L1, contributing to solar and heliospheric studies.
 - These include WIND, Solar and Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO), Advanced Composition Explorer (ACE) and Deep Space Climate Observatory (DISCOVER).

8. Should India study wastewater to track malaria, dengue? - The Hindu

Relevance: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

News:

Prelims Takeaway

- Malaria
- Dengue
- Wastewater Surveillance

Identifying priority pathogens

Wastewater surveillance has been routinely used for decades for tracking polio virus



Independent: Wastewater surveillance does not rely on access to healthcare and people getting tested. MANOJKUMAR

■ During the pandemic, countries relied on wastewater surveillance to track new SARS-CoV-2 variants and to know the extent of virus spread in the community

■ Many countries have used wastewater surveillance to track other diseases such as monkeypox, influenza and cholera

■ U.S. researchers have suggested that wastewater surveillance be expanded to track dengue, malaria, Zika and typhoid

■ Unlike in India, malaria and dengue outbreaks are rare in the U.S. and European countries. Developed countries also have excellent sewage network, which makes it easy to track these pathogens

■ Besides humans shedding the pathogens through stools, several mammals, including nonhuman primates, serve as reservoir hosts of malaria and dengue

■ For vector-borne diseases, wastewater surveillance is not an ideal solution in India

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

9. How has Red Sea trouble impacted India? - The Hindu

Relevance: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Context:

- A series of attacks by **Houthi militia** in Yemen on **cargo ships in the Red Sea** since November has disrupted the quickest marine route linking **Asia to Europe through the Suez Canal**.
- This has compelled ships to take a **longer route around the Cape of Good Hope**.
- It has **compounded the woes of global trade** that was already grappling with **post-pandemic challenges** and **economic slowdown**.

Impact on Indian Trade

- Major cargo shipping lines have abandoned the Red Sea route, rerouting almost 90% of western hemisphere cargo, impacting both inbound and outbound shipments from India.
- The Cape of Good Hope route is longer, costlier and causes delays in deliveries.
- The remaining 10% of Indian import or export cargo is either not moving or using a transit facility.
- Different buyer-seller contracts influence the impact, with
 - FOB (free on board) contracts burdening buyers
 - CIF (cost, insurance and freight) or C&F (cost and freight) contracts affecting exporters.
- Approximately 20-25% of consignments are being held back, with a significant increase in freight costs affecting low-value, high-volume cargo and perishables.

Impact on India's Imports

- Longer import cycles and costlier imports due to the extended route.
- Increased costs and longer delivery times could contribute to dearer final products, impacting sectors like fuel prices.
- Critical imports are being assessed for potential disruptions.

Response and International Situation

- The UN has condemned Houthi attacks, stating "no cause or grievance" justifies threats to freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.
- The US seeks more support for 'Operation Prosperity Guardian' to keep the sea lanes open and free of threats.
- India is closely monitoring the situation, with the Commerce Secretary engaging in discussions with officials and trade bodies.

Sector-Specific Impact

- Commodities, especially chemicals, plastics and petrochemicals, face the brunt due to thin margins unable to absorb higher freight costs.
- High-value, low-volume commodities may opt for airlifting, but large-volume goods are significantly impacted.

Conclusion

- The disruption in Red Sea shipping routes **poses challenges for Indian trade**, affecting both exports and imports.
- The **prolonged use of the Cape of Good Hope route**, coupled with increased freight costs, underscores the **need for resilient strategies** in the face of evolving geopolitical and maritime security situations.

10. Why have truck drivers called for a strike? - The Hindu

Relevance: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Context:

- Recently, the truck drivers commenced a month-long strike, protesting against the stringent penalties for **hit-and-run cases** under the newly enacted **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**.
- The strike led to **widespread road blockades**, causing concerns about **potential fuel shortages**.

Hit-and-Run Clause in the BNS, 2023

- Section 106 (1) prescribes imprisonment up to five years and a fine for causing death due to rash or negligent acts not amounting to culpable homicide.
- Section 106 (2) stipulates imprisonment up to ten years and a fine for causing death through rash and negligent driving not amounting to culpable homicide, with an escape without reporting the incident to a police officer or a Magistrate.

Comparison with Existing Laws

- Replacing Section 304A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the BNS increases the punishment for causing death by negligence.
- The BNS also lacks relief measures that were provided under Section 134 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.

Government's Response

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) met with the All-India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) to address the situation.
- The Home Secretary assured drivers that the new law had not been implemented, and any decision to invoke Section 106 (2) would be made after consulting AIMTC.

