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SOURCES



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Important News Articles

GSI

1. BAPS temple inaugurated by PM Modi in Abu Dhabi: features, significance - Indian Express

Relevance: Art and Culture

News:

- The Indian Prime Minister recently inaugurated the **BAPS Swaminarayan temple in Abu Dhabi**, the first Hindu temple in the Gulf nation.
- The temple is built by **Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS)**, a Vaishnav sect of Hinduism.

Features of the Temple

- The Abu Dhabi temple is a traditional **stone Hindu temple**, built in the traditional **Nagar style, with seven shikhars**.
 - The seven shikhars (spires) are representative of the seven Emirates of the UAE.
- The temple has two central domes viz. **Dome of Harmony** and **Dome of Peace**, emphasising human coexistence through the carvings of earth, water, fire, air, and plants.
- A **Wall of Harmony**, one of the largest 3D-printed walls in the UAE, features a video showcasing key milestones of the temple's construction.
 - The word 'harmony' has been written in 30 different ancient and modern languages.
- The temple's front panel depicts universal values, stories of harmony from different cultures, Hindu spiritual leaders and avatars.
- While the **external facade uses pink sandstone** from Rajasthan, the **interior uses Italian marbles**.
- Spread over 27 acres, the temple complex is on 13.5 acres, with a parking area of 13.5 acres.
 - The 13.5 acres of land was gifted by Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE in 2019.
- Other amenities include an assembly hall with a capacity of 3,000 people, a community centre, exhibitions, classrooms, and a majlis venue.
- Like all BAPS temples around the world, it is **open to everyone**.

Key Architectural Features

- The temple incorporates various architectural elements, including **96 bells** representing **Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 96 years of life**.
- Special features like the **'holy river'** and depictions of **deities from diverse cultures** enhance its significance.
 - These include Lord Ram, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman, Lord Shiv, Parvati, Ganpati, Kartikeya, Lord Jagannath, Lord Radha-Krishna, Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj (Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Gunatitanand Swami), Tirupati Balaji and Padmavati and Lord Ayappa.
- Apart from 15 value tales from Indian civilisation, stories from the Maya civilisation, Aztec civilisation, Egyptian civilisation, Arabic civilisation, European civilisation, Chinese civilisation and African civilisation have been depicted.
- **No ferrous material** (which is more vulnerable to corrosion) has been **used** in the temple.
- There is a special pillar, called the **'Pillar of pillars'**, which has around 1,400 small pillars carved into it.
- **Nano tiles** have been used, which will be comfortable for visitors to walk on even in the hot weather.
- Buildings surrounding the temple are modern and **monolithic**, with their colour resembling sand dunes.

Prelims Takeaway

- BAPS Temple in Abu Dhabi
- Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS)

GS II

2. No more adjournment letters in after-notice bail cases: SC - 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

- Adjournments
- Advocate on Record

News:

- **Adjournments, denounced as a major factor for pendency**, delay in court hearings, and a money-drainer for litigants, is no longer going to be easy in the Supreme Court.

Key Highlights

- A circular issued by the Supreme Court said it would not entertain letters of adjournment from lawyers in bail and anticipatory bail cases for which notice had been earlier issued by the court.
- Letters of adjournment are **last-minute requests by parties for postponement of cases** listed before a Bench of the court.
- The case, when called for hearing in the day, is usually adjourned if all the parties agree.
- Usually, they do it as a **matter of professional courtesy**.
- The court said such letters seeking adjournment would also not be entertained in cases
 - in which exemption from surrendering has already been granted;
 - cases in which an interim order favouring the party seeking the adjournment is already in operation;
 - and in matters in which suspension of sentence has been sought.
- This would mean that the parties must necessarily appear in court in these categories of cases and the Bench would take a decision, in its own discretion
- The court had in turn constituted a committee of judges to prepare a **standard operating procedure (SoP) on adjournments**.

