

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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2. PM launches portal for marginalised sections - The Hindu
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## Important News Articles

### GS II

#### 1. Cauvery panel to meet in Puducherry after four-year gap - 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

- Cauvery Water Dispute
- Cauvery river

**News:**

- The **Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) will meet recently**, in Puducherry
- This is the second time the committee will hold its deliberations in the Union Territory, where it last met in January 2020.

**Key Highlights**

- Though the Cauvery Water Management Authority directed **Karnataka to ensure environmental flows in the lean months of the year**
- the upper riparian State has not been able to comply with the order as its capital, Bengaluru, is in the grip of a severe water crisis.
- Meanwhile, the negotiation committee on the Pennaiyar water dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, which met last month, has sought data from the State

**Pennaiyar water dispute**

- In 2018, **Tamil Nadu filed an original suit against Karnataka** for constructing check dams and diversion structures **on the Pennaiyar river**.
- On November 30, 2019, Tamil Nadu formally requested the Union government to constitute a Tribunal for adjudication of disputes over the waters of the river.
- In mid-December, the court gave the Centre three months to constitute the tribunal to resolve the dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

**Cauvery Water Dispute**

- The Cauvery Water Dispute is a dispute between the Indian states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, along with Kerala and Puducherry over the sharing of the Cauvery River's waters.
- It involves issues of water allocation and usage rights, with historical agreements, tribunals, and court rulings playing a significant role in its resolution.

## Crop cover

A look at paddy coverage in Tamil Nadu\*



Region	Normal area	Target	Coverage on March 11, 2024	Coverage on March 13, 2023
			2023-24	2022-23

### Samba/Thaladi/Pishanam

Delta	8.914	13.263	11.927	13.528
Non-delta	21.716	21.902	21.055	22.984
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30.63</b>	<b>35.165</b>	<b>32.982</b>	<b>36.512</b>

\* In lakh acres | Source: Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Tamil Nadu government

## 2. PM launches portal for marginalised sections - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- the Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan evam Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan (PM-SURAJ) portal was launched by P.M.

**Key Highlights**

- The Aim is to provide **credit support to entrepreneurs from disadvantaged sections of society**
- The **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** launched a nationwide initiative
- It disbursed around ₹720 crore worth of credit to one lakh beneficiaries from the Scheduled Castes, Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Safai Karamcharis.
- The portal will be a **one-stop point where people from disadvantaged sections of society can apply** for and monitor the progress of all loan and credit schemes already available to them.

### Prelims Takeaway

- Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakaram
- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

### Welfare scheme for vulnerable section

- Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 (PCR) and the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (PoA)
- Stand-Up India Scheme.
- Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana.
- Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana.
- Van Bandhu Kalyan Yojana.
- Vocational Training Centres in Tribal Areas.
- Hamari dharohar
- Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakaram
- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

## 3. SC to hear plea to include CJI on EC selection panel- 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:

- The Supreme Court agreed to urgently hear a plea which said the **Centre could take “unfair advantage” while filling the two vacancies of Election Commissioners (ECs)** in the Election Commission of India (ECI)

### Key Highlights

- Chief Justice of India (CJI) should be brought back on board the high-profile selection committee headed by the Prime Minister for appointments of ECs to the top poll body
  - as directed by a landmark Supreme Court judgment in the Anoop Baranwal case

### ‘Free and fair elections’

- Now, the Executive has the ability to **appoint two Election Commissioners which can give an unfair advantage to the Executive.**
- The role of the Election Commission is critical in ensuring free and fair elections and therefore, the appointments must also be seen to be fair and free from any bias or latches to the government of that time