Truckers' Grievances

- Truck drivers oppose the steep penalties, citing monthly earnings of ₹10,000 to ₹15,000.
- Lack of consultation with drivers and absence of accident investigation protocols are also highlighted.
- Truckers emphasise the need for better traffic violation enforcement, control over tractor-trolleys, adherence to working hours, driving training and insurance provisions.

Road Accident Data

- In 2022, 4,61,312 road accidents were reported in India, resulting in 1,68,491 fatalities.
- Of these, 56% accidents and 60.5% of fatalities occurred on National and State Highways.
- Trucks accounted for 9% of total accident deaths, and hit-and-run cases constituted 18.1% of fatalities.

Issues Beyond Penalties

- Truck drivers are a vulnerable category of road users and easy targets for the police who tend to deem drivers of heavier vehicles guilty.
- Challenges faced by heavy vehicle drivers include road lane assignments, lack of footpaths and issues of driver fatigue.
- Recommendations for addressing driver fatigue include regulation of working hours and improvement of truck cabin ergonomics.
- The Chairman of the Institute of Road Traffic Education calls for police training and better use of forensic evidence in the accident investigations.

11. How AI is being harnessed in the treatment of cancer - Indian Express

Relevance: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

Context:

- As cancer cases rise, Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH) aims to address the **shortage of specialists** by implementing **artificial intelligence (AI)**.
- The hospital has initiated a project called the '**Bio-Imaging Bank**,' leveraging deep learning to create **cancer-specific algorithms for early-stage detection**.

Bio-Imaging Bank Project

- Objective: To establish a comprehensive repository integrating radiology and pathology images with clinical information, outcome data, and treatment specifics.
- Initially concentrating on head and neck cancers and lung cancers, the project aims to compile data from a minimum of 1000 patients for each cancer type.
- The project involves training and testing AI algorithms for tasks like screening for lymph node metastases, nucleus segmentation and classification, biomarker prediction and therapy response prediction.
- Funded by the Department of Biotechnology, in collaboration with IIT-Bombay, RGCIRC-New Delhi, AIIMS-New Delhi and PGIMER-Chandigarh.

AI in Early Cancer Detection

- AI contributes significantly to cancer detection by emulating the human brain's information processing.
- In cancer diagnosis, AI analyses radiological and pathological images, learning from extensive datasets to recognise unique features associated with various cancers.
- It facilitates early detection by identifying tissue changes and potential malignancies.

Current Scenario

- TMH has added data from 60,000 patients to the biobank in the last year.
- It has also started using AI to reduce radiation exposure for paediatric patients undergoing CT scans, achieving a 40% reduction in radiation.
- AI algorithms on a pilot basis are also employed in the ICU for thoracic radiology, providing a 98% accuracy in diagnosing conditions related to the chest area.

Future Prospects

- In the future, AI is poised to play a transformative role in cancer treatment, particularly in mitigating fatalities in rural India.
- Doctors envision a future where AI facilitates swift cancer detection with a simple click, potentially eliminating the need for extensive tests.
- AI is anticipated in tailoring treatment approaches based on diverse patient profiles, thereby optimising therapy outcomes.
- Through continuous learning, AI enhances accuracy, ensuring timely cancer diagnoses, improving patient outcomes, and aiding healthcare professionals in decision-making processes.
- However, debates arise about potential replacement of human radiologists, facing regulatory scrutiny and resistance from some doctors and health institutions.

12. SUPREME COURT LEGAL SERVICES COMMITTEE - Indian Express

Relevance: Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context:

- **Justice BR Gavai** was recently nominated as the new Chairman of the **Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC)**.

Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC)

- The SCLSC operates under Section 3A of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
- Objective: To provide free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of society within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.
- The Committee is constituted by the Central Authority (NALSA).
- Under Section 27 of the 1987 Act, the Centre is empowered to make rules in consultation with the CJI, by notification, to carry out the provisions of the Act.

Composition of SCLSC

- As of now, SCLSC comprises a Chairman and nine members nominated by the CJI.
- Rule 10 of NALSA Rules, 1995, outlines the criteria for members' strength, experience and qualifications.
- The CJI nominates both the chairman and other members, with the authority to appoint the Secretary to the Committee.
- The Committee can also appoint officers and other employees as prescribed by the Centre, in consultation with the CJI.