3. Panagariya chairs first meeting of 16th Finance Commission - Indian Express

Relevance: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

News:

- Recently, the **16th Finance Commission (XVI-FC)** convened its inaugural meeting under the **Chairmanship of Arvind Panagariya**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Finance Commission
- Terms of Reference (ToR)
- Consolidated Fund of India

Terms of Reference (ToR)

- During the meeting, it **discussed its Terms of Reference**, as per the order by the President of India and notified by the Ministry of Finance.
- **Terms of Reference (ToR) approved by the Cabinet**
 - The distribution between the Union and states of the net proceeds of taxes
 - which are to be, or may be, divided between them under Chapter I, Part XII of the Constitution
 - The allocation between states of the respective shares of such proceeds
- **Other Terms of Reference (ToR):** The principles governing
 - The grant in-aid of the revenues of states out of the Consolidated Fund of India
 - The sums to be paid to states by way of grants-in-aid of their revenues.
- Suggest measures needed to **augment the Consolidated Fund of a State** to supplement the resources of panchayats and municipalities as per ToR.

4. Rare Case Of Bubonic Plague In US, It Killed 50 Million In 14th Century - NDTV

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

Prelims Takeaway

- Bubonic Plague

News:

- Recently, officials in the US state of Oregon said they are dealing with a **rare human case of bubonic plague** that was likely transmitted by a pet cat.

Bubonic Plague

- Bubonic plague is one type of plague that gets its name from the **swollen lymph nodes (buboes)** caused by the disease.
 - Plague is an infectious disease caused by a specific type of bacterium called *Yersinia pestis*, a zoonotic bacterium usually found in small mammals and their fleas.
- Called the **Black Death**, it killed millions of Europeans during the Middle Ages.
- Plague can be a very severe disease in people, with a **case-fatality ratio of 30% to 60%** for the bubonic type, and is always fatal for the pneumonic kind when left untreated.
- **Symptoms:** The symptoms include
 - Sudden high fever and chills
 - Pain in the areas of the abdomen, arms, and legs
 - Headaches
 - Large and swollen lumps in the lymph nodes (buboes) that develop and leak pus.
- **Transmission:** It is transmitted between animals and humans
 - by the bite of infected fleas
 - direct contact with infected tissues
 - inhalation of infected respiratory droplets.
- The incubation period of bubonic plague is **usually 2 to 8 days**.
- **Treatment:** It can be treated and cured with antibiotics such as Ciprofloxacin, levofloxacin, moxifloxacin, Gentamicin and Doxycycline.

GS III

5. China moves its nationals into its vacant 'defence villages' along LAC - Indian Express

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

Prelims Takeaway

- Vibrant Villages Programmes
- Line of Actual Control (LAC)

News:

- Chinese nationals have started **occupying several of their model “Xiaokang” border defence villages across India’s north-eastern borders**
- China has been building it along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) since 2019,

Key Highlights

- the Chinese, in the last few months, have started occupying a couple of these villages built on its side of the **LAC across from Lohit Valley and the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh**.
- China has been constructing 628 such “well-off villages” along India’s borders with the Tibet Autonomous Region
 - including Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh for over five years now.
- the Chinese are building infrastructure all along the LAC bordering the northeast
 - even as the LAC remains far off from most **inhabited areas or areas of importance except for Tawang and the Siliguri Corridor**.
- The official added that the Chinese have consistently improved their existing infrastructure including

- improving their connectivity through passes, constructing roads and bridges and their model villages.
- China has also been constructing infrastructure, including border villages, in Bhutanese territory.
- In the last three to four years, India has also stepped up work on its border infrastructure —
 - This includes improving forward connectivity, constructing alternate routes to the LAC as well as connecting them.
- Under the **Vibrant Villages programmes**, India plans to develop 663 border villages into modern villages with all amenities in the first phase.
- Of them, at least 17 such villages along the borders with China in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh
 - have been selected for development as a pilot project under the programme.
- Work is underway to improve connectivity to the passes
 - establish laterals for inter-valley connectivity and on construction of helipads and advanced landing grounds at various locations in the state

6. Pension concerns - The Hindu

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

News:

- Recently the Central Board of Trustees of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) **recommended for a 0.1-percentage-point increase** in provident fund (PF) deposits for 2023-24
- It is in tune with what the EPFO did last year.

