

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



Date: 16 Feb. 2024

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2. 16th century Qutub Shahi tombs get a digital twin - The Hindu
3. India has rejected demand for data exclusivity in drug development in FTA talks: Commerce Secretary - The Hindu
4. Global meet urges India to augment pulses production to meet nutritional needs - The Hindu/ Efforts being made to attain self-sufficiency in pulses by 2027: Munda - Indian Express
5. January trade deficit narrows to 9-month low of \$17.5 billion - The Hindu/ Goods exports up 3% in Jan, gold and electronics imports widen trade deficit - Indian Express
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Quick Look

1. Electoral Bonds
2. Schengen Visa
3. New Drug to Treat Chronic Kidney Disease
4. Kaji Nemu
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Important News Articles

GS I

1. Kotravai sculpture from Pallava period unearthed near Ulundurpet - The New Indian Express

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

Prelims Takeaway

- Cholas
- Pandayas

News:

- A team of archaeological researchers has **discovered an eighth-century Kotravai sculpture, an artefact that dates back to the Pallava period**, near Ulundurpet.

Key Highlights

- “Kotravai sculpture is made in a slab stone of five-feet height and four-feet width.
- The idol is depicted with eight hands, indicating its origin in the **eighth century during the Pallava period**.
- “The sculpture depicts various elements such as chakkara, sword, bell, and abhaya mudra in the right hands.
- Conch, bow, shield, and Uru Mudhra are shown in the left side hands along with bangles in all hands

The Pallava dynasty

- The Pallava dynasty **existed from 275 CE to 897 CE**, ruling a substantial portion of the Deccan, also known as Tondaimandalam.
- Pallava power expanded beyond their original heartland, and **they came into conflict with other dynasties, particularly the Chalukyas and Cholas**.

Rulers of the Pallava dynasty

- The Pallava rulers made significant contributions to the fields of art, architecture, and literature.
- **Simhavarman I (c. 275 – 300 CE):** Simhavarman I is considered one of the earliest known Pallava rulers. He is credited with laying the foundation for the dynasty’s rule in the region.
- **Mahendravarman I (c. 600 – 630 CE):** Mahendravarman I was a notable Pallava king known for his patronage of the arts and literature.
- He was a prolific poet himself and is believed to have authored the Sanskrit play “Mattavilasa Prahasana.” He was a follower of Jainism but later embraced Shaivism.
- **Narasimhavarman I (c. 630 – 668 CE):** Also known as Mamalla, Narasimhavarman I was one of the most famous Pallava rulers.
- He is best known for his military campaigns and his patronage of art and architecture. He is credited with the construction of the famous Shore Temple in Mahabalipuram, a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- **Nandivarman II (c. 731 – 796 CE):** Nandivarman II was another Pallava king who made significant contributions to art and architecture.
- He is known for his patronage of rock-cut temples, including the Mandagapattu and Trichinopoly rock-cut temples.
- **Nandivarman III (c. 850 – 869 CE):** Nandivarman III was one of the later Pallava rulers.
- His reign also witnessed the continuing decline of the Pallava dynasty as the Cholas expanded their influence in the region.

2. 16th century Qutub Shahi tombs get a digital twin - The Hindu

Relevance: Art and Culture

News:

- Recently, **Hexagon**, a reality tech firm, unveiled the **digital twin of Qutb Shahi’s tomb** in Hyderabad.

Digital Twin Technology

- A digital twin is a **digital model** of an object, system or a process that acts the **same as its real world counterpart**.
- **Benefits**

Prelims Takeaway

- Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah
- Mohammed Quli Qutub Shah’s Tomb
- Digital Twin Technology

- It helps companies and organisations to understand a physical object or a process well.
- It helps in testing a solution or a design in simulation using the digital twin.
- It saves developers time and energy by simulating real-world scenarios.

Accuracy of Digital Twin

- The drone scanners utilised only **8 minutes** to gather the data, achieving accuracy with up to **1-centimeter** geotagging precision.
- A total of **600 GB of data was captured** for the creation of the digital twin

Mohammed Quli Qutub Shah's Tomb

- Built by the **Qutub Shahis**, these tombs are considered to be among the oldest historical monuments of Hyderabad.
- Built in **1602**, it is one of the **largest tombs at the Qutb Shahi heritage park complex**.
- It is one-of-its-kind place in the world where the whole dynasty is buried at a single spot.
- These are erected in the memory of the **departed kings of Golconda**.
- They are located **one kilometre north of Golconda Fort's** called **Banjara Darwaza**.
- They resemble **Persian, Pathan and Hindu** architectural styles
- **Material Use:** Grey Granite, with stucco ornamentation.

Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (1581- 1611)

- He was the **fifth king of the Qutb Shahi dynasty** who laid the foundation of **Hyderabad**.
- A contemporary of **Tulsidas**, he blended the best traditions of the two streams of thought and life to impart a new halo to his poetry.
- He is justifiably the **first poet in Deccani Urdu** with at least fifty thousand shers to his credit.

GS II

3. India has rejected demand for data exclusivity in drug development in FTA talks: Commerce Secretary - The Hindu

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

News:

- India has dismissed the request for '**data exclusivity**' during ongoing discussions with the **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** for a free trade agreement.

The Background

- The EFTA, comprising **Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Lichtenstein**, have consistently pushed for **data exclusivity since 2008** in trade negotiations with India.
 - EFTA is an inter-governmental organisation for the promotion and intensification of free trade.
- India rejects it as such a clause would impede its **thriving generic drug industry**.
- It has been pivotal in providing **affordable alternatives to expensive medications** globally.
 - India's generic drug industry is estimated at about USD 25 billion and the country exports 50% of its produce.

Data Exclusivity

- It involves a provision in the draft agreement proposing a **minimum six-year embargo on clinical trial data** produced during drug testing and development.
- This clause would compel manufacturers seeking to **replicate a drug** to
 - either generate their own data, which is costly
 - or wait out the embargo period before selling their version in India.
- Through it, innovator firms can **prevent competitors from obtaining marketing licenses for low-cost versions** during the exclusivity period.
- This regulation could also **impact drugs not patented in India**.
- Data exclusivity is beyond the provisions of the **TRIPS agreement** under the WTO (World Trade Organisation).

Prelims Takeaway

- Free Trade Agreement (FTA)
- TRIPS Agreement
- European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

GS III

4. Global meet urges India to augment pulses production to meet nutritional needs - The Hindu/ Efforts being made to attain self-sufficiency in pulses by 2027: Munda - Indian Express

Relevance: Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country, – different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.

Prelims Takeaway

- Self-sufficiency in Pulses
- NAFED

News:

- The Global Pulses Conference, an annual meeting of pulses producers, processors and traders, suggested that **India augment production of pulses to meet the nutritional requirements.**

Key Highlights

- The Centre had taken adequate measures to improve pulses cultivation in the country **by increasing the minimum support price (MSP) regularly.**
- The two-day conference is jointly organised by **the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED)** and the Global Pulse Confederation (GPC).
- Over the last decade pulses production had grown by 60% from 171 lakh tonnes in 2014 to 270 lakh tonnes in 2024.

'Self-sufficiency by 2027'

- **India had become self-reliant in chickpeas (chana) and many other pulses crops**, with only a slight deficiency remaining in pigeon peas (tur) and black gram.
- Consistent efforts are being made to attain self-sufficiency in pulses by 2027.
- It's a crop that **benefits the soil.**
- It is nutritious and benefits the smallholding farmers.
- If India takes efforts to improve cultivation, **all the stakeholders will get the benefits.**

5. January trade deficit narrows to 9-month low of \$17.5 billion - The Hindu/ Goods exports up 3% in Jan, gold and electronics imports widen trade deficit - Indian Express

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

News:

Prelims Takeaway

- Trade Deficit
- Balance of Payments

Shortfall narrows

The trade deficit, which hit a record high of \$29.9 billion in October, narrowed sequentially for the third straight month, provisional estimates show



■ Goods exports rose for the second straight month to \$36.92 billion in January

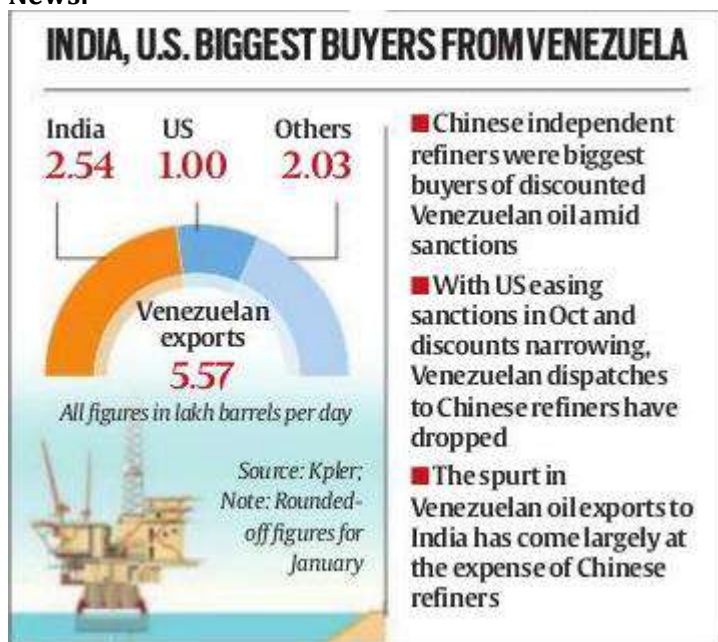
■ Imports of \$54.4 billion were, however, 6.6% lower than in the preceding month

