

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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Important News Articles

GS I

1. Libya's Catastrophic Flooding- The Hindu

Relevance: Salient features of world's physical geography.

News:

- Recently, **Eastern Libya experienced a catastrophic event as floods** caused by Storm Daniel, brought widespread destruction.
- The **enormous surge of Mediterranean storm water burst** two upstream river dams and reduced the city of Derna to an apocalyptic wasteland
- **Entire city blocks** and untold numbers of people were **washed into the Mediterranean.**
- **Decades of war and a lack of a central government** have resulted in deteriorating
- **Infrastructure, making the country highly susceptible** to the recent torrential rains.
- **Libya is the only nation without a climate strategy**, as per the United Nations.
- **This catastrophe underscores the urgent need for stability**, unity, and comprehensive
- governance in Libya, as it continues to **grapple with multiple crises**, from internal unrest to the exploitation of migrants and oil revenue disputes.

Mediterranean storm

- It is also known as a **Mediterranean cyclone or a Mediterranean low**, is a type of weather system that forms over the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Mediterranean storms** can vary in intensity and impact, but they often lead to **heavy precipitation.**
 - which can result in flooding, landslides, and other weather-related hazards.

Prelims Takeaway

- Mediterranean Sea
- Mediterranean storm



GS II

2. Govt. to explain to SC pricing of life-saving drugs - The Hindu

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

News:

- The Centre has agreed to place on record in the Supreme Court its **mechanism for controlling the price of life-saving and essential drugs.**
- In November 2022, the government **had revised the list and prices of essential medicines.**

Prelims Takeaway

- National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)
- Drug Price Control Order, 2013

Drug Price Control Order, 2013

- The **Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers** had announced the **Drugs Price Control Act, 2013**
- **Objective:** to improvise the availability of basic medicines at affordable prices across the country.
- Under **The Order**, the work of revising the applicable ceiling price of notified drugs **was initiated by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority.**
- The order has been issued by the Government of India for the **regulation of drug pricing in the country under Section 3 of Essential Commodities Act, 1955.**
- As per the DPCO 2013, all dosages mentioned in the **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) will be under price control.**

National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)

- It is a **government regulatory agency** established with the aim of controlling and regulating the prices of pharmaceutical drugs and medical devices in the country.
- It was constituted vide **Government of India Resolution** dated 29th August 1997.
- It is an **attached office of the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.**
- **Functions**
 - To implement and enforce the provisions of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order in accordance with the powers delegated to it.
 - To deal with all legal matters arising out of the decisions of the Authority.

3. All reported births, deaths to be digitally registered from Oct. 1 - The Hindu

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

News:

- **All reported births and deaths in the country will be digitally registered** on the Centre's portal from October 1, according to a government notification.

Key Highlights

- The **Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Act, 2023** that paves way for **digital birth certificates** which will be a single document to be used for:
 - admission to educational institutions
 - applications for driving licence
 - government jobs
 - passports or Aadhaar
 - voter enrolment,
 - registration of marriage,
- It will **come into effect from October 1.**
- **sub-section (2) of Section 1 of the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Act, 2023** (20 of 2023) gives the power to the **Central government to do so.**
- The centralised database will also **update the National Population Register (NPR)**, ration cards, property registration and electoral rolls.
- It will be **compulsory for States:**
 - to register births and deaths on the Centre's Civil Registration System (CRS) portal
 - to share data with the RGI which functions under the Union Home Ministry.
- The Act authorises the government to **"collect Aadhaar numbers of parents and informants, if available, in case of birth registration.**
- **Presently, either parent voluntarily provides an Aadhaar number for a newborn's birth certificate generated through the CRS.**
- As on March 31, **Aadhaar has a saturation of 93%** for a projected population of 138.72 crore.

Prelims Takeaway

- National Register of Citizens (NRC)
- Centre's Civil Registration System (CRS)

National Population Register (NPR)

- It is a database **containing a list of all usual residents of the country.**
- A usual resident for the purposes of NPR is a person who has **resided in a place for six months or more and intends to reside there for another six months or more.**
- Its objective is to have a **comprehensive identity database of people** residing in the country.
- In March 2020, the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) amended the Census Rules** framed in 1990
- The objective was to **capture and store the Census data in an electronic form** and enabled self-enumeration by respondents.
- NPR, **first collected in 2010** and updated in 2015 **through door-to-door enumeration, during the "house-listing" phase of the Census.**
- It has a **database of 119 crore residents.**
- NPR is the **first step to the creation of National Register of Citizens (NRC)**, as per the Citizenship Act.