Key Highlights

- However, **the recommended rate of 8.25% is 0.4-percentage points** lower than in 2018-19, a pre-election year like 2023-24.
- Months ago, the **Finance Ministry had rejected** a proposal to double the minimum pension amount, citing a “huge rise” in **the budgetary support needed under the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), 1995**.
- There is one more component in the budgetary support which refers to the Central government's contribution at 1.16% of wages up to an amount of ₹15,000 a month.
- The Finance Ministry **calculates that a 100% rise in the minimum pension** would be more than the proportionate increase in the overall budgetary support
 - As numerous pensioners had received much less than ₹1,000 as monthly pension till 2014.
- Describing the EPS as a “Defined Contribution-Defined Benefit” social security scheme,
 - The government said in the Rajya Sabha that all benefits were paid out of accumulations through contributions
 - And as per the fund's valuation as on March 31, 2019, there was “an actuarial deficit.
- However, this **argument has been virtually demolished in the EPFO's annual report (2022-23)**.
- Notwithstanding its reasons not to hike the minimum pension, the government must note that the difference between the minimum and original pension was about ₹970 crore for 2022-23.
- So, the doubling of the minimum pension is no strain.
- In the case of higher PF pension, the rules have been framed after the 2022 Supreme Court judgement wherein most of the pre-2014 retirees would not be covered;
 - There are around four lakh such applications for higher pension. A more expansive approach to PF pension matters will help senior citizens.

Prelims Takeaway

- Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)
- Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), 1995

7. Kerala passes resolution requesting Union govt. to amend wildlife Act - The Hindu

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

News:

- The Kerala Legislative Assembly adopted a **unanimous resolution urging the Central government** to suitably **amend the Wildlife Protection Act** to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts.

Key highlights

- Wildlife intrusions in habitations abutting forests and lethal attacks on residents had impelled the government to request the Centre to make the law more contemporary.
- The resolution demanded that the Central law empower Chief Forest Conservators to use lethal force to liquidate wild animals
 - That trespass on residential localities and pose an imminent threat to human life.
- The resolution demanded the Central government declare wild pigs as vermin.
- It also requested the Centre to initiate scientific and humane measures to control the wildlife population.
- The resolution was paramount to the State, **given that forests covered 30% of its geographical expanse.**
- UDF had blamed forest officials for not taking pre-emptive action to insulate residential localities from potentially lethal wildlife intrusions in Wayanad.

The Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972

- It provides a legal framework for the protection of various species of wild animals and plants, management of their habitats, regulation
 - And control of trade in wild animals, plants, and products made from them
- The act also **lists schedules of plants and animals** that are afforded varying degrees of protection and monitoring by the government.
- India's entry to the CITES** (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) was made easier by the Wildlife Act.
- Earlier, **Jammu and Kashmir was not covered** by the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.
- The Indian Wildlife Protection Act now applies to J&K as a result of the reorganisation act.

Prelims Takeaway

- Wildlife Protection Act
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

8. ISRO to launch INSAT-3DS on Feb 17, will improve forecasts - Indian Express

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

News:

- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** will soon launch the **INSAT-3DS** from Sriharikota.

Key Features

- It will facilitate the **development of new satellite products** to track cyclones, monsoon systems, thunderstorms, and other natural disasters.
- It will also **provide valuable observations** of the atmosphere, land, and oceans.
- Funding:** Ministry of Earth Sciences
- Payloads:** Four payloads - an Imager, a Sounder, a Data Relay Transponder and a Satellite aided Search and Rescue Transponder.