### Anoop Baranwal versus Union of India

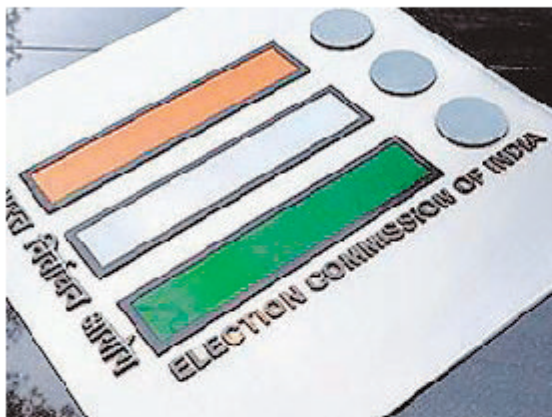
- a Constitution Bench ordered the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two ECs to be appointed by the President on the advice tendered by a committee
  - Consisting of **Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha or the leader of the single largest party in Opposition and the CJI.**
- However, the government had enacted a new law — **The Chief Election Commission and other Election Commissions (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023** to countermand the judgment.
- The law had replaced the CJI with a Cabinet Minister on the selection committee, giving the Centre a dominant role in the appointment process.

### Prelims Takeaway

- The Chief Election Commission and other Election Commissions (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023
- Election commission

## Matter of concern

The NGO's plea before the Supreme Court has asked for these specific interventions



- Stay the implementation of Section 7 of The Chief Election Commission and other Election Commissions (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023

- Direct the Union of India to appoint the vacant positions of Election Commissioners, till the pendency of the case in the Supreme Court, in accordance with the Selection Committee laid down by the *Anoop Baranwal vs Union of India* judgment of March 2023

- Bring the CJI back on board the high-profile selection committee headed by the Prime Minister for appointment of ECs

### 4. Uttarakhand Bill on Uniform Civil Code gets President's nod - The Hindu

**Relevance:** Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.

**News:**

- Uttarakhand has now become the first State in Independent India to have a Uniform Civil Code after the President gave assent to the UCC Bill, 2024.

**Key Highlight**

- The Bill, which has kept tribal people out of its ambit, has banned practices like **halala, iddat, and talaq** (customs related to marriage and divorce in Muslim Personal Law).
- It ensures that women are given **equal rights in matters related to property and inheritance rights**.
- **Under Article 201** of the 'Constitution of India', the President gave assent to the 'Uniform Civil Code Uttarakhand 2024' Bill passed by the Uttarakhand Legislative Assembly

**Uniform Civil Code (UCC)**

- UCC provides for one law for the entire country across all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.
- **UCC is defined in Article 44** as part of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), in part of Part IV of the Constitution.
- **Article 44** - It states that 'The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India'.
- UCC aims to enforce a uniform legal framework to all citizens, irrespective of their religion.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Article 44
- UCC

## GS III

### 5. SC stops Assam govt. move to de-notify rhino habitat - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- The **Supreme Court froze the Assam government's move to withdraw an almost 26-year-old notification** constituting the **Pobitora wildlife sanctuary**, which hosts one of the largest rhino populations in the country.

**Key Highlights**

- The government reasoned that **declaration of the sanctuary was made without settling the rights of the people living** in villages in the area including Thengabhangra, Murkata and Mayong.
- These villagers belonged to the marginalized communities and had been residing in the area even before Independence.

**Panel set up**

- The government, **having withdrawn the 1998 notification** declaring the wildlife sanctuary,
- It had also constituted a committee to look into both the rights and claims of the forest dwellers in the area
  - as well as taking a considered decision, this time, to declare the Pobitora region as a wildlife sanctuary.

**Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary**

- Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary has the **highest density of one-horned rhinos** in the world and second highest concentration in Assam after Kaziranga National Park.
- It is often called '**Mini Kaziranga**' due to **similar landscape and vegetation**.
- The wildlife sanctuary is home to endangered one-horned rhinoceros and the other mammals such as Leopard, Leopard cat, Fishing cat, Jungle cat, Feral Buffalo, Wild pigs, Chinese pangolins, etc.
- About 72% of Pobitora Sanctuary consists of the wet savannah of Arundo donax and Saccharum.
  - The remaining area is covered by water bodies.
- **Water hyacinth** (an invasive aquatic plant) is a **major problem** to the area especially to waterfowl, as it forms thick mats on the water surface.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- |                       |          |
|-----------------------|----------|
| • Kaziranga Sanctuary | Wildlife |
| • Pobitora Sanctuary  | Wildlife |

### 6. Overcoming theoretical limits on solar cell capacity - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- In photovoltaics – i.e. the study of conversion of light energy into electrical energy — the **Shockley-Queisser limit is a theoretical concept** that defines the maximum capacity of a solar cell to produce electricity.