Need for Legal Services

- Article 39A of the Indian Constitution, emphasises the state's duty to promote justice and provide free legal aid, ensuring equal opportunity.
- Articles 14 (right to equality) and 22(1) (rights to be informed of grounds for arrest) also make it obligatory for the State to ensure
 - equality before the law
 - a legal system that promotes justice based on equal opportunity
- The idea of legal aid programs was proposed in the 1950s, and a national committee under Justice PN Bhagwati was established in 1980 to monitor legal aid activities.

Legal Services Authorities Act

- Enacted in 1987, the Act provides a statutory foundation for legal aid programs, aiming to offer free and competent legal services to eligible groups.
 - These include women, children, SC/ST and EWS categories, industrial workers, disabled persons and others.
- NALSA, established in 1995, monitors and evaluates legal aid implementation, laying down policies for availability.
- State Legal Services Authorities (SLSA), District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) and Taluk Legal Services Committees form a nationwide network to implement legal aid programs.
- It also disburses funds and grants to State Legal Services Authorities and NGOs for implementing legal aid schemes and programmes.

Hierarchy of Legal Service Authorities

- SLSAs, headed by the Chief Justice of the respective High Court, implement NALSA's policies, give free legal services to people and conduct Lok Adalats.
- DLSAs, chaired by District Judges, operate in districts, providing various legal services.
- Taluk Legal Services Committees, led by senior civil judges, function in taluks, organising legal awareness camps, offering free legal services, supplying and obtaining certified order copies and other legal documents etc.

Mentorship
India

Quick Look

1. Goods and Services Tax (GST)

- Recently, the GST authorities in India have identified 4,153 bogus firms engaged in suspected evasion of input tax credit (ITC), amounting to around Rs 12,036 crore during the October-December 2023 period.
- Maharashtra and Delhi top the list in terms of the number of bogus firms and the amount of suspected tax evasion.
- GST is a value-added tax levied on most goods and services sold for domestic consumption.
- Paid by consumers, but it is remitted to the government by the businesses selling the goods and services.
- Applicable on 'supply' of goods or services as against the old concept on the manufacture of goods or on sale of goods or on provision of services.
- Based on the principle of destination-based consumption taxation as against the present principle of origin-based taxation.
- India has dual GST with the Centre and the States simultaneously levying tax on a common base.
- Import of goods or services are treated as inter-state supplies and subject to Integrated Goods & Services Tax (IGST) in addition to the applicable customs duties.
- GST rates are mutually agreed upon by the Centre and the States.
- The rates are notified on the recommendation of the GST Council.

2. Night Landing at Kargil ALG

- An Indian Air Force (IAF) C-130 Super Hercules tactical transport aircraft recently executed a night landing at the Kargil airstrip, situated near the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan.
- This accomplishment marks the first night landing at the Advanced Landing Ground (ALG) in Kargil and involved a team of Garud special forces.
 - The Kargil ALG is located at an altitude of around 10,000 feet and features a restricted airstrip with a unidirectional approach surrounded by rough terrain.
- The landing showcased enhanced capabilities in executing specialised missions round the clock in challenging terrains.
- In the broader region, the Indian Air Force has established airfields at various locations, including Srinagar, Awantipora, Udhampur, Jammu, Leh, Thoise, Nyoma, Fukche, and Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO).
- The Defence Ministry has undertaken projects to upgrade and operationalize Advanced Landing Grounds (ALGs) close to the border, with a focus on areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.

3. Project Veer Gatha

- It is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Education instituted under the Gallantry Awards Portal (GAP) in 2021.
- Objective: To disseminate the details of acts of bravery of the Gallantry Awardees among the students to raise the spirit of patriotism and instil the values of civic consciousness.
- It provides a platform to the school students to do creative projects/activities based on gallantry award winners.
- As part of this, the students frame different projects through various media like art, poems, essays and multimedia on these gallantry award winners.
- Best projects are awarded at national level by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Education.

4. Sohrai Painting

- Recently, a Bengal village began their New Year with workshop on ancient indigenous art i.e. Sohrai Painting.
- It is an indigenous mural art form that dates back to the Meso-chalcolithic period (9000-5000 BC).

- Theme: Natural elements of the universe which includes forests, rivers, animals amongst others.
- These ancient paintings are made by tribal women with the use of natural substances like charcoal, clay or soil.
- The very primitive form of Sohrai art was in the form of cave paintings.
- It is practiced by indigenous communities, particularly in the States of Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, and West Bengal.
- The region of Hazaribagh in Jharkhand has received the GI tag for this art form.
- It is the art of the women of the Kurmi, Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Agaria, Ghatwal tribes.
- Sohrai paintings are distinctive for their vibrant colours, intricate patterns, and symbolic motifs;
- There is a Sohrai festival held every year, marking the harvesting season and the arrival of winter.

