

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



**Date: 14-15 Jan. 2024**

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2. Maharashtra Speaker's decision conflicts with court ruling on factions- The Hindu
3. Ayodhya mosque to be 'better than Taj'- The Hindu
4. Last of Mizoram's Bru refugees to settle down in Tripura- The Hindu
5. Rising sea, shrinking sands erode vibrancy of Ganga Sagar Mela - The Hindu
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7. FCI should emerge as a trusted partner of farmers, says Goyal- The Hindu
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## Important News Articles

### GS I

## 1. India's oldest living city found in Vadnagar: multi-institution study- The Hindu

**Relevance:** Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

**News:**

- A joint study by five prominent institutions has found evidence of a **cultural continuity in Vadnagar in present-day Gujarat even after the collapse of the Harappan civilisation**, thus making it likely that the “Dark Age” was a myth.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Mesopotamia
- Dark Age

#### Key Highlights

- The study also indicates that the **rise and fall of different kingdoms during the 3,000-year period** and recurrent invasions of India by central Asian warriors were driven by severe changes in climate like rainfall or droughts.
- Vadnagar was a multicultural and multireligious** (Buddhist, Hindu, Jain and Islamic) settlement.
- The **period between the collapse of the Indus Valley Civilization and the emergence of the Iron Age** and cities such as Gandhar, Koshal, and Avanti is often depicted as a **Dark Age** by archaeologists.
- evidence makes Vadnagar the oldest living city** within a single fortification unearthed so far in India.
- Some of our recent unpublished radiocarbon dates suggest that the settlement could be as old as 1400 BCE contemporary to the very late phase of post-urban Harappan period.

#### Harappan Civilization

- The **history of India begins with the birth of the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC)**, also known as Harappan Civilization.
- It flourished around 2,500 BC, in the western part of South Asia, in contemporary Pakistan and Western India.
- The Indus Valley was home to the largest of the four **ancient urban civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China**.
- In the 1920s, the Archaeological Department of India carried out excavations in the Indus valley wherein the ruins of the two old cities, viz. **Mohenjodaro and Harappa were unearthed**.
- In 1924, **John Marshall**, Director-General of the ASI, announced the discovery of a new civilisation in the Indus valley to the world.

### GS II

## 2. Maharashtra Speaker's decision conflicts with court ruling on factions- The Hindu

**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:**

- Maharashtra Speaker discerned from the “legislative majority”** held by the faction led by Maharashtra Chief Minister that they were the “real” Shiv Sena.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Anti-Defection Law
- Constitution (Ninety-first Amendment) Act, 2003



### Key Highlights

- However, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, deciding the Shinde versus Uddhav Thackeray dispute, had directed in a May 2023 judgment
  - That the “Speaker must not base their decision as to which group constitutes the political party on a blind appreciation of which group possesses a majority in the Legislative Assembly”.
- The **Constitution (Ninety-first Amendment) Act, 2003 deleted the provision** of ‘split’ in Paragraph 3 of the Tenth Schedule.
- The inevitable consequence of the deletion of **Paragraph 3 from the Tenth Schedule** is that the defense of a split is no longer available to members who face disqualification proceedings.
- To hold otherwise would be to permit the entry of the defense of ‘split’ in the Tenth Schedule through the back door.
- This is impermissible and would render the deletion of Paragraph 3 meaningless.

### Anti-Defection Law

- The anti-defection law **punishes individual Members of Parliament (MPs)/Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs)** for leaving one party for another.
- Parliament added it to **the Constitution as the Tenth Schedule in 1985** in order to bring stability to governments by discouraging legislators from changing parties.
- **The Tenth Schedule** - popularly known as the Anti-Defection Act - was included in the Constitution via the 52nd Amendment Act, 1985.
- It sets the provisions **for the disqualification of elected members** on the grounds of defection to another political party.
- It was a response to the toppling of multiple state governments by party-hopping MLAs after the general elections of 1967.