**Key Points**

- Photovoltaic devices like solar cells allow us to harness solar energy.
- Photovoltaic cells are made of semiconducting materials like (doped) silicon.
- When sunlight interacts with a semiconductor, **it excites electrons from the lower-energy valence band to the higher-energy conduction band**.
- This transition leaves behind a vacancy in the valence band called a hole.
  - To be more precise, a hole is a vacant site where an electron is supposed to be.
  - Since it denotes the absence of an electron, a hole is also a place with positive charge.
- The process of an electron moving to the conduction band and **leaving a hole behind in the valence band creates an electron-hole pair**.
- These pairs are the fundamental charge carriers in semiconductors and play a crucial role in the operation of electronic devices.
- In short, electron-hole pairs create the photocurrent

#### Prelims Takeaway

- |                 |
|-----------------|
| • Photons       |
| • Semiconductor |

- an electric current created as a result of radiation in the semiconductor.
- We know that the efficiency with which a solar cell can produce an electric current when sunlight is incident on it can't be 100%
  - because some light particles (photons) pass through the material without interacting with it (i.e. transparency loss, around 25%)
  - some energy simply heats up the material without exciting the electrons (thermalisation, around 30%).
- As a result, **the maximum efficiency of a conventional solar cell is confined, and this range is called the Shockley-Queisser limit.**
- These days, a solar cell can convert only a third of the incident solar energy into electric energy.
- The semiconductor can't make use of photons with less energy than that required by electrons to jump across the band gap.
- Similarly, photons carrying significantly more energy than the size of the band gap only heat the device.
- Researchers have been trying to find ways to surpass the Shockley-Queisser limit and use more solar energy
- thus improve the cells' efficiency, but this has been easier said than done.

## 7. NITI Aayog Launches 'Vocal for Local' Initiative Fostering Grassroots Entrepreneurship and Self-reliance- PIB

**Relevance:** Development processes and the development industry — the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

**News:**

- **NITI Aayog launched the 'Vocal for Local' initiative** under its Aspirational Blocks Programme

**Vocal for Local' Initiative:**

- It is an initiative of NITI Aayog **under its Aspirational Blocks Programme** to encourage a spirit of self-reliance among the people and propel them towards sustainable growth and prosperity.
- As a part of this initiative, **local products from 500 aspirational blocks** have been mapped and consolidated under the Aakanksha brand.
- Aakanksha is an umbrella brand, which could be supplemented into multiple sub-brands that have the potential to create an international market.
- In order to encourage these products, a dedicated window for the Aspirational Blocks Programme under the brand name Aakanksha
  - has been established on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal.
- The partners will also provide technical and operational support for the facilitation of
  - e-commerce onboarding, establishing linkages, financial/digital literacy, documentation/certification, and skill enhancement, among others.

### Prelims Takeaway

- NITI AAYOG
- VOCAL FOR LOCAL

## Editorials, Gists and Explainers

### 8. India's R&D funding, breaking down the numbers - The Hindu

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

**Context:**

- The announcement in the interim Budget for 2024-25, of a corpus of **₹1 lakh crore to bolster the research and innovation ecosystem within the country**



**Key Highlights**

- The significance of research and innovation cannot be overstated in fuelling economic growth, technological advancement, and global competitiveness.
- This entails examining India's comparatively lower R&D expenditure as a percentage of GDP alongside its noteworthy output in terms of patent grants, PhDs awarded, and publication outputs.
- Analyzing the quality of this output is equally imperative in understanding the true implications of these initiatives.
- India's R&D is witnessing significant growth, with a notable increase in Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) from ₹6,01,968 million in 2010-11 to ₹12,73,810 million in 2020-21.
- However, with research and development investment as a percentage of GDP standing at 0.64%
- India falls behind major developed and emerging economies such as China (2.4%), Germany (3.1%), South Korea (4.8%) and the United States (3.5%).