4. Bill downgrades EC to status of Cabinet Secy from that of SC Judge - The Hindu

Relevance: Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

News:

- **The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023**, is listed for discussion in the **special session** starting September 18,
- It was introduced in Rajya Sabha in August

Current scenario

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI) is an autonomous constitutional authority** responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.
- The **President appoints CEC and Election Commissioners.**
- They have a **fixed tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years**, whichever is earlier.
- They enjoy the **same status and receive salary and perks as available to Judges of the Supreme Court (SC) of India.**
- They can **resign anytime or can also be removed before the expiry of their term.**
- "At present, when the **commissioners call a government officer like:**
 - The Law Secretary
 - Cabinet Secretary at the Centre
 - The Chief Secretary of a state
- For a meeting, or seek their explanation regarding a lapse or deliberate disregard of their direction, their order is perceived to **carry the authority of a Supreme Court Judge.**
- The equivalence of the **EC to a Judge is implied in the Constitution itself as it says the CEC can only be removed through impeachment.**

The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023

- It proposes to **revise the salary, allowance and service conditions of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the two Election Commissioners**, aligning them with **those of a Cabinet Secretary.**
- As of today, it is **aligned to that of a Supreme Court Judge.**
- It deals with the **constitution of a committee responsible for selecting the three election commissioners.**
- This **committee**, which has the **Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition, and a Union Cabinet Minister does not have the Chief Justice of India** as a member, contrary to the **Supreme Court's suggestion in a March 2023 judgment.**

Prelims Takeaway

- Election Commission of India
- The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023

- In its ruling dated March 2, 2023, the Supreme Court had said that such **appointments must be made based on the recommendations of a committee.**
- This committee is to be composed of the **Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of India, and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha.**
- Currently there is **no law of a Central government law governing appointments to the Election Commission of India.**

Concern

- “Being seen as the equal of a Cabinet Secretary means **below an MoS (Minister of State) in stature.**
- aligning Election Commissioners with the bureaucracy **could potentially tie their hands and erode their perceived authority**
- if the Bill is passed, it would **create a peculiarity** wherein the **Constitution stipulates that a CEC can only be removed in a manner similar to that of a Supreme Court Judge.**
- However, in practice, the **CEC’s service conditions align with those of a Cabinet Secretary.**
- It would not only erode their authority but also **impact their international standing.**
- In many countries, especially developing countries which **look up to India’s electoral democracy,** their counterparts are either retired Supreme Court Judges or enjoy the status of SC Judges.
- **“Half of the countries in the world have judges as Election Commissioners.**
- **India is the vishwa guru in elections,** 108 countries have sent their Election Commissioners to learn from us in the past 10 years.
- equating the EC with the Cabinet Secretary **may have been an oversight.**
- “In the past few years, the government has **similarly equated the salary of the CIC (Chief Information Commissioner) and CVC (Chief Vigilance Commissioner) with that of the Cabinet Secretary** instead of an apex court Judge.
- The **difference is that the CVC and CIC are not Constitutional bodies** like the EC.
- The salary may not be different in the proposed Bill, but what is **different is the public perception of who the EC is being equated to.**
- **Judges are given an independent stature under the Constitution** because they have to decide cases that involve the government, the Prime Minister and Ministers.
 - That kind of independence is needed for the Election Commission too.
- This is **sending the wrong message about the independent character of the EC.**

5. PMMSY: bridging gaps in the fisheries sector - The Hindu

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

News:

- **Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying** will launch a six-month-long outreach initiative of the **Department of Fisheries “Matsya Sampada Jagrukata Abhiyan”.**
- Its **objective is to efficiently implement the scheme** and reach out to the potential stakeholders.