## 3. Ayodhya mosque to be ‘better than Taj’- The Hindu

**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.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Babri mosque
- Taj mahal

#### News:

- The Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF), overseeing Ayodhya mosque construction, plans a **revamped funding strategy inspired by the success of the Ram Temple project.**

### Key Highlights

#### Initial Plan and Challenges

- **It aims to build one of India's largest mosques**, surpassing the Taj Mahal, with the world's biggest Quran.
- The mosque will have five minars, a zero-carbon-footprint design, and a water-and-light show synchronized with prayers.
- Plans include a giant fish aquarium and retention of the hospital and community kitchen.
- Construction is scheduled to begin in the second half of 2024, post-Ramzan.
- **A symbolic brick with Quranic verses will travel to Saudi Arabia** and prominent dargahs before being laid at the site.

#### Historical Context:

- The mosque, allotted a five-acre plot in Dhannipur, Ayodhya, in 2020, **emerged in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's approval for the Ram Temple's construction**, replacing the demolished Babri Masjid.

#### Ram Mandir-Babri Masjid dispute

- It is about a plot measuring 2.77 acres in Ayodhya that houses the Babri mosque and Ram Janmabhoomi.
- This particular **piece of land is considered sacred among Hindus** as it is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram.
- Muslims argue that the land houses Babri mosque, where they had offered prayers for years before the dispute erupted.
- **The controversy is over whether the Babri mosque was built on top of a Ram temple** after demolishing or modifying it in the 16th century.
- Muslims, on the other hand, say the **mosque was built by Mir Baqi in 1528 and that Hindus took control over it in 1949**, when some people placed idols of Lord Ram inside the mosque

### GS III

#### 4. Last of Mizoram's Bru refugees to settle down in Tripura- The Hindu

**Relevance:** Security challenges and their management in border areas – linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

**News:**

- The Tripura government has allocated land for the **rehabilitation of the last batch of Mizoram Bru refugees**
  - Who were granted permanent settlement in Tripura through a Home Ministry-initiated quadripartite agreement signed on January 16, 2020.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Bru refugees
- Map based questions

**Key Highlights**

- As per the agreement, a total 6,959 Bru (also known as Reang) **tribe families comprising 37,136 persons, were to be permanently settled in 12 different locations** across four districts in the State.
- **The settlement process has now been completed with the State government** identifying and allocating land for the final group of refugees.
- The 12th settlement colony has been established in Laungangsom, located in the Santirbazar subdivision in south Tripura district
- The last settlement colony will accommodate 633 Bru families.
- It will be spread over an area of 30 hectares that was previously unused.

**Monthly ration**

- Apart from land allocation, the refugees are receiving monthly rations in accordance with the quadripartite **agreement signed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the governments of Tripura and Mizoram with the representatives of the Bru refugees**
  - who fled ethnic tensions in Mizoram in October 1997.

#### 5. Rising sea, shrinking sands erode vibrancy of Ganga Sagar Mela - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- **The Ganga Sagar Mela in Sagar Island, West Bengal, is facing challenges from rising sea levels and beach erosion**
- It prompted the state government to seek "national fair" status for the religious congregation.

**Key Highlights**

**Impact on Pilgrimage**

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Ganga-Meghna-Brahmaputra river system
- Meghna delta

- Warning signs have been erected, and pilgrims are redirected to alternative beaches for the holy dip.

#### Government's Response

- West Bengal government ministers express helplessness in combating nature.
- Tetrapods, concrete wave-dissipating blocks, have been installed along the Ganga Sagar beach to mitigate erosion, with their effectiveness to be assessed after the monsoon.

#### Financial Investment:

- The government has spent ₹25 crore on dredging the island, constituting 10% of the estimated ₹250 crore budget for the Ganga Sagar Mela.

#### Political Embarrassment:

- Erosion becomes a source of embarrassment as the state government aims for national fair status.

#### Environmental and Human Factors

- Sea level rise threatens the Kapil Muni temple, with experts noting that **earlier temples had already submerged**.
- Human interventions, such as clearing sand dunes for Mela ground extension, contribute to increased wave attacks.
- Violations of Coastal Regulation Zone in Sagar Island** construction exacerbate the issue.

#### Concerns Raised by Experts

- the lack of **sediment influx from the Ganga-Meghna-Brahmaputra river system**, leading to land accretion towards the Meghna delta and land loss in the Sundarbans.

