

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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1. Regulation by statute does not rob a varsity of minority status: Justice Chandrachud - The Hindu/ SC: Regulation doesn't take away character of minority institution - Indian Express
2. HC refuses to declare election of 4 MPs, 8 MLAs null and void - The Hindu
3. India, U.K. sign two deals during Defence Minister's visit - The Hindu
4. Rapid rise in Web blocking orders, shows RTI reply - The Hindu
5. Govt sets up task force to resolve trade barrier issues for exporters - Indian Express/ Commerce ministry sets up task force to resolve trade barrier issues for exporters - The Economic Times
6. Nasa launches Peregrine lander to explore Moon's 'Bay of Stickiness' - India today
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Important News Articles

GS II

1. Regulation by statute does not rob a varsity of minority status: Justice Chandrachud - The Hindu/ SC: Regulation doesn't take away character of minority institution - Indian Express

Relevance: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

News:

- A seven-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India observed that an **educational institution does not lose its minority status** merely on the ground that its administration is regulated by a statute.

Prelims Takeaway

- S. Azeez Basha vs Union of India
- Article 30

Key Highlights

- The court noted that an **educational institution need not offer just religious courses**.
- **Article 30** of the Constitution does not envisage that the administration of the educational institution ought to be absolutely by the members of a minority community.
- The administration could be secular and students from any community could get admission
- The court is considering a reference on questions about the indices for treating an educational institution as a minority educational institution.
- The points of reference in the case stemmed from a **1967 judgement by a five-judge Bench of the court in S. Azeez Basha vs Union of India**
 - which validated amendments made to the Aligarh Muslim University Act of 1920.
- **The Basha judgement** had concluded that the varsity was a central university and minority status cannot be conferred on it.

2. Rule of law vs right to liberty: What Court said - Indian Express

Relevance: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity

News:

- The Supreme Court, while overturning the **Gujarat government's decision to grant remission to Bilkis Bano case** convicts, delves into the intersection of personal liberty and the rule of law.

The Importance of Rule of Law

- The court acknowledges personal liberty as a **fundamental right under Article 21** but raises the question of whether the rule of law can override it.
- The rule of law, as defined by John Adams, is characterized as a **check against executive lawlessness**, ensuring no arbitrary arrest or detention without legislative sanction.

Court's Interpretation of Rule of Law

- The court interprets the rule of law as a mechanism **to ensure that the state fulfills its duties, preventing abuse of legal processes due to inaction**, arbitrary actions, or failures to comply with legal obligations.
- **Breaching the rule of law is seen as negating equality under Article 14**, making judicial scrutiny necessary for its enforcement.

Judiciary as Guardian of Rule of Law

Prelims Takeaway

- Article 142
- Article 14

- The court emphasises that the judiciary must be a beacon in upholding the rule of law to prevent selective application and a dangerous state of affairs in democracy.

Rule of Law vs. Arbitrariness

- The court cites Justice H R Khanna's dissenting judgement, stating that **the rule of law is the antithesis of arbitrariness.**
- It references a 2014 ruling, noting that justice encompasses not only the rights of convicts but also those of victims and law-abiding sections of society.

Rejecting Plea for Liberty

- The court rejects the convicts' plea for protection of liberty, asserting that the rule of law must prevail, and the orders of remission should be set aside.
- It invokes **Article 142 of the Constitution**, stating that it cannot be used to allow individuals to remain out of jail when orders are deemed null and void.

Restoration of Status Quo

- Complying with the principle of equal protection of law under Article 14, the court justifies the deprivation of liberty for the convicts as they were erroneously set at liberty against the law.
- The court emphasizes restoring the status quo ante, as the remission orders have been quashed, rejecting the plea for protecting the convicts' liberty.

3. India, U.K. sign two deals during Defence Minister's visit - The Hindu

Relevance: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

News:

- India and the UK recently signed significant agreements during India's Defence Minister's visit.

