

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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Important News Articles

1. Over 100 active permafrost structures identified in Jhelum basin, can cause catastrophic disasters in future: Study - Down to Earth
2. Maldives, China commit to greater strategic cooperation, sign 20 MoUs - The Hindu
3. South Africa accuses Israel of genocide in Palestine, asks UN court to intervene - The Hindu/ ICJ begins hearing SA's genocide case against Israel as Gazans return to ruins - Indian Express
4. 6 countries share top spot for most powerful passports - Hindustan Times
5. Surat, Indore cleanest cities; Maharashtra tops State list - The Hindu/ Indore, Surat cleanest cities, Maharashtra 1st among states - Indian Express
6. Ministry notifies revised rules to ensure quality of medicines - The Hindu
7. Govt set to roll out vaccine drive to fight cervical cancer - Indian Express
8. Direct tax kitty crosses 80% of 2023-24 target - The Hindu
9. Need legislative change for group insolvency framework: RBI's Das - Indian Express

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

1. Accurate data is the first step in bringing down logistics costs in India - Indian Express
2. Open up the playing field - Indian Express

Quick Look

1. Classical Language
2. Spiral Galaxy
3. Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan (MMUA)
4. Report Fish Disease App
5. Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL)
6. Kateel Yakshagana mela
7. Exercise Sea Dragon-24
8. Einstein Probe (EP)

Important News Articles

GSI

1. Over 100 active permafrost structures identified in Jhelum basin, can cause catastrophic disasters in future: Study - Down to Earth

Relevance: Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone. etc.

News:

- A new study has mapped over **100 permafrost structures** known as '**rock glaciers**' in the **Kashmir Himalayas**.
- The study raises concerns about the **impact of permafrost melting** on the region and its potential contribution to **natural disasters**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Rock Glaciers
- Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)
- Kashmir Himalayas

Rock Glaciers

- These are a **mass of rock, ice, snow, mud, and water** that moves slowly down a mountain under the **influence of gravity**.
- Unlike an ice glacier, rock glaciers usually have **very little ice visible at the surface**.
- These rock glaciers, with **ice volumes within**, are crucial **indicators of permafrost movement or melting**.
- They typically form in **mountainous regions with permafrost, rock debris, and ice**.
- While research on permafrost is advanced in areas like Greenland, Alaska, and Siberia, **little is known about rock glaciers in the Himalayas**.

Study Findings

- More than 100 rock glaciers in the Kashmir Himalayas were identified through satellite images and field visits.
- The researchers classified them as '**active**' or '**relict**' based on **permafrost status**.
- Active rock glaciers, indicating permafrost movement, raise concerns about **instability and potential natural disasters** as the region warms.

Implications of Permafrost Melting

- The melting permafrost **makes areas unstable**, posing risks to nearby settlements and critical infrastructure.
- The study points out the dangers posed by rock glaciers, including the risk of **glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs)**.
- Rock glaciers near glacial lakes, such as Chirsar Lake, **increase the risk of GLOFs**, which can cause massive damage in surrounding areas.
- It may also **make landslides more frequent** with the land on the melting ice becoming loose.

GS II

2. Maldives, China commit to greater strategic cooperation, sign 20 MoUs - The Hindu

Relevance: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

News:

- Recently, **China and Maldives** announced an elevation of their relationship to a **comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership**.
- A joint press communique mentioned increased strategic cooperation, expanded practical collaboration and **joint efforts towards a shared future**.

Prelims Takeaway

- India and Maldives
- Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)
- Colombo Security Conclave

Diplomatic Developments

- Both nations commit to **strengthening collaboration on international and multilateral affairs**.
 - The move follows Maldives's participation in the **Global Security Initiative (GSI)**.
- They agreed to draw up an "action plan" for building a **China-Maldives Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership from 2024 to 2028**.
- Both governments sign **20 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)** covering several areas.
 - These include the blue economy, digital economy, infrastructure development linked to BRI, disaster and risk mitigation, and news cooperation.

Shift in Foreign Policy

- Notable decisions came after **Maldives skipped the India-led Colombo Security Conclave's NSA-level meet** in December.
- This suggests a **departure** from the earlier policy of the Solih government, which emphasised **close defence and security collaboration** with India and the United States.

Diplomatic Tensions with India

- Maldives President's visit coincides with a **diplomatic row between Maldives and India**, sparked by controversial remarks against the Indian Prime Minister.
- The tensions lead to online campaigns calling for a boycott of Maldives, impacting the country's crucial tourism sector.