## 6. Centre yet to take a call on beginning HPV vaccination campaign for girls- The Hindu

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

#### News:

- The Union Health Ministry is yet to decide on **initiating a vaccination campaign against human papillomavirus (HPV)**
- It is despite the **National Technical Advisory Group for Immunization (NTAGI) recommending vaccination** for adolescent girls aged 9 to 14.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Cervical cancer
- HPV vaccine

#### Key Highlights

#### Background and Recommendations:

- In June 2022, the **NTAGI suggested including the HPV vaccine in the universal immunization programme** after evaluating evidence on cervical cancer burden and vaccine effectiveness.
- The proposed plan involves a one-time catch-up shot for girls aged nine to 14, followed by routine vaccination for others at the age of nine.

#### Past Setbacks and Vaccine Trials:

- Over a decade ago, the **HPV vaccine faced backlash in India due to reported deaths during vaccine trials** conducted by the Programme for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) in collaboration with the government.
- The parliamentary committee termed the situation "intriguing and fishy" and raised concerns about potential commercial exploitation.

#### Global and Indian Cervical Cancer Burden:

- Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer in women globally** and the second most common in Indian women. India contributes significantly to the global cervical cancer burden.

**Potential for Prevention:**

- Experts emphasize the efficacy of HPV vaccination, citing its potential to prevent over 90% of HPV-attributable cancers.
- Trials conducted in India and abroad indicate an 81% reduced risk of HPV-associated cancer in vaccinated women.

**Pending Decision and Way Forward:**

- The Health Ministry is yet to decide on initiating the vaccination campaign, despite the potential benefits in preventing cervical cancer.

## 7. FCI should emerge as a trusted partner of farmers, says Goyal- The Hindu

**Relevance:** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.

Prelims Takeaway
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Market Sale Scheme</li> <li>• Food Corporation of India</li> </ul>

**News:**

- The Food Minister **lauded the role of Food Corporation of India** on its 60th founding anniversary.
- He said the FCI should emerge as a trusted partner of farmers and people of the country.

**Background**

- The role of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) is not only to deliver rations but also to **instill confidence in farmers and beneficiaries** by bringing in transparency, efficiency, and accountability,
- The FCI plays a **crucial role in facilitating** flagship schemes such as **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana [PMGKAY]** by providing ration to beneficiaries in every corner of the country,
- The FCI should embrace digitisation and technology to improve efficiency.
- Quality can be achieved in areas such as inspection, procurement, transportation, distribution, and storage," he said.
- the FCI to reduce operational costs through route optimisation, mechanised loading/unloading, innovative storage solutions, and other methods.
- **The open market sale scheme** (domestic) operations had also proved to be an effective tool in moderating the prices of wheat and rice.

**Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)**

- **FCI sells surplus stocks of wheat and rice** at predetermined prices through e-auction in the open market from time to time to enhance the supply of food grains.
- The purpose of OMSS is to dispose of surplus stocks of wheat and rice held by FCI, and to regulate the prices of wheat in the open market.
- **FCI conducts weekly auctions for the OMSS** for wheat on the platform of the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX).
- NCDEX is a commodity exchange platform in India that provides a platform for trading in various agricultural and other commodities

## 8. Delhi AQI severe, curbs back on cars and construction- Indian Express

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

**News:**

- The **air quality in Delhi** turned 'severe'.
- This has led to a ban on **construction** and on the running of **BS-III petrol** and **BS-IV diesel four-wheelers**.

Prelims Takeaway
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GRAP</li> <li>• AQI</li> </ul>



- The fine for violating the restriction on running BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel four-wheelers is Rs 20,000.

### Environmental Ambience in Delhi

- Delhi's average AQI on **January 14, 2024** was 447.
- **The India Meteorological Department** held low wind speed and high moisture levels, responsible for accumulation of pollutants.
- **The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)** held local pollution sources, including large-scale open burning, responsible for it.
- Earlier the Commission has brought in the restrictions under **phase III of the Graded Response Action Plan** to curb such pollutants.
- The ban will cover **construction and demolition activities**,

### Exceptions to the Ban

- **Exceptions** have been granted for following projects :
  - Railways,
  - Metro rail,
  - Airports, "projects of national importance",
  - Hospitals, water supply and sanitation
  - Linear public projects (including roads, flyovers, bridges, highways and pipelines).

