DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By

Mentorship
India

---- SOURCES ----

THE HINDU

PIB

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

ET
Economic Times.com

live mint

आकाशवाणी

The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

Important News Articles

1. Conservationists to propose Kazhuveli watershed region in T.N. for nomination to World Monuments Fund Watch 2025- The Hindu
2. Less than 50% of 46 projects sanctioned under tourism ministry's PRASHAD scheme completed in 10 yrs- PIB
3. New ECs take charge; Supreme Court refuses to stay their appointments
4. Why has SBI not disclosed codes of bonds: SC-
5. Railways plans to develop multi-modal transport hubs- The Hindu
6. Centre scraps requirement to seek its nod before launching 'untested' AI- Indian Express
7. Panjab University study sheds light on role, functioning of Technology Transfer Centres- The Print
8. Here are all 'Made in India' weapons systems showcased during tri-service 'Bharat Shakti' exercise- The Print

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

9. New policy cuts import duty on EVs with certain riders, likely to benefit global automakers like Tesla- The Print
10. How AI can accelerate production and dissemination of election disinformation- Indian Express

Quick Look

1. Atapaka Bird Sanctuary:
2. Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis (NASH):
3. ETHANOL 100 fuel
4. SIMA

Important News Articles

GS I

1. Conservationists to propose Kazhuveli watershed region in T.N. for nomination to World Monuments Fund Watch 2025- The Hindu

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

News:

- The Eri (tank) network in the Kazhuveli watershed region in Villupuram district that **comprises an incredible network of tanks created thousands of years ago is to be proposed for nomination to the World Monuments Fund Watch 2025 programme.**

Prelims Takeaway
• World Monuments Fund Watch 2025 programme.

Key Highlights

- The World Monuments Fund (WMF) is a leading non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the world's most valuable historical and cultural sites.
- Their mission is to not only preserve these places but also use them to foster understanding and appreciation between cultures.
- Since 1965, they've applied the highest international standards to conserve over 700 historical sites across 112 countries.
- WMF goes beyond just saving buildings; **they tackle current issues through heritage preservation.**
- This includes challenges like climate change, ensuring all cultures are represented in conservation efforts, managing tourism's impact, and helping communities recover from crises.
- Their **headquarters are in New York City.**
- WMF India, established in 2015, is part of a global network.
- This aligns with India's policy of including heritage conservation in corporate social responsibility programs.
- One of WMF's key initiatives is the World Monuments Watch.
- Every two years, the Watch highlights 25 critical locations, raising awareness and support for these places and the communities that care for them.
- The Watch **aims to empower local efforts and improve the lives of people connected to these historical sites.**
- The 2025 Watch will focus on 25 such locations, each with a unique story of local importance with global significance.

2. Less than 50% of 46 projects sanctioned under tourism ministry's PRASHAD scheme completed in 10 yrs- PIB

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

News:

- The Rs 40-crore **Hazratbal shrine development projec**t, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister is one of the 46 projects sanctioned under PRASHAD Scheme

Prelims Takeaway
• Mathura-Vrindavan as Mega Tourist Circuit
• PRASAD scheme

- The **Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) scheme launched by the Ministry of Tourism** in 2014.

Key Highlights

- The scheme itself has been marred by delays with less than 50 percent (22 projects) completed in the past decade
- The PRASHAD scheme — **earlier called PRASAD since 'development of heritage sites'** was added to the name only in 2020

- It is aimed at the integrated development of popular religious, spiritual and heritage sites to provide essential infrastructure
  - such as parking, pathways, toilets, illumination, tourist information centres, among others, and promote them as popular tourist destinations.
- Under the scheme, **a large number of projects being undertaken are at Hindu pilgrimage sites**
  - including at the Somnath temple (Gujarat), Srisailam temple (Andhra Pradesh), Kamakhya temple (Assam) and Kedarnath (Uttarakhand), among others.
- Development works have also been sanctioned at other religious and heritage sites, including at **Hazratbal shrine and Ajmer Sharif Dargah**
  - development of pilgrimage facilitation at Four Patron Saints, Yuksom (Sikkim);
  - development of Chamkaur Sahib (Punjab), development of Patna Sahib (Bihar);
  - development of pilgrimage tourism infrastructure at Zunheboto (Nagaland);
  - river cruise tourism at Varanasi, among others, according to ministry's reply to a question in the Lok Sabha last month.
- **delays in identification of implementing agencies** as well as approval from the forest department and local authorities
  - the pandemic were to blame for the delay in completion of projects.
- The delay in implementation of the projects, which has to be executed by the respective state governments
- has been due to various factors, such as delay in getting necessary approvals from state authorities, preparation of detailed project reports (DPRs) and availability of land, among others
- "Some projects like the development of Mathura-Vrindavan as Mega Tourist Circuit (Ph-II) and development of basic facilities at Vishnupad temple, Gaya, Bihar, have had a delay of four years.

GS II

3. New ECs take charge; Supreme Court refuses to stay their appointments

Relevance: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

Prelims Takeaway
• CEC
• Selection committee of EC

News:
- Former bureaucrats Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu assumed charge as Election Commissioners
- a day after their selection by a **high-powered panel chaired by Prime Minister**

Key Highlights
- This is the first time that Election Commissioners have been appointed in accordance with the new **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023**
  - which was brought in by the government last December, and which replaces the Chief Justice of India with a Cabinet Minister in the selection panel chaired by the Prime Minister.
- **This was a violation of Section 6 of the 2023 Act**, which required the selection panel members to be given ample opportunity to make a considered decision regarding the candidates.

Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023
- **Election Commission:** The Election Commission will consist of a Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other Election Commissioners (ECs).
- The President will periodically fix the number of ECs.
- **Appointment of the Commission:** The Commission will be appointed by the President, upon the recommendation of the Selection Committee.
  - The Selection Committee will comprise the Prime Minister, Cabinet Minister, and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha (or leader of the single largest opposition party).

- **A Search Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary** will suggest five names to the Selection Committee.
- The Selection Committee may consider any person other than those suggested by the Search Committee.
- **Eligibility criteria:** The CEC and ECs must: (i) be persons of integrity, (ii) have knowledge and experience in the management and conduct of elections, and (iii) be or have been Secretary (or equivalent) to the government.
- **Term and reappointment:** Members of the Election Commission will hold office for six years, or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- Members of the Commission cannot be re-appointed. If an EC is appointed as a CEC, the overall period of the term may not be more than six years.

4. Why has SBI not disclosed codes of bonds: SC-

Relevance: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

Prelims Takeaway
• Electoral bond
• SBI

News:
- The Supreme Court asked the State Bank of India (SBI) why **it had not disclosed the unique alphanumeric numbers of individual electoral bonds** to the Election Commission (EC) for publication on its official website.

Key Highlights
- Court had directed disclosure specifically of all the details of the electoral bonds, including date of their purchase, the amount, names of purchasers, the political parties which redeemed the bonds, etc.
- But the bank has not disclosed the numbers of the bonds purchased and encashed.
- The court issued a notice to the bank and listed the case for March 19.

'No copies retained'
- In its judgment on February 15, the five-judge Bench had directed the EC to publish the confidential information submitted in the court, along with details of electoral bonds.
- However, the EC filed an application on March 14, saying that it had given the court the originals of the documents and not retained any copies.

Misgivings About the SC's Judgment That Need to Be Addressed
- While hearing the SBI's plea for an extension of the time frame to provide the information
  o the court **clarified that it had never asked for information on purchasers and recipients to be decoded and matched.**
- A concern voiced by many is that shorn of details about **who donated how much money through electoral bonds to which party, the disclosures are of little value.**
- Further, apart from tracing out shell companies or fly-by-night operators, perusing the financial statements of donor companies **will reveal if loss-making entities donated through electoral bonds.**
- The anonymity guaranteed to donors was meant to incentivise them to move away from cash donations, which they preferred because of fear of "consequences from political opp**onents.**
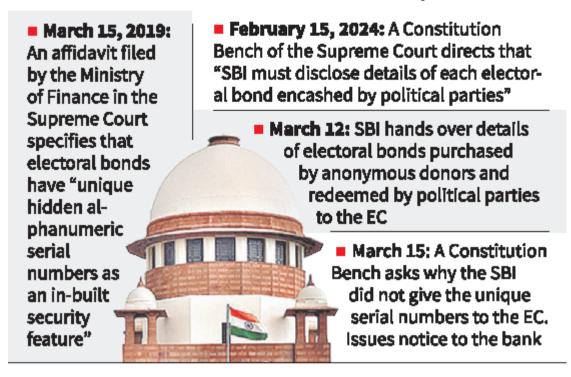
Untangling the bond

A timeline of the electoral bonds issue in the Supreme Court

■ **March 15, 2019:** An affidavit filed by the Ministry of Finance in the Supreme Court specifies that electoral bonds have "unique hidden alphanumeric serial numbers as an in-built security feature"

■ **February 15, 2024:** A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court directs that "SBI must disclose details of each electoral bond encashed by political parties"

■ **March 12:** SBI hands over details of electoral bonds purchased by anonymous donors and redeemed by political parties to the EC

■ **March 15:** A Constitution Bench asks why the SBI did not give the unique serial numbers to the EC. Issues notice to the bank

5. Railways plans to develop multi-modal transport hubs- The Hindu

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

Prelims Takeaway
• Indian Railways
• Viksit Bharat' initiative

News:

- The **Indian Railways will create mega railway terminals with multi-modal connectivity** in aspirational cities with a population of more than 10 lakh across the country.

Key Highlights

- The programme is part of the infrastructure being **developed for Prime Minister 'Viksit Bharat' initiative.**

'Enhancing experience'

- The Railway Ministry has also taken up enhancement of passenger experience on a mission mode and warned that any laxity on the part of its senior officers will not be tolerated.
- With the proliferation of Vande Bharata Express trains across the country, **which are being projected as game changers**
- the Railway Board has taken up the task of enhancing the travel experience of passengers through improved cleanliness of coaches and properly maintained amenities on railway premises.

Some facts about Indian Railways:

- **Network**: Indian Railways covers a distance of over 67,000 km and operates on more than 7,000 stations. It connects almost all parts of the country and transports millions of passengers and goods every day.

- **Freight**: Indian Railways carries over 3 million tonnes of freight every day, which is equivalent to moving the entire population of Mumbai every day. In a year, it transports more than 1 billion tonnes of freight.
- **Revenue**: Indian Railways is one of the largest revenue generators for the Indian government. In 2019-20, it generated a revenue of over INR 1.