Tourism Focus

- Maldives President encouraged **Chinese tourists to reclaim the top spot** in arrivals, previously held by Indian tourists for the last two years.
- In meetings, the Maldivian President highlighted **support for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** and expressed enthusiasm for expanding cooperation.
- China pledged respect and support for the Maldives's development path, firmly **opposing external interference** in its internal affairs.

3. South Africa accuses Israel of genocide in Palestine, asks UN court to intervene - The Hindu/ ICJ begins hearing SA's genocide case against Israel as Gazans return to ruins - Indian Express

Relevance: World Affairs

News:

- South Africa has brought a case to the ICJ accusing **Israel of committing genocide** in its military response to the 7 October Hamas attack.

Prelims Takeaway

- Genocide Convention
- International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- The South African case includes references to the Israeli use of blanket bombing and the cutting of food, water and medicine supplies to Gaza.

Jurisdiction of ICJ in the present case

- The **ICJ cannot automatically decide** all cases involving breaches of international law.
- It can only decide cases that are **brought before it by States that consent to its jurisdiction**.
 - According to the convention, disputes about interpreting, applying, or fulfilling the Convention, including a State's responsibility for genocide, must go to the ICJ if any party involved asks for it.
 - Both South Africa and Israel are parties to the Convention.
- If ICJ passes an order, it will have **legal significance for all States** that are parties to the Genocide Convention.

UN's 1948 Genocide Convention

- The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is an international human rights treaty that **codified the crime of genocide for the first time**.
- This was the **first human rights treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly** on December 9, 1948, and has been in effect since January 12, 1951.
- The Convention defines genocide as **five physical acts** viz.
 - killing members of a group
 - causing serious bodily or mental harm
 - inflicting on the group, conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction
 - imposing measures intended to prevent births within a group
 - forcibly transferring children of the group to another group - committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.

4. 6 countries share top spot for most powerful passports - Hindustan Times

Relevance: Reports and Indices

News:

- The recently released **2024 Henley Passport Index** reveals a significant **increase in the average number of visa-free destinations** since 2006.
- The average number of visa-free destinations for travellers has **nearly doubled, from 58 in 2006 to 111 in 2024**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Henley Passport Index
- Visa

Top-Ranked Passports

- **Six countries secure the top position**, providing citizens with visa-free access to 194 out of 227 global destinations.
 - These include France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore and Spain.
- Japan and Singapore maintain their leadership for the fifth consecutive year.
- The top 10 is largely dominated by **European nations**.
- **Afghanistan ranks at the bottom** with access to only 28 countries without a visa.

India's Passport Ranking

- India holds the **80th position** on the 2024 Henley Passport Index.
- Indian passport allows **visa-free access to 62 destinations**, including popular tourist spots like Thailand, Indonesia, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and Maldives.

Henley Passport Index

- It is the original, authoritative ranking of all the **world's passports** based on the number of destinations their holders can visit **without obtaining a visa in advance**.
- The number of countries that a specific passport can access becomes its **visa-free 'score'**.

- It is compiled and published by **Henley & Partners**, a global citizenship and residence advisory firm.
 - Based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA).
- Includes **199 different passports and 227 different travel destinations**.

5. Surat, Indore cleanest cities; Maharashtra tops State list - The Hindu/Indore, Surat cleanest cities, Maharashtra 1st among states - Indian Express

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

Prelims Takeaway

- Swachh Survekshan
- Swachh Bharat Mission

News:

- Recently, **Surat and Indore** were jointly declared **cleanest cities of India** at the annual clean city awards 2023 of the Union Urban Affairs Ministry.
- Both cities exhibit **100% door-to-door waste collection, 98% source segregation, and 100% remediation of dumpsites**.
- This was for the seventh year in a row that Indore has been ranked as the cleanest city in India.

Swachh Survekshan 2023 Key Highlights

- **Maharashtra** was recognized as the **cleanest state** with 89.24% door-to-door waste collection and 67.76% source segregation.
- **Bottom Five States:** Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Nagaland and Tripura
- **Chandigarh** was honoured for the **best safety standards for sanitation workers**.
- **Varanasi and Prayagraj**, both in Uttar Pradesh, won the **top two awards amongst the cleanest Ganga towns**.
- The **Mhow Cantonment Board** in Madhya Pradesh was adjudged the **cleanest cantonment**.

