

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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2. Modi and Putin discuss 'special strategic' ties, future roadmap - Indian Express
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Important News Articles

GSI

1. ONGC makes back-to-back gas discoveries in Mahanadi basin block - The Economic Times

Relevance: distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian sub-continent); factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India).

Prelims Takeaway

- Natural gas
- coal

News:

- State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) **achieves back-to-back natural gas discoveries in the Mahanadi basin** deepwater block in the Bay of Bengal.
- The discoveries are part of ONGC's strategic move into high-risk deepwater exploration.

Discovery Details

- The discoveries occurred in the MN-DWHP-2018/1 block, secured by ONGC in the third round of auction under the **open acreage licensing policy in 2019**.
- Notably, the discoveries are in an area previously designated as a **'no-go' zone due to national security interests**.
- The first discovery, named **Uktal, is at a water depth of 714 metres** and exhibited a significant flow of gas during initial testing.

Implications for India's Energy Security

- The **discoveries contribute positively to India's energy security**, aiming to reduce dependence on gas imports.
- India **aims to increase the share of natural gas** in its energy mix to 15% by 2030, with natural gas playing a role in transitioning towards net zero carbon emissions by 2070.

Government Initiatives and Exploration Acceleration

- ONGC's exploration was **expedited following the government's decision** to free almost one lakh square kilometres of area from restrictions in 2022.
- Previously classified as **'no-go' areas due to missile testing or satellite launch routes, these restrictions were lifted**, allowing energy companies to explore for oil and gas.

Collaboration and Technical Expertise

- ONGC collaborated with French energy giant TotalEnergies to **exchange information on deepwater offshore acreage** in the Mahanadi and Andaman basins.
- The collaboration aimed to leverage TotalEnergies' technical expertise in deepwater exploration and production.

Future Outlook

- ONGC's discoveries align with India's efforts to enhance domestic production and reduce reliance on imported gas.
- **Natural gas, with its lower carbon footprint**, is considered a transitional fuel in India's shift away from fossil fuels.
- Increased natural gas usage is expected **to replace coal in power generation** and liquid fuels in industries.

GS II

2. Modi and Putin discuss 'special strategic' ties, future roadmap - Indian Express

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

News:

- The Indian Prime Minister and Russian President held a "good conversation," discussing various aspects of the **"special and privileged strategic partnership" between India and Russia.**
- Both leaders agreed to formulate a roadmap for future initiatives during the discussion.

Prelims Takeaway

- Map based questions
- BRICS

Key Highlights

Coordination on BRICS Agenda and International Issues

- Both countries **affirmed their readiness to closely coordinate approaches to the BRICS agenda**, with India expressing its intention to support Russia's chairmanship goals.
- International issues, including the **situation around Ukraine, were discussed**, highlighting the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

India's Role in Ukraine Peace Talks

- The phone call follows a meeting of national security advisors in Davos, where **Switzerland emphasised India's potential role in Ukraine peace talks** due to its influence with Russia.

Annual Summit Challenges

- The visit did not take place last year.
- Scheduling challenges have been cited, with the last summit occurring on December 6, 2021

3. Received details from India on social security pact, more work required on subject: USTR- The Hindu

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

News:

- The U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) said the U.S. had received information from **India recently on the proposed social security agreement** and there was much work to be done on the subject.

Prelims Takeaway

- India-US Trade Policy Forum (TPF)
- Social Security Pact

Key Highlights

- Social security totalisation agreement is one of the **key asks from the Indian side in the meeting of the Trade Policy Forum (TPF)**
 - as it will significantly contribute towards enhancing services trade between countries and help Indian IT professionals who temporarily work in the U.S.
- India has submitted all the relevant data on its social security schemes** which was sought by the U.S. to start negotiations on the agreement.
- Under the agreement, **an expatriate in either country need not contribute to the social security scheme** of the host country.
- It will **benefit a number of Indians**, particularly from the IT sector, who are working in America and **paying social security but are unable to get any benefit out of it.**

India-US TPF

- The India-US TPF **aims to activate its working groups** in the fields of agriculture, non-agriculture goods, services, investment, and intellectual property
 - to meet frequently and address issues of mutual concern in a mutually beneficial manner.
- The idea is to **deliver tangible benefits to both countries** by resolving outstanding market access issues.