■ Services exports are estimated to have expanded 17.5% to \$32.8 billion

6. As sanctions ease, India becomes top buyer of Venezuelan crude in Dec, Jan - Indian Express

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

News:



Prelims Takeaway

- Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)
- Trends based Question

7. From restoring forests to river basins, seven conservation initiatives across continents recognised by UN - Down To Earth

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

News:

- The United Nations named seven initiatives from across **Africa, Latin America, the Mediterranean and Southeast Asia** as the intergovernmental organisation's World Restoration Flagships
- The projects revolve around revival and preservation of ecosystems at **the tipping point of outright degradation caused by wildfires, drought, deforestation and pollution.**

Prelims Takeaway

- Terai Arc Landscape initiative
- Sri Lanka Mangrove Regeneration initiative

Key Highlights

- The award conferred by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN
 - Makes the initiatives eligible for technical and financial support from the organisation.
- The awards serve as a part of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, led by the two agencies.
- Along with this, over **eight million hectares are planned for restoration by 2030.**
- The Living Indus initiative received approval from the Pakistan** parliament in the wake of the devastating 2022 climate change-induced floods.
- Its official launch took place at the 27th Conference of Parties to the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Sharm el-Sheikh.**
- The initiative aims to restore 25 million hectares of the river basin by 2030**, encompassing 30 percent of Pakistan's surface area through the implementation of 25 high-impact interventions for policymakers, practitioners and civil society.
- It designates the Indus River as a living entity with rights
 - A measure taken to protect rivers elsewhere as well.
 - It involves Australia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, India, New Zealand, Peru and Sri Lanka.

- The **Acción Andina social movement led by Peruvian conservation** non-profit ECOAN aims to protect and restore a forest area of one million hectares.
- “They are expected to benefit from the initiative by 2030 in various ways--from access to medicine, solar panels, and clean-burning clay stoves
 - To improve grazing management, sustainable agriculture, microbusiness, and ecotourism management of Indigenous cultures.
- The **Sri Lanka Mangrove Regeneration initiative** is a science-driven programme co-led by local communities.
- It focuses on the restoration of natural balance in the ecosystem. Since its launch in 2015, efforts have led to 500 hectares of restored mangroves, according to the UN statement.
- **The Terai Arc Landscape initiative aimed to**
 - Restore the forests of critical corridors of the Terai Arc Landscape in collaboration with local communities working
 - As citizen scientists, community-based anti-poaching units, forest guards, among others.
- Growing forests in Africa's drylands initiative aims to expand from 41,000 restored hectares today to 229,000 hectares by 2030.
- **“Ecosystem restoration is a long-term solution** in the fight to eradicate poverty, hunger and malnutrition,
 - As we face population growth and increased need for foods and ecosystem goods and services,

8. IBBI expert panel bats for specialised insolvency mediation- The Hindu

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

News:

- An **IBBI-appointed expert committee headed by former Law Secretary** has recommended a voluntary mediation framework under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

Key Highlights

- Currently, **mediation does not exist as a legislative mandate** under IBC.
- Mediation is the use of a neutral third party to facilitate the negotiated settlement of a dispute and resolve conflicts between two or more parties.
- The **Committee has taken a cautious approach** and endeavoured to balance the fundamental objectives of the Code,
 - i.e., “time-bound reorganisation” and “maximisation of value” with autonomy to parties to voluntarily opt for the ‘out-of-court’ mediation process to enhance efficiency of the insolvency resolution process.
- The Committee has recommended a **“stage based” and phased introduction of voluntary mediation** as a dispute resolution mechanism under the Code,
 - While maintaining the sanctity of the timelines for various existing insolvency resolution processes.