Ranking cleanliness

The tables list the cleanest cities with more than 1 lakh population and the best-performing States, according to the Swachh Survekshan Awards. Indore bagged the tag of India's cleanest city for the seventh consecutive time

Cleanest cities with >1 lakh population		States ranking	
Rank	City	Rank	State
1	Indore	1	Maharashtra
1	Surat	2	M.P.
3	Navi Mumbai	3	Chhattisgarh
4	Greater Visakhapatnam	4	Odisha
5	Bhopal	5	Telangana



Swachh Survekshan

- Swachh Survekshan is the **world's largest urban sanitation and cleanliness survey**.

- Started in 2016 with 73 cities, the annual ranking covers 4,416 urban local bodies, 61 cantonments, and 88 Ganga towns in 2023.
- It is conducted under the ambit of the **Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban)**.
- It was launched by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** with **Quality Council of India (QCI)** as its implementation partner.
- **Objective:** To encourage large-scale citizen participation and create awareness amongst all sections of society about the importance of working together toward making towns and cities better places to reside in.
- The **methodology** for measuring cleanliness rests on two main criterias viz. **citizen feedback and field assessment**.

6. Ministry notifies revised rules to ensure quality of medicines - The Hindu

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

News:

- The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** in India recently introduced revised rules under **Schedule M of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945
- Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)

Objective of Revision

- The revision of Schedule M aims to **strengthen pharmaceutical manufacturing standards** in India.
- This is in response to global scrutiny and concerns about **sub-standard medicines exported from India**.
- The focus is on ensuring the manufacture of **safe, effective, and high-quality drugs** compliant with international quality standards.
- It aims to align **Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)** recommendations with **global standards**, particularly those of the WHO.

Global Scrutiny

- India faced global scrutiny after the WHO issued an alert regarding the contamination of cough syrups with diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol, considered toxic and potentially fatal.
- QP Pharmachem Ltd, a Punjab-based company, had its manufacturing licence suspended after its cough syrup was linked to child deaths in Gambia and Uzbekistan.

Revised Categories and Sections

- **Five new categories of drugs** have been introduced, including pharmaceutical products containing hazardous substances.
 - These include sex hormones, steroids, cytotoxic substances, biological products, and radiopharmaceuticals.
- **Additional sections** include
 - Introduction of a pharmaceutical quality system (PQS), quality risk management (QRM), product quality review (PQR)
 - Qualification and validation of equipment
 - Computerized storage system for drug products
- The **manufacturer** is required to assume **responsibility for the quality of pharmaceutical products**.
 - They must ensure they are fit for use, comply with licence requirements, and do not pose risks to patients.

Quality Assurance Measures

- Companies must market a finished product only after **obtaining satisfactory results** from tests of ingredients.

- **Adequate samples** of intermediate and final products must be **retained for repeated testing or verification** of a batch.

Implementation Timeline

- Small manufacturers with an **annual turnover of less than Rs 250 crore** will have **12 months** to implement the revised rules.
- Large manufacturers with an **annual turnover exceeding Rs 250 crore** will be given **six months** for implementation.

7. Govt set to roll out vaccine drive to fight cervical cancer - Indian Express

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

News:

- The Indian government is set to launch a **human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign** to reduce the incidence of **cervical cancer**.

Prelims Takeaway

- HPV Vaccine
- Cervical Cancer
- World Health Organisation (WHO)

The HPV Vaccination Campaign

- It is planned in three phases over three years, and aims to immunize around 8 crore children.
- It will target **girls aged 9-14 to combat cervical cancer**, the second most common cancer among Indian women.
- The vaccine also protects against HPV strains causing **cancers of the anus, vagina, oropharynx and genital warts**.
- Currently priced at Rs 2,000 per dose commercially, it will be available for free once included in the government's immunization program.

Cervical Cancer Burden in India

- India accounts for about a **fifth of global cervical cancer cases**, with 1.25 lakh new cases and 75,000 deaths annually.
- About **83 percent of invasive cervical cancer cases** are attributed to **HPV 16 or 18 in India**.

Vaccination Logistics

- The immunization drive will be conducted through **schools and existing vaccination points**.
- Serum Institute of India's indigenously developed **quadrivalent vaccine, Cervavac**, will be used.

Single-Dose Regimen

- The National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI) recommends ICMR conduct trials on the **efficacy of a single-dose regimen in the 9-15 age group**.
- While **HPV vaccines available globally** recommend a **two-dose schedule**, **WHO allows a single-dose regimen for public health programs**.