Benefits of Multi-Spectral Imager and Sounder

- The multi-spectral imager will generate images of the Earth **across six wavelength bands.**

Prelims Takeaway

- INSAT-3DS
- Types of Orbits
- India Meteorological Department (IMD)
- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)

- It will aid visualisation of colour-dependent atmospheric parameters like water vapour (humidity).
- The sounder will contribute in generating **vertical profiles of the atmosphere** and **provide information** like temperature and humidity.

Third Generation Meteorological Satellite

- It is a continuation to the **Third Generation Meteorological Satellite series** from the **geostationary orbit**.
- It follows predecessors like **INSAT-3D** and **INSAT-3DR**, which have been operational since their launch in 2016.

Benefits of INSAT Data

- Since 2003, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has been using INSAT data for its **operational meteorology purposes**.
- Satellite-based products have significantly **improved forecast accuracy, atmosphere and ocean monitoring**, and overall meteorological services.
 - All this led to reduced loss of life, property, and livelihood.

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

9. A demand that could hamper gender equality - The Hindu

Relevance: Social

News:

- The **Sabrimala temple issue** sparked widespread discussion on the **discrimination faced by menstruating women** in accessing religious spaces.
- It highlighted the ongoing struggle to **eliminate discriminatory practices** related to menstruation and to **promote gender equality**.

Paid Leave and Menstruation

- Demand for paid menstrual leave is critiqued as potentially undermining efforts for gender equality.
- According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021, this would further dissuade companies from hiring women.
- While paid leave for menstruation aims to raise awareness, it may actually exacerbate the issue by highlighting menstruation as a special concern.
- It could also inadvertently widen the gender gap instead of closing it, despite their well-meaning intentions.
- If the government ratifies 'special status' for menstruating women, it could reinforce social stigma around menstruation.

World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021

- According to the report, the gender global gap has widened (instead of shrinking).
- At the workforce level, a woman earns 84 cents for every dollar that a man makes.
- The participation of women in the labour force is significantly lower than that of men, and even fewer women hold leadership positions.
- In the current situation, it would take the world 135.6 years to achieve gender equality.

Menstrual Hygiene

- The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) report highlights challenges in menstrual hygiene.
- Approximately 50% of women between the ages of 15 to 24 in India continue to rely on the use of cloth for menstrual protection
 - Due to insufficient awareness and societal taboos around menstruation
- Girls are often compelled to leave school or face social exclusion during their menstrual cycles.

Case Study: Japan

- Countries such as Japan provide leave for painful menstruation- but it is mostly unpaid, and unused.
- This is mostly because women are reluctant to avail this leave due to fear of stigma and harassment.
- Even though this policy was introduced in Japan more than seven decades ago, a mere 0.9% of women in the workforce avail menstrual leave days in Japan.
- Gender disparities still persist in employment and pay despite high female education levels.

Implementation Challenges

- Implementing paid menstrual leave raises questions about misuse and enforcement methods.
- This is exemplified by incidents of invasive checks on menstruation in Indian schools.

Continuing Struggles for Gender Equality

- Women globally fight for equal opportunities, from combat roles in the military to pay parity in corporate settings.
- The Supreme Court of India even urged the government to enable equal evaluation of women, and to have them undergo the same standards of testing as men.
- In response, the government argued that women are not suitable for ground combat roles.

Conclusion

- Acknowledging the diverse range of experiences women have during menstruation is essential.
- Instead of applying blanket solutions, providing **tailored support** would promote inclusivity and address individual needs.

10. PLAINLY ON MSP - Indian Express

Relevance: Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices

Context:

- Farmers marching to Delhi primarily seek a **legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP)** for various crops announced by the Centre.
- However, this demand is criticised as **illogical** and **impractical** due to the limitations in enforcing MSP on all crops and quantities, especially in private trade.

Broader support

A guaranteed MSP across crops can benefit farmers and address crop imbalances, argues CRISIL

■ **A broader, guaranteed MSP will offer cash support to farmers when prices plummet below MSP, the ratings firm says**

■ **It will also give farmers the freedom to sow crops of their choice and to be more amenable to their local conditions**

■ **The government will have to procure only those crops whose mandi prices are lower than the MSP, notes CRISIL**



Challenges in Enforcing MSP

- The government can only guarantee MSP on crops it procures, creating logistical challenges as it cannot buy the entire produce brought by farmers.
- Enforcing MSP on private trade is also problematic, as traders may refuse to purchase if asked to pay more than prevailing rates.