Prelims Takeaway

- India and United Kingdom
- Location Based Questions

The Agreements

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for **bilateral international cadet exchange programme.**
- A Letter of Arrangement (LoA) on **defence collaboration in Research and Development.**
 - The LoA on R&D was signed between India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL).

Key Highlights

- This is the **first visit by an Indian Defence Minister** to the UK after over two decades.
- The Defence Minister highlighted fruitful discussions on a **wide range of issues.**
 - These include defence cooperation, security and also on enhancing defence industrial cooperation.
- The signed documents will **provide impetus to**
 - the people-to-people exchanges particularly among the youth
 - larger area of defence research collaboration between the two countries

GS III

4. Rapid rise in Web blocking orders, shows RTI reply - The Hindu

Relevance: Reports and Indices

News:

- A recent reply to a Right to Information (RTI) reveals a significant **rise in website blocking orders.**

Prelims Takeaway

- Section 69A of IT Act, 2000
- Internet Service Providers (ISPs)

Data Highlights

- Website blocking orders have grown over a 100-fold, from 62 in 2013 to **6,954 until October 2023.**

- The statistics pertain to orders issued under **Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000**.
- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) had recently directed Internet service providers (ISPs) to **compile IP addresses of servers** in India for **quick blocking**.

Internet Usage and Blocking Orders

- The increase in blocking orders coincides with a **massive uptick in Internet use**, particularly after the drop in mobile data prices.
- The data reflect blocking orders sent to **social media and content firms** for specific pages, profiles and videos.
- However, the IT Ministry refused to provide a **breakdown of these statistics**, citing the **confidentiality clause** in the rules.

Section 69A of IT Act, 2000

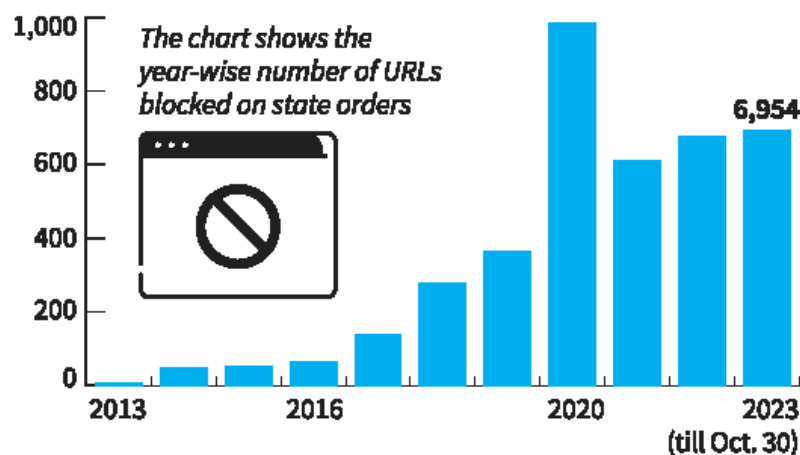
- It allows the Union government to **block online content** in the interest of India's sovereignty, integrity, defence, security, friendly relations, or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognisable offence.
- DoT's recent order emphasises the **tracing of web/application servers' location** for immediate action.
- However, industry experts have expressed concerns about the **practicality and implementation challenges** of DoT's directive.
 - Difficulty in tracing the location of web/application servers, especially with encryption technologies and the scale of the request.

IP Address Listing Challenges

- Listing IP addresses may face resistance from data centre providers and web hosting firms due to **corporate security concerns**.
- Experts suggest collaboration with **content delivery networks (CDNs)** for more effective website blocking.

Banning websites

The number of URLs blocked under Section 69A has drastically increased in the past decade, according to a recent RTI response



5. Govt sets up task force to resolve trade barrier issues for exporters - Indian Express/ Commerce ministry sets up task force to resolve trade barrier issues for exporters - The Economic Times

Relevance: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

News:

- The commerce ministry has set up a **task force to identify and resolve trade barriers** being faced by exporters in other countries
 - a move which would help provide greater market access to domestic goods, an official said.