**Research output, innovation**

- Annually, India generates an impressive 40,813 PhDs and is in third place after the United States and China.
- Additionally, India's research output remains substantial, ranking third globally, with over 3,00,000 publications in 2022
  - highlighting the nation's robust research ecosystem and its commitment to advancing knowledge across diverse fields.
- India also demonstrates commendable performance in patent grants, securing the sixth position globally with 30,490 patents granted in 2022.
- In India, GERD is primarily driven by the government sector, with the private sector industry contributing only 36.4% during 2020-21.
- Collaboration between the government, business enterprises and HEIs is essential to maximise the positive impact of science, technology, and innovation on economic growth and technological advancement.

**Investment in R&D**

- According to the R&D statistics (2022-23) of the Department of Science and Technology, India's total investment in R&D reached \$17.2 billion in 2020-21.
- Within this sum, 54% (\$9.4 billion) is allocated to the government sector and predominantly utilised by four key scientific agencies
  - the Defence Research and Development Organisation (30.7%), the Department of Space (18.4%), the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (12.4%), and the Department of Atomic Energy (11.4%).
- Learning from the R&D ecosystem in other developed countries while maintaining India's strengths in streamlined decision-making and strategic alignment could be a powerful force to optimise its R&D landscape.
- India must implement policies that incentivise private companies to invest in R&D.

**Impact of initiatives**

- Initiatives such as the National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP) signal a strong commitment to technological progress and innovation.
- The recent enactment of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act, underscores the government's dedication to catalysing research and innovation as the cornerstone of development.
- The Act aims to bridge India's persistent R&D investment gap while nurturing a robust research culture within HEIs.

**Conclusion**

- The interim Budget, combined with the NDTSP and ANRF Act, sends positive signals regarding India's commitment to incentivising private sector-led research and innovation, particularly in burgeoning industries.

## 9. A fresh stance: India's free trade pact with four EU nations matters even if gains are limited - The Hindu

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

**Context:**

- India signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with a bloc of four European countries — Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, formally known as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).
- In market access terms, the deal offers more room for Indian services firms, with easier visa rules, so that they can also tap other European markets using these countries as a base.
- Professionals (architects, accountants and nurses), can also expect more opportunities.
- Most goods exports already get duty-free treatment in Switzerland, India's largest EFTA trade partner, so the lynchpin in this deal is the in-built goal to nudge \$100 billion of fresh foreign direct investment into India and create a million jobs over 15 years.
- Indian consumers can expect cheaper wines and chocolates, while producers may access cheaper machinery.
- India's tariff cuts are linked to investment inflows, but a full assessment of those outcomes will only happen after 20 years
  - so persistent hard work is needed on both sides to realize these goals.
- The EFTA deal assumes greater symbolic significance than the size of trade flows involved.

- It signals that India's apparent aversion to such trade pacts since 2014, capped by its walkout from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership in 2019, is likely a thing of the past.
- A country that has often been criticised for its high import tariffs and protectionist approach
  - now seems willing and able to walk the talk on free trade when many nations are turning protectionist.
- The EFTA pact, expected to be ratified by the end of 2024, also marks the first time that India has agreed to include non-trade issues such as labour, human rights, environment and gender in an economic agreement.
- Whether the inclusion of these issues in trade deals is necessary can be debated, but this is a positive augury for potential allies such as the EU that consider them critical.

## 10. With electoral bonds decision, SC makes amends- 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.

**Context:**

- The decision of the Supreme Court on the **electoral bonds scheme stands in stark contrast with a long series of judgments** that appeared to go systematically in favour of the government at the Centre.

### NJAC

- As early as July 2014, the government promoted a constitutional amendment in order to create a commission which would be responsible for appointing and transferring judicial officers
  - which would consist of the CJI, two senior judges, the Minister of Law and Justice and two "eminent personalities"
- These two personalities would have been selected by a committee comprising the CJI, the PM and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha.
- This bill was passed in Parliament, but the Supreme Court quashed it in 2015 because it would affect the independence of the judiciary, guaranteed, in its view, by the Collegium system.