4. Crisis can impact India as 80% of exports to Europe takes place via Red Sea: Official - Indian Express

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

News:

- The **Red Sea shipping crisis could impact India's exports to Europe**
 - about 80 per cent of the outbound shipments to Europe takes place through the Red Sea region,

Prelims Takeaway

- Export Credit Guarantee Corporation
- Map based question

Key Highlights

- This assumes significance as **India's goods exports to the European Union (EU) have already slowed** due to weakening demand in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war.
- The **EU contributes to over 15 per cent of India's** total goods exports.
- A number of environmental related trade measures such as **the carbon border adjustment mechanism and EU's deforestation law** are feared to **hit India's exports** going forward.
- The ministry said that there has been an increase in attacks on commercial shipping vessels
 - travelling through the lower Red Sea since mid-November and 80 per cent of India's merchandise trade with Europe passes via the Red Sea.

Global issue

- **Whole of commodity across the globe** moves from the eastern to the western part **through the Red Sea route**
- the Red Sea region is vital for 30 percent of global container traffic and 12 percent of global trade
- About **95 percent of vessels have rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope**, adding 4000 to 6000 nautical miles and 14 to 20 days to journeys.
- Indian shipments of low value products such as agriculture and textiles to Europe are primarily expected to face the impact of disruption in the Red Sea region.
- The union government has asked **Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) not to raise insurance premiums** amid rising cost of shipping to Europe.

GS III

5. What are the complaints about Digi Yatra?- The Hindu

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

News:

- **Concerns arose about the collection of facial biometrics for the Digi Yatra app** at airport entry gates without passengers' consent or knowledge.

Prelims Takeaway

- Digital Personal Data Protection Act
- Digi Yatra app

Key Highlights

Complaints from Air Traveler

- Air travellers lodged complaints about the "coercive and deceptive" practices of private staff and CISF personnel enrolling them for Digi Yatra without their permission.

Digi Yatra and Its Objectives

- Digi Yatra is an initiative **promoting digital processing of passengers for paper-less and seamless movement** through airport checkpoints.
- Launched in 2018 as a voluntary program, **Digi Yatra was implemented from December 2022 at three airports** and has expanded to 13 airports, with plans for 24 more in 2024.

Ownership and Implementation

- **Digi Yatra app is owned by a consortium**, Digi Yatra Foundation, with shareholders including the Airports Authority of India and five private airports.
- The aim is to enhance operational efficiency, track delayed passengers, and improve security.

Issues with Implementation

- Government asserts **no central storage of passenger data**; it's encrypted and stored on mobile devices.
- Shared with departure airport on the day of travel, data is purged within 24 hours.
- Concerns raised about compliance with **data protection laws**.
- **The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, is passed**, but rules are pending.
- Criticisms include **broad powers for government agencies to exempt themselves**, aligning with exemptions in Digi Yatra policy.
- Policy allows access to passenger data by security agencies based on existing protocols
- It provides the **Biometric Boarding System the ability to change data purge settings** for security reasons.

6. Fintech SRO should be development-oriented, independent: RBI draft - Indian Express

Relevance: Economy

News:

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has released a draft framework for self-regulatory organisations (SROs) in the fintech sector.

Self Regulatory Organisations (SROs)

- An SRO is a **non-governmental organisation** that **sets and enforces rules and standards** relating to the **conduct of entities** in the industry (members).
- **Objective:** To protect the customer and promote ethics, equality, and professionalism.
- It can act as a **watchdog** and encourage members to adopt responsible and ethical practices.
- It can provide a **link between the regulator and market participants** through a less formal set-up.
- Earlier, in September 2023, RBI had asked fintechs to **establish an SRO themselves**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Self Regulatory Organisations (SROs)
- Fintech Industry
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

RBI's Draft Framework

- An SRO in the fintech sector should **operate independently, be development-oriented and actively contributing to the industry's growth**.
- It should maintain **impartiality, avoid conflicts of interest**, and ensure **unbiased oversight** over its members.
- Independence would enhance the reputation of the SRO-FT as a **neutral and reliable entity**, essential for gaining the trust of both industry participants and regulators.