Prelims Takeaway

- Non-tariff barriers
- Global Trade Research Initiative

Key Highlights

- **Many times India's exports suffer from these barriers** such as time taking prior registration requirements and unreasonable domestic standards/rules in many countries.
- **The ministry is also looking at improving mutual recognition agreements (MRAs)** with different countries so that product standards are as per the requirements of the importing countries.
- **Standards for goods and services should help in promoting global trade** and not act as non-tariff barriers, the official added.
- According to a report of the economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), India needs to act in a fast-track manner for removal of non-trade barriers (NTBs)
 - being faced by domestic exporters in different countries like the US, China and Japan, to achieve one trillion dollar outbound shipment target for goods by 2030.
- It has asked for upgrading domestic systems, in cases where Indian products are rejected due to quality issues
 - and retaliating if unreasonable standards or rules continue to obstruct exports from New Delhi.
- **Key Indian exports that routinely face high barriers** include chillies, tea, basmati rice, milk, poultry, bovine meat, fish, chemicals products to EU
 - sesame seed, black tiger shrimps, medicines, apparels to Japan; food, meat, fish, dairy, industrial products to China
- According to the report, the other products which face these barriers include ceramic tiles in Egypt; chili in Mexico; medicines in Argentina; microbiological reagents in Saudi Arabia
- Most **non-tariff measures (NTMs)** are domestic rules created by countries **with an aim to protect human, animal or plant health and environment.**
- NTM may be technical measures like regulations, standards, testing, certification, pre-shipment inspection or non-technical measures like quotas, import licensing, subsidies, government procurement restrictions.
- When **NTMs become arbitrary**, beyond scientific justification, **they create hurdles for trade and are called NTBs (non-tariff barriers).**

6. Nasa launches Peregrine lander to explore Moon's 'Bay of Stickiness'- India today

Relevance: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

News:

- **The Peregrine Lunar Lander was launched** aboard the United Launch Alliance's Vulcan rocket to embark on **its pioneering journey to explore the Moon.**

Prelims Takeaway

- PROSPECT Ion-Trap Mass Spectrometer (PITMS)
- Peregrine Mission

Peregrine Lander

- **It is designed to carry scientific instruments** and other payloads to the Moon's surface, specifically targeting the Sinus Viscoositatis region.
- This area, also known as the Bay of Stickiness, lies **adjacent to the Gruithuisen Domes near the Oceanus Procellarum, or Ocean of Storms.**
- Its objective is to locate water molecules on the moon, measure radiation and gases around the lander, and evaluate the lunar exosphere (the thin layer of gases on the moon's surface)"

Objective:

- To analyse the lunar exosphere, assess the thermal properties and hydrogen content of the lunar regolith, study magnetic fields, examine the radiation environment, and test advanced solar arrays.
- **Peregrine Mission 1** will transport approximately ten payloads, with a total mass capacity of 90 kilograms.
- The **scientific payload features** cutting-edge instruments such as
 - Laser Retro-Reflector Array (LRA)
 - Linear Energy Transfer Spectrometer (LETS)
 - Near-Infrared Volatile Spectrometer System (NIRVSS)
 - PROSPECT Ion-Trap Mass Spectrometer (PITMS)
 - Neutron Spectrometer Peregrine Lander System (NSS).

7. Majority of Indian cities far from clean air target, says study - The Hindu

Relevance: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

News:

- The **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)** in India aims to improve air quality, with a **focus on reducing particulate matter concentrations.**
- However, an analysis by Respirer Living Sciences and Climate Trends reveals varying success rates in different cities.

Prelims Takeaway

- National Clean Air Programme
- Air Pollution

Key Highlights

- **Original Targets and Adjustments**
- The NCAP originally aimed for a 20-40% reduction in pollution by 2024 but later **extended the deadline to 2026.**
- The ultimate goal is a **40% reduction in particulate matter** concentrations in 131 cities compared to 2017 levels.

City-wise Progress

- Of 49 cities with consistent particulate matter data for five years, only 4 met or exceeded the targeted decline.
- Delhi's PM 2.5 levels decreased by 5.9%, while Navi Mumbai, Mumbai, Ujjain, Jaipur, and Visakhapatnam experienced varying levels of increase.