### Supreme court drop the ball in the favor of government

- However, the Supreme Court began to drop the ball with regard to its vigilance against the crossing of lines by the Executive.
- In 2017, the Court refused to examine a petition alleging dilution in the Whistleblower Protection Act
- in 2018 it validated the Aadhaar Act that the government had passed as a money bill — like the Electoral Bonds Bill
  - in spite of the fact that it fell well outside the limits set by the Constitution for money bills.
- In 2019, the Supreme Court judgment on the MLAs who had defected from Congress to BJP
  - enabling the latter party to form the government in Karnataka in spite of its electoral defeat, made a mockery of the Anti-Defection Law.
- Similarly, the Court kicked the can down the road on the constitutional challenge to the abrogation of Article 370,
  - the splitting of the erstwhile state of J&K into two Union Territories, on reservation for economically weaker sections, judicial review of money bills, electoral bonds and the challenge to the Citizenship Amendment Act.

### judicial evasion

- If what constitutional law scholar Gautam Bhatia has called "judicial evasion" remained the Supreme Court's favourite strategy, when it did make decisions, none of them challenged the government.
- For instance, it dismissed the plea to transfer the PM CARES Fund, that had received large sums of money during the Covid-19 crisis to the National Disaster Relief Fund
  - and upheld the validity of the draconian Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), including the investigative powers of the Enforcement Directorate.
- The 10 per cent EWS quota was upheld, as was the legality of the government's 2016 demonetisation move, and the abolition of Article 370 as well as the downgrading of J&K

### Conclusion

- With the decision on electoral bonds, the court seems to have retrieved some of the ground it had steadily ceded to the Executive.

## Quick Look

### 1. Aspirational Blocks Programme

- It is on the lines of the Aspirational District Programme that was launched in 2018 and covers 112 districts across the country.
- This new programme is aimed at improving performance of blocks lagging on various development parameters.
- This will enable holistic development in those areas that require added assistance.
- The programme will initially cover 500 districts across 31 States and Union Territories.
- Over half of these blocks are in six States: Uttar Pradesh (68 blocks), Bihar (61), Madhya Pradesh (42), Jharkhand (34), Odisha (29), and West Bengal (29).

### 2. Digital arrest

- Digital arrest is a new form of cybercrime where fraudsters pretending to be law enforcement officials deceive targets into believing their aadhaar card SIM, or bank account has been used for criminal activities.
- They make victims believe that they will be arrested if they don't agree to be interrogated over video call and then extort money.
- Digital Arrest involves the virtual restraint of individuals.

### 3. CAA, 2019

- It amended the Citizenship Act of 1955 to make illegal migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, eligible for Indian citizenship.
- Who are illegal migrants?: An illegal immigrant enters India without valid travel documents or stays beyond the permitted time, potentially facing prosecution, deportation, or imprisonment.
- Those from these communities who entered India on or before December 31, 2014, would not be treated as illegal immigrants, providing a path to naturalisation.
- However, it exempts the Muslim community.

**Prelims Track Question****Q1. Consider the following Protected Areas**

1. Nagarhole National Park
2. Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary
3. Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve

**How many of the above are located in the Cauvery Basin?**

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

**Q2. Consider the following statements**

1. Tribal advisory councils (TACs) are statutory bodies formed to deal with welfare and advancement of scheduled tribes in states.
2. The Sixth Schedule is aimed at preserving the culture and identity of indigenous people by ensuring their control over land and natural resources.
3. The Inner Line Permit (ILP) prohibits movement of foreign nationals only in protected areas.

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

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

**Q3. With reference to the Model Code of Conduct, consider the following statements:**

1. Election Commission of India has the power to impose Model Code of Conduct under article 342 of Indian Constitution.
2. During general elections to the Local bodies, the code is applicable in the entire State.
3. Fundamental right to free speech is curtailed during the imposition of Model Code of Conduct.

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

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

**Q4. President may give assent to the bill passed by state legislature when:**

- A. Rajya sabha authorized him to do so
- B. Bill is reserved by a Governor for the consideration of President
- C. Any dispute between the Indian Government and States.
- D. Bill falls under the purview of concurrent list

**Q5. Consider the following statements about Eco-Sensitive Zones**

1. Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) are designated areas surrounding ex - situ conservation area that are deemed ecologically fragile
2. All human activities are prohibited in this area for the conservation of wildlife and their habitats.
3. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has mandated the declaration of land within 10 km of the park or sanctuary boundaries as ESZs under the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986

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

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

**Q6. Consider the following statements**

1. Photovoltaic (PV) devices directly convert sunlight into electricity.
2. Photovoltaic devices solely generate Alternating Current (AC) electricity.
3. Currently, India lacks a robust manufacturing base for Photovoltaic technology.