Flexibility in process

- The core essence of the framework is **its independence and flexibility to provide room for quick incorporation of implementational learning**.
- The committee recommended the **likely framework for the introduction of mediation as a complementary mechanism**
 - for resolution of disputes around the processes under the Code.
- The mediation framework would best operate as a self-contained blueprint within the Code
 - with independent infrastructure to ensure that the objectives of the Code are met without compromising or diluting the basic structure of the Code in terms of timelines, public rights.
- However, there are **critical issues that require attention before the scheme is implemented**.
- One notable concern is the exclusion of financial creditors from the initial scope of voluntary mediation provisions,

Prelims Takeaway

- Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)
- Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

9. An intervention that will help strengthen legal education - The Hindu

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

News:

- Recently, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law, and Justice released a report **addressing the quality of legal education** in India.

<p>Historical Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal education in India has historically lagged behind fields like medicine and engineering. However, the establishment of National Law Universities (NLUs) in the 1990s marked a positive shift, offering new opportunities for aspiring lawyers. <p>Current Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite the success of NLUs, many law schools in India still suffer from mediocrity. Most of the NLUs too have failed to emerge as centres of excellence in legal research. Only two Indian law schools rank among the top 250 law schools globally in the QS rankings. <p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Against this backdrop, the committee suggested limiting the powers of the Bar Council of India (BCI) to regulate legal education. It proposes creating an independent body, the National Council for Legal Education and Research (NCLER), to oversee non-litigation aspects of legal education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The BCI's role in regulating legal education that pertains to acquiring basic eligibility to practise in the courts is indispensable. This proposed body will develop qualitative benchmarks to regulate legal education. In addition to judges and practising lawyers, the NCLER should have eminent law professors with an unimpeachable track record of research and serving legal education. 	<p>Focus on Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many of India's 1,700-odd law schools principally focus on teaching, with scant attention to research. Additionally, out of more than 800 law journals globally indexed in Scopus barely a handful are Indian law journals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scopus is an internationally recognised database that lists leading journals in all fields. The report emphasizes the need to prioritize research in legal education to foster critical thinking among students. It calls for recruiting top researchers as faculty members and increasing state funding to bolster research ecosystems in law schools. <p>Global Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing the impact of globalization on legal education, the committee recommends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implementing a global curriculum facilitating international exchange programs incorporating more international law courses increasing students' exposure to different legal systems <p>Cultural Shift</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee's suggestions signal a positive change but highlight the need for passionate and visionary leadership within law faculties. It calls for academic freedom and autonomy to promote a culture of legal research.
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Conclusion

- The intervention of the parliamentary committee is welcomed as a step towards **enhancing the quality of legal education** in India, urging all **stakeholders to collaborate** for improvement.

10. Re-energising RTI - Indian Express/ A vital verdict - Indian Express

Relevance: Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context:

- The Supreme Court's landmark decision declaring the Electoral Bonds scheme unconstitutional has bolstered the **Right to Information Act (RTI)**.

The SC Judgement

- The SC favoured **Article 19 (1) (a)** of the Constitution, **prioritizing voters' right over informational privacy**.
- It averred that the **voters' right is breached by the anonymity clause** and that information on political parties is essential.
- Poll bond, in fact, is violative of fundamental rights and **infringement of RTI is not justified for curbing black money**.

Studies by the Association for Democratic Reforms

- It revealed that a significant portion of funds extended through electoral bonds went to the BJP.
 - The analysis of declaration data shows that since the introduction, around 55% have gone to the BJP, Congress with less than 10%.
- Additionally, it indicated a lopsided distribution of funds, with large denominations dominating the issuance.
 - Electoral bonds with denominations of Rs 1 crore accounted for more than 91% of the Rs 5,896 crore raised in the first 11 phases of the sale of bonds.
- All this led to allegations of corruption and cronyism and perceptions of an uneven playing field.
- Financial contributions to a political party may lead to a quid pro quo arrangement and undue influence over policy making.
 - because of the close nexus between money and politics.

Challenges and Opacity within the RTI Regime

- The RTI regime faced challenges with vacancies in Information Commissions, mounting pendency, delayed hearings and a perceptible lack of transparency.
- 3,21,000 appeals were pending before the various Commissions as of June 30, 2023.
- Satark Nagrik Sangathan in its recent study of State Information Commissions' performances found that 4 out of 29 are defunct and at least three are still headless.
- Nineteen of the 29 Commissions have not cared to file their annual report, mandatory under the Act.
- The CIC itself boasts of only three commissioners with eight vacant posts.
- Concerns were raised over the CIC's decision that information disclosure on Electoral Bonds was not in the public interest.