Prelims Takeaway

- Central Sector Scheme
- Centrally Sponsored Scheme
- Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

- It was introduced **as part of the ‘Atma Nirbhar Bharat’ package** with an investment of Rs. 20,050 crores, the highest-ever investment in this sector
- It aims to bring about the **Blue Revolution** through sustainable and responsible development of the fisheries sector in India.
- The scheme is being **implemented in all States and UTs for a period of 5 years from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25.**
- In order to facilitate access to **institutional credit, fishermen are provided with insurance coverage, financial assistance and a facility of Kisan Credit Card (KCC)** as well.
- It will be **implemented as an umbrella scheme** with two separate components namely:
 - **Central Sector Scheme:** The project cost will be borne by the Central government.
 - **Centrally Sponsored Scheme:** All the sub-components/activities will be implemented by the States/UTs and the cost will be shared between Centre and State.

6. SC information a click away as it joins National Judicial Data Grid - The Hindu/ SC data now onboard National Judicial Data Grid portal: CJI - Indian Express

Relevance: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

News:

- Recently, the **Chief Justice of India** announced that the **Supreme Court is now “onboard” the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) portal.**
- The onboarding of Supreme Court’s case data on the NJDG is **based on the ‘open data policy.**
- With this onboarding, the **flagship project of the e-courts project** completes the full circle.
- One can now access **case-related information, statistics** such as pendency and disposal of cases, **case types and year-wise break-up of the SC at the click of a button.**
- The **NJDG-SC portal** can be accessed through the **Supreme Court website.**

Prelims Takeaway

- National Judicial Data Grid
- eCourts Project

National Judicial Data Grid

- It is a **database of orders, judgments and case details** of 18,735 District & Subordinate Courts and High Courts.
- It was created as an **online platform** under the **eCourts Project.**
- Data is updated on a **near real-time basis** by the connected District and Taluka courts.
 - It provides data relating to **judicial proceedings/decisions of all computerised district and subordinate courts** of the country.
- All **High Courts have also joined** the NJDG **through web services**, providing easy access facility to the litigant public.
- Aligned with the **National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP)**, NJDG provides an **Open Application Programming Interface (API)** to Central & State Governments.

Significance

- It works as a **monitoring tool** to identify, manage & reduce pendency of cases.
- It helps to **provide timely inputs for making policy decisions** to reduce delays in disposing of cases and helps in **reducing case pendency.**
- Facilitates **better monitoring of court performance and systemic bottlenecks** and thus, serves as an **efficient resource management tool.**
- To track cases related to land disputes, **land records data of 26 States have been linked with NJDG.**

International Recognition

- NJDG is recognised as a **significant innovation under the Centre’s ease of doing business initiative.**
- World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Report, 2018**
 - It commended NJDG for its role in generating **case management reports that facilitate contract enforcement.**

Current CJI views on NJDG

- The **NJDG portal** has
 - increased transparency
 - brought in accountability and responsibility
 - improved efficiency
 - increased coordination
 - helped informed decision-making
 - helped optimum deployment of resources and manpower
- Besides being a single source of data, it has **huge potential for high-quality research work.**

GS III

7. Govt. limits wheat stocks to control price rise, hoarding - The Hindu/ Amid rise in wheat prices, Centre curbs stock limit to 2000 MT - Indian Express

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

News:

- The Centre recently **reduced the wheat stock limit** from 3,000 metric tonnes (MT) to 2,000 MT for **traders, wholesalers, and big chain retailers**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Essential Commodities Act 1955
- Minimum Support Price

The Order on Stock Limits

- Objective:** To curb the rising retail and wholesale prices of wheat and atta.
- All wheat stocking entities** are required to register on the **wheat stock limit portal** and **update the stock position** every Friday.
- Any entity found to have **not registered on the portal** or **violating the stock limits** will be subject to suitable punitive action under **Section 6 & 7 of Essential Commodities Act, 1955**.

Reasons behind the Order

- An **upward movement in wheat prices** in near future
- Chances of hoarding** ahead of the festive season

Essential Commodities Act 1955

- To **prevent hoarding and black marketing of foodstuffs**, the Essential Commodities Act was enacted in 1955.
- It was legislated at a time when the country was facing a **scarcity of foodstuffs** due to **persistent low levels of foodgrains production**.