GS III

8. Direct tax kitty crosses 80% of 2023-24 target - The Hindu

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

News:

Prelims Takeaway

- Taxation System of India
- Income Tax
- Budget

Tax mop-up

Direct tax collections are at 80.61% of the Budget estimates for FY24 as of January 10

- Gross direct tax collections amount to ₹17.18 lakh crore, showing a year-on-year growth of 16.77%

- Net direct tax collection, after refunds, stands at ₹14.70 lakh crore, reflecting a year-on-year growth of 19.41%

- The net corporate income tax has grown by 12.37%, and the net personal income tax has grown by 27.26% year-on-year

- Refunds amounting to ₹2.48 lakh crore have been issued between April 1, 2023, and January 10, 2024



9. Need legislative change for group insolvency framework: RBI's Das - Indian Express

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

News:

- The RBI Governor recently called for the establishment of a **specified framework for group insolvency** and the **development of a vibrant market for stressed assets** to enhance the functioning of the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)**.
- The IBC, 2016 is the **bankruptcy law of India** that consolidates and amends the existing laws relating to **insolvency and bankruptcy**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

Group Insolvency Mechanism

- The group insolvency mechanism has been **evolving under court guidance** due to the absence of a specified framework.
- Legislative changes are needed to lay down **appropriate principles**.
- Challenges in the group insolvency process include **asset intermingling, defining a 'group,' and addressing cross-border aspects**.

Vibrant Market for Stressed Assets

- The **absence of a vibrant market for stressed assets** limits the pool of prospective resolution applicants under the IBC.
- A robust **secondary market for loans** can be a crucial mechanism for **managing credit exposures** by lending institutions.

Recovery and Behavioural Shift

- Creditors have realised Rs 3.16 lakh crore out of the admitted claims of Rs 9.92 lakh crore as of September 2023, with a recovery rate of 32%.
- The RBI Governor emphasized that the most interesting outcome of the IBC has been the **substantial behavioural shift** ushered in by the code.
 - This is evident in the withdrawal of 26,518 applications for initiation of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) till August 2023.

Criticisms of IBC

- **Time taken for resolution** and the **extent of haircuts** in comparison to admitted claims.
- **Delays in resolution processes**
 - 67% of ongoing CIRP cases exceed the total timeline of 270 days as of September 2023.
- Concerns over the **conduct of Committees of Creditors**, impacting the value of assets.

Editorials, Gists and Explaners

10. Accurate data is the first step in bringing down logistics costs in India - Indian Express

Relevance: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Context:

- In the **2023 Logistics Performance Index (LPI)**, India is ranked **38** out of 139 countries, showcasing an improvement from its 2014 ranking of 54.

<p>Logistics Performance Index (LPI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The World Bank has a Logistics Performance Index (LPI) with a focus on trade logistics. • This is based on six heads of customs, infrastructure, international shipments, logistics competence, tracking and tracing, and timeliness. <p>Government Goals for achieving the Vision of the National Logistics Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce logistics costs to global benchmarks • To improve its LPI ranking among the top 25 countries by 2030 • To establish a data-driven decision support mechanism for efficient logistics • PM Gati Shakti, launched in 2021, is expected to impact logistics positively in the future. 	<p>Global Scenario</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logistics costs amount to 8-10 percent of GDP in the US and Europe, and 9 per cent in China. • The global average is close to 8 percent of GDP. • This reveals a competitiveness gap of USD 180 billion for India.
<p>Logistics Cost Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various reports present different estimates of logistics costs in India, ranging from 7.8% to 18% of GDP. • The Economic Survey 2022-23 notes that logistics costs in India have been in the range of 14-18% of GDP. • A CII-Arthur D Little report on India's supply chain (2020) mentions costs of nearly 14% of GDP. • The NCAER Report (December 2023) presents a more precise methodology, estimating logistics costs between 7.8% and 8.9% of GDP in 2021-22, showcasing a decline over time. 	<p>State-Level Logistics Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India's logistics are influenced by states, as highlighted in the LEADS (Logistics Ease Across Different States) report. • Coastal states such as Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu perform well, while Goa, Odisha, and West Bengal lag behind. • The LEADS report suggests the formulation of state-level logistics policies for efficiency improvements.