7. India's multidimensional poverty rate down to 11.28% in 2022-23 from 29.17% in 2013-14 - Indian Express

Relevance: Economy

News:

- A recent paper by NITI Aayog reveals a significant **improvement in India's multidimensional poverty**, projecting a decline from 29.17% in 2013-14 to **11.28% in 2022-23**.
- Approximately **24.82 crore people** are believed to have **escaped multidimensional poverty** over the last nine years.

Prelims Takeaway

- National Multidimensional Poverty Index
- National Family Health Survey

National Multidimensional Poverty Index

- The MPI seeks to **measure poverty** across its **multiple dimensions**.
 - In effect, it complements existing poverty statistics based on per capita consumption expenditure.
- **Objective:** Deconstructing the Global MPI and creating a globally aligned and yet customised India MPI.
 - For drawing up **comprehensive Reform Action Plans** with the larger goal of **improving India's position in the Global MPI rankings**.
- It measures simultaneous deprivations across three equally weighted dimensions of **health, education, and standard of living** represented by **12 SDG aligned indicators**.
 - These include nutrition, child and adolescent mortality, maternal health, years of schooling, school attendance, drinking water, electricity, housing, and assets.
- It **uses** the globally accepted and robust methodology developed by the **Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)** and the **UNDP**.

Geographical Impact

- States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan witnessed the sharpest decline in the number of people classified as poor.
- The **severity of deprivation decreased at a slightly lower rate** between 2015-16 and 2019-21.
- However, the **reduction in the share of MPI poor out of the total population was faster** after 2015-16.
 - This is attributed to a lesser number of years in the latter period.

Impact of COVID-19

- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on poverty **may not be fully reflected**, as part of NHFS-5 data collected between 2019-21 was before the pandemic.
- Despite this, India is expected to **achieve SDG Target 1.2**, reducing the proportion of people living in poverty.

Improvement in Standard of Living Indicators

- Indicators related to the standard of living dimension showed the **highest levels of deprivation in 2005-06**.
- Notably, there was a decline in deprivation related to cooking fuel, sanitation facilities, and access to bank accounts.

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

8. DAVOS SUMMIT - Indian Express

Relevance: Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

Context:

- The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** Annual Meeting is taking place from January 15 to 19 in **Davos, Switzerland**.
- The notable attendees include leaders from the UN, World Bank, World Health Organization, and various political figures.

Initiation of World Economic Forum (WEF)

- Founded by German professor Klaus Schwab in 1971 originally known as the European Management Forum
- It introduced the concept of "stakeholder capitalism," emphasizing long-term value creation for all stakeholders.
- As an extension of this, leaders from business, government, and civil society convene to address the global challenges.

Evolution of WEF

- Initially focused on European firms catching up with US management practices, WEF expanded its scope to economic and social issues after key events in 1973.
 - These include the collapse of the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate mechanism and the Arab-Israeli War.
- It later introduced membership for the world's leading companies, fostering partnerships and discussions on global issues.

WEF Meetings in Davos

- Davos brings together around 3,000 participants including investors, business leaders, politicians, economists, celebrities and journalists.
- Over five days and 500 sessions, stakeholders discuss various global socio-economic issues.
- It is largely funded by partnering corporations with an annual turnover exceeding \$5 billion.

Historic Moments at WEF

- Davos has served as a venue for pivotal international diplomacy, with historical meetings such as
 - North and South Korea's first ministerial-level talks
 - Meeting of the East German Prime Minister and German Chancellor to discuss German reunification.
 - Discussions between South African leaders during the country's political transition in 1992

WEF's Influence Beyond Meetings

- In 1998, the WEF emphasised the inclusion of major developing countries, leading to the formation of the G20.
- The G20 meeting, initially focused on global finance, was elevated to a summit in 2008 due to the global economic crisis.
- The WEF also went on to regularly publish global rankings and indices, such as the Global Competitiveness Report and the Global Gender Gap Report.