Positive Outliers

- Cities like Varanasi, Agra, and Jodhpur showcased remarkable progress, achieving reductions of 50-72% in PM 2.5 levels.
- Notably, all cities meeting the 2026 targets are from Uttar Pradesh.

Influence of Monitoring Stations

- The availability and spread of continuous ambient air quality monitors impact annual pollutant concentrations.

- Cities like Mumbai and Delhi, with numerous monitoring stations, fare better in assessing pollution levels compared to those with fewer than five stations.

Geographical Factors

- The variations in pollution levels are attributed to geographical locations, diverse emission sources, and meteorological influences.
- The contribution of emissions versus meteorology requires further study.

Concerns and Suggestions

- While the NCAP has made progress, challenges persist, with some cities experiencing an increase in pollution.
- Strengthening monitoring infrastructure and achieving the revised 40% reduction goal by 2026 reflect a commitment to environmental targets.

Lagging behind

The table shows PM 2.5 levels (annual average) in India's most polluted cities from 2019 to 2023. It remained higher than the acceptable level of 40 micrograms per cubic metre in all the years



AP

Rank in 2023	City	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1	Delhi	108.4	95.3	107.6	99.5	102
2	Patna	119.6	72.8	76.5	91.3	89.5
3	Faridabad	94.5	87.6	95.6	95.3	87.9
4	Muzaffarpur	108.1	67.4	122.6	85.7	83.6
5	Noida	113.8	97.9	100.8	79.3	83.6

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

8. A LESS ABLEIST POLITICS - Indian Express

Relevance: Social

Context:

- Recently, the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** released an advisory on **disability-sensitive terminologies** for political parties.

Guidelines Overview

- The advisory comprises 11 guidelines categorized into **three categories**
 - **Disability-Inclusive Communication**
 - Addresses usage of ill-health terminologies for persons with disabilities (PwD)
 - Avoids dehumanising language and stereotypes.
 - **Information Accessibility**
 - Ensuring information accessibility on political party websites.
 - Holding events at accessible locations.
 - **Inclusion within Party Frameworks**
 - Developing training modules on disability for party workers.
 - Striving to include PwDs at all levels of a political party.

Limitations and Suggestions

1. These guidelines are **only an "advisory"**, though the phraseology of a few guidelines is in mandatory language.
 - A **uniform mandate is needed** across all guidelines under disability-inclusive communication, accessibility, and party frameworks.
2. These guidelines are still not part of the **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)**
 - As per the advisory, the breach related to disability-inclusive communication would make political parties and their members prone to **action under section 92 of the RPwD Act**.
 - However, it is unclear whether a breach of other guidelines will also invoke this provision.
 - The guidelines must be **integrated into the MCC** to enforce compliance, similar to gender guidelines.
3. **Ambiguity in guidelines** regarding specific phrases like "blind," "deaf," and "dumb".
 - This requires a detailed list of disability-sensitive words and phraseology under the **UN Disability Inclusion Strategy**.
4. The **draft National Policy for PwD** didn't have any chapter on political inclusion.
 - As the ECI advisory is expected to catalyse the political inclusion of PwD, a **chapter on political inclusion** in the national policy should be incorporated.
 - This will align with the principles of **Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.
5. **Absence of data** on the number of legislators with disabilities.
 - The ECI doesn't have any **column on disability in the nomination forms and affidavits** filed by contestants during elections.
 - The lack of data has contributed significantly to the **political exclusion of PwDs**.

9. India & giant radio telescope - Indian Express

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

Context:

- India recently formally joined the **Square Kilometer Array (SKA) project, world's largest radio telescope initiative**.
- India had already been **contributing to the project** for the past several years.
- However, full membership involves **signing an international treaty and financial commitment**.