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

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

**Q.7 Consider the following statements regarding the Aspirational Blocks Programme:**

1. The ABP solely focuses on providing monetary support to people living in slum areas within the identified blocks.
2. A real-time monitoring system tracks the progress of the ABP through a publicly available ranking system.
3. The program targets all blocks across India, aiming for nationwide development.

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

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

**Q.8 Consider the following statements**

1. Initiatives such as the National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP) signal a strong commitment to technological progress and innovation.
2. The recent enactment of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act, underscores the government's dedication to catalysing research and innovation as the cornerstone of development.
3. The Act aims to bridge India's persistent R&D investment gap while nurturing a robust research culture within HEIs.

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

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

**Q9. Consider the following statements regarding the European Free Trade Association (EFTA):**

1. EFTA comprises all the member states of the European Union (EU).
2. The primary objective of EFTA is to establish a political and economic union similar to the EU.
3. EFTA facilitates free trade and economic cooperation amongst its member states.

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

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

**Q10. Consider the following statements regarding Electoral Bonds:**

1. Electoral bonds can be purchased by any individual or company in India.
2. Electoral bonds ensure complete anonymity of the donor contributing to a political party.
3. Government brought the Electoral bonds as a means to curb black money in political funding.

**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 B is correct

#### Explanation

- The following are the protected areas located in the Cauvery basin:
- Nagarhole National Park: Nagarhole National Park is a wildlife sanctuary located in the Kodagu and Mysore districts of Karnataka. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve is a protected area and tiger reserve located along the area straddling both the Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats in the Erode District of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is a wildlife sanctuary on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra in Morigaon district in Assam, India. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

### Answer 2 Option A is correct

#### Explanation

- The Fifth Schedule deals with administration of scheduled areas where tribal communities are in a majority. Tribal advisory councils (TACs) are constitutional bodies formed under the Fifth Schedule to deal with welfare and advancement of scheduled tribes in states. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- Sixth Schedule in the Indian Constitution established Autonomous District Councils (ADC) in four northeastern states, namely Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. These ADCs envisage protecting and preserving tribal culture. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The rationale behind the creation of ADCs is to preserve the culture and identity of indigenous people by ensuring their control over land and natural resources, as these factors to a large extent determine the lifestyle and culture of the indigenous people.
- Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Lakshadweep, and Himachal Pradesh have Inner Line Permits. An Inner Line Permit (ILP) is a legal document issued by the concerned state government that allows an Indian citizen to enter a protected area for a limited time. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

### Answer 3 Option D is correct

#### Explanation

- The Election Commission ensures observance of the MCC by a political party in power and contesting candidates for conducting free and fair elections under Article 324 of the Constitution of India. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- During general elections to the Lok Sabha, the code is applicable throughout the country. During general elections to the Legislative Assembly of the state, the code is applicable in the entire State.
- During bye-elections, the Model Code of Conduct would be applicable in the area of the concerned Constituency only. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**
- According to a verdict held by the Delhi High Court the restrictions on political advertisements during the Model Code of Conduct does not violate either the freedom of speech or the freedom of carrying out trade. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**

#### Model Code of Conduct

- The Model Code of Conduct was agreed to by all the political parties in 1968.
- The Election Commission first effectively put to use the Model Code of Conduct in the year 1991 to ensure fair elections and a level playing field.
- As soon as the code kicks in, the party in power — whether at the Centre or in the States — should ensure that it does not use its official position for campaigning.
- The party must also avoid advertising at the cost of the public exchequer or using official mass media for publicity on achievements to improve chances of victory in the elections.
- The ruling party also cannot use government transport or machinery for campaigning.
- Holding public meetings during the 48-hour period before the hour fixed for the closing of the poll is also prohibited. The 48-hour period is known as “election silence”.

- The MCC evolved as part of the ECI's drive to ensure free and fair elections and was the result of a consensus among major political parties. It has no statutory backing. In other words anybody breaching the MCC can't be proceeded against under any clause of the Code. The EC uses moral sanction or censure for its enforcement.