Proposed Solutions and Critiques

- One proposed solution involves the government transferring the difference between market-clearing price and MSP to farmers' bank accounts.
- However, this poses challenges in data collection and opens avenues for market manipulation.
- Overall, guaranteeing MSP through legislation could lead to logistical and fiscal challenges.

Alternatives to MSP

- Cost-plus MSPs oblivious to demand conditions could distort farmers' production decisions and increase price volatility.
- Alternatives to MSP include crop insurance and timely payout of claims for production losses due to factors like climate change.
- A minimum income support (MIS) through direct benefit transfers (per-acre or per-farmer) is proposed to enable informed market-driven decisions on what crops to grow.
- An MIS, in combination with a phase-out of water, electricity and fertiliser subsidies, will induce much-needed crop diversification.

Government Response and Engagement

- The government is urged to engage with protesting farmers rather than resorting to confrontational tactics.
- Past experiences, including the recent repeal of farm laws, highlight the importance of dialogue and avoiding the portrayal of protesters as anti-national or criminals.
- A more constructive approach to address farmers' concerns is crucial.



Mentorship
India

Quick Look

1. PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India launched the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana to provide free electricity to its beneficiaries.
- The free electricity scheme was earlier announced by the Finance Minister in an interim budget speech.
- Under the scheme, the government will provide 300 units of free electricity per month to its beneficiaries by investing worth ₹75,000 crores.
- Target: It aims to light up 1 crore households.
- Urban Local Bodies and Panchayats shall be incentivised to promote rooftop solar systems in their jurisdictions.
- The Central Government will guarantee no financial burden on the people by providing significant subsidies directly to their bank accounts and offering highly concessional bank loans.
- Expected Benefits
 - Savings of up to fifteen to eighteen thousand rupees annually for households from free solar electricity and selling the surplus to the distribution companies;
 - Entrepreneurship opportunities for a large number of vendors for supply and installation
 - Employment opportunities for the youth with technical skills in manufacturing, installation and maintenance.

2. Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species

- The COP14 to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals is hosted by the Government of Uzbekistan, in Samarkand from 12-17 February 2024.
- Also known as the Bonn Convention, it is an environmental treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme.
- It provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats.
- It is the only global and UN-based intergovernmental organisation established exclusively for the conservation and management of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range.
- Activities by CMS Parties may range from legally binding treaties to less formal instruments, such as Memoranda of Understanding.
- The Conference of Parties (COP) is the decision-making organ of this convention.
- Appendices
 - Appendix I: It lists endangered migratory species and includes prohibitions regarding the take of these species.
 - Appendix II: It lists species that have an 'unfavourable conservation status' and encourages range states to draft range-wide agreements for the conservation and management of these species.

3. e-Jagruti Portal

- The Consumer Affairs Secretary recently asserted that integration of AI in the 'e-Jagruti' portal will help reduce the number of pending cases in consumer courts.
- e-Jagruti Portal, a portal for consumer commissions, has been designed to further improve the customer experience.
- It provides a simple, fast, and cost-effective consumer dispute redressal software solution at all levels.
- It is envisaged to integrate consumer grievance platforms, namely, the Online Case Monitoring System (OCMS), E-Daakhil, the National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (NCDRC) Case Monitoring System etc. on a single platform.

- It offers modules case filing, online fee payment, case monitoring modules for seamless disposal of cases by all the Commissions, has Smart search facility on archived consumer complaints/cases/judgements and Voice-to-text conversion of judgements, case history and other details using AI.
- The portal will integrate a Virtual court facility for a convenient and accessible resolution of consumer complaints, reducing the time of disposal, multiple hearings, and physical court appearances, bringing effective and fast decisions & disposals in all Consumer Commissions.
- It is an initiative of the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution.