5. Chandra X-ray Observatory

- Chandra X-ray Observatory recently captured a stunning image of 30 Doradus B.
 - It is a supernova remnant that is part of a vibrant region of space where stars have been forming for millions of years.
- It was launched by NASA on July 23, 1999.
- It is a telescope specially designed to detect X-ray emission from very hot regions of the Universe, such as exploded stars, clusters of galaxies and matter around black holes.
- Because X-rays are absorbed by Earth's atmosphere, Chandra must orbit above it, up to an altitude of 139,000 km (86,500 mi) in space.

6. Indrayani River

- It is a tributary of the Bhima River, which again is a tributary of the Krishna River.
- It originates in Kurvande village near Lonavala, a hill station in the Sahyadri mountains of Maharashtra.
- Fed by rain, it flows east from there to meet the Bhima River.
- It follows a course mostly north of the city of Pune.
- The river has great religious importance, and the two sacred towns of Alandi and Dehu are situated on its banks.
 - Dehu is known to be a sacred place for being the hometown of the poet Saint Tukaram, who was a popular saint of Maharashtra.
 - Alandi holds the samadhi of the poet Dnyaneshwar.
- Valvan Dam at Kamshet, situated on the Indrayani River, is a hydroelectric generating station.

7. Pallas Fish Eagle

- After 10 years, the Pallas fish eagle was recently sighted in the Chilika during the bird census carried out by the Chilika wildlife division.
- Also known as Pallas's sea eagle or band-tailed fish eagle, it is a large, brownish sea eagle.
- It can be seen near lakes, marshes and large rivers, from lowlands to 5,000 metres of elevation.
- It is partially migratory and feeds primarily on fish.
- It breeds usually near water in a large nest placed in a tall tree.
- It is found in the east Palearctic in Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, China, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- IUCN Status: Endangered
- Humans contribute to the decline of this species through habitat degradation, pollution, and draining or overfishing lakes.

8. Thanjavur Doll

- Thanjavur dolls are facing stiff competition from electronic toys and e-commerce platforms, besides a severe labour crunch and shortage of clay.
- The craft was brought to Thanjavur by Maratha ruler Raja Serfoji in the early 19th Century.

- Thanjavur dolls are primarily of two kinds, one is the bobble-head version, and the other is the tilting doll version.
- Materials used
 - Doll-makers use papier-mache, POP and other materials for the body.
 - A mixture of vandal mann (fine silt deposited by rushing streams of water), kali mann (clayey riverbed mud), and manal (loose aggregate) is required to make the dolls' pedestals.
 - Copper sulphate powder is added as a fungicide.
- The dancing doll has four sections, each balancing on the other with the help of inner metal loop hooks that create the light bobbing movement.
- It earned the Geographical Indication tag in 2009.



Mentorship
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Prelims Track Question**Q1. Consider the following statements about Delimitation**

1. Delimitation is the process of redrawing electoral boundaries to ensure equal representation in legislative bodies.
2. The Delimitation Commission is a constitutional body established under Article 82 of the Indian Constitution.
3. The last Delimitation Commission in India was constituted in 2002 and completed its task in 2008.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the Hajj pilgrimage

1. Hajj is one of the Five Pillars of Islam and is obligatory for every financially and physically capable Muslim at least once in their lifetime.
2. The annual Hajj pilgrimage takes place in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, during the month of Ramadan.
3. The Government of India facilitates the Hajj pilgrimage by providing financial assistance to selected pilgrims through the Hajj Committee of India.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Q3. Consider the following statements about Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)

1. PACS are grassroots-level cooperative credit institutions providing financial services to farmers in India.
2. PACS are set to operate as Jan Aushadi Kendras
3. The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development is responsible for the formation and regulation of PACS in India.

4. PACS typically operate at the village or mandal level and are instrumental in disbursing short-term credit to farmers.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. Only three
- D. All four

Q4. Consider the following statements about "Zero Defect, Zero Effect"

1. It is a government initiative aimed at promoting quality manufacturing with minimal environmental impact.
2. The initiative encourages manufacturers to adopt energy-efficient technologies and reduce their carbon footprint.
3. It primarily focuses on the service sector to ensure high-quality service delivery without any negative environmental consequences.
4. The Quality Council of India (QCI) is actively involved in the implementation and monitoring of "Zero Defect, Zero Effect."