Essential Commodity

- There is **no specific definition of essential commodities** in the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.
 - Section 2(A) of the Act** states that an **"essential commodity"** means a **commodity specified in the Schedule** of the Act.
- The Act gives **powers to the central government to add or remove a commodity in the Schedule**.
- The Centre, if it is satisfied that it is necessary to do so **in the public interest**, can **notify an item as essential**, in consultation with state governments.
- By declaring a commodity as essential, the government can **control the production, supply, distribution of that commodity and impose a stock limit**.

8. Rubber Board to increase area under rubber in Northeast States - The Hindu

Relevance: Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country

News:

- In a move to **expand the area under natural rubber in non-traditional States**, the Rubber Board is implementing a project in the **Northeastern States**.
- However, the project area will **exclude Sikkim, but will include West Bengal**.
- This is in **collaboration** with the **Central government** and the **Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association**.
- The project is expected to bring in **socio-economic benefits**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Natural Rubber
- Rubber Board

Rubber Board

- It is a **statutory organisation** constituted under the **Rubber Act, 1947**.
- It functions under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- Headquarters:** Kottayam, Kerala.

Functions

- Development of the rubber industry** by assisting and encouraging research, development, extension and training activities related to rubber.

- **Maintain statistical data of rubber**, take steps to **promote marketing of rubber** and undertake **labour welfare activities**.
- **Issue licenses** to rubber producers, manufacturers and exporters.
 - This license, known as the "**Rubber Board license/registration**," is **mandatory** for anyone involved in rubber manufacturing and export

Structure

- The Board is headed by a **Chairman appointed by the Central Government**.
- It has **28 members representing various interests of the natural rubber industry**.
- The **activities** of the Board are **exercised through Five Departments** viz.
 - General Services
 - Extension & Advisory Services
 - Research Services (rubber Research Institute of India)
 - Training (Rubber Training Institute)
 - Finance

Natural Rubber

- Rubber is made from the **latex of a tree called Hevea Brasiliensis**.
- It is largely perceived as a **strategic industrial raw material** and accorded special status globally for **defence, national security and industrial development**.

Conditions for Growth

- It is an equatorial crop, but under special conditions, it is also grown in tropical and sub-tropical areas.
- **Temperature:** Above 25°C with a moist and humid climate.
- **Rainfall:** More than 200 cm.
- **Soil Type:** Rich well-drained alluvial soil.
- **Cheap and adequate supply of skilled labour**

Key Facts

- **Major Producers Globally:** Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, China and India.
- **Major Consumers Globally:** China, India, USA, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia.
- **Top Rubber Producing States:** Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka.
- About **40% of India's total natural rubber consumption** is currently **met through imports**.

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

1. Invent in India - Indian Express

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

Context:

- Bharat is now the **world's fifth largest economy** and will **make it to the third spot soon**.
- However, it **lags behind on most benchmarks concerning innovation, science and technology**.
- One of the main reasons for this deficit has been **Indian academia and industry failing to ramp up its contribution to the national R&D effort**.

Role of Make in India

- Manufacturing in key sectors has been hobbled by constraints in fundamental factor markets of land, labour, capital and faulty trade policies.
- However, the Make in India momentum is unmistakable with India's share of global merchandise exports registering fresh highs.
- Alongside the Make in India push, the government has recognised that the infrastructure to generate patents required an overhaul.
- There is a strong effort underway to make it easier and faster to file for and obtain patents for inventions.
- Recent bilateral agreements in science and technology, especially with the US show that the government is correctly identifying strategic priorities.
- It appreciates that Invent in India has to complement Make in India.

Invent in India to build momentum and scale

- The newly established National Research Foundation (NRF) will hopefully address this important issue.
- The institutions that mediate the flow of capital and resources to convert scientific knowledge into technology-based wealth will require drastic changes.
- This is needed so that these institutions power India's economic output to \$10 trillion and beyond in the coming decade by delivering on productivity-multiplying R&D across industries.

Recommended Critical Parameters

1. Merit and quality of human capital should be weighted the highest when it comes to staffing and administration of institutions.

- The bureaucratic mind is geared towards aggregating numbers but in scientific research, Lotka's law reigns supreme.
- Losing the top dozen leaders in a given field to other countries is as good as ceding leadership of that field.
- The reality "Quantity is no substitute for quality" demands that India gears up to both
 - retain its premier talent at home
 - position itself as a home for talent from abroad
- The remittance-seeking mindset of the Licence Raj era needs to give way to a value creation approach.
- One of the principal flaws of science policy has been the near-complete separation of teaching and research.
- The idea should be to bring teaching and research together in a merit-driven admissions system.

