

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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## **IMPORTANT NEWS ARTICLES**

1. DRDO's oceanographic research vessel 'INS Sagardhwani' embarks on Sagar Maitri Mission-4 to establish long-term scientific partnerships with Indian Ocean Rim countries in 'Ocean Research & Development' - PIB
2. Egypt is racing to eliminate hepatitis C - The Hindu
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## Important News Articles

### GS II

#### 1. DRDO's oceanographic research vessel 'INS Sagardhwani' embarks on Sagar Maitri Mission-4 to establish long-term scientific partnerships with Indian Ocean Rim countries in 'Ocean Research & Development' - PIB

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

**News:**

- Recently, **INS Sagardhwani** embarked on a two-month long **Sagar Maitri (SM) Mission-4** from Kochi.

Prelims Takeaway

- Sagar Maitri
- INS Sagardhwani
- Indian Ocean Rim

**INS Sagardhwani**

- An **oceanographic research vessel** launched in **July 1994**.
- It has been **designed and developed** by the **Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL), Kochi**.
  - The NPOL is involved in **studying the ocean environment** and other related fields.
    - It is a **premier systems laboratory** of the **DRDO**.
- It is **constructed indigenously** by GRSE Ltd.
- The vessel has been engaging in **extensive oceanic observing missions and research** for the last 25 years.

**Sagar Maitri**

- A novel initiative of the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- Vision:** It supports the objective of India's policy declaration '**Safety and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)**'.
- Objective:** To promote **closer cooperation among Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) countries** in the areas of socio-economic and scientific interactions especially in ocean research.
- It focuses on establishing **long-term scientific partnerships and collaborations with eight IOR countries**.
  - These countries include **Oman, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Myanmar**.
- Under the aegis of this policy, DRDO initiated a **scientific component named 'MAITRI (Marine and Allied Interdisciplinary Training and Research Initiative)'**.
  - MAITRI focuses on establishing long-term collaboration with IOR countries in the field of 'Ocean Research and Development'.

**The Current Mission (SM 4)**

- It **includes**
  - Scientific deployments onboard INS Sagardhwani in the Northern Arabian Sea.
  - Initiating collaborative research programmes with the Department of Marine Sciences & Fisheries at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman.
- Gives the scientists an opportunity to **cooperate and build strong working relationships with their IOR counterparts** studying the oceans.

## GS III

### 2. Egypt is racing to eliminate hepatitis C - The Hindu

**Relevance:** Health

**News:**

- According to the **WHO**, **Egypt** became the **first country** to achieve “**gold tier**” status on the path to **elimination of hepatitis C**.

**Gold tier Status**

- It includes meeting **specific criterias** such as
  - Ensuring 100% blood and injection safety
  - Maintaining a minimum of 150 needles/ syringes per year for people who inject drugs (PWID)
  - Diagnosis of over 80% of people living with chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV)
  - Treatment of over 70% of individuals diagnosed with HCV
  - Establishment of a **sentinel surveillance programme** for hepatitis sequelae, including liver cancer.

**Hepatitis C**

- An infectious disease caused by **blood-borne virus hepatitis C virus (HCV)** that primarily **affects the liver**.
- **It can be both acute and chronic**
  - **Acute** (inflammation of the liver that presents with sickness - jaundice, fever, vomiting)
  - **Chronic** (inflammation of the liver that lasts more than six months, but essentially showing no symptoms)
- **Symptoms:** It can include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine and yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice).

**Transmission**

- The most common modes of infection are through **exposure to small quantities of blood**.
- This may **happen through**
  - drug use
  - unsafe injection practices
  - unsafe health care
  - the transfusion of unscreened blood and blood products

**Treatment**

- Presently there is **no vaccine available for HCV**.
- However, it can be **treated with antiviral medication**.
- **Hepatitis A and B** are **preventable by vaccine**.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Gold Tier Status
- Hepatitis C
- World Health Organisation

### 3. Teesta-III dam break: NHPC admits damage, 9 years ago it said no threat - Indian Express/ Sikkim's fallen dam haunts India's dreams in Bhutan - The Hindu

**Relevance:** Disaster and Disaster Management

**News:**

- The NGT recently issued notices to **3 key stakeholders** viz. the Sikkim government, the Sikkim Urja Limited and NHPC.