9. How GM mustard was developed, why the question of its approval has now reached Supreme Court - Indian Express

Relevance: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

Context:

- The Supreme Court recently questioned the Centre about the **approval of the environmental release of transgenic mustard hybrid DMH-11** by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC).
- The Court raised concerns about the **lack of consideration of Technical Experts Committee (TEC) reports** by the GEAC.

Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)

- The GEAC functions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
- It has been tasked with the appraisal of proposals relating to the “release” of GM organisms and products (ordinarily considered hazardous) into the environment.

Court Proceedings

- The top court is addressing pleas for a moratorium on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) release into the environment.
- The petitions contend that the release must happen after a comprehensive, transparent and rigorous biosafety protocol only.
- The Centre also seeks the withdrawal of an earlier commitment to refrain from commercial cultivation of GM mustard.
- In November, 2022, the court ordered for status quo on the GEAC’s previous decision to approve GM mustard for commercial cultivation, raising concerns about the risk factors.

GM Mustard DMH-11

- Developed by Delhi University’s Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants, DMH-11 involves genetic modification for hybridization in mustard, a self-pollinating plant.
- Scientists have developed the hybrid mustard DMH-11 containing two alien genes isolated from a soil bacterium called *Bacillus amyloliquefaciens*.
- The hybridization system, utilising 'barnase' and 'barstar' genes, claims a 28% yield increase over traditional varieties.

GEAC's Decision

- The GEAC recommended the environmental release of DMH-11 for seed production and testing before commercial cultivation.
- It also proposed the release of parental lines (carrying the barnase and barstar genes) for developing new hybrids with potentially higher yields.
 - The barnase-barstar system enables breeding of hybrids from a wider range of mustards, including those of East European origin such as 'Heera' and 'Donskaja'.
 - New traits can also be introduced relating to resistance against disease (alternaria blight and stem rot fungus) or canola oil quality (zero/ low levels of erucic acid and glucosinolates, seen as negative from a health standpoint).

Concerns and Recommendations

- **Presence of a third 'bar' gene:** It makes GM mustard plants tolerant to the spraying of glufosinate ammonium, a chemical used for killing weeds.
- This may cause displacement of manual labour engaged in weeding by promoting the use of chemical herbicides.
- GM mustard threatens or undermines the population of honey bees.
 - Mustard flowers are a source of nectar for honey bees and many other pollinator insects.
- GEAC recommended herbicide usage exclusively for seed production and called for field studies to assess the impact on pollinators post-environmental release.
- The GEAC also cited the report of an expert committee which stated that it is unlikely that the bar, barnase and barstar system will pose an adverse impact on honey bees and other pollinators”.

Economic Significance

- The approval could address India's significant edible oil import bill, prompting considerations to boost domestic production.
- With an annual edible oil production of 8.5-9 million tonnes and imports of 14-14.5 million tonnes, the move can reduce the country's dependence on foreign imports, especially given the high foreign exchange outgo.

10. Global surgery: why access to essential surgery is important - Indian Express

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

Context:

- **Global surgery, especially in South Asia**, where the largest population worldwide lacks access to crucial surgical services, has been **significantly overlooked**.

Global Surgery

- Global surgery focuses on **equitable access to emergency and essential surgery**.
- These “surgeries” include essential and emergency surgeries such as surgery, obstetrics, trauma, and anaesthesia (SOTA).
- While it predominantly focuses on **low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)**, it also prioritises **access disparities and under-served populations in high-income countries (HICs)**.