2. India should have a barbell strategy for funding research

The barbell strategy suggests that the best way to strike a balance between reward and risk is to invest in the two extremes while avoiding middle-of-the-road choices.

- There are two precedents for creating this barbell approach
- **The New Millennium India Technology Leadership Initiative (NMITLI) programme, 2003**
 - NMITLI made collaboration across industry, academia and national labs a standard practice.
- **The recent Design-Linked Incentive (DLI) programme**
 - DLI envisages underwriting innovation with big payoffs in collaboration with high technology businesses
 - For instance, India Semiconductor Mission receiving appropriate funding for semiconductor design.
- Therefore, NMITLI and DLI are reliable models for setting the baseline on R&D, which should be oriented towards industry.
- Global business history shows joint efforts by government and industry to fund blue sky research have yielded breakout results.
- In several cases outside India where such results were achieved, the underpinning talent was trained in India but emigrated.
- This underscores the point on retaining our talent and prioritising merit in staffing and administration.
- Ultimately, bringing industry to the table for such outcomes should be done through the carrot of profit and the stick of competitive pressure.

3. The culture and software of Indian science too needs a reboot

- It is easy to blame politicians for lack of progress, but they act on positions set by science bureaucrats who rely largely on domain experts in academia.
- Unfortunately, this group becomes a self-perpetuating clique, with its own inertia and resistance to doing what is necessary.
- Good system design for the new setup can incentivise collegiality, undermine hierarchical mindsets, eradicate cartelisation and promote controlled risk taking.
- However, eventually long-term outperformance will be dependent on the quality and motivations of the people involved in Indian science.

2. Why Saudi Arabia matters - Indian Express

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

Context:

- Recently, the **Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia** visited New Delhi for the **G20 Leaders' Summit**.
- He along with the **Indian Prime Minister** and **US President** announced the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor**.
- It is a massive **infrastructure project** that would **connect India to Europe via West Asia** and could rival **China's Belt and Road Initiative**.

Saudi Arabia: One of India's important Strategic Partner

- Both Saudi Arabia and India chaired the first meeting of the India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council.
- They signed eight agreements, including
 - upgrading hydrocarbon energy partnership to a comprehensive energy partnership for renewable, petroleum and strategic reserves
 - creating a joint task force for \$100 billion in Saudi investment.
- They also discussed
 - possibility of trading in local currencies
 - expediting negotiations for FTA between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council of which Saudi Arabia is a member.

Old ties, Getting stronger

- Both the countries established diplomatic relations in 1947 and have always enjoyed cordial and friendly relations.
- The visit of King Abdullah to India in January 2006 was a watershed moment in the relationship.
- The royal visit resulted in the signing of the Delhi Declaration, followed by the Riyadh Declaration in 2010 that elevated bilateral ties to a strategic partnership.
- Indian Prime Minister's visit to Riyadh in April 2016
 - It captured the spirit of enhanced cooperation in the political, economic, security, and defence realms.
 - King Salman conferred on the Prime Minister the kingdom's highest civilian honour, the King Abdulaziz Sash.
- The visit of Crown Prince Mohammed to India in February 2019 took this momentum further.
 - It was announced that the kingdom would invest approximately \$100 billion in India.
 - Six MoUs/ Agreements were signed in a range of fields.
 - An agreement was also signed to pave the way for Saudi Arabia to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- PM's visit to Riyadh again in October 2019
 - During this visit, the Strategic Partnership Council (SPC) Agreement was signed.
 - This established a high-level council to steer the Indo-Saudi relationship.
 - The SPC now has separate subcommittees on Political, Security, Social and Cultural Cooperation and on Economy and Investments.
 - Twelve pacts were signed during the PM's visit.