**The Background**

- The **GLOF** that washed away the **1200-MW Teesta-III** caused **severe damage to two NHPC projects** namely
  - 510 MW Teesta-V
  - The under-construction 500 MW Teesta-VI - downstream.
- In 2014, NHPC's 520 MW Teesta-IV project faced a challenge to its **environmental clearance**.
- The NHPC in an affidavit to the NGT had **dismissed any threats from GLOF**.
- Apparently convinced, the NGT **dismissed the appeal against Teesta-IV's environment clearance** in 2017.

**National Green Tribunal (NGT)**

- It is a **specialised body** set up under the **National Green Tribunal Act (2010)** for **effective and expeditious disposal** of cases relating to **environmental protection and conservation** of forests and other natural resources.
- With the establishment of the NGT, India became the **third country** in the world to set up a **specialised environmental tribunal**, only after Australia and New Zealand
- NGT is guided by the **principles of 'natural justice'**.
- It is mandated to make **disposal of applications** or appeals finally **within 6 months of filing** the same.
- An order/decision/award of Tribunal is executable as a **decree of a civil court**.
- An **appeal** against order/decision/award of the NGT lies to the **Supreme Court**, generally within **ninety days** from the date of communication.
- The NGT deals with **civil cases** under the **seven laws** related to the environment, these include:
  - The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974,
  - The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977,
  - The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980,
  - The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981,
  - The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986,
  - The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991 and
  - The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

**Structure of NGT**

- The Tribunal comprises the **Chairperson**, the **Judicial Members** and **Expert Members**.
- They shall hold **office** for a term of **three years** or till the age of **sixty-five** years, whichever is earlier
- They are not eligible for **reappointment**.
- The **Chairperson** is appointed by the **Central Government** in consultation with the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)**.
- A **Selection Committee** shall be formed by the **central government** to appoint the Judicial Members and Expert Members.

**Prelims Takeaway**

- National Green Tribunal
- Teesta-III Dam Project
- Teesta River

#### 4. Study estimates count of UAVs required for the three Services

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

**News:**

- The **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen** recently ordered two studies to be conducted on major military platforms used by all three services.
- According to defence sources these platforms are **Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and armoured helicopters.**

##### Prelims Takeaway

- Light Combat Helicopter

**Key Points**

- The **three services operate a large number of Israeli Heron MALE UAVs.**
- A **major upgrade** to weaponise and incorporate satellite communication on these UAVs **has been pending** for several years.

**Army to get Apaches**

- The Indian Air Force has traditionally been responsible for **operating attack helicopters.**
- Army Aviation recently **inducted the first batch of Light Combat Helicopter (LCH).**
- **The Cabinet Committee on Security** has already given **in-principle sanction** for procurement of **39 AH-64 Apache attack helicopters** from the US.
- The IAF has since **inducted 22 AH-64E Apaches** under a deal signed in September 2015.

**The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)**

- It is a **cabinet committee of the Government of India** that discusses, debates and is the final decision-making body on:
  - Senior appointments in the national security apparatus
  - Defence policy and expenditure
  - Generally all matters of India's national security

**Members**

- Prime Minister of India
- Minister of Defence
- Minister of Home Affairs
- Minister of Finance
- Minister of External Affairs
- The National Security Adviser, the Cabinet Secretary and the Defence Secretary have also been attendees of the CCS meetings.

#### 5. Sri Lanka moves towards RCEP; Bangladesh in queue

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

**News:**

- Sri Lanka **"has taken steps"** to **renegotiate free trade agreements** with "key bilateral partners including **India, China and Thailand,** " the country's State Minister of Finance has said.
- Sri Lanka intends to **join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**

##### Prelims Takeaway

- Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

**Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**

- RCEP negotiations were launched in **November 2012** between the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations**

- ASEAN includes Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam
- ASEAN's free trade agreement partners (Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea)
- RCEP has the **potential to deliver significant opportunities for businesses in the East Asia region**
  - the 16 RCEP participating countries account for almost half of the world's population
  - contribute about 30 percent of global GDP and over a quarter of world exports.

#### India and RCEP

- India's **exit in November 2019** from negotiations on the world's largest trade deal

#### What led India to withdraw

- **increased trade deficits with countries it has free trade agreements (FTAs)** with, as evidence of what RCEP-led economic integration would bring.
- the **lack of safeguards** allowing India to **respond to import surges**, particularly from China
- the threat of **import competition in agriculture**
- **inadequate market access for services exports**, including greater mobility of people to deliver them.
- **Rising border tensions with China** were argued to justify a guarded approach to foreign investment in sensitive sectors such as defence, communication and energy.