Historical Perspective

- The year 2015, can be considered the “Annus Mirabilis” or the miracle year for global surgery.
- It was marked by the Disease Control Priorities Network (DCPN) report and The Lancet Commission on Global Surgery (LCoGS).
- The Disease Control Priorities Network (DCPN) report on essential surgery was sponsored by the World Bank.
 - **Key Highlights**
 - Emergency and essential surgical care is cost-effective
 - Scaling up surgical systems is cost-beneficial
 - There is a large disease burden that is surgically avertable
- The Lancet Commission on Global Surgery (LCoGS) brought together experts and stakeholders.
 - **Objectives**
 - examine the status of surgical care access around the world
 - ideate the indicators for monitoring surgical care preparedness, systemic capacity and impact
 - develop implementable strategies such as the national surgical, obstetrics, and anaesthesia plan (NSOAP).
- The World Health Organization Declaration on Safe Surgery (WHO Resolution 68.15) followed.
 - It recognized the necessity of emergency and essential surgical systems for universal health coverage.

Magnitude of the Problem

- Over 70% of the global population lacks timely access to safe and affordable surgical care, with 99% and 96% facing access gaps in low- and lower-middle-income countries.
- South Asia bears a significant burden, with over 98% lacking access to essential surgical care.
- Surgically treatable conditions accounted for 17 million deaths in 2010, surpassing the combined mortality burden of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria - emphasising the need for improved access.
- Lack of access contributes to an economic burden, with projected losses to GDP and societal welfare.
 - The cumulative projected loss to GDP due to the absence of scale-up of surgical care is estimated to be \$20.7 trillion (in PPP terms) across 128 countries by 2030.
 - The annual loss in societal welfare was about \$14.5 trillion for 175 countries.

The Issues and Challenges

- Global surgery receives minimal attention in international and national policies, as indicated by a lack of indicators in major health reports.
 - The LCoGS noted that surgery contributed to <1% of all indicators mentioned in the World Bank, WHO, UNICEF, and other reports.
- National Health Strategic Plans in African countries and policymaking in India demonstrate limited attention to surgery.
- Funding for surgery is also neglected, with minimal contributions compared to other health areas.
- Research in global surgery is limited, with few publications compared to broader global health research.

Current Scenario and the Solutions

- Work from LCoGS and DCPN depict that emergency and essential surgical care is cost-effective and cost-beneficial.
- Several LMICs, including India, have subnational data on surgical care indicators.
- African countries have implemented National Surgical, Obstetrics, and Anaesthesia Plans (NSOAPs), showcasing political commitment.
- South Asian countries like Pakistan and Nepal have initiated similar plans, and India's Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana provides surgeries at minimal cost.
- Research, policy focus, and sustained financing are identified as key elements to address global surgery challenges.

Quick Look

1. Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)

- It is the statutory committee constituted under the “Rules for the Manufacture, Use/Import/Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells (Rules, 1989)” framed under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- It functions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEF & CC).
- Functions: It is responsible for the
 - approval of activities involving large-scale use of hazardous living microorganisms and recombinants in research and industrial production from an environmental perspective.
 - appraisal of proposals relating to the release of genetically engineered (GE) organisms and products into the environment, including experimental field trials.
- The committee or any person authorised by it has the power to take punitive action under the Environment Protection Act.
- Composition
 - GEAC is chaired by the Special Secretary/Additional Secretary of MoEF&CC and co-chaired by a representative from the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).
 - Presently, it has 24 members and meets every month to review the applications in the areas indicated above.
 - The members comprise experts from other ministries as well as institutions such as the ICAR, ICMR, CCMB and so on.

2. Green Rupee Term Deposit (SGRTD) Scheme

- It is an initiative of the State Bank of India (SBI) with the aim of raising money to finance environment-friendly projects.
- The scheme is open to resident individuals, non-individuals, and non-resident Indian (NRI) customers.
- The current framework permits green deposits to be denominated in rupees only.
- It offers investors the flexibility to choose from three distinct tenors: 1,111 days, 1,777 days, and 2,222 days.
- It will offer 10 basis points (bps) interest rates below the card rate for retail and bulk deposits for respective tenors.
- Senior Citizens/ Staff/ Staff Senior Citizens are eligible for an additional interest rate over the applicable rate for the public.
- The benefit of additional interest shall not be available to NRI Senior Citizens/NRI Staff.
- Premature withdrawals and loan/ overdraft facility against the deposit are allowed under the scheme.

3. Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park (PNHZP)

- The Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park (PNHZP) in Darjeeling has successfully bred 77 snow leopards since the 1980s.
- Formerly known as Himalayan Zoological Park, it was established in August, 1958 in Darjeeling (West Bengal).
- The Park is striving for the maintenance of ecological balance in the Eastern Himalayas with the following objectives
 - Ex-situ Conservation and Captive Breeding of endangered Himalayan animal species.
 - Educating, motivating and initiating awareness campaigns among the local people as well as visitors on the importance of conservation of Himalayan Ecosystem.
 - Initiating applied research on animal biology, behaviour and health care.

- The zoo has been a pioneer for conservation breeding of endangered Eastern Himalayan Species in India.
 - The first ex-situ conservation breeding program started in 1986 as a Snow Leopard conservation breeding project.
 - The Red Panda project was started in 1990.
- It is the largest high-altitude zoo in the country.

4. Kachchi Kharek

- Kachchi Kharek, the indigenous variety of dates of Kutch, has become the second fruit of Gujarat to get a geographical indication (GI) tag.
- The presence of dates in Kachchh (Kutch) is believed to be around 400-500 years old.
- It is believed that date palm groves along the north-western border of India have developed from the seeds thrown by the settlers, who used to visit Middle-East countries for Haj.
- Dates grown in Kutch are harvested at the khalal stage, the stage when fruits have matured, accumulated sucrose, and have turned red or yellow but are still crisp as they can't withstand moist weather.
- The Kutch date season typically commences on June 15 each year, and the trees are known for their tolerance to salinity and adaptability to extreme drought and heat conditions.
- Kachchh is the only place around the globe where fresh dates are economically cultivated, marketed, and consumed.
- The area accounts for more than 85% of total date palm cultivation in India.

5. Multidimensional Poverty

- A person who is poor can suffer multiple disadvantages at the same time – for example they may have poor health or malnutrition, a lack of clean water or electricity, poor quality of work or little schooling.
- Focusing on one factor alone, such as income, is not enough to capture the true reality of poverty.
- Multidimensional Poverty is a measure of poverty that captures deprivations in education and access to basic infrastructure in addition to income or consumption at the \$2.15 international poverty line (as per World Bank).
- The World Bank defines the international poverty line at USD 2.15 (in 2017 purchasing power parity terms) daily to measure monetary value.

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Mahanadi Basin Block

1. The Mahanadi Basin Block is located in the Bay of Bengal and has recently witnessed significant natural gas discoveries by the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC).
2. ONGC acquired the Mahanadi Basin Block in the third round of auction under the open acreage licensing policy in 2019.
3. The recent discoveries in the Mahanadi Basin Block were made in an area previously classified as a 'no-go' zone due to environmental concerns.

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 regarding Ukraine

1. Ukraine shares a land border with Russia to the west.
2. Crimea, a region with a significant Russian-speaking population, was annexed by Ukraine in 2014.
3. The ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine involves pro-Russian separatists, and it has been a source of tension between Ukraine and Russia.

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

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

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Trade Policy Forum (TPF)

1. The Trade Policy Forum is a bilateral trade mechanism between India and China, established to facilitate discussions on trade-related issues and enhance economic cooperation.
2. TPF is co-chaired by the Commerce Ministers of both countries and serves as a platform to address challenges and explore opportunities for expanding bilateral trade.
3. The Trade Policy Forum is an initiative under the World Trade Organization (WTO) aimed at promoting global trade liberalisation.

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

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

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

1. CBAM is a policy tool that seeks to address the carbon footprint associated with imported goods by imposing a tax or tariff based on their carbon content.
2. The European Union (EU) has implemented CBAM as part of its strategy to achieve carbon neutrality and promote fair competition on a global scale.
3. CBAM aims to discourage carbon leakage by ensuring that domestic industries are not put at a disadvantage due to lower environmental standards in exporting countries.
4. CBAM is designed to be a unilateral measure implemented by individual countries to regulate their carbon emissions from imported goods.