11. Open up the playing field - Indian Express

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

Context:

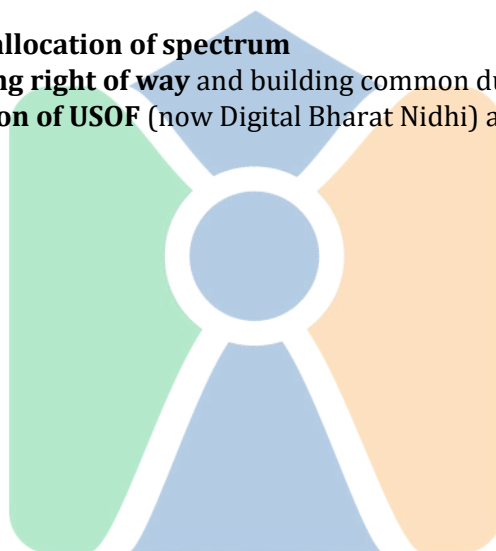
- The recently passed **Telecommunications Act 2023** replaces the **Telegraph Act 1885** and the **Wireless Telegraphy Act 1933**.
- The new Act, while introducing several changes, faces **scrutiny** for contested provisions related to **safety standards and government powers during public emergencies**.

Key Objectives of the Act

- Promotion of competition
- **Resource mobilization for infrastructure upgrade** in the telecom industry, which is burdened with debt.

Positive Changes

- Providing **flexibility for allocation of spectrum**
- Mechanisms for **improving right of way** and building common ducts and cable corridors
- **Expanding the application of USOF** (now Digital Bharat Nidhi) and improving fund utilisation



Mentorship
India

Challenges in 5G Implementation

- India faces challenges in 5G adoption, marked by unattractive use cases, poor monetization, and underinvestment in infrastructure.
 - Investments in 5G start-ups have shrunk from \$639 million in 2022 to \$134.1 million in 2023.
- Opening up the market to new players and improving competition can attract more investments and consequently innovation in the industry.

Technology Neutrality

- While the Act provides for technology neutrality in spectrum use, it doesn't extend the same principle to the delivery of communication services.
- Non-discriminatory and non-exclusive access to infrastructure for new players is needed, promoting fair competition.

Infrastructure Unbundling

- The principles of infrastructure unbundling, evident in the right-of-way section for facilities providers, must be reflected in the authorizations section of the new Act.
- The aim should be to facilitate
 - equivalence of inputs (products and processes offered to competitors at the same terms as to the operator's own retail arm)
 - equivalence of outputs (products and services offered by the operator to its own retail business and to other operators, are functionally comparable)
- A return to the concept of functional separation, explored in the Communications Convergence Bill of 2001 is needed.

Functional Separation

- Many countries, such as Sweden, the UK, Australia, Ireland, and Poland, have employed functional separation as a regulatory measure to address market concentration.
- However, disproportionate remedies can result in counterproductive outcomes, including reduced investments and innovation.
- Voluntary transitions, as demonstrated by Italy, tend to be more effective for infrastructure industries dominated by incumbents.

Encouraging Wireline Architecture

- To advance towards high-quality digital applications, it is crucial to shift from a wireless-centric to a wireline-led architecture.
- The emphasis on Right of Way in the provisions of the new Act, acknowledges this need as well.
- Resource generation for the development of fibre infrastructure in both urban and rural areas is also crucial.
- The government, facilitated by the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), should play a role in promoting explicit targets for infrastructure development in both rural and non-rural areas.
- Simultaneously, it should foster a competitive environment to encourage private sector investments.

Unified Vision

- There is a pressing need for regulatory convergence between telecommunications and the internet, highlighting the blurring lines between telcos and over-the-top services.
- A unified vision of the government of India should bring synergies in licensing, standards, skilling and governance across different departments.

Quick Look

1. Classical Language

- Recently, the West Bengal Chief Minister asked the central government to officially list Bengali as a “classical language”.
- Currently there are six languages that enjoy the ‘Classical’ status in India viz. Tamil (2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).
- All the Classical Languages are listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.
- The Ministry of Culture provides the guidelines regarding Classical languages.
 - High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years
 - A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers
 - The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community
 - The classical language and literature being distinct from modern
- Once a language is notified as a Classical language, the Human Resource and Development Ministry provides certain benefits to promote it.
 - Two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in classical Indian languages
 - A Centre of Excellence for studies in Classical Languages is set up.
 - The University Grants Commission is requested to create, to start with at least in the Central Universities, a certain number of Professional Chairs for the Classical Languages so declared.