#### What India should review

- In a world where production is organised around supply chains, India's exit would disadvantage not only its consumers, **Consumers would lose access to more affordable imports**,
- **firms would lose competitiveness** due to their inability to source cheaper and more diverse inputs at preferential tariff rates.

## 6. Centre likely to raise age of retirement of scientists to 65

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

#### News:

- **The Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST)** is working on a proposal to increase the **retirement age of scientists to 65**.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)

#### Key Points

- At present, **scientists in most wings of the government retire at 60**
- Those **working at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) **retire at 62**.
- Over the years, concerns have been raised that **several senior scientists approaching retirement** were quitting institutes for careers in academia.

#### The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)

- It was established on 16 July 1929 as a **registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860**.
- It is an **autonomous organisation** under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**.
- It is **headquartered at New Delhi**.
- With **102 ICAR institutes and 71 agricultural universities spread across the country** this is one of the largest national agricultural systems in the world.

- It is the **apex body for coordinating, guiding and managing research** and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.
- The ICAR has played a pioneering role in **ushering Green Revolution and subsequent developments in agriculture in India** through its research and technology development
  - It has enabled the country to increase the production of foodgrains by 5.6 times, horticultural crops by 10.5 times etc.

## 7. Railways develops anti-freeze flushes and fuel tanks for journeys in J&K

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

**News:**

- The process of **linking Kashmir to Kanyakumari**, through the new **Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project**, poses a unique challenge to the Railways
- It is facing challenges in **maintaining water and fuel in liquid form in sub-zero temperatures during the winters.**

### Prelims Takeaway

- Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link Project

**Key Points**

- To circumvent the problem of water freezing in toilets and fuel tanks, **engineers at the Rail Coach Factory (RCF) in Kapurthala have designed and implemented indigenous innovations.**
- While the **LHB coach** design is prominently used by the Railways, **it did not have temperature control systems.**
- In winter, **temperatures in the J&K region plummet to minus-eight to minus-12 degrees Celsius.**
- There is a problem **if the water freezes in the tanks.**
- Another major challenge is that **if the water tank is full, there is a hazard that it will develop cracks and burst**, as ice has the tendency to expand
- The water tank **mimics thermoplastic bottles with two walls** and an insulation layer of foam in the middle, which traps the air.
- This will maintain water **in liquid form in sub-zero conditions from 16 to 20 hours.**
- In another innovation, **the RCF has borrowed technology from the defence services** to tackle the problem of freezing water in the supply pipelines.
- We are using heated pipes with a **distributed heating system covered by insulation.**

**Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link Project(USBRL)**

- It is of length – **272 Km.**
- With a view to **provide an alternative and a reliable transportation system to Jammu & Kashmir**, Govt. of India planned a 272 Km. long Railway Line under this project.
- In view of the importance of the USBRL project in providing seamless and hassle-free connectivity, the Project was **declared as “National Project” in 2002.**
- The alignment of USBRL involves **construction of a large number of Tunnels and Bridges in highly rugged and mountainous terrain** with most difficult and complex Himalayan geology.
- This Project involves 38 Tunnels (combined length of 119Km), **the longest Tunnel (T-49) is having a length of 12.75 Km** and is country's longest transportation tunnel.



- There are **927 nos. of Bridges (combined length of 13 Km)**.
- These bridges include **the iconic Chenab Bridge** which will be the **highest railway bridge in the world**.
- Indian railway's **first cable-stayed bridge** is also being **constructed on Anji Khad**.

## 8. Kaziranga sanctuary reopens with tribute to British-era officer

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

**News:**

- Recently, **the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve reopened** with a literary tribute to a British-era forest officer who removed its name from any hunting connotations.

### Prelims Takeaway

- UNESCO World Heritage Site

### Kaziranga National Park

- It is located **in the State of Assam** and covers 42,996 hectares (ha).
- It is the **single largest undisturbed** and representative area in the **Brahmaputra Valley floodplain**.
- It was declared as a **National Park in 1974**.
- It has been declared a **tiger reserve since 2007**.
- The 1,300 sq. km tiger reserve, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**
- It is the home of the world's **most one-horned rhinos**.
- Much of the focus of conservation efforts in Kaziranga are focused on the 'big four' species— **Rhino, Elephant, Royal Bengal tiger and Asiatic water buffalo**.
- As per the figures of tiger census conducted in 2014, Kaziranga had an estimated 103 tigers
- It has **the third highest population in India** after Jim Corbett National Park (215) in Uttarakhand and Bandipur National Park (120) in Karnataka.
- National **Highway 37** passes through the park area.
- The park also has more than **250 seasonal water bodies, besides the Diphlu River running through it**.