Pillars of the Relationship

1. ECONOMIC TIES

- India is Saudi Arabia's second-largest trade partner.
- Saudi Arabia is India's fourth-largest trade partner.
- Bilateral trade in FY2022-23 was valued at \$52.76 billion.
- Trade with Saudi Arabia accounted for 4.53% of India's total trade in FY23.
- The bilateral trade has increased to more than US\$52 billion in 2022-23, marking a growth of more than 23%."
- Saudi direct investments in India amounted to \$3.15 billion (as of March 2022).
- Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) has invested in several Indian startups such as Delhivery, Grofers, Ola through SoftBank Vision Fund.
- Indian companies and corporate groups such as L&T, Tata, Wipro, TCS, TCIL and Shapoorji Pallonji have established a strong presence in Saudi Arabia.

2. ENERGY COOPERATION

- Saudi Arabia is a key partner for ensuring India's energy security.
- It was India's third largest crude and petroleum products source for FY23.
- India imported 39.5 million metric tonnes (MMT) of crude from SA in FY23, amounting to 16.7% of India's total crude imports.
- India's LPG imports from Saudi Arabia stood at 7.85 MMT, and 11.2% of its total petroleum product imports, in FY 23.

3. DEFENCE PARTNERSHIP

- The defence partnership has witnessed tremendous growth in recent years.
- Then Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane made a landmark visit to Saudi Arabia in December 2020.
- There is extensive naval cooperation between India and Saudi Arabia.
- Two editions of the bilateral naval exercise, Al Mohed al Hindi, have been concluded so far.
- Both sides also cooperate closely in the domain of defence industries and capacity-building.
- On defence ties, the joint statement said that the two sides commended their deepening cooperation and agreed to
 - continue work including joint exercises, training and high-level visits
 - consider possibilities of joint development and production of defence equipment

4. INDIANS IN SAUDI

- The Indian community in the kingdom is more than 2.4 million strong.
- It is widely respected for its contribution to the development of Saudi Arabia and seen as a living bridge between the two countries.
- The joint statement said the Indian side thanked the Saudi side for
 - taking excellent care of the Indian diaspora residing in the kingdom
 - supporting the evacuation of Indian nationals stranded in Sudan through Jeddah under Operation Kaveri
 - facilitating Indian Hajj and Umrah pilgrims.

The importance of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman

- He has ensured significant changes in the country's ultra-conservative society.
 - Women have got the right to drive
 - Cinemas have been opened
 - Foreign tourists are welcomed
 - Pop stars and high-profile sports matches have been hosted.
- He has engaged with China and is moving towards rapprochement with Iran and Israel.
- He is also now consolidating the Saudi partnership with the US, India, and Europe.
- Riyadh still helps Pakistan with economic aid even while strategically engaging with India.
- India and Saudi Arabia have stressed the importance of strengthening security cooperation in the field of combating terrorism and its financing.
- Both sides emphasized that terrorism, in all its forms, remains one of the gravest threats to humanity.
- They agreed that there cannot be any justification for any act of terror for any reason whatsoever.

Quick Look

1. Patent

- A patent is the granting of a property right by a sovereign authority to an inventor.
- This grant provides the inventor exclusive rights to the patented process, design, or invention for a designated period in exchange for a comprehensive disclosure of the invention.
- The Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks (CGPDTM), also known as India Patent Office, grants patents.
- The Indian Patent Office grants patents which are governed by the Indian Patents Act, 1970.

2. NaVIC or the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)

- A seven-satellite system that makes up India's version of the American GPS (global positioning system).
- Of the seven satellites used by NaVIC at present, three are in the geostationary orbit and four in the geosynchronous orbit.
- It provides real-time positioning and timing services in India and an area extending up to 1,500 km from the country's borders.
- Its use is currently restricted for
 - Tracking and delivering information about natural disasters
 - Providing emergency warning alerts to fishermen travelling into the deep sea
 - Monitoring public traffic in India
- Currently, NavIC is only compatible with the L5 and S bands and hasn't easily penetrated into the civilian sector.

3. Bhoj Wetland

- It consists of two contiguous human-made reservoirs located in the city of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.
- The Upper lake is called Bhojtal (Bada Talaab) and the Lower Lake is known as Chhota Talaab.
- The lakes are very rich in biodiversity, particularly for macrophytes, phytoplankton and zooplankton.
- It has more than 15 kinds of fish and several vulnerable species, including turtles, amphibians and aquatic invertebrates.
- It was designated as the Ramsar site in 2002.