### Recent Development on Environment Pollution in Delhi

- Delhi's average air quality in **November** and **December** has been poorer than in previous years.
- With the AQI touching the **severe** (400) or '**severe +**' category (450+) several times in these two months
- The CAQM had imposed GRAP restrictions **multiple times**.
- These were revoked on **January 1, 2024**.

### GRAP-Graded Response Action Plan

- GRAP is a set of emergency measures implemented to prevent the deterioration of air quality in Delhi-NCR.
- Stage 1 of GRAP is activated when the AQI is in the 'poor' category (201 to 300).
- Stage 2 of GRAP is activated when the AQI is in the 'very poor' category (301 to 400).
- Stage 3 of GRAP is activated when the AQI is in the 'severe' category (401 to 450).
- Stage 4 of GRAP is activated when the AQI is in the 'very severe' category (above 450).

## 9. President Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi wish Indian Army on Army Day- Hindustan times

**Relevance:** Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

### News:

- The President and Prime Minister conveyed their warm wishes to **Indian Army personnel on the occasion of Army Day on January 15**.

### Prelims Takeaway

- Field Marshal
- Army Day



**Indian Army Day**

- Indian Army Day is **celebrated every year on January 15**.
- On the special occasion of Army Day, the officials will perform a parade in the presence of higher dignitaries, and its salute is taken by the Indian Army Chief.

**Background**

- On January 15, 1949, **Field Marshal K.M. Cariappa became the first** Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, and took over authority from the British Commander-in-Chief General Francis Butcher
- He became the first Indian to command the Army in its long, rich history.
- From 1949 until 2022, the **Army Day parade was organised at the Cariappa Parade Ground in the Delhi Cantonment**.
- In 2023, the Southern Command was responsible for the parade in Bengaluru. It was the first time the Army Day parade was held outside the country's capital.

**Field Marshal KM Cariappa**

- He was the **First Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army** and led the Indian forces on the Western Front during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1947.
- He is one of the two Indian Army officers to hold the highest rank of Field Marshal (the other being Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw).
- He was **appointed as the first Commander-in-Chief** of an independent Indian Army on 15 January 1949 which is celebrated as Indian Army Day.
- He took over the **command of the Indian Army from General Sir FRR Bucher**, the last British Commander-in-Chief.
- The Government of India conferred the **rank of Field Marshal on Cariappa in 1983**.

**Editorials, Gists and Explainers****10. A Speaker's flawed move to determine the real faction - The Hindu**

**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.

**Context:**

- **The Maharashtra Assembly Speaker faces a critical decision** on whether the Shiv Sena breakaway group, led by Eknath Shinde, voluntarily abandoned their party membership
  - and violated the party whip, leading to potential disqualification under the anti-defection law.

<p><b>Background and Legal Framework:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examining the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, voluntary departure from the party or voting against its whip constitutes defection.</li> <li>The Speaker must determine if the Shinde group's actions qualify for disqualification, despite subsequent developments like Shinde becoming Chief Minister.</li> </ul> <p><b>Petition and Allegations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The original Shiv Sena party files a petition seeking disqualification, citing secret meetings, non-attendance at party meetings, and forming an alliance with the opposition.</li> <li>The Speaker must assess whether these actions equate to voluntarily giving up party membership.</li> </ul> <p><b>Legal Precedent and Criteria:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referring to the Supreme Court's guidance, joining the opposition and attempting to form an alternative government can be deemed voluntary abandonment of party membership.</li> <li>The conduct of the Shinde group, in light of this, suggests defection.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Flawed Judgment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speaker Narwekar's nearly 1,200-page judgment is criticized as deeply flawed for attempting to avoid disqualification.</li> <li>The Tenth Schedule now lacks the provision for legislators to avoid disqualification through a party split, making the Speaker's judgment contentious.</li> </ul> <p><b>Misinterpretation by the Speaker:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Speaker erroneously delves into determining the real Shiv Sena faction, a task beyond his jurisdiction.</li> <li>The Election Commission is designated to decide faction authenticity, and the Speaker's focus should be on determining the original party the legislators defected from.</li> </ul> <p><b>Contradictions in the Ruling:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Speaker's declaration of the Shinde group's appointments as valid contradicts the Supreme Court's findings that recognize them as illegal.</li> <li>The court unequivocally states that the original Shiv Sena, led by Uddhav Thackeray, is the only political party, questioning the Speaker's jurisdiction to determine faction authenticity.</li> </ul>
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**Conclusion:**

- The controversial ruling raises **questions about the Speaker's jurisdiction, misinterpretation of legal precedents**, and contradictions with the Supreme Court's findings.
- The dispute underscores the complexities of anti-defection laws and the need for adherence to legal procedures in such cases.