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

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

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding Digi Yatra

1. Digi Yatra is a government-owned initiative launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation in 2022 to promote digital processing of passengers for seamless travel through various checkpoints at airports.
2. The Digi Yatra app is owned by the Indian government and is funded entirely by government resources for its implementation.
3. Passengers registering for Digi Yatra need to provide their name, mobile number, email address, and Aadhaar document, along with uploading a selfie for facial matching.
4. The implementation of Digi Yatra involves a central storage system for passenger data, shared securely

between airports for efficient processing.

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 regarding Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO)

1. An SRO is a non-governmental organisation that sets and enforces rules and standards relating to the conduct of entities in the industry.
2. It provides a link between the regulator and market participants through a less formal set-up.
3. SROs are widely considered experts in their fields and so have in-depth knowledge of the markets they operate in.

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 National Multidimensional Poverty Index, consider the following statements

1. It has three equally weighted dimensions viz. Health, Education, and Standard of living represented by 12 indicators.
2. It uses the methodology developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the UNDP.
3. The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) releases the National Multidimensional Poverty Index.
4. In India, approximately 24.82 crore people have escaped multidimensional poverty over the last nine years.

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

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

Q8. The Global Competitiveness Report, seen in the news recently, is released by which of the following organisations?

- A. World Bank
- B. World Economic Forum (WEF)
- C. World Trade Organization (WTO)
- D. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Q9. Consider the following statements with reference to the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)

1. It is the statutory committee that functions under the Ministry of Science and Technology.
2. The clearance of GEAC is mandatory for the environmental release of Genetically Modified (GM) crops in India.
3. The members of GEAC comprise experts from several ministries and institutions.

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

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

Q10. Consider the following statements about Global Surgery

1. Global surgery focuses on equitable access to emergency and essential surgery predominantly in the low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
2. The Disease Control Priorities Network (DCPN) report on essential surgery is sponsored by the World Health Organisation (WHO).
3. The Lancet Commission on Global Surgery (LCoGS) recognized the necessity of emergency and essential surgical systems for universal health coverage.

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

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

Prelims Track Answer

Answer 1 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The Mahanadi Basin Block is indeed located in the Bay of Bengal, and ONGC has recently made significant natural gas discoveries in this region. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- ONGC acquired the Mahanadi Basin Block in the third round of auction under the open acreage licensing policy in 2019. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The recent discoveries in the Mahanadi Basin Block were made in an area that was previously classified as a 'no-go' zone due to national security interests, not environmental concerns. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**

Answer 2 Option A is correct

Explanation

- Ukraine shares a land border with Russia to the east, not the west. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect**
- Crimea was annexed by Russia in 2014, not by Ukraine. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**
- The ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine involves pro-Russian separatists, and it has been a significant source of tension between Ukraine and Russia. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

Answer 3 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The Trade Policy Forum is not a bilateral mechanism between India and China. It is a bilateral trade mechanism between India and the United States. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect**
- The Trade Policy Forum is indeed co-chaired by the Commerce Ministers of India and the United States. It serves as a platform for both countries to discuss trade-related issues and explore ways to enhance economic cooperation. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The Trade Policy Forum is a bilateral forum between specific countries and is not an initiative under the World Trade

Organization (WTO). It focuses on bilateral trade relations rather than global trade liberalisation. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**

Answer 4 Option B is correct

Explanation:

- CBAM is a policy tool that aims to address the carbon footprint associated with imported goods by imposing a tax or tariff based on their carbon content. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- The European Union (EU) has indeed implemented CBAM as part of its strategy to achieve carbon neutrality and ensure fair competition on a global scale. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- One of the primary objectives of CBAM is to discourage carbon leakage, which occurs when industries relocate to countries with lower environmental standards to avoid stringent domestic regulations. CBAM helps ensure that domestic industries are not put at a disadvantage due to such practices. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- CBAM is not designed to be a unilateral measure by individual countries. It is typically implemented by a group of countries or a regional bloc, such as the EU.
- It is a cooperative measure aimed at addressing carbon emissions associated with international trade. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect**