How many of the statements given above is/are INcorrect?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. Only three
- D. All four

Q5. Consider the following statements about Schedule M, which outlines Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)

1. Schedule M is part of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945, and provides guidelines for the Good Manufacturing Practices of pharmaceutical products.
2. The recent revision of Schedule M replaces 'Good Manufacturing Practices' with 'Good Manufacturing Practices and Requirements of Premises, Plant and Equipment for Pharmaceutical Products.'
3. The amendments introduced in the revised Schedule M include the incorporation of a pharmaceutical quality system, quality risk management, and a computerised storage system for drug products.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Q6. Consider the following statements with reference to Aditya L1 Mission, seen in the news recently

1. Launched by ISRO, it is India's first observatory dedicated to studying the sun.
2. It will continuously view the Sun without any occultation or eclipse.
3. It was launched using the LVM3 (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk III).

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Q7. Consider the following statements about Red Sea

1. It is an inlet of the Indian Ocean between Africa and Asia.
2. Connected to the Indian ocean in south through Sinai Peninsula and Gulf of Suez.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q8. With reference to the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, consider the following statements

1. It increases the punishment for causing death by negligence when compared to Indian Penal Code (IPC).
2. It lacks relief measures that were provided under Section 134 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q9. What is the primary objective of the 'Bio-Imaging Bank' project seen in the news recently?

- A. To establish a repository to create cancer-specific algorithms for early-stage detection.
- B. To create a centralized database for threatened species so as to plan actions for their conservation.
- C. To create a centralized database for storing patient records and clinical outcomes.
- D. To establish a repository of the traditional knowledge, especially about medicinal plants and formulations used in Indian systems of medicine.

Q10. With reference to Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC), consider the following statements

1. It was formed under Section 3A of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
2. It aims to provide free legal services to the weaker sections of society under the Supreme Court's jurisdiction.
3. It comprises a Chairman and nine members nominated by the Central Government.
4. The Committee can appoint officers and other employees as prescribed by the Centre, in consultation with the CJI.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. Only three
- D. All four

Prelims Track Answer

Answer 1 Option A is correct

Explanation

- Delimitation involves the readjustment of territorial boundaries of electoral constituencies to maintain equality in the representation of people in legislative bodies. The goal is to ensure a fair distribution of seats, considering population changes over time. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Delimitation Commission is indeed a statutory body, but it is established under the Delimitation Act of 2002, not under Article 82 of the Indian Constitution.
- Article 82 deals with the representation of the Anglo-Indian community in the House of the People (Lok Sabha). **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The last Delimitation Commission in India was set up in 2002, but its work was frozen through a constitutional amendment in 2008.
- The freeze is still in effect, and as of the last available information (up to my knowledge cutoff in January 2022), a new Delimitation Commission has not been appointed. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

Answer 2 Option B is correct

Explanation

- Haj is indeed one of the Five Pillars of Islam, and it is mandatory for every financially and physically capable Muslim to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.
- This pilgrimage is a significant religious obligation. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The annual Haj pilgrimage does take place in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, but it occurs during specific days of the Islamic month of Dhu al-Hijjah, not during the month of Ramadan.
- The pilgrimage includes rituals performed over several days, culminating in the celebration of Eid al-Adha. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The Government of India does facilitate the Haj pilgrimage by providing financial assistance to selected pilgrims.
- The process is managed through the Haj Committee of India, which organises the pilgrimage, selects pilgrims, and oversees various arrangements for their journey. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 3 Option C is correct

Explanation

- PACS, or Primary Agricultural Credit Societies, are indeed grassroots-level cooperative credit institutions. They play a crucial role in providing financial services, including credit, to farmers in India. These societies are designed to meet the credit needs of their members, primarily small and marginal farmers. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) are set to operate as Jan Aushadi Kendras. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- While NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) plays a significant role in rural credit policies and agricultural development, the formation and regulation of PACS fall under the jurisdiction of the State Cooperative Banks and the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC).
- NABARD provides financial assistance and support for their development. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- PACS typically operate at the grassroots level, often at the village or mandal level.
- They are instrumental in disbursing short-term credit to farmers, enabling them to meet their agricultural needs during different stages of the cropping cycle. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**