4. Epizootic Haemorrhagic Disease (EHD)

- It is an insect-borne disease caused by a virus affecting wild and domestic ruminant species.
- The causative agent, epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus (EHDV), belongs to the Orbivirus genus.
- It is a disease of animals, not humans, so there are no human or public health issues.
- EHDV is transmitted between ruminant hosts by Culicoides midges, tiny biting flies commonly known as "no-see-ums" or gnats that are smaller than mosquitoes and other flies.
- Clinical signs: Fever, weakness, lack of appetite, more saliva than usual, difficulty swallowing, skin rash on the udder, bleeding (skin and internal tissues), swollen red skin near hooves, swollen lining of the mouth, mouth ulcers, difficulty in breathing and sudden death (particularly in deer).
- There is no treatment for HD in wildlife populations and no commercially available vaccine to protect against EHD.
- It has become an emerging disease in cattle and was added to the World Organisation of Animal Health list of notifiable diseases in May 2008.

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following pairs

Sea: Bordering country

1. Black Sea: Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine
2. Caspian Sea: Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan
3. Mediterranean Sea: Sudan, Libya, Egypt

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

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

Q2. Consider the following statements about National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)

1. It is a statutory body set up under the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.
2. It is a government regulatory agency established with the aim of controlling and regulating the prices of pharmaceutical drugs and medical devices in the country.

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

Q3. Consider the following statements with reference to National Register of Citizens (NRC)

1. It was first collected in 2010 and updated in 2015 through door-to-door enumeration, during the "house-listing" phase of the Census.
2. The NRC was published only once in 1951 and since then, it has not been updated until recently.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

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

Q4. Consider the following statements about The Election Commission of India (ECI)

1. The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering

Union and State and local bodies election processes in India.

2. The constitution of India gives the power to the President appoints CEC and Election Commissioners.
3. Currently there is no law of a Central government law governing appointments to the Election Commission of India.

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 Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

1. It was introduced as part of the 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' package
2. It aims to bring about the Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development of the fisheries sector in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

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

Q6. With reference to National Judicial Data Grid consider the following statements

1. It is a database of orders, judgments and case details of Courts created under the eCourts Project.
2. It works as a monitoring tool to identify, manage & reduce pendency of cases.
3. It is recognised as a significant innovation under the Centre's ease of doing business initiative.

How many of the statements given above is/are not correct?

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

Q7. Consider the following statements regarding the Essential Commodities Act, 1955

1. It was enacted to control the production, supply and distribution of, and trade and commerce in, certain goods considered as essential commodities.
2. The Act gives powers to the central government to add or remove a commodity in the Schedule.
3. Food and civil supply authorities in States execute the provisions of the Act.
4. The Act defines the term "essential commodities" in detail.

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

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

Q8. Consider the following statements on Rubber Board

1. It is a statutory organisation under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.
2. It issues licenses to rubber producers, manufacturers and exporters.
3. It is headed by a Chairman appointed by the Central Government.

How many of the statements given above is/are not correct?

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

Q9. Consider the following statements regarding design-linked incentive (DLI) scheme

1. It aims to provide financial and infrastructural support to companies setting up fabs or semiconductor making plants in India.
2. The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC) serves as the nodal agency for the implementation of the DLI scheme.

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

Q10. Consider the following countries

1. Jordan
2. Egypt
3. Iran
4. Yemen

How many of the countries stated above share land boundaries with Saudi Arabia?

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

Prelims Track Answer

Ans. 1 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The Black Sea is an inland sea located between far-southeastern Europe and the far-western edges of the continent of Asia and the country of Turkey.
 - It's bordered by Turkey, and by Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, and Georgia.
 - The Caspian Sea is an enclosed body of water between Asia and Europe. It is bordered by Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Russia,
 - The following countries have a coastline on the Mediterranean Sea: Northern shore (from west to east): Spain, France, Monaco, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Greece, Turkey
 - Eastern shore (from north to south): Turkey, Syria, Libya, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Egypt.
- Hence, pair 3 is incorrect.**

Ans. 2 Option B is correct

Explanation

- It is a government regulatory agency established with the aim of controlling and regulating the prices of pharmaceutical drugs and medical devices in the country.
- It was constituted vide Government of India Resolution dated 29th August 1997.
- It is an attached office of the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.
- Functions
 - To implement and enforce the provisions of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order in accordance with the powers delegated to it.
 - To deal with all legal matters arising out of the decisions of the Authority.