Other Projects

- India would build a gravitational wave detector to join the international LIGO (Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory) network.
- India is a full member of the ITER project, which is working to harness energy from nuclear fusion reactions.
- Strong participation in the Large Hadron Collider (LHC).
 - LHC is the world's largest and most powerful particle accelerator executing experiments in particle physics.
- The Giant Meterwave Radio Telescope (GMRT) near Pune is one of the most advanced facilities in the world.
 - There are other similar facilities in Ooty, Nainital and Bengaluru.

Square Kilometer Array (SKA) Project

- SKA is not a single large telescope, but a collection of thousands of dish antennas operating as a single unit.
 - The name comes from the original intention to create one square kilometre of effective area for collecting radio waves.
- Construction underway in South Africa and Australia in sparsely populated locations.
 - To minimise signal interference from undesirable Earth-based sources.
- Once operational, SKA would be between 5 to 60 times more powerful than existing radio telescopes.

Significance for India

- Despite no SKA facilities in India, full membership promises significant gains in science and technology.
 - It offers opportunities similar to the LHC or the ITER, which too are located on foreign soil but have brought rich dividends to the Indian scientific community.
- Full member status grants India preferential access to SKA facilities.
- SKA operates on highest-end technologies, offering intellectual properties accessible to member countries.
- Potential expansion of science and technology base, with learning opportunities for academics, scientists, and private industry.

India's involvement

- The Indian participation in the project is being led by Pune-based National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA).
- However, 22 institutions are collaborating on SKA-related activities in the country.
 - These include leading research institutions, IITs and IISERs, universities and colleges and some private companies.
- India has been involved in SKA project since the 1990s, contributing to design, development, and negotiation of the SKA Observatory Convention.
- Main contribution: Development and operation of the Telescope Manager, the 'neural network' or the software that will run the entire facility.

Future Plans

- There are plans for an SKA regional centre in India to process and store data for the global network.
- Indian scientists have identified several areas of research for which they want to use the SKA telescopes.
 - These include early universe evolution, galaxy formation, neutron star physics, and solar sciences.

10. Why 2023 was the warmest year on record, and what happens now - Indian Express

Relevance: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

Context:

- Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) recently stated that **2023 was the warmest year** since records began in 1850.
- 2023 recorded a **1.48 °C increase** from the pre-industrial level, surpassing the previous record of 2016.
- It also mentioned that temperatures in 2023 likely exceeded those of any year-long period in at least the last 100,000 years.

Extreme Weather Events

- Rising temperatures contributed to global extreme events in 2023 like heatwaves, floods, droughts and wildfires.
- Canada faced its most destructive wildfire season on record, with over 45 million acres burned.

Unprecedented Records

- Every day in 2023 exceeded 1 °C above the pre-industrial level.
- Around 50% of days were over 1.5 °C warmer, with two days in November exceeding 2 °C.
- However, it does not mean that the planet has breached the 1.5 and 2 °C thresholds set by the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Notable Climate Shifts

- The global daily average sea surface temperature (SST) also increased.
- According to Climate Reanalyzer, since mid-March 2023, the daily average SST has been the highest ever, leading to marine heatwaves in various regions.
 - Climate Reanalyzer is a website which provides visualisations of publicly available datasets and models.
- Antarctic sea ice extent hit a new low in September, reaching 16.96 million sq km, 1.03 million sq km less than the previous record set in 1986.

Causes of Extreme Warming

- The main driver behind the extreme warming is the increasing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, including carbon dioxide and methane.
- Human activities, especially fossil fuel burning, released unprecedented levels of greenhouse gases.
 - According to C3S and the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS), in 2023, greenhouse gas concentrations reached the highest levels ever recorded in the atmosphere.
 - In 2023, carbon dioxide concentrations increased by 2.4 ppm, while methane concentrations rose by 11 ppb compared to 2022.
- El Nino's onset in 2023 also contributed to extreme warming.
 - El Nino refers to an abnormal warming of surface waters in the equatorial Pacific Ocean.