4. Swachhata Green Leaf Rating

- A government-initiated rating system for the hospitality sector which aims to ensure world-class hygiene and sanitation in hotels, resorts and homestays
 - It has become a non-starter with no State opting for it as of now.
- The objective is to prevent pollution in water bodies and keep the environment clean.
- The target groups are hotels, lodges, homestays, 'Dharamshalas' and camps which have portable toilets. The rating will be based on compliance with the safe sanitation practices outlined in the guidelines.
- The ranking scheme was launched in November 2023 by the Union Tourism Ministry in collaboration with the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation.
- As part of the initiative, the State teams of Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (rural) and the tourism department will organise workshops on the concept, process and desired outcomes for the stakeholders.
- A three-tiered committee system has been proposed for implementation, beginning with a Verification Sub-Committee formed by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) for the on-ground verification, followed by a District Committee, which the District Collector will chair and then a State-level committee, headed by the Chief Secretary of the State.



Mentorship
India

Prelims Track Question

Q1. With reference to the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), consider the following statements

1. It is a socio-spiritual Hindu faith with its roots in the Vedas.
2. No Alcohol, No Addictions, No Adultery, No Meat, No Impurity of body and mind are the five-lifetime vows of BAPS followers.
3. It has a Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

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

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

Q2. Consider the following statements with reference to an Advocate on Record in the context of the Supreme Court of India

1. An Advocate on Record is a legal professional who is eligible to file and argue cases directly in the Supreme Court of India.
2. The designation of Advocate on Record is granted by the Bar Council of India based on a rigorous examination conducted by the Supreme Court.
3. Advocates on Record play a crucial role in the admission and scrutiny process of cases, ensuring that only valid and well-prepared matters are presented before the Supreme Court.

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

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

Q3. Consider the following

1. The share of states in the divisible pool of central taxes.
2. The allocation of resources among states
3. The distribution of finances among the Public Sector Undertaking.
4. The additional transfers to specific states or sectors

How many of the above tasks are recommended by the Finance Commission?

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

Q4. With reference to Bubonic Plague, consider the following statements

1. The disease gets its name from the swollen lymph nodes caused by the disease.
2. It is also called the Black Death because it killed millions of Europeans during the Middle Ages.
3. Currently, there is no cure for the disease.

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

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

Q5. Consider the following statements about the Line of Actual Control (LAC)

1. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) separates India and China along their disputed border in the northern and northeastern regions.
2. The LAC is a mutually agreed-upon boundary between India and Pakistan, recognized by international treaties.
3. The term "Line of Actual Control" was coined during the 1962 Sino-Indian War to describe the de facto boundary between the two nations.
4. The LAC is demarcated by physical barriers and clear markers on the ground to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts between the border patrols of India and its neighbouring countries.

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

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

Q6. Consider the following statements about the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), 1995

1. It is applicable to all employees covered under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.
2. Under the EPS, 1995, employees contribute a percentage of their salary towards their pension, and the employer also makes a matching contribution.
3. The EPS provides a guaranteed pension amount to employees upon retirement, and the pension is calculated based on the average salary during the last 12 months of service.

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

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

Q7. With reference to the Wildlife Protection Act, consider the following statements

1. The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, aims to provide for the protection of wild animals, birds, and plants and for matters connected therewith or ancillary thereto.
2. The Act categorizes species into different schedules, providing varying degrees of protection and penalties for their conservation.
3. The Wildlife Protection Act empowers the Central Government to declare any area a 'National Park' for the purpose of protecting and conserving wildlife.
4. The Act allows for the establishment of 'Wildlife Crime Control Bureau' to combat illegal trade and activities related to wildlife.