## Editorials, Gists and Explainers

### 1. The world needs to stop taking water for granted - The Hindu

**Relevance:** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

**Context:**

- **Water availability affects every aspect of human life**, especially food and nutrition security.
- The **theme for World Food Day** this year - **‘Water is Life, Water is Food’** - calls for urgent action in managing water wisely.
- Availability or a lack of water has become even more critical with **increasing climate extremes**.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Rainfed Production</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 60% of India's net sown area is rainfed, contributing to 40% of the total food production.</li> <li>• There is an urgent need to adapt to climate change by promoting technologies and practices that make rainfed production more resilient and sustainable.</li> <li>• Sustainable water management is critical to address the impending food and nutrition security threats.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Water and Crop Production</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decades of poor water management, misuse and pollution, and the climate crisis have degraded freshwater supplies and ecosystems.</li> <li>• About 40% of the planet's total land area is degraded, leaving farmers with less productive land.</li> <li>• Small-scale farmers, who make up more than 80% of farmers globally, are especially affected.</li> <li>• This is because they often lack access to finance, technology and irrigation to maintain a level of production that can sustain their livelihoods.</li> <li>• Extreme weather events and variability in water availability are               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o severely affecting agricultural production</li> <li>o changing agro-ecological conditions</li> <li>o shifting growing seasons</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Changes in rainfall and higher temperatures also affect crop productivity.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Key Facts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Government of India has assessed the impact of climate change in 2050 and 2080 using climate projections and crop simulation models.</li> <li>• Without adaptation measures               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Rainfed rice yields in India are projected to reduce by 20% in 2050, and by 47% in 2080 scenarios.</li> <li>o Irrigated rice yields are projected to decline by 3.5% in 2050 and 5% in 2080 scenarios.</li> <li>o Wheat yields are projected to decrease by 19.3% in 2050 and 40% in 2080.</li> <li>o Kharif maize yields could decline by 18% and 23%.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In every scenario, climate change without adequate adaptation measures reduces crop yields and lowers the nutritional quality of produce.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Water management needs a Hydro-social Approach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irrigation can be an effective measure to make agriculture more resilient.</li> <li>• In most cases, it enables farmers to transform their livelihoods by growing, consuming and selling high-value crops such as nutritious fruits and vegetables.</li> <li>• In this context, the World Food Programme (WFP) through food assistance in exchange for labour supports               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o soil and water conservation</li> <li>o building or fixing of irrigation canals, dams, ponds, and dykes, as well as flood barriers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In 2021, 8.7 million people across 49 countries benefited directly from such support.</li> <li>• The WFP is collaborating with the Government of Odisha to develop solutions for smallholder farmers, focusing on women.</li> <li>• Similarly, IFAD supports Indian States in leveraging the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o It ensures that micro-irrigation infrastructure is environmentally and socially sustainable and financially viable.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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### Climate Change Adaptation

- The FAO also supports the sustainable transformation of agrifood systems and climate-smart agriculture practices to improve water-use efficiency.
- It supported the farmer water school programme in Uttar Pradesh, which helped smallholder farmers.
- The Andhra Pradesh Farmer Managed Groundwater Systems project reached 638 habitations in seven drought-prone districts, which included a hydrological monitoring programme.
- Similarly, IFAD has enshrined climate change adaptation in its core strategies.
- It set ambitious targets in terms of leveraging climate financing to mitigate climate change by
  - addressing the adverse impacts of agriculture and helping farmers to adapt to the increasing volatility of weather conditions
  - investing in the restoration and preservation of soil health, water resources
  - merging modern technologies with indigenous knowledge systems to build productive and resilient production systems and value chains
- IFAD-supported projects incorporate climate-resilient seed varieties and crops.
- It trains farmers in climate-sensitive agricultural practices and soil management to cope with increased water stress.