Outlook for 2024

- Scientists predict that 2024 could be even warmer than 2023.
- Also, El Nino's delayed onset in 2023 suggests it might not have been the primary driver, making 2024 potentially hotter.
- WMO's State of Global Climate Report, 2023
 - There is a 66% chance that at least one of the years between 2023 and 2027 could breach the 1.5 °C warming threshold.
- Long-term breach of the 1.5 degree limit could lead to severe climate change impacts, necessitating urgent global action on emission cuts.

Quick Look

1. Remission

- Prison being a State subject, Prison rules in each state govern remission, where prisoners can earn days off their sentences through reformatory and rehabilitative activities.
- Life convicts, in particular, must serve a minimum of 14 years before becoming eligible for remission.
- However, applying for remission does not guarantee its approval, as each case undergoes individual consideration by a committee.
- The committee assesses factors outlined by the Supreme Court in *Laxman Naskar vs State of West Bengal* (2000).
 - These include the nature of the offence, likelihood of reoffending, the convict's potential for criminal activity, the purpose of continued confinement, and the socio-economic conditions of the convict's family.
- *Epuru Sudhakar vs State of Andhra Pradesh* (2006) SC Judgement: It allows judicial review of remission orders only in cases of non-application of mind, mala fide intentions, consideration of irrelevant factors, or arbitrariness.

2. Chandubi Festival

- It is organised every year for five days starting from the first day of the New Year along the Chandubi lake, which is situated in the state of Assam.
- Objective: To promote eco-tourism in this biodiversity hotspot of Assam.
- Preserving the waterbody, the water level of which has rapidly been lowering over the years, has been the motive for organising the festival every year.
- The festival has been providing an opportunity to generate livelihood to different tribes viz. Rabhas, Garos, Gorkhas and tea tribes.
- The main attractions of the Chandubi festival are the local folk culture, ethnic cuisine, local handloom and dresses, boating, etc.

3. Sisal Plant

- Recently, a research team at Stanford University has found the absorption capacity of a sisal-based material to be higher than commercial menstrual pads.
- Sisal Plant is a xerophytic, monocarp, semi-perennial leaf fibre producing plant.
- The leaves are thick, fleshy and often covered with a waxy layer, typical characteristics of xerophytic plants.
- It is mainly propagated by vegetative means such as 'bulbils' and 'suckers'.
- It is well adapted to arid environments as the species is xerophytic in nature.
- It can withstand a maximum temperature 40-45°C and grows well with evenly distributed rainfall of 60-125 cm.
- It thrives best on dry, permeable, sandy-loam soils with a good amount of liming materials (Ca and Mg).
- In India it is grown in light calcareous and gravelly soils with good drainage.
- It is well adapted mainly in Odisha, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, part of Bihar, western part of West Bengal and many southern states.

4. Agnipath Scheme

- It allows patriotic and motivated youth to serve in the Armed Forces for a period of four years.

- Under this scheme, the youth joining the army will be called Agniveer. Youth will be able to be recruited into the army for a short duration.
- Under the new scheme, around 45,000 to 50,000 soldiers will be recruited annually, and most will leave the service in just four years.
- However, after four years, only 25% of the batch will be recruited back into their respective services, for a period of 15 years.

5. Aligarh Movement

- It was a systemic movement aimed at reforming the social, political and educational aspects of the Muslim community.
- The movement undertook to modernise Muslim's education by adapting English as a medium of learning and western education rather than just focusing on traditional teachings.
- Sir Syed established the Scientific Society in 1864, in Aligarh to translate Western works into Indian languages to prepare the Muslims to accept Western education
- The Aligarh Institute Gazette, a magazine published by Sir Syed was an organ of the Scientific Society



Mentorship
India

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the minority status of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU)

1. AMU, set up as the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in 1877 by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan
2. The minority status accorded to AMU is based on its founding principles and objectives, emphasizing the protection and promotion of Muslim education and culture.
3. it officially became University through an Act of the Parliament in 1920,

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 regarding Article 329 of the Indian Constitution

1. Article 329 empowers the Parliament to make laws for the delimitation of constituencies for the purpose of elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
2. The provisions of Article 329 provide for the freezing of representation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies based on the 1971 census.
3. Article 329 includes a provision that allows the extension of the reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies beyond the initial 10-year period.