## 11. To combat climate change, citizens and government must join hands- Indian Express

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

**Context:**

- Air pollution**, particularly in NCR (National Capital Region), remains an ongoing problem with **no immediate solution in sight**.
- It has evolved into a **perennial concern demanding difficult choices** and decisive actions, yet both society and government engage in blame games rather than substantial discussions.

**Key Highlight**

<p><b>The Triangle Approach: Scientists, Governments, and People</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addressing air pollution necessitates collaboration among scientists, governments, and the public.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenges in Crop-Burning Resolution:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addressing crop burning requires a win-win solution involving technical, regulatory, fiscal, and informational interventions.</li> </ul>
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- While scientists provide evidence, the responsibility of making informed trade-offs lies with the political class.
- Activists contribute valuable perspectives but advocating for a single trade-off may hinder open discussions.

#### **Political Class as Decision-makers**

- Despite significant policy decisions in the past, the political class, as representatives of the people, struggles to address the intersection of air pollution and political decision-making effectively.
- The need for better understanding this intersection is crucial.

#### **Learnings from Past Initiatives**

- Case studies like the Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) corridor and the odd-even experiment in Delhi reveal insights into political decision-making.
- The BRT corridor, designed to enhance public transport at the expense of private vehicles, succeeded in its objectives but faced opposition from the car-using middle class, leading to its dismantling.

- Convincing all stakeholders demands a clear political narrative, which, despite political capability, remains an unexplored avenue.

#### **Public Involvement and Incremental Progress:**

- Public participation is essential for politically expedient solutions.
- Incremental gains are being made, but the speed is insufficient to counter increasing pollution levels.
- The public's readiness for hard trade-offs, such as increased use of public transport, remains a critical factor.

#### **Incentivizing Change through Public Policies:**

- Progress requires a circular logic where politicians incentivize positive changes, and citizens signal their readiness for compromises.
- This interaction can create a cascade leading to a tipping point.
- Public policies need to incentivize people to move in the right direction, establishing a partnership between the community and the political class.

#### **Conclusion:**

- The ongoing dance between the community and the political class regarding air pollution hinges on reaching a tipping point where real and hard trade-offs become acceptable to the public.
- **Incentivizing positive changes through policies can create a mutually beneficial dynamic, fostering a more effective response to the persistent challenge of air pollution.**

## Quick Look

### 1. Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar'

- The Government of India has announced the "Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar" in the field of Science, Technology and Innovation.
- The National Award recognizes outstanding and inspiring scientific, technological and innovation contributions of researchers, technologists and innovators.

#### Categories of awards

- Vigyan Ratna (VR): Maximum of three awards to be bestowed to recognize lifetime achievements & contributions made in a given field of Science and Technology.
- Vigyan Shri (VS): Maximum of 25 awards to be given to recognize the distinguished contributions in the given field of Science and Technology.
- Vigyan Yuva: Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (VY-SSB) award: Maximum of 25 awards to be given to recognize and encourage young scientists who made an exceptional contribution in the given field of Science and Technology.

### 2. Graded Response Action Plan

- GRAP is a set of emergency measures that kick in to prevent further deterioration of air quality once it reaches a certain threshold in the Delhi-NCR region.
- It was approved by the Supreme Court in 2016 and notified in 2017.
- The plan was formulated after several meetings between Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA), state government and experts.
- GRAP works only as an emergency measure.
- The plan does not include action by various state governments to be taken throughout the year to tackle industrial, vehicular and combustion emissions

### 3. Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT)

- It has been conceived as a 30-metre diameter primary-mirror optical and infrared telescope that will enable observations into deep space.
- It is proposed as a joint collaboration involving institutions in the S., Japan, China, Canada, and India.
- It will be the world's most advanced and capable ground-based optical, near-infrared, and mid-infrared observatory.
- It will integrate the latest innovations in precisions control, segmented mirror design, and adaptive optics.
- At the heart of the telescope is the segmented mirror, made up of 492 individual segments. Precisely aligned, these segments will work as a single reflective surface of 30m diameter.