2. Spiral Galaxy

- The Hubble Space Telescope recently captured an image of the spiral galaxy, MCG-01-24-014, revealing the enigmatic beauty of 'forbidden' light.
- Spiral galaxies are twisted collections of stars and gas that often have beautiful shapes and are made up of hot, young stars.
- Approximately 60% of all galaxies are thought to be spiral galaxies.
- Spiral galaxies are thought to evolve into elliptical galaxies as the spirals get older.
- The Milky Way, the galaxy that includes Earth and our solar system, is an example of a spiral galaxy.
- Structure
 - Most spiral galaxies contain a central bulge surrounded by a flat, rotating disk of stars.
 - The bulge in the centre is made up of older, dimmer stars and is thought to contain a supermassive black hole.
 - Approximately two-thirds of spiral galaxies also contain a bar structure through their centre, as does the Milky Way.
 - The disk of stars orbiting the bulge separates into arms that circle the galaxy.
 - These spiral arms contain a wealth of gas and dust and younger stars that shine brightly before their quick demise.

3. Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan (MMUA)

- Recently, the Assam government launched the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan (MMUA) to financially support rural women entrepreneurs.
- Objective: To empower women in rural self-help groups, transforming them into "rural micro-entrepreneurs" with a target annual income of Rs 1 lakh per member.
- Beneficiaries can choose from 145 government-prepared business plans.
- In the first year, eligible women receive Rs 10,000, followed by Rs 12,500 from the government and a Rs 12,500 bank loan over the next two years.
- Conditions include a cap on the number of children, aligning with the state's population norms policy.
 - General and OBC women cannot have more than three children to avail the scheme, while STs and SCs are allowed up to four children.

- The Chief Minister justified the child limit by stating that it ensures women utilize funds for business instead of being occupied with childcare.
- Approximately 5 lakh women out of 39 lakh involved in rural self-help groups may be excluded due to the child limit.
- Beneficiaries must fulfill two other conditions viz. enrolling girl children in school and ensuring survival of trees planted under the government's tree plantation drive.
- Previous restrictions on government jobs for those with more than two children were implemented from January 2021.

4. Report Fish Disease App

- The National Surveillance Programme for Aquatic Animal Diseases (NSPAAD) project recently introduced a mobile app 'Report Fish Disease'.
- Purpose: To track and monitor fish diseases across the country.
- The mobile application intends to empower fish farmers with a convenient and efficient platform to report diseases on their farms.
- The app offers an easy disease reporting format, where farmers can easily report disease outbreaks by providing essential information such as location, species affected, symptoms observed, and images.
- Geo-tagging technology facilitates swift response from authorities and the receivers get real-time updates on the status of their reported cases.
- The app also serves as an information hub, providing farmers with valuable resources on disease prevention, treatment, and best aquaculture practices.

5. Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL)

- The Prime Minister will inaugurate the country's longest bridge over the sea - the 22 km Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) aka the Atal Setu Nhava Sheva Sea Link.
- It is a 22-km-long twin-carriageway six-lane bridge over the Thane Creek in the Arabian Sea, connecting Sewri in the island city of Mumbai to Chirle in Raigad district on the mainland.
- It includes a 16.5 km sea link and viaducts on land at either end with a cumulative length of 5.5 km.
- Objective: To improve connectivity in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region which comprises the districts of Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, and Raigad, and promote the region's economic development.

6. Kateel Yakshagana mela

- A century-old Yakshagana mela in Dakshina Kannada will resume its all-night performances following approval from the Karnataka High Court.
- Kateel Yakshagana mela is a famous Yakshagana troupe started in the mid-19th century.
- Yakshagana is a traditional folk-dance form popular in Coastal Karnataka.
- It is a rare combination of dance, music, song, scholarly dialogues and colourful costumes.
- Traditionally, men portray all roles, including the female ones, though women are now part of Yakshagana troupes.
- A typical troupe consists of 15 to 20 actors and a Bhagawatha, who is the master of ceremonies and the main storyteller.
- Elements of Yakshagana
 - The Act: Each performance typically focuses on a small sub-story (known as 'Prasanga') from ancient Hindu epics of Ramayana or Mahabharata.
 - The show consists of both stage performances by talented artists and commentary accompanied by traditional music.
 - The Music: Musical instruments include Chande (drums), Harmonium, Maddale, Taala (mini metal clappers) and flute among others.
 - The Dress: Large size headgear, coloured faces, elaborate costumes all over the body and musical beads on the legs (Gejje).