### Way Forward

- To achieve global food and nutrition security, political commitment is needed along with investments.
- The needed policies and investments must
  - promote innovative and proven technologies that allow farmers to increase their productivity
  - adapt to climate change and become more resilient to shocks
  - promote environmentally and socially sustainable and financially viable irrigation and water management strategies
  - reduce their climate footprint of agricultural production, bio-hazards and environmental pollution
  - bring sanitation and drinking water supplies closer to rural households
  - adopt efficient food and water recycling strategies
  - strengthen institutional arrangements and capacity for sustainable and equitable water regulations, management, access and ownership

## 2. We need more doctors - Indian Express

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

**Context:**

- The **demand for doctors exceeds the supply** in large parts of India.
- At the same time, the **demand for medical education also exceeds the number or supply of seats.**
- **Reducing the demand-supply gap** in medical education has proven to be a **challenging objective.**

### Steps Taken

- Over the last decade, India has made rapid strides in expanding medical colleges and seats at the postgraduate (PG) and undergraduate (UG) levels.
- Since 2010-11, UG seats have nearly tripled, PG seats have almost quadrupled, while medical colleges have doubled.
- Despite this expansion, in 2021, the number of medical graduates per lakh population was 4.1.
  - This is well below 6.2 in China (2018), 6.9 in Israel (2020), 8.5 in US (2021), and 13.1 in UK (2021).

### Reasons for continued Gap

- While the number has increased rapidly, the size of medical colleges remains a critical barrier to increasing the supply of doctors.
  - The average number of UG seats per college is 153 in India as against 220 in Eastern Europe and 930 in China.
- The small size is an outcome of regulatory and financial constraints.
  - Draft guidelines for establishment of new medical colleges by upgrading district/referral hospitals, 2015
    - A seat expansion in a public medical college from 150 to 200 required
    - an expansion of books in the library from 11,000 to 15,000
    - daily OPD footfalls from 1,200 to 2,000
    - doubling in the number of nursing staff required
  - Some of these have been relaxed, but seats per college have not risen proportionately.
- Scaling up might be a riskier proposition for private medical colleges.
  - Investments in physical infrastructure, hiring teaching faculty and other staff may raise feasibility questions when seats remain vacant and costs are not recovered.
  - This often leads to price distortions with high capitation fees.
- Government colleges are only able to provide medical education at lower prices, but their costs continue to remain high.

### Competency-based Curriculum

- The competency-based curriculum being implemented by India is similar to the one implemented in the US.
- The US has innovated in resource utilisation to scale the production of doctors
- Besides its focus on mainstreaming technology and providing better financial incentives to teachers, it employs other innovations like
  - use of practising MD doctors who observe and mentor medical students in a clinical setting
  - integrating interprofessional education (IPE) into the curriculum where doctors, nurses and pharmacists are taught together
- It improves quality, reduces teaching faculty requirements and enables optimal utilisation of resources.

### Maintaining Equity

- While there is a perceived trade-off between quality and scale, there are also concerns about equity.
- While scale is needed, the National Medical Commission has currently prioritised equity.
- The previous cap of 250 UG seats has been revised to 150 for new medical colleges from 2024-25.
- The following reveal the government's focus on evenly distributed, localised production of doctors.
  - The requirement of 100 seats per 10 lakh population
  - The restrictions on locating new medical colleges within 15 km of an existing college
- However, this will not lead to efficient production due to inter-state migration of doctors from high-producing states.

### Conclusion

- The goal of equity requires **attention to incentives** and **encouraging migration to low-availability areas** rather than restricting production.
- The **policy focus**, therefore, should be on **addressing the barriers to scale**.

## Quick Look

### 1. David's Sling

- It is an Israeli medium-range air defence system designed to defeat short-range ballistic missiles, large-caliber rockets and cruise missiles.
- It occupies the middle part of Israel's sophisticated and multi-layer air-defence network, between the point-defence Iron Dome and upper-tier Arrow systems.
- Features
  - It incorporates a vertical missile firing unit, a fire control radar, a battle management/operator station, and the Stunner interceptor.
  - Each firing unit can hold up to 12 missiles.
  - It is designed to intercept ballistic and cruise missiles at ranges of 40 to 300 km.
  - Unlike Iron Dome's, Stunner has no warhead, defeating targets by striking them directly.