### 4. Cabo Verde

- It is also known as Cape Verde which comprises a group of islands that lie off the west coast of Africa.
- It is located nearby Senegal and is the nearest point on the continent.
- This volcanic archipelago includes ten islands and five islets, divided into the windward (Barlavento) and leeward (Sotavento) groups.
- Climate: Generally moderate, the climate is characterized by stable temperatures with extreme aridity.
- The terrain of the Cabo Verde islands varies from the geologically older, flatter islands in the east and the newer, more mountainous islands in the west.
- Population: The overwhelming majority of the population of Cabo Verde is of mixed European and African descent and is often referred to as mestiço or Crioulo.



## 5. Himalayan Wolf

- The Himalayan Wolf (*Canis lupus chanco*), a prominent lupine predator found across the Himalayas.
- It is also called Tibetan wolves, which live at more than 4,000 metres altitudes and are genetically distinct from grey wolves.
- Living at such high altitudes, these wolves have genetically adapted themselves to live in low oxygen (hypoxic) conditions.
- In China, the Himalayan wolf lives on the Tibetan Plateau in the provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Tibet, and western Sichuan.
- In northern India, it occurs in the Union Territory of Ladakh and in the Lahaul and Spiti region in northeastern Himachal Pradesh.
- Conservation status: IUCN: Vulnerable
  - CITES: Appendix I
  - Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I

## 6. PM-eBus Sewa Scheme

- Under the PM-eBus Sewa Scheme, 10,000 e-buses will be deployed across cities in the country.
- The scheme was introduced to give a push to the slow adoption of e-buses in public transport.
- Under this scheme, city bus operations will be done on a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model.
- This scheme will support bus operations for 10 years.
- States/Cities shall be responsible for running the bus services and making payments to the bus operators.
- The Central Government will support these bus operations by providing subsidies to the extent specified in the proposed scheme.

## 7. India's First Dark Sky Park

- The Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR) in Maharashtra is India's first Dark Sky Park within a tiger reserve for earmarking areas around the park that restrict light pollution for stargazers to access pristine dark skies.
- Dark Sky Place certification focuses on lighting policy, dark sky-friendly retrofits, outreach and education, and monitoring the night sky.
- This designation positions PTR as a sanctuary where tourists can witness celestial spectacles, shielded from the intrusion of artificial light pollution.
- PTR became the fifth such park in Asia.
- The certification was given by the International Dark-Sky Association, a global dark-sky movement to promote astronomy.

## Prelims Track Question

**Q1. With reference to recent Vadnagar excavations, consider the following statements**

1. The site exclusively belonged to Buddhist Culture.
2. The site's time period is between Vedic Culture and the Iron Age.
3. The evidence makes it the oldest living city within a single fortification unearthed so far in India.

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

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

**Q2. With reference to recent Anti Defection Law in India, consider the following statements**

1. The anti-defection law punishes individual Members of Parliament /Members of the Legislative Assembly for leaving one party for another.
2. It was included in the Constitution of India in 1995.
3. It was a response to the toppling of multiple state governments by party-hopping MLAs after the general elections of 1967.

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

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

**Q3. With reference to Mosque Project in Ayodhya that has remained in news, consider the following statements**

1. The project is being built by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board.
2. The mosque will contain the world's biggest Quran.
3. A symbolic brick with Quranic verses will travel to Saudi Arabia before being laid at the site.

**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 Bru Refugee Issue that has remained in news, consider the following statements**

1. The tribe is being rehabilitated by the Mizoram Government.
2. The tribe originally belongs to the State of Manipur.
3. The tribe is also known as Kuki.

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

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

**Q5. With reference to Ganga Sagar Mela, consider the following statements**

1. It is known as the world's second largest human congregation after Kumbh.
2. It happens every year during Makar Sankranti.
3. The mela is held in the State of West Bengal.
4. The site is associated with the temple of Kapil Muni.

**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 pairs with reference to Human Papilloma Virus:**

<b>Vaccine</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Valency of Vaccine</b>
1. Gardasil	:	Quadrivalent
2. Cervarix	:	Nonavalent
3. Gardasil-9	:	Bivalent

**How many of the pairs given above is/are correct?**

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

**Q7. With reference to the PMGKAY, consider the following statements**

1. It was first introduced in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. It was designed to provide 5kg free foodgrains to eligible ration card holders under the National Food Security Act, 2013.
3. The scheme has expired in December, 2023.