7. Exercise Sea Dragon-24

- It is an elite multinational maritime exercise that encourages professional exchanges and teamwork among participating navies.
- Participating countries: India, Japan, South Korea, Australia and the US.
- The exercise seeks to improve skills in a variety of maritime combat domains through a number of aerial and ground-based tasks, including
 - Anti-submarine warfare (ASW): Locating and neutralising enemy submarines hiding beneath the seas.
 - Surface warfare: Coordinated attacks on hostile surface vessels using superior weaponry and tactics.
 - Air defence: Putting up an impenetrable air barrier to keep friendly forces safe from aerial threats.
 - Search and rescue (SAR): Tracking down and saving maritime personnel in need.
 - Communication and coordination: Synchronising activities across several platforms and exchanging information in a seamless manner.

8. Einstein Probe (EP)

- A mission of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) dedicated to time-domain high-energy astrophysics.
- Objective: To explore the transient and variable X-ray sky, capturing powerful bursts of high-energy light emanating from objects such as merging neutron stars and black holes.
- It was successfully launched in 2024, from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in China with a "Long March-2C" rocket.
- Unlike conventional X-ray telescopes, Einstein Probe's unique design allows it to monitor almost a tenth of the sky simultaneously.
 - discovering new sources as they light up in X-rays
 - enabling in-depth studies of known and new celestial phenomena over extended periods
- It will also detect light from gamma-ray bursts, supernovae, flares from other stars, and events within the Solar System, such as emissions from comets.



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India

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements with reference to rock glaciers

1. It is a mass of rock, ice, snow and water that moves slowly down a mountain.
2. They form in mountainous regions with permafrost, rock debris, and ice.
3. They usually have very little ice visible at the surface.

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

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

Q2. With respect to the International Political Milieu, consider the following

1. Principle of Indivisible Security
2. Asian Security Model
3. Opposing Sanctions
4. Tackling New Cold War

How many of the above is/are the features of the Global Security Initiative?

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

Q3. With reference to UN's Genocide Convention, consider the following statements

1. The crime of genocide was first time codified under the convention.
2. The convention came into effect in 1948.
3. The convention defines two physical acts of genocide.

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

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

Q4. With reference to the Henley Passport Index 2024, consider the following statements

1. It is a ranking of all the world's passports based on the number of destinations their holders can visit without obtaining a visa in advance.

2. It is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

3. Indian citizens are allowed visa-free travel to more than 100 countries.
4. Six countries secured the top position in the index.

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

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

Q5. Consider the following statements with reference to Swachh Survekshan

1. It is the world's largest urban sanitation and cleanliness survey.
2. The methodology for measuring cleanliness rests on five main criterias.
3. It was launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

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

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

Q6. With reference to the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), consider the following statements

Statement 1: It regulates the hike of the drugs and devices listed under the National List of Essential Medicines.

Statement 2: It is an attached office under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Which one of the following statements is correct?

- A. Statement I is correct but statement II is incorrect
- B. Statement I is incorrect but Statement II is correct
- C. Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement I
- D. Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement I

Q7. With reference to CERVAVAC, consider the following statements

1. It is India's first indigenously developed quadrivalent human papillomavirus (qHPV) vaccine.
2. It is based on Virus-Like Particles (VLP).

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

Q8. With respect to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) consider the following statements

1. It is a statutory body.
2. It consists of five members and one Chairman.
3. The Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and the Reserve Bank of India have representation in the Board.

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

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

Q9. Which of the following organisations publishes the The Logistics Performance Index (LPI)?

- A. World Economic Forum (WEF)
- B. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- C. World Trade Organization (WTO)
- D. World Bank

Q10. Consider the following statements about Telecommunications Act 2023

1. The Act replaces the Telegraph Act 1885 and the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1933.
2. The act provides flexibility for allocation of spectrum
3. It expanded the application of USOF (now Digital Bharat Nidhi) and improving fund utilisation

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

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

Prelims Track Answer

Answer 1 Option C is correct

Explanation

- Rock Glaciers are a mass of rock, ice, snow, mud, and water that moves slowly down a mountain under the influence of gravity. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Unlike an ice glacier, rock glaciers usually have very little ice visible at the surface. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- These rock glaciers, with ice volumes within, are crucial indicators of permafrost movement or melting.
- They typically form in mountainous regions with permafrost, rock debris, and ice. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- The researchers classify them as 'active' or 'relict' based on permafrost status.
- Active rock glaciers, indicating permafrost movement, raise concerns about instability and potential natural disasters as the region warms.