### 2. Amur Falcon

- Locally known as Akhuipuina, it is a small raptor of the falcon family.
- The bird arrives mainly in Manipur and Nagaland.
- They breed in south-eastern Siberia and Northern China and migrate long distances in large flocks to winter in Southern and East Africa.
- Threats: Illegal trapping and killing during migration, habitat loss from agricultural practices and land reclamation.
- It is protected under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972.
- In 2018, the forest department started a conservation programme by radio-tagging the birds to study their migratory route.
- IUCN Status: Least Concern

### 3. Saraswati Samman Award

- It is given annually for outstanding literary works in 22 Indian languages in the last 10 years.
- It was instituted by the K. Birla Foundation.
- It is among the highest recognitions in the field of Indian literature.
- The selection follows a rigorous three-tier process leading up to a final decision by Chayan Parishad.
- It carries a citation, a plaque and prize money of 15 lakh rupees.

## 4. Deepfake

- The term deepfake originated in 2017, when an anonymous Reddit user called himself “Deepfakes.
- This user manipulated Google’s open-source, deep-learning technology to create and post pornographic videos.
- The videos were doctored with a technique known as face-swapping. The user Deepfakes replaced real faces with celebrity faces.

## 5. Hailstorm

- Hail is a type of solid rain made up of balls or lumps of ice.
- Storms that produce hail that reaches the ground are known as hailstorms.
- They typically last for no more than 15 minutes but can cause injuries to people and damage buildings, vehicles, and
- They are most common in the midlatitudes.
- Hailstorms can sometimes be accompanied by other severe weather events, such as cyclones and tornadoes.
- The size of hailstones can vary widely, from small pellets less than 1/4 inch in diameter to larger stones measuring several inches in size.



Mentorship  
India

## Prelims Track Question

**Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Sagar Maitri Mission**

1. It is an initiative of the Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India.
2. It aims to establish long-term scientific partnerships and collaborations with the QUAD members.
3. It supports the objective of India's policy declaration 'Safety and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)'.

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

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

**Q2. With reference to the Hepatitis C, consider the following statements**

1. It is an infectious disease caused by blood-borne hepatitis C virus (HCV) that primarily affects the liver.
2. Hepatitis B, unlike Hepatitis C, does not have a vaccine.

**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 Acts**

1. The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
2. The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
3. The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
4. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974

**How many of the Acts mentioned above are dealt with by the NGT ?**

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

**Q4. Consider the following statements about the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)**

1. It is the final decision-making body on Senior appointments in the national security apparatus and Defence policy and expenditure
2. Prime Minister of India, Minister of Defence, Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of Finance are its member

**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

**Q5. Consider the following statements about the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership**

1. These negotiations were launched in November 2012 between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations
2. ASEAN's free trade agreement partners are Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea
3. India's exit in November 2019 from negotiations

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

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

**Q6. Consider the following statements about The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**

1. It was established on 16 July 1929 as a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
2. It is an autonomous organisation under Ministry of Science and technology
3. It is the apex body for coordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.

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

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

**Q7. Consider the following statements about Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link Project (USBRL)**

1. The USBRL project was declared as a “National Project” in 2002.
2. The project involves the iconic Chenab Bridge which will be the highest railway bridge in the world.

**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

**Q8. Consider the following statements about Kaziranga National Park**

1. It is the single largest undisturbed and representative area in the

Brahmaputra Valley floodplain.

2. It was declared as a National Park in 1974.
3. It has been declared a tiger reserve since 2007.
4. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site

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

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

**Q9. Consider the following statements**

1. World Food Day is celebrated to commemorate the date of the founding of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.
2. The theme for the World Food Day 2023 is “Water is Life, Water is Food”.

**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. With reference to Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (AB-PMJAY) consider the following statements**

1. It has been launched to achieve Universal Health Coverage.
2. The cost of implementation is shared between the Central and State Governments.
3. It is only applicable to people aged 60 and above.

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

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



## Prelims Track Answer

**Ans. 1 Option A is correct**

**Explanation**

- Sagar Maitri is a novel initiative of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- Vision: It supports the objective of India's policy declaration 'Safety and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)'. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- Objective: To promote closer cooperation among Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) countries in the areas of socio-economic and scientific interactions especially in ocean research.
- It focuses on establishing long-term scientific partnerships and collaborations with eight IOR countries. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- These countries include Oman, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Myanmar.