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 with reference to the the British and Indian Parliamentary System

1. The British system is based on the doctrine of the sovereignty of Parliament.

2. In India, the prime minister may be a member of any of the two Houses of Parliament similar to Britain.
3. In India, a person who is not a member of Parliament can also be appointed as minister.
4. 'Shadow cabinet' is a unique institution of the British cabinet system.

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

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

Q4. Consider the following statements with reference to the Information Technology Act, 2000

1. It is the primary law in India for matters related to cybercrime and e-commerce.
2. Section 69A of the Act allows the Union government to issue directions to intermediaries for blocking access to online content.

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

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding Non-Trade Barriers (NTBs) in international trade

1. NTBs are restrictions or obstacles to trade other than tariffs, such as quotas, licensing requirements, and technical standards.
2. NTBs are primarily employed to promote free and fair trade by reducing the cost of imported goods.
3. Sanitary and phytosanitary measures, such as food safety regulations, are examples of NTBs aimed at protecting human, animal, and plant health.
4. Unlike tariffs, NTBs are generally transparent and easy to quantify, making it simpler for countries to navigate and comply with international trade regulations.

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

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

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding the Peregrine lander

1. The Peregrine lander is a lunar lander designed to carry payloads to the Moon's surface.
2. It is developed by NASA as part of its Artemis program, aimed at returning humans to the Moon.
3. Astrobotic Technology, a private company, is responsible for the development and operation of the Peregrine lander.
4. The Peregrine lander is intended to carry only scientific instruments and is not designed for human space exploration.

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

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

Q7. Consider the following statements regarding the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)

1. NCAP aims to reduce particulate matter (PM) levels by 20-30% in 122 non-attainment cities by the year 2024.
2. NCAP focuses solely on outdoor air quality improvement and does not address indoor air pollution.
3. NCAP is a centrally sponsored scheme, and it provides for the setting up of city-specific action plans to combat air pollution.

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

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

Q8. Consider the following statements about Election Commission of India

1. It is a constitutional body responsible for administering Union, State and local elections in India.
2. It administers elections to the offices of the President and Vice President in India.

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

Q9. With reference to Square Kilometer Array (SKA) Project, consider the following statements

1. It aims to map galaxies and explore the universe
2. It is headquartered at the Jodrell Bank Observatory in the UK.
3. The Indian participation in the project is being led by Pune-based National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA).
4. There are no SKA facilities in India.

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

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

Q10. The State of the Global Climate Report, seen in the news recently, is released by which of the following organisations?

- A. World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- B. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- C. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
- D. International Energy Agency (IEA)

Prelims Track Answer

Answer 1 Option C is correct

Explanation

- AMU, set up as the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in 1877 by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan.
- AMU was granted minority status through an official notification, and this status is based on its founding principles that emphasize the promotion of Muslim education and culture.
- IT officially became University through an Act of the Parliament in 1920. **Hence, all statement are correct**

Answer 2 Option A is correct

Explanation

- Article 329 does not freeze the representation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; instead, it provides for their representation in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- Article 329 does not specifically include a provision for the extension of reservation; the reservation itself is governed by other constitutional provisions.
- Article 329 does provide for the representation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes based on the 1971 census, and as it allows the extension of reservation beyond the initial 10-year period. **Hence, statement 3 is INcorrect**
- Article 329 does not freeze the representation based on the 1971 census; it provides for the representation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes without specifying a particular census. **Hence, statement 2 is INcorrect**

Answer 3 Option A is correct

Explanation

- The parliamentary system of government in India is largely based on the British parliamentary system.
- India has a republican system in place of the British monarchical system.
- The British system is based on the doctrine of the sovereignty of Parliament, while the Parliament is not supreme in India and enjoys limited and restricted powers due to a written Constitution, federal system, judicial review and fundamental rights. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**