Historical Context and Impact of RTI Act

- The inception of the RTI era in India, marked by the filing of the first RTI query in 2005, signified a significant shift towards transparency and accountability in governance.
- However, the Act faced challenges such as delayed compliance with orders, increased pendency, and instances of violence against RTI activists probing corruption.

Government's Response and Future Outlook

- The government's resistance to bringing political parties under the RTI Act, despite legal rulings, raises concerns about public accountability and transparency.
- Suggestions are made for the government to display willingness to revitalise the RTI regime to address issues and implement necessary reforms
 - Through the formation of a committee under the Minister of Personnel, comprising stakeholders from civil society.

Conclusion

- The SC judgement is seen as an **opportunity to reinvigorate the RTI Act**, aligning with principles of transparency and accountability.
- Given RTI's potential to elevate India's international reputation, there is optimism for a revitalized dedication to **transparency and public access to information**.

11. Proportionality in Electoral Bonds case - Indian Express

Relevance: Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context:

- Recently, the Supreme Court, led by the Chief Justice of India, unanimously invalidated the **electoral bonds scheme**, citing disproportionate **restrictions on free speech**.
- The examination of the electoral bonds scheme revolved around whether the **state's intrusion** into individual rights **proportionately served its goals** - curbing black money and protecting donor privacy.

Proportionality Test

- A law passed by Parliament cannot interfere with Part-III of the Constitution that lists out the inviolable fundamental rights.
- The proportionality test determines if state actions align with Article 19(2)'s "reasonable restrictions" on free speech.
- Justice Chandrachud emphasized the importance of the proportionality test in resolving conflicts between rights claims and legitimate government interests.
- The test is deemed necessary to guard against arbitrary action, so that the state cannot extinguish the right entirely even in pursuance of a legitimate state interest.
- For example, the right to life cannot be taken away to ensure law and order.

Puttaswamy Judgement

- The test was formally laid down as the best practice in the 2017 seven-judge Bench Puttaswamy ruling.
- It mandates that
 - The action should be sanctioned by law
 - The proposed action must be necessary in a democratic society for a legitimate aim
 - The extent of such interference must be proportionate to the need for such interference
 - There must be procedural guarantees against abuse of such interference

Government's Defence

- In the electoral bonds case, the government argued that curbing black money and protecting donor anonymity are both legitimate aims for the state.
 - Since anonymity seeks to give effect to a fundamental right - the right to privacy of the donor.
- On the extent of interference with the voter's right to know, the government argued that the right to information only operates against information in the possession or in the knowledge of the state.

Application of the Proportionality Test

- Justice Khanna, applying the proportionality test, said that donor anonymity cannot be a legitimate state aim.
- He also held that voters' right to know supersedes anonymity in political party funding.
- The CJI, however, applied the "double proportionality" test, considering both the right to information and privacy.
- The court must consider both perspectives and determine if the state has chosen the least restrictive methods to uphold both rights.
- He also highlighted the availability of less intrusive alternatives, such as the electoral trusts scheme, to achieve the goals of curbing black money and preserving donor anonymity.

12. Regulating political funding: Rules around the world, India's challenge - Indian Express

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

Context:

- Recently, the SC delivered a comprehensive judgement on the **Electoral Bonds case**.
- It addressed the **intersection of money and politics** in India's democracy.

The Judgement

- The judgement focused on two primary issues raised by the petitions
 - The impact of unlimited corporate funding on free and fair elections
 - The violation of citizens' right to information due to non-disclosure of contributions.

Significance of Party Funding

- Unlike the US, where elections centre around individual candidates, India's parliamentary system places parties at the core of electoral politics.
- Therefore, any effective campaign finance framework must primarily address party funding, rather than individual candidates.

Key Aspects of a Fruitful Party Funding Framework

- The judgement outlined four crucial aspects for an effective party funding framework.

1. Regulation of Donations

- Restrictions on who can donate and limits on donation amounts aim to prevent parties from being dominated by a few large donors.

2. Limits on Expenditure

- Imposing expenditure limits on political parties prevents a financial arms race.
- It ensures that parties compete for votes rather than money.

3. Public Financing of Elections

- Public funding based on predetermined criteria can help reduce reliance on private funding.
- such as past electoral performance, membership fees, and private donations

4. Disclosure Requirements

- Mandating the disclosure of donations nudges voters against electing politicians engaged in quid pro quo arrangements.

Challenges and Solutions

- The judgement discussed various challenges in implementing an effective party funding framework.
- These include balancing transparency and anonymity, and preventing quid pro quo arrangements.
- It highlighted the Chilean experiment with "complete anonymity" of party funding.
 - It ultimately failed due to coordination between politicians and donors.