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

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

Q8. With reference to Insat-3DS, consider the following statements

1. It is a collaborative effort between ISRO and the India Meteorological Organisation (IMD).
2. It is part of a series of climate observatory satellites aimed at enhancing climate services.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q9. Consider the following statements with reference to Global Gender Gap Report, seen in the news recently

1. It benchmarks countries on their progress towards gender parity in four key dimensions with submatrices.
2. It is released by the World Bank.
3. Iceland is the only country to have closed over 90% of its gender gap.

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 about Minimum Support Price (MSP)

1. In India, MSP originated in response to food shortages in the 1960s, notably during the Bihar famine of 1966–1967.
2. The CACP recommends MSPs for 25 mandated crops and fair and remunerative price (FRP) for sugarcane.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Prelims Track Answer

Answer 1 Option D is correct

Explanation

- Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) is a socio-spiritual Hindu faith with its roots in the Vedas. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is based on the Vedic teachings propagated by Bhagwan Swaminarayan (1781-1830 CE).
- It was formally established in 1907 CE by Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj.
- No Alcohol, No Addictions, No Adultery, No Meat, No Impurity of body and mind are the five-lifetime vows of BAPS followers. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Founded on the pillars of practical spirituality, the BAPS reaches out far and wide to address spiritual, moral and social challenges and issues.
- Its global network of mandirs and centres hosts many moral, social, cultural, and spiritual activities.
- It is also engaged in a variety of humanitarian activities that include services in times of natural calamities, primary schools, students' hostels, hospitals etc.
- BAPS is an NGO with a Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 2 Option C is correct

Explanation

- An Advocate on Record is indeed a legal professional who is eligible to file and argue cases directly in the Supreme Court of India. This designation allows them to act as an intermediary between clients and the court. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The designation of Advocate on Record is granted by the Supreme Court of India itself. To become an Advocate on Record, one must pass a rigorous examination conducted by the Supreme Court, and only those who succeed are given this designation. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Advocates on Record play a vital role in the admission and scrutiny process of cases. They are responsible for ensuring that the cases presented before the Supreme Court are well-prepared, valid, and meet the necessary legal requirements. They act as a filter, contributing to the efficiency and

quality of the cases heard by the Supreme Court. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 3 Option C is correct

Explanation

- Finance Commissions are constitutional bodies set up under Article 280 of the Constitution every five years to make recommendations on the distribution of financial resources between the Union and the states.
- Recommendations cover three main aspects:
 - Vertical Devolution: The share of states in the divisible pool of central taxes.
 - Horizontal Distribution: The allocation of resources among states based on a formula that reflects their fiscal needs, capacities and performance.
 - Grants-in-aid: The additional transfers to specific states or sectors that are in need of assistance or reform. **Hence, option C is correct.**

Answer 4 Option B is correct

Explanation

- Bubonic plague is one type of plague that gets its name from the swollen lymph nodes (buboes) caused by the disease. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Plague is an infectious disease caused by a specific type of bacterium called *Yersinia pestis*.
- Called the Black Death, it killed millions of Europeans during the Middle Ages. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Plague can be a very severe disease in people, with a case-fatality ratio of 30% to 60% for the bubonic type, and is always fatal for the pneumonic kind when left untreated.
- Symptoms: The symptoms include Sudden high fever and chills; Pain in the areas of the abdomen, arms, and legs; Headaches; and Large and swollen lumps in the lymph nodes (buboes) that develop and leak pus.
- Transmission: It is transmitted between animals and humans by the bite of infected fleas, direct contact with infected tissues and inhalation of infected respiratory droplets.
- Treatment: It can be treated and cured with antibiotics such as Ciprofloxacin, levofloxacin, moxifloxacin, Gentamicin and Doxycycline. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

Answer 5 Option B is correct**Explanation**

- The Line of Actual Control (LAC) indeed separates India and China along their disputed border in the northern and northeastern regions. The exact alignment of the LAC is not agreed upon by both sides, leading to occasional tensions and border disputes. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The LAC is not a mutually agreed-upon boundary between India and Pakistan. It is specific to the border between India and China, and the India-Pakistan border is known by a different term, the Line of Control (LoC). **Hence, statement 2 is INCORRECT.**
- The term "Line of Actual Control" was indeed coined during the 1962 Sino-Indian War to describe the de facto boundary between India and China. It reflects the areas where the two countries' military forces are positioned. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- The LAC is not demarcated by physical barriers or clear markers on the ground. The lack of a well-defined and agreed-upon boundary has been a source of tension and incidents between the border patrols of India and China. **Hence, statement 4 is INCORRECT.**