- In Britain, the prime minister should be a member of the Lower House (House of Commons) of Parliament. In India, the prime minister may be a member of any of the two Houses of Parliament. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- Usually, the members of Parliament alone are appointed as ministers in Britain. In India, a person who is not a member of Parliament can also be appointed as minister, but for a maximum period of six months. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- Unlike in Britain, the ministers in India are not required to countersign the official acts of the Head of the State.
- 'Shadow cabinet' is a unique institution of the British cabinet system. There is no such institution in India. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**

Answer 4 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The Information Technology Act, 2000 is the primary law in India for matters related to cybercrime and e-commerce. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Under this law, for any crime involving a computer or a network located in India, foreign nationals can also be charged.
- It also gives legal recognition to digital signatures.
- Section 69A grants to the government the power to issue directions to intermediaries for blocking access to any information that it considers prejudicial to, among other things, the sovereignty and integrity of India, national security, or public order. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The Indian IT Act is not a cybersecurity law and therefore does not deal with the nuances of cybersecurity.

Answer 5 Option B is correct

Explanation

- Sanitary and phytosanitary measures are indeed examples of NTBs **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- NTBs are not primarily employed to promote free and fair trade; instead, they can be used for various reasons, including protecting domestic industries. **Hence, statement 2 is INcorrect**
- NTBs as obstacles other than tariffs. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**

- NTBs are generally considered less transparent and more challenging to quantify compared to tariffs, making them more complex for countries to navigate. **Hence, statement 4 is INcorrect**

Answer 6 Option C is correct

Explanation

- the Peregrine lander as a lunar lander. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- NASA's Artemis program includes the development of lunar landers, including Peregrine. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- Astrobotic Technology, a private company, is responsible for the development of the Peregrine lander. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- The Peregrine lander is designed to carry various payloads, including scientific instruments and commercial payloads, but it is not intended for human space exploration. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect**

Answer 7 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) indeed aims to reduce particulate matter (PM) levels by 20-30% in 122 non-attainment cities by the year 2024. This is one of the key objectives of the program. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- NCAP addresses both outdoor and indoor air pollution. While the primary focus is on outdoor air quality improvement, it also acknowledges the significance of indoor air quality for a comprehensive approach to tackling air pollution. **Hence, statement 2 is INcorrect.**
- NCAP is a centrally sponsored scheme, and it encourages the formulation of city-specific action plans to combat air pollution. This allows for tailored strategies to address the unique challenges faced by different cities. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 8 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.
- The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Part XV (Article 324-329) of the Indian Constitution deals with elections and establishes a commission for these matters.

- It is not concerned with the elections to panchayats and municipalities in the states. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- For this, the Constitution of India provides for a separate State Election Commission.

Answer 9 Option D is correct

Explanation

- India recently formally joined the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) project, world's largest radio telescope initiative.
- Despite no SKA facilities in India, full membership promises significant gains in science and technology. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**
- SKA is not a single large telescope, but a collection of thousands of dish antennas operating as a single unit.
- The SKA Observatory (SKAO) includes 16 member countries, such as Australia, South Africa, Canada, China, India, Japan, and several European nations.
- The SKA project is headquartered at the Jodrell Bank Observatory in the UK. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The Indian participation in the project is being led by Pune-based National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA). **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- India has been involved in SKA project since the 1990s, contributing to design, development, and negotiation of the SKA Observatory Convention.
- The SKA will observe and map galaxies at the edge of the observable universe, providing insights into galaxy formation and evolution. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The telescope will delve into the early universe's 'Dark Ages' and investigate phenomena like dark matter and dark energy.
- The SKA will also contribute to the search for life beyond Earth by examining habitable zones around stars.

Answer 10 Option A is correct

Explanation

- The State of the Global Climate report is released by the World Meteorological Organization. **Hence, option A is correct.**
- It predicts a 66% chance that annual average temperatures will exceed 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels for at least one year between 2023 and 2027.
- The forecast combines the effects of human-induced climate change and the expected development of a warming El Nino event.

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