Balancing Transparency and Anonymity

- Many jurisdictions strike a balance by allowing anonymity for small donors while requiring disclosures for large donations.
- India's current framework lacks donation limits for individuals and legal expenditure limits for parties.
- This allows large donors to hide their contributions through schemes like Electoral Bonds.

Evolution of Political Funding

- The judgement emphasised the evolving nature of political funding, noting the increasing involvement of third-party entities in campaign activities.
- This necessitates a reevaluation of traditional assumptions about political funding frameworks in India.

Quick Look

1. Electoral Bonds

- The electoral bonds system was introduced in 2017 by way of a Finance bill and was implemented in 2018.
- They serve as a means for individuals and entities to make donations to registered political parties while maintaining donor anonymity.
- Key Features
 - State Bank of India (SBI) is the authorized issuer and the bonds are issued through designated SBI branches.
 - SBI issues the bonds in denominations of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore.
 - Can be purchased digitally or through cheques by Indian citizens or entities established in India.
 - Purchased Can be bought individually or jointly with other individuals.
 - Payable to the bearer on demand and interest-free.
 - Valid for 15 calendar days from the date of issue.
 - Encashment only through an authorised bank account of the political party.
 - Parties must disclose their bank account with the Election Commission of India (ECI).
 - Political parties are obligated to explain the utilization of the funds received.
- Eligibility of Political Parties
 - Political parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951
 - Must have secured not less than 1% of the votes polled in the last general election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly

2. Schengen Visa

- It is an official document mandatory for some non-Europeans to travel to all the 27 countries which are part of the Schengen area.
 - The Schengen Area is a group of 27 European nations that have abolished their internal borders, for the free and unrestricted movement of people.
- Once granted, this visa allows the traveller to cross the borders of the other member-states without going through identity checks at the border.
- This type of visa is issued by one of the Schengen States and allows you to visit any of the Schengen countries for a duration of up to 90 days in total within 180 days.

3. New Drug to Treat Chronic Kidney Disease

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) recently granted approval for the use of Jardiance (empagliflozin) 10 mg tablets in reducing the risk of sustained decline in patients with end-stage kidney disease, cardiovascular death, and hospitalisation in adults with chronic kidney disease (CKD) at risk of progression.
- However, the release cautions against the use of Jardiance for CKD treatment in patients with polycystic kidney disease or those requiring intravenous immunosuppressive therapy or high doses of prednisone.

4. Kaji Nemu

- Recently, the Assam government declared the GI-tagged 'Kaji Nemu' (Citrus Limon) as the State Fruit.
- It is grown in almost all the districts of the state, is available throughout the year.
- Kaji Nemu is elongated, oblong and a lot juicier compared to other lemon varieties.
- It is popular for its unique aroma and health benefits (powerhouse of nutrients) and has been traditionally associated with the Assamese cuisines.
- It is majorly used in culinary and commercial purposes, and it is extensively used for its medicinal properties.

5. Mimas

- Recent findings from data collected by NASA's Cassini spacecraft reveal the presence of a vast ocean beneath the icy surface of Saturn's moon Mimas.
- It is the smallest and innermost of the major regular moons of Saturn.
- The surface is icy and heavily cratered and the most striking feature of this small moon is a gigantic crater known as Herschel.
 - Herschel is one of the largest impact structures, relative to the size of the body, known in the solar system.
 - A central peak in the centre of the crater rises to a height of 4 miles, almost as high as Mount Everest on Earth.
- The low density of Mimas indicates that it is composed almost entirely of water ice.



Mentorship
India

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Pallava dynasty

1. The Pallavas were one of the earliest dynasties in South India, known for their significant contributions to art and architecture.
2. Mamallapuram, also known as Mahabalipuram, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and features several Pallava monuments, including the famous Shore Temple.
3. The Pallavas played a crucial role in the spread of Indian culture and Hinduism to Southeast Asia through their maritime activities.

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 with reference to Digital Twin Technology

1. It involves creating a virtual model of a physical object or system.
2. It helps in testing a solution or a design in simulation using the digital twin.

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. With reference to Data Exclusivity, consider the following statements

1. The Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940 provides for data exclusivity for a "new drug".
2. The TRIPS agreement under the WTO (World Trade Organisation) mandates data exclusivity.