Ans. 3 Option A is correct

Explanation

- National Register of Citizens, 1951 is a register prepared after the conduct of the Census of 1951 in respect of each village, showing the houses or holdings in a serial order and indicating against each house or holding the number and names of persons staying therein. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- The NRC was published only once in 1951 and since then, it has not been updated until recently. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

- It has been updated in Assam only for now and the government plans to update it nationally as well.

Ans. 4 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India and not the local bodies. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- The President appoints CEC and Election Commissioners.
- **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- Currently there is no law of a Central government law governing appointments to the Election Commission of India.
- **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Ans. 5 Option D is correct

Explanation

- It was introduced as part of the 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' package with an investment of Rs. 20,050 crores, the highest-ever investment in this sector. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It aims to bring about the Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development of the fisheries sector in India. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The scheme is being implemented in all States and UTs for a period of 5 years from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25.
- In order to facilitate access to institutional credit, fishermen are provided with insurance coverage, financial assistance and a facility of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) as well.

Ans. 6 Option D is correct

Explanation

- National Judicial Data Grid is a database of orders, judgments and case details of 18,735 District & Subordinate Courts and High Courts created as an online platform under the eCourts Project. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Data is updated on a near real-time basis by the connected District and Taluka courts.
- Aligned with the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP), NJDG provides an Open Application Programming Interface (API) to Central & State Governments.

- It works as a monitoring tool to identify, manage & reduce pendency of cases. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It helps to provide timely inputs for making policy decisions to reduce delays in disposing of cases and helps in reducing case pendency.
- Facilitates better monitoring of court performance and systemic bottlenecks and thus, serves as an efficient resource management tool.
- NJDG is recognised as a significant innovation under the Centre's ease of doing business initiative. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report, 2018 commended NJDG for its role in generating case management reports that facilitate contract enforcement.
- The Board is headed by a Chairman appointed by the Central Government. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- It has 28 members representing various interests of the natural rubber industry.
- Headquarters: Kottayam, Kerala.
- Functions
 - Development of the rubber industry by assisting and encouraging research, development, extension and training activities related to rubber.
 - Maintain statistical data of rubber, take steps to promote marketing of rubber and undertake labour welfare activities.
 - Issue licenses to rubber producers, manufacturers and exporters. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

Ans. 7 Option C is correct

Explanation

- Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955 was enacted to control the production, supply and distribution of, and trade and commerce in, certain goods considered as essential commodities. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It was legislated at a time when the country was facing a scarcity of foodstuffs due to persistent low levels of foodgrains production.
- There is no specific definition of essential commodities in the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect.**
- The Act gives powers to the central government to add or remove a commodity in the Schedule. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- By declaring a commodity as essential, the government can control the production, supply, distribution of that commodity and impose a stock limit.
- Most of the powers under the Act have been delegated by the Central Government to the State Governments with the direction that they shall exercise these powers.
- Food and civil supply authorities in States execute the provisions of the Act. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Ans. 8 Option A is correct

Explanation

- The Rubber Board is a statutory organisation constituted under the Rubber Act, 1947.
- It functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**

Ans. 9 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The design-linked incentive (DLI) scheme aims to provide financial and infrastructural support to companies setting up fabs or semiconductor making plants in India. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It aims to attract existing and global players as it will support their expenditures related to design software, IP rights, development, testing, and deployment.
- Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC), a scientific society operating under MeitY, will serve as the nodal agency for the implementation of the DLI scheme. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It has three components which are Chip Design infrastructure support, Product Design Linked Incentive and Deployment Linked Incentive

Ans. 10 Option B is correct

Explanation

- Saudi Arabia is a desert country in southwestern Asia (Middle East) that occupies most of the Arabian Peninsula.
- The kingdom is bounded by the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea in the west and the Persian Gulf in the east.
- Bordering countries: Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. **Hence, Option B is correct.**
- Maritime boundaries: Egypt, Sudan, and Eritrea in the Red Sea; Iran and Bahrain in the Persian Gulf.

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