Answer 4 Option A is correct

Explanation

- "Zero Defect, Zero Effect" is a government initiative that emphasizes high-quality manufacturing processes (zero defects) while minimizing the environmental impact of those processes (zero effect).
- The goal is to promote sustainable and eco-friendly manufacturing practices. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The initiative indeed encourages manufacturers to adopt energy-efficient technologies and reduce their carbon footprint.
- This aligns with the broader objective of promoting environmental sustainability in manufacturing. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

- While "Zero Defect, Zero Effect" is applicable across various industries, it is not primarily focused on the service sector.
- The initiative's main emphasis is on manufacturing and production processes. **Hence, statement 3 is INCORRECT.**
- The Quality Council of India (QCI) is actively involved in the implementation and monitoring of "Zero Defect, Zero Effect."
- QCI plays a crucial role in ensuring that the standards of quality and environmental impact are adhered to by participating industries. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**

Answer 5 Option C is correct

Explanation

- Schedule M is indeed part of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945. It provides comprehensive guidelines for ensuring Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) for pharmaceutical products, emphasising the quality control aspects of production. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The recent revision of Schedule M has indeed replaced the term 'Good Manufacturing Practices' with 'Good Manufacturing Practices and Requirements of Premises, Plant and Equipment for Pharmaceutical Products.' This change reflects a broader focus on quality control measures throughout the manufacturing process. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The amendments introduced in the revised Schedule M include the incorporation of a pharmaceutical quality system (PQS), quality risk management (QRM), and a computerised storage system for drug products.
- These changes are aimed at aligning GMP recommendations with global standards, particularly those of the World Health Organization (WHO). **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 6 Option B is correct

Explanation

- Launched by ISRO, Aditya-L1 Mission marks India's first observatory dedicated to studying the sun. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The spacecraft has been placed in a halo orbit around the Lagrangian point L1.
- The L1 point that lies between the Sun-Earth line provides a unique advantage for continuous solar observations without

occultation or eclipse. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

- Launched using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) with seven payloads on board. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- Aditya-L1's observations will provide crucial information on coronal heating, coronal mass ejections, flare activities, space weather dynamics, and particle and field propagation.
- Mission Lifetime: 5 years

Answer 7 Option A is correct

Explanation

- The Red Sea is an inlet of the Indian Ocean between Africa and Asia. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
One of the most saline bodies of water in the world.
- Bordering Countries: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea and Djibouti.
- It is connected to the Indian ocean in south through the Bab el Mandeb strait and the Gulf of Aden. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- In the north are the Sinai Peninsula, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Gulf of Suez (leading to the Suez Canal).
- Occupies a part of Great Rift Valley (Afro-Arabian Rift Valley).

Answer 8 Option D is correct

Explanation

- The truck drivers are protesting against the stringent penalties for hit-and-run cases under the newly enacted Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023.
- Section 106 (1) prescribes imprisonment up to five years and a fine for causing death due to rash or negligent acts not amounting to culpable homicide.
- Section 106 (2) stipulates imprisonment up to ten years and a fine for causing death through rash and negligent driving not amounting to culpable homicide, with an escape without reporting the incident to a police officer or a Magistrate.
- Replacing Section 304A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the BNS increases the punishment for causing death by negligence. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The BNS also lacks relief measures that were provided under Section 134 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

Answer 9 Option A is correct**Explanation**

- The Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH) has initiated a project called the 'Bio-Imaging Bank,' leveraging deep learning to create cancer-specific algorithms for early-stage detection.
- Objective: To establish a comprehensive repository integrating radiology and pathology images with clinical information, outcome data, and treatment specifics. **Hence, option A is correct.**
- The project involves training and testing AI algorithms for tasks like screening for lymph node metastases, nucleus segmentation and classification, biomarker prediction and therapy response prediction.
- Funded by the Department of Biotechnology, in collaboration with IIT-Bombay, RGCIRC-New Delhi, AIIMS-New Delhi and PGIMER-Chandigarh.

Answer 10 Option C is correct**Explanation**

- The Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC) operates under Section

3A of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**

- Objective: To provide free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of society within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The Committee is constituted by the Central Authority (NALSA).
- Under Section 27 of the 1987 Act, the Centre is empowered to make rules in consultation with the CJI, by notification, to carry out the provisions of the Act.
- As of now, SCLSC comprises a Chairman and nine members nominated by the CJI.
- Rule 10 of NALSA Rules, 1995, outlines the criteria for members' strength, experience and qualifications.
- The CJI nominates both the chairman and other members, with the authority to appoint the Secretary to the Committee. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- The Committee can also appoint officers and other employees as prescribed by the Centre, in consultation with the CJI. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**

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