**Ans. 2 Option A is correct**

**Explanation**

- Hepatitis C is an infectious disease caused by blood-borne hepatitis C virus (HCV) that primarily affects the liver. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It can be both Acute (inflammation of the liver that presents with sickness - jaundice, fever, vomiting) and Chronic (inflammation of the liver that lasts more than six months, but essentially showing no symptoms)
- Symptoms: It can include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine and yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice).

- The most common modes of infection are through exposure to small quantities of blood.
- This may happen through drug use, unsafe injection practices, unsafe health care and the transfusion of unscreened blood and blood products
- Presently there is no vaccine available for HCV, however, it can be treated with antiviral medication.
- Hepatitis A and B are preventable by vaccine. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**

**Ans. 3 Option C is correct**

**Explanation**

- The NGT deals with civil cases under the seven laws related to the environment, these include
- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977
- The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
- The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
- The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
- The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
- The Biological Diversity Act, 2002. **Hence, Option C is correct.**

**Ans. 4 Option C is correct**

**Explanation**

- It is a cabinet committee of the Government of India that discusses, debates and is the final decision-making body on:
  - Senior appointments in the national security apparatus
  - Defence policy and expenditure
  - Generally all matters of India's national security
  - **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**

- Members
- Prime Minister of India, Minister of Defence, Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of Finance, Minister of External Affairs
- The National Security Adviser, the Cabinet Secretary and the Defence Secretary have also been attendees of the CCS meetings. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

**Ans. 5 Option D is correct**

**Explanation**

- RCEP negotiations were launched in November 2012 between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- ASEAN includes Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam
- ASEAN's free trade agreement partners (Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- RCEP has the potential to deliver significant opportunities for businesses in the East Asia region
- the 16 RCEP participating countries account for almost half of the world's population
- contribute about 30 percent of global GDP and over a quarter of world exports.
- India's exit in November 2019 from negotiations on the world's largest trade deal **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

**Ans. 6 Option B is correct**

**Explanation**

- It was established on 16 July 1929 as a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is an autonomous organisation under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education

(DARE), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**

- It is headquartered at New Delhi.
- With 102 ICAR institutes and 71 agricultural universities spread across the country this is one of the largest national agricultural systems in the world.
- It is the apex body for coordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

**Ans. 7 Option C is correct**

**Explanation**

- It is of length - 272 Km.
- With a view to provide an alternative and a reliable transportation system to Jammu & Kashmir, Govt. of India planned a 272 Km. long Railway Line under this project.
- In view of the importance of the USBRL project in providing seamless and hassle-free connectivity, the Project was declared as a "National Project" in 2002. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- This Project involves 38 Tunnels (combined length of 119Km), the longest Tunnel (T-49) is having a length of 12.75 Km and is the country's longest transportation tunnel.
- There are 927 nos. of Bridges (combined length of 13 Km).
- These bridges include the iconic Chenab Bridge which will be the highest railway bridge in the world. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

**Ans. 8 Option D is correct**

**Explanation**

- It is located in the State of Assam and covers 42,996 hectares (ha).

- It is the single largest undisturbed and representative area in the Brahmaputra Valley floodplain. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It was declared as a National Park in 1974. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It has been declared a tiger reserve since 2007. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- The 1,300 sq. km tiger reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**
- It is the home of the world's most one-horned rhinos.
- Much of the focus of conservation efforts in Kaziranga are focused on the 'big four' species— Rhino, Elephant, Royal Bengal tiger and Asiatic water buffalo.

**Ans. 9 Option B is correct**

**Explanation**

- World Food Day is an international day celebrated every year worldwide on October 16 to commemorate the date of the founding of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in 1945. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
  - FAO is a specialised agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- It is observed annually to address the problem of global hunger.
- It emphasises Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) i.e. Zero Hunger.
- The theme for World Food Day 2023 is 'Water is Life, Water is Food' which calls for urgent action in managing water wisely. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

**Ans. 10 Option B is correct**

**Explanation**

- Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (AB-PMJAY) was launched in 2018 to achieve Universal Health Coverage. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It offers a sum insured of Rs. 5 lakh per family for secondary care (which doesn't involve a super specialist) as well as tertiary care (which does). **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- It is an entitlement-based scheme that targets the beneficiaries as identified by latest Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data.
- It is the world's largest health assurance scheme fully financed by the government.
- The cost of implementation is shared between the Central and State Governments. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The National Health Agency has been constituted for effective implementation of PMJAY in alliance with state governments.

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