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 regarding the target of achieving self-sufficiency in pulses by 2027

1. The Government of India has set a target to achieve self-sufficiency in pulses production by 2027 to address the country's dependence on imports for this essential protein source.
2. Pulses play a crucial role in enhancing soil fertility through nitrogen fixation, making them an integral part of sustainable agricultural practices.
3. The National Food Security Mission (NFSM) has been instrumental in promoting pulses cultivation by providing financial incentives and technological support to farmers.

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 regarding "The Living Indus Initiative"

1. The Living Indus Initiative is a collaborative effort aimed at the conservation and sustainable management of the Indus River ecosystem.
2. It focuses on addressing the environmental challenges faced by the Indus River, including issues related to water quality, biodiversity loss, and habitat degradation.
3. The initiative involves the participation of multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities.
4. One of the key objectives of The Living Indus Initiative is to promote the cultural and historical significance of the Indus River, emphasizing the need for community engagement in its conservation.

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 Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)

1. It has regulatory oversight over the insolvency professional agencies and insolvency professionals only.
2. It collects and maintains records relating to insolvency and bankruptcy cases.
3. The Board members are appointed by the Reserve Bank of India.

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

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

Q7. With reference to the Bar Council of India, consider the following statements

1. It is a statutory body created by Parliament under the Advocates Act, 1961 to regulate and represent the Indian bar.
2. It grants recognition to Universities whose degree in law will serve as qualification for enrollment as an advocate.
3. According to the Constitution of India, only advocates enrolled with BCI can practice law.

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

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

Q8. Consider the following statements about the Central Information Commission

1. It consists of a Chief Information Commissioner and not more than ten Information Commissioners.
2. The Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall hold office for a term of three years.
3. The Commission can not order an inquiry into any matter on its own.
4. The Central Information Commission is a constitutional body.

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 with reference to the doctrine of proportionality

1. The doctrine of proportionality was adopted by the Supreme Court of India in the case of Om Kumar v. Union of India.
2. The principle requires that the decision or action must be proportionate to the objective it seeks to achieve.

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

Q10. Consider the following statements regarding political funding around the world

1. Many countries have implemented public funding of political parties to reduce dependence on private donations and ensure transparency in political financing.
2. In some countries, political donations from corporations and foreign entities are strictly prohibited to maintain the integrity of the electoral process.
3. Campaign finance laws in certain nations place limits on individual contributions to political parties to prevent the undue influence of wealthy individuals on the political system.
4. The concept of micro-donations and crowdfunding has gained popularity in several democracies as a means of involving a large number of citizens in political funding.

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

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

Prelims Track Answer

Answer 1 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The Pallavas, who ruled from the 4th to the 9th centuries, were indeed one of the earliest dynasties in South India. They were notable for their contributions to art and architecture, especially the rock-cut temples and sculptures. Examples include the Shore Temple in Mamallapuram and the Kailasanatha Temple in Kanchipuram. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- Mamallapuram, or Mahabalipuram, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its group of sanctuaries carved out of rock in the 7th and 8th centuries by the Pallava kings. The Shore Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is one of the prominent structures at this site. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The Pallavas were known for their maritime activities, and they played a vital role in spreading Indian culture and Hinduism to Southeast Asia. The influence of Pallava art and architecture can be seen in regions like present-day Cambodia and Indonesia, where their cultural impact persisted. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 2 Option C is correct

Explanation

- A digital twin is a digital model of an object, system or a process that acts the same as its real world counterpart. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It helps companies and organisations to understand a physical object or a process well.
- It helps in testing a solution or a design in simulation using the digital twin. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It saves developers time and energy by simulating real-world scenarios.

Answer 3 Option B is correct

Explanation

- Data Exclusivity involves a provision in the draft agreement proposing a minimum six-year embargo on clinical trial data produced during drug testing and development.
- This clause would compel manufacturers seeking to replicate a drug to
 - either generate their own data, which is costly
 - or wait out the embargo period before selling their version in India.