Answer 6 Option A is correct**Explanation**

- The Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), 1995, is applicable to all employees covered under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952. It is a social security scheme designed to provide pension benefits to employees. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Under the EPS, employees contribute a percentage of their salary towards their pension, and the employer also makes a matching contribution. The contributions are determined based on the pensionable salary of the employee. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The EPS provides a guaranteed pension amount to employees upon retirement, but the pension is calculated based on the average salary during the last 60 months of

service, not the last 12 months. **Hence, statement 3 is INCORRECT.**

Answer 7 Option A is correct**Explanation**

- The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, indeed aims to provide for the protection of wild animals, birds, and plants and for matters connected therewith or ancillary thereto. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- The Act categorizes species into different schedules (Schedule I to V), providing varying degrees of protection and penalties for their conservation. Species listed in Schedule I receive the highest level of protection. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- While the Wildlife Protection Act empowers the Central Government to declare any area a 'Sanctuary' or 'National Park' for the purpose of protecting and conserving wildlife, the power to declare a 'National Park' specifically lies with the State Government. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**
- The Wildlife Protection Act allows for the establishment of the 'Wildlife Crime Control Bureau' to combat illegal trade and activities related to wildlife. The bureau focuses on preventing and investigating wildlife crimes. **Hence, statement 4 is correct**

Answer 8 Option C is correct**Explanation**

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will soon launch the INSAT-3DS from Sriharikota.
- It is a collaborative effort between ISRO and the India Meteorological Organisation (IMD). **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is part of a series of climate observatory satellites aimed at enhancing climate services. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It will facilitate the development of new satellite products to track cyclones, monsoon systems, thunderstorms, and other natural disasters.
- It will also provide valuable observations of the atmosphere, land, and oceans.
- Funding: Ministry of Earth Sciences
- Payloads: Four payloads - an Imager, a Sounder, a Data Relay Transponder and a Satellite aided Search and Rescue Transponder.

- It will be launched by using the Geosynchronous Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F14).

Answer 9 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The Global Gender Gap Report is released by the World Economic Forum (WEF), evaluating the status of Gender Parity across 146 countries. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It benchmarks countries on their progress towards gender parity in four key dimensions with submatrices - Economic Participation and Opportunity; Educational Attainment; Health and Survival; and Political Empowerment. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- On each of the four sub-indices as well as on the overall index the GGG index provides scores between 0 and 1, where 1 shows full gender parity and 0 is complete imparity.
- It is the longest-standing index, which tracks progress towards closing these gaps over time since its inception in 2006.
- Iceland has maintained its position as the most gender-equal country for the 14th consecutive year, with a gender gap score of 91.2%. It is the only country to have closed over 90% of its gender gap. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- The global gender gap score in 2023 stands at 68.4%, indicating a modest improvement

of 0.3% points compared to the previous year.

- At the current rate of progress, it would take 131 years to achieve full gender parity, showing a significant slowdown in the overall rate of change.

Answer 10 Option A is correct

Explanation

- In India, MSP originated in response to food shortages in the 1960s, notably during the Bihar famine of 1966–1967. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Minimum Support Price (MSP) is the price at which the government purchases crops for the farmers, to insure farmers against any sharp fall in farm prices.
- The government bases its announcement on the recommendations given by the Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP).
- The CACP recommends MSPs for 22 mandated crops and fair and remunerative price (FRP) for sugarcane. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The mandated crops include 14 crops of the kharif season, 6 rabi crops and 2 other commercial crops.
- MSP are announced at the beginning of the sowing season, this helps farmers make informed decisions on the crops they must plant.

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