**Answer 4 Option B is correct****Explanation**

- Article 201 of the Constitution specifically states that "When a Bill is reserved by a Governor for the consideration of the President, the President shall declare either that he assents to the Bill or that he withholds assent therefrom". But no time stipulation is provided in the Constitution.

**Answer 5 Option A is correct****Explanation**

- Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) are designated areas surrounding national parks and wildlife sanctuaries (IN -SITU) that are deemed ecologically fragile and important for the conservation of wildlife and their habitats. **Hence, statement 1 is INCORRECT.**

**Areas mandated under ESZ:**

- MoEFCC has mandated the declaration of land within 10 km of the park or sanctuary boundaries as ESZs under the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986. However, the application of the 10-km rule can vary, and areas beyond 10 km can also be notified as ESZs if they contain significant ecological corridors. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- In situ conservation means the conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings and, in the case of domesticated or cultivated species, in the surroundings where they have developed their distinctive properties.

**Categorization of Activities:**

- Prohibited: Commercial mining, sawmills, polluting industries, major hydroelectric projects, and commercial use of wood
- Regulated activities include tree felling, the establishment of hotels and resorts, commercial use of natural water, the erection of electrical cables, and drastic changes in agricultural practices.

- Permitted activities in ESZs include ongoing agricultural or horticultural practices, rainwater harvesting, organic farming, the use of renewable energy sources, and the adoption of green technology for all activities. **Hence, statement 3 is INCORRECT.**

**Answer 6 Option B is correct****Explanation**

- PV cells primarily generate Direct Current (DC) electricity. However, for grid integration and efficient power transmission, inverters convert the DC output to AC. **Hence, statement 1 is INCORRECT**
- PV devices, also known as solar cells, utilize the photovoltaic effect. Light energy absorbed by a semiconductor material like silicon excites electrons, creating a flow of electricity. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- While India's PV manufacturing capacity is growing, it still lags behind established players. However, initiatives like the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" program aim to strengthen domestic manufacturing capabilities. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

**Answer 7 Option A is correct****Explanation**

- ABP targets developmentally lagging blocks, not solely focusing on slums. It aims to improve their performance across various socio-economic parameters like health, education, and infrastructure. **Hence, statement 1 is INCORRECT**
- NITI Aayog, in partnership with states, releases a Delta Ranking every month. This ranking evaluates the incremental progress made by the blocks on crucial development indicators. This fosters a competitive spirit and incentivizes improvement. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- ABP strategically selects specific blocks with the most significant development gaps. Targeting all blocks simultaneously would be resource-intensive and less impactful. **Hence, statement 3 is INCORRECT**

**Answer 8 Option C is correct****Explanation**

- Initiatives such as the National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP) signal a strong commitment to technological progress and innovation.

- The recent enactment of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act, underscores the government's dedication to catalysing research and innovation as the cornerstone of development.
- The Act aims to bridge India's persistent R&D investment gap while nurturing a robust research culture within HEIs. **Hence all the statements are correct**

**Answer 9 Option A is correct**

**Explanation**

- EFTA is a separate intergovernmental organization established in 1960. While some European nations belong to both EFTA and the EU (like Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway), not all EFTA members are part of the EU. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect**
- EFTA focuses solely on promoting free trade and economic cooperation between member states. It does not aim for a full-fledged political union like the EU, which entails deeper integration encompassing areas like currency, foreign policy, and border control. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**
- The association facilitates the removal of trade barriers (customs duties, quotas) amongst member states, fostering a free trade zone and encouraging economic activity. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

**Answer 10 Option C is correct**

**Explanation**

- Electoral bonds can be purchased by Indian citizens and entities incorporated or established in India. This excludes foreign entities or individuals residing outside India. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- Electoral bonds are bearer instruments, similar to cash. They do not record the identity of the purchaser or the political party encashing them. This anonymity aims to protect donors from potential intimidation or reprisals. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- While aiming to eliminate anonymous cash donations, the scheme's effectiveness in curbing black money is a matter of debate. Critics argue that shell companies or individuals acting as proxies can still be used to channel illicit funds. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**



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