- Through it, innovator firms can prevent competitors from obtaining marketing licenses for low-cost versions during the exclusivity period.
- Data exclusivity is beyond the provisions of the TRIPS agreement under the WTO (World Trade Organisation). **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940 provides for data exclusivity for a “new drug” under section 122E for a total period of 4 years from the date of approval. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**

Answer 4 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The Government of India has indeed set a target to achieve self-sufficiency in pulses production by 2027 to reduce dependency on imports. Pulses are a crucial source of protein in the Indian diet, and achieving self-sufficiency is essential for food security. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- Pulses are known for their ability to fix nitrogen in the soil through a symbiotic relationship with nitrogen-fixing bacteria. This enhances soil fertility and makes pulses an essential component of sustainable agricultural practices, promoting overall soil health. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The National Food Security Mission (NFSM) in India has been actively involved in promoting pulses cultivation by providing financial incentives, technological support, and promoting better agricultural practices. It aims to increase the production of pulses to meet the country's nutritional needs. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

Answer 5 Option D is correct

Explanation

- The Living Indus Initiative is indeed a collaborative effort focused on the conservation and sustainable management of the Indus River ecosystem. It aims to address the various challenges faced by the river to ensure its ecological health. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- The initiative aims to tackle a range of environmental challenges, including but not limited to water quality issues, loss of biodiversity, and degradation of habitats within the Indus River ecosystem. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**

- The success of The Living Indus Initiative relies on the active involvement of various stakeholders, such as government agencies, NGOs, and local communities. Collaboration is essential to address the complex and multifaceted challenges associated with the Indus River. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- The initiative recognizes the cultural and historical significance of the Indus River and emphasizes the importance of community engagement in its conservation. This approach ensures that conservation efforts are culturally sensitive and community-driven. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**

Answer 6 Option A is correct**Explanation**

- Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) was established on 1st October 2016 under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016.
- It is responsible for the implementation of the IBC, 2016.
- It has regulatory oversight over the insolvency professional agencies, insolvency professional entities, insolvency professionals and information utilities. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- It enforces rules for processes of corporate insolvency resolution, individual insolvency resolution, corporate liquidation and individual bankruptcy under the IBC.
- It specifies the minimum eligibility requirements for registration of insolvency professional agencies, insolvency professionals and information utilities and curriculum for the qualifying examination of the insolvency professionals for their enrolment.
- It collects and maintains records relating to insolvency and bankruptcy cases and disseminate information relating to such cases. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The Board members are appointed by the Central Government. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

Answer 7 Option B is correct**Explanation**

- The Bar Council of India is a statutory body created by Parliament under the Advocates Act, 1961 to regulate and represent the Indian bar. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It performs the regulatory function by prescribing standards of professional

conduct and etiquette and by exercising disciplinary jurisdiction over the bar.

- It sets standards for legal education and grants recognition to Universities whose degree in law will serve as qualification for enrollment as an advocate. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Section 29 of the Advocates Act, states that only advocates enrolled with BCI can practice law. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

Answer 8 Option A is correct**Explanation**

- The Central Information Commission was established by the Central Government in 2005, under the provisions of the Right to Information Act (2005). It is not a constitutional body. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect.**
- The Commission consists of a Chief Information Commissioner and not more than ten Information Commissioners. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- They are appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of the Prime Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.
- The Chief Information Commissioner and an Information Commissioner shall hold office for such term as prescribed by the Central Government or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- It is the duty of the Commission to receive and inquire into a complaint from any person regarding information requested under RTI, 2005.
- The Commission can order an inquiry into any matter if there are reasonable grounds (suo-moto power). **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- While inquiring, the Commission has the powers of a civil court in respect of summoning, requiring documents etc.

Answer 9 Option D is correct**Explanation**

- In India, the doctrine of proportionality was adopted by the Supreme Court of India in the case of Om Kumar v. Union of India. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**

- Proportionality means that the administrative action should not be more drastic than it ought to be for obtaining the desired result. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The test was formally laid down as the best practice in the 2017 seven-judge Bench Puttaswamy ruling. It mandates that
 - The action should be sanctioned by law
 - The proposed action must be necessary in a democratic society for a legitimate aim
 - The extent of such interference must be proportionate to the need for such interference
 - There must be procedural guarantees against abuse of such interference
- To maintain the integrity of the electoral process and prevent undue influence, several countries have strict regulations prohibiting political donations from corporations and foreign entities. This helps in ensuring that political decisions are not unduly influenced by external interests. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- Many countries have established limits on individual contributions to political parties to prevent the concentration of influence in the hands of wealthy individuals. This measure aims to maintain the democratic principle of equal representation and prevent the distortion of political outcomes. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- The use of micro-donations and crowdfunding has become increasingly popular in democratic countries as a way to involve a larger number of citizens in political funding. This approach is seen as a way to democratize the funding process and reduce dependence on large donations from a few wealthy individuals or entities. **Hence, statement 4 is correct**

Answer 10 Option D is correct

Explanation

- Various countries have introduced public funding mechanisms to reduce the reliance of political parties on private donations. Public funding aims to enhance transparency, reduce corruption, and ensure a level playing field among political parties. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**



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