**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 pairs with reference to Graded Response Action Plan:**

<b>Category</b>	<b>: AQI</b>
1. Poor	: 201 to 300
2. Very Poor	: 301 to 400
3. Severe	: 401 to 500
4. Very Severe	: 501 to 600

**How many of the pairs given above is/are correct?**

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

**Q9. With reference to the power of disqualification under the Anti-Defection Law in the Constitution of India, consider the following statements**

1. The question of such disqualification is decided by the presiding officer of the House.
2. Kihoto Hollohan versus Zachilhu is the leading case on such power of disqualification.
3. The decision is disqualification once made is final and it cannot be questioned in any court of law.

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

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

**Q10. Consider the following statements with respect to the problem of Stubble Burning:**

1. It causes the release of the Volatile Organic Compounds in the atmosphere.
2. It is the cause of soil erosion.
3. It is one of the causes of the release of methane in the atmosphere that causes climate change.
4. It makes soil fertile.

**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

- The study also indicates that the rise and fall of different kingdoms during the 3,000-year period and recurrent invasions of India by central Asian warriors were driven by severe changes in climate like rainfall or droughts.
- Vadnagar was a multicultural and multireligious (Buddhist, Hindu, Jain and Islamic) settlement. **Hence, Statement 1 is incorrect.**
- The period between the collapse of the Indus Valley Civilisation and the emergence of the Iron Age and cities such as Gandhar, Koshal, and Avanti is often depicted as a Dark Age by archaeologists. **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The evidence makes Vadnagar the oldest living city within a single fortification unearthed so far in India. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**
- Some of our recent unpublished radiocarbon dates suggest that the settlement could be as old as 1400 BCE contemporary to the very late phase of post-urban Harappan period.

### Answer 2 Option B is correct

#### Explanation

- The anti-defection law punishes individual Members of Parliament (MPs)/Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) for leaving one party for another. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- Parliament added it to the Constitution as the Tenth Schedule in 1985 in order to bring stability to governments by discouraging legislators from changing parties. **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The Tenth Schedule - popularly known as the Anti-Defection Act - was included in the Constitution via the 52nd Amendment Act, 1985.
- It sets the provisions for the disqualification of elected members on the grounds of defection to another political party.

- It was a response to the toppling of multiple state governments by party-hopping MLAs after the general elections of 1967. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**

### Answer 3 Option B is correct

#### Explanation

- The Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF), overseeing Ayodhya mosque construction, plans a revamped funding strategy inspired by the success of the Ram Temple project. **Hence, Statement 1 is incorrect.**
- It aims to build one of India's largest mosques, surpassing the Taj Mahal, with the world's biggest Quran. **Hence, Statement 2 is correct.**
- The mosque will have five minars, a zero-carbon-footprint design, and a water-and-light show synchronized with prayers.
- Plans include a giant fish aquarium and retention of the hospital and community kitchen.
- Construction is scheduled to begin in the second half of 2024, post-Ramzan.
- A symbolic brick with Quranic verses will travel to Saudi Arabia and prominent dargahs before being laid at the site. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**

### Answer 4 Option C is correct

#### Explanation

- The Tripura government has allocated land for the rehabilitation of the last batch of Bru refugees. **Hence, Statement 1 is incorrect.**
- The Bru refugees originally belonged to the State of Mizoram. **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- They were granted permanent settlement in Tripura through a Home Ministry-initiated quadripartite agreement signed on January 16, 2020.
- As per the agreement, a total 6,959 Bru (also known as Reang) tribe families comprising 37,136 persons, were to be permanently settled in 12 different locations across four districts in the State. **Hence, Statement 3 is incorrect.**



**Answer 5 Option D is correct****Gangasagar Mela**

- It is known as the world's second largest human congregation after Kumbh. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- It happens every year during Makar Sankranti. **Hence, Statement 2 is correct.**
- The mela is held at Sagar Island, West Bengal. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**
- It has been mentioned in Indian epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, putting its existence as early as 400 BCE.
- The pilgrims after taking a dip in Ganga also visit the temple of Kapil Muni. **Hence, Statement 4 is correct.**