Answer 2 Option D is correct

Explanation

- **Principle of Indivisible Security:** With growing threats posed by unilateralism, hegemony and power politics, and increasing deficits in peace, security, trust and governance, mankind is facing more and more intractable problems and security threats. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- **Asian Security Model:** GSI calls for a "common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable" security and building an Asian security model of mutual respect, openness and integration". **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- **Opposing Sanctions:** This would oppose the use of unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction, appearing to refer to Western sanctions. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- **Tackling New Cold War:** Indo-Pacific' strategy to divide the region and create a 'new Cold War', and the use of military alliances to put together an 'Asian version of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**

Answer 3 Option A is correct

Explanation

- The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is an international human rights treaty that codified the crime of genocide for the first time. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- This was the first human rights treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1948, and has been in effect since January 12, 1951. **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The Convention defines genocide as five physical acts viz.
 - killing members of a group
 - causing serious bodily or mental harm
 - inflicting on the group, conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction
 - imposing measures intended to prevent births within a group
 - forcibly transferring children of the group to another group - committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

Answer 4 Option C is correct

Explanation

- Henley Passport Index is the original, authoritative ranking of all the world's passports based on the number of destinations their holders can visit without obtaining a visa in advance. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is compiled and published by Henley & Partners, a global citizenship and residence advisory firm.
- Based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA). **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Includes 199 different passports and 227 different travel destinations.
- India holds the 80th position on the 2024 Henley Passport Index.

- Indian passport allows visa-free access to 62 destinations. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- Six countries viz. France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore and Spain secured the top position, providing citizens with visa-free access to 194 out of 227 global destinations. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**

Answer 5 Option A is correct**Explanation**

- Swachh Survekshan is the world's largest urban sanitation and cleanliness survey. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Started in 2016 with 73 cities, the annual ranking covers 4,416 urban local bodies, 61 cantonments, and 88 Ganga towns in 2023.
- It is conducted under the ambit of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).
- It was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) with Quality Council of India (QCI) as its implementation partner. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- Objective: To encourage large-scale citizen participation and create awareness amongst all sections of society about the importance of working together toward making towns and cities better places to reside in.
- The methodology for measuring cleanliness rests on two main criterias viz. citizen feedback and field assessment. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**

Answer 6 Option A is correct**Explanation**

- National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) regulates the price hike of the drugs and devices listed under the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM). **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- NPPA was constituted by the Government of India in 1997.
- It is an attached office of the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers. **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- It acts as an independent Regulator for pricing of drugs and to ensure availability and accessibility of medicines at affordable prices.

Answer 7 Option D is correct**Explanation**

- CERVAVAC is India's first indigenously developed quadrivalent human papillomavirus (qHPV) vaccine that is said to be effective against four strains of the virus - Type 6, Type 11, Type 16 and Type 18. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is based on VLP (Virus-Like Particles), similar to the Hepatitis B vaccination. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The vaccine is extremely effective only when it's administered before the first sexual intercourse.

Answer 8 Option B is correct**Explanation**

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) was established under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.
- It is a statutory body, responsible for making and implementing rules and regulations for insolvency and bankruptcy resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms, and individuals in India. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The IBBI has 10 members. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The Members represent the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and the Reserve Bank of India. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 9 Option D is correct**Explanation**

- The Logistics Performance Index (LPI) is published by the World Bank. **Hence, option D is correct.**
- It conducts the LPI Survey every two years.
- It helps countries to identify the challenges and opportunities in their trade logistics performance by measuring the logistics friendliness.
- The LPI considers 6 parameters to evaluate logistics performance, namely Customs performance, Infrastructure quality, Ease of arranging shipments, Logistics services quality, Consignment tracking and tracing; and Timeliness of shipments.

Answer 10 Option D is correct

Explanation

- The recently passed Telecommunications Act 2023 replaces the Telegraph Act 1885 and the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1933.

Hence, statement 1 is correct.

- Objectives
 - Promotion of competition
 - Resource mobilization for infrastructure upgrade in the telecom industry, which is burdened with debt.

- The Act provides flexibility for allocation of spectrum. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It has mechanisms for improving right of way and building common ducts and cable corridors
- It expands the application of USOF (now Digital Bharat Nidhi) and improves fund utilisation **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**



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+91 9999 057869
www.mentorshipindia.com

A-92, Third Floor, Hari Nagar
Delhi - 110064

 @mentorship.india