Answer 5 Option B is correct

Explanation

- Digi Yatra is indeed an initiative launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation to promote digital processing of passengers for seamless travel through various airport checkpoints. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- The Digi Yatra app is not owned by the government; it is owned by a consortium called the Digi Yatra Foundation.
- The government does not provide funding for its implementation; airports fund it from their resources. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**
- Passengers registering for Digi Yatra are required to provide their name, mobile number, email address, Aadhaar document, and upload a selfie for facial matching. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

- The government maintains that there is no central storage of passenger data. The data is encrypted and stored on the passenger's mobile device. Although shared with the departure airport on the day of travel, it is purged within 24 hours. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect**

Answer 6 Option C is correct

Explanation

- Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO) is a non-governmental organisation that sets and enforces rules and standards relating to the conduct of entities in the industry. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It aims to protect the customer and promote ethics, equality, and professionalism.
- It can act as a watchdog and encourage members to adopt responsible and ethical practices.
- It can provide a link between the regulator and market participants through a less formal set-up. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- SROs can help build trust among consumers, investors, and regulators by proactively addressing issues.
- SROs are widely considered experts in their fields and so have in-depth knowledge of the markets they operate in. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- It will serve as a two-way communication channel between its members and the RBI.
- It will establish a uniform grievance redressal and dispute management framework across its members.

Answer 7 Option A is correct

Explanation

- The National Multidimensional Poverty Index seeks to measure poverty across its multiple dimensions.
- Objective: Deconstructing the Global MPI and creating a globally aligned and yet customised India MPI for drawing up comprehensive Reform Action Plans with the larger goal of improving India's position in the Global MPI rankings.
- It measures simultaneous deprivations across three equally weighted dimensions of health, education, and standard of living represented by 12 SDG aligned indicators. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It uses the globally accepted and robust methodology developed by the Oxford

Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the UNDP. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

- NITI Aayog releases the National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- According to a recent paper by NITI Aayog, approximately 24.82 crore people are believed to have escaped multidimensional poverty over the last nine years. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**

Answer 8 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) regularly publishes global rankings and indices, such as the Global Competitiveness Report and the Global Gender Gap Report. **Hence, option B is correct.**
- Founded by German professor Klaus Schwab in 1971, the WEF was originally known as the European Management Forum
- It introduced the concept of "stakeholder capitalism," emphasizing long-term value creation for all stakeholders.
- As an extension of this, leaders from business, government, and civil society convene to address the global challenges.
- It is largely funded by partnering corporations with an annual turnover exceeding \$5 billion.

Answer 9 Option B is correct

Explanation

- Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) is the statutory committee constituted under the "Rules for the Manufacture, Use/Import/Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells (Rules, 1989)" framed under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- It functions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEF & CC). **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- It is responsible for the
 - approval of activities involving large-scale use of hazardous living microorganisms and recombinants in research and industrial production from an environmental perspective.
 - appraisal of proposals relating to the release of genetically engineered (GE) organisms and products into the

environment, including experimental field trials. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

- Composition
 - GEAC is chaired by the Special Secretary/Additional Secretary of MoEF&CC and co-chaired by a representative from the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).
 - Presently, it has 24 members and meets every month to review the applications in the areas indicated above.
 - The members comprise experts from other ministries as well as institutions such as the ICAR, ICMR, CCMB and so on.**Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 10 Option A is correct

Explanation

- Global surgery focuses on equitable access to emergency and essential surgery.
- These “surgeries” include essential and emergency surgeries such as surgery, obstetrics, trauma, and anaesthesia (SOTA).
- While it predominantly focuses on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), it also
 - prioritises access disparities and underserved populations in high-income countries (HICs). **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
 - The Disease Control Priorities Network (DCPN) report on essential surgery was sponsored by the World Bank. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
 - The Lancet Commission on Global Surgery (LCoGS) brought together experts and stakeholders to
 - examine the status of surgical care access around the world
 - ideate the indicators for monitoring surgical care preparedness, systemic capacity and impact
 - develop implementable strategies such as the national surgical, obstetrics, and anaesthesia plan (NSOAP).
 - The World Health Organization Declaration on Safe Surgery (WHO Resolution 68.15) recognized the necessity of emergency and essential surgical systems for universal health coverage. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**



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