**Answer 6 Option A is correct****Explanation**

Three main types of HPV vaccines are available:

- **Quadrivalent Vaccine (Gardasil):** This vaccine guards against four types of HPV, including HPV 16 and 18, which are responsible for the majority of cervical cancer cases, and HPV 6 and 11, which cause genital warts. **Hence, Pair 1 is correct.**
- **Bivalent Vaccine (Cervarix):** Cervarix provides protection against the high-risk HPV strains 16 and 18, which are the most common culprits behind cervical cancer. **Hence, Pair 2 is incorrect.**
- **Nonavalent Vaccine (Gardasil 9):** Gardasil 9 is the most comprehensive of the three, offering protection against nine different HPV strains, including those responsible for most cases of cervical cancer. **Hence, Pair 3 is incorrect.**

**Answer 7 Option B is correct****Explanation**

- The PMGKAY was first introduced in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- It was designed to provide 5kg free foodgrains to eligible ration card holders

under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA). **Hence, Statement 2 is correct.**

- Initially set to expire in December 2022
- The scheme was extended till December 2023.
- The scheme has been extended for an additional five years. **Hence, Statement 3 is incorrect.**

**Answer 8 Option B is correct****Explanation****GRAP-Graded Response Action Plan**

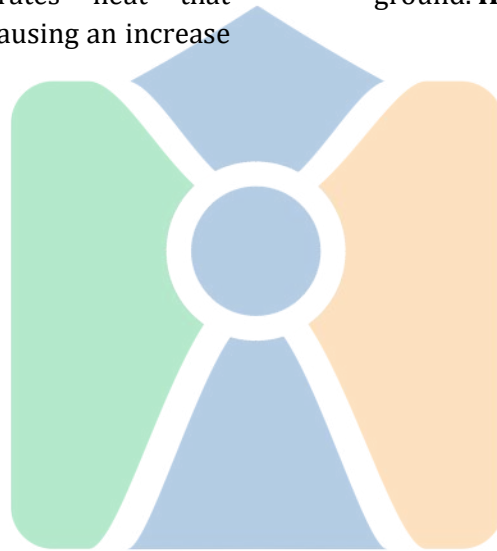
- GRAP is a set of emergency measures implemented to prevent the deterioration of air quality in Delhi-NCR.
- Stage 1 of GRAP is activated when the AQI is in the 'poor' category (201 to 300). **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- Stage 2 of GRAP is activated when the AQI is in the 'very poor' category (301 to 400). **Hence, Statement 2 is correct.**
- Stage 3 of GRAP is activated when the AQI is in the 'severe' category (401 to 450). **Hence, Statement 3 is incorrect.**
- Stage 4 of GRAP is activated when the AQI is in the 'very severe' category (above 450). **Hence, Statement 4 is incorrect.**

**Answer 9 Option A is correct****Explanation****Powers of Speaker with regard to Anti-Defection Law**

- Any question regarding disqualification arising out of defection is to be decided by the presiding officer of the House. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- The Kihoto Hollohan versus Zachilhu case (1993) is the leading case in this regard. **Hence, Statement 2 is correct.**
- The Supreme Court declared that the decision of the presiding officer is not final and can be questioned in any court. **Hence, Statement 3 is incorrect.**
- It is subject to judicial review on the grounds of malafide, perversity, etc.

**Answer 10 Option C is correct****Explanation**

- Stubble burning emits toxic pollutants in the atmosphere containing harmful gases like carbon monoxide (CO), carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds (VOC). **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- The combustion of agricultural residue is a prominent contributor to air pollution in certain regions of northern India.
- Stubble burning generates heat that penetrates into the soil, causing an increase in erosion, loss of useful microbes and moisture. **Hence, Statement 2 is correct.**
- The release of toxic gases like methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) from stubble burning will increase global warming, further aggravating climate change. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**
- Uncontrolled firing- Risk of fires spreading out of control, could turn into huge pits of flames.
- Soil becomes less fertile and its nutrients are destroyed when the husk is burnt on the ground. **Hence, Statement 4 is incorrect.**



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+91 9999 057869  
www.mentorshipindia.com

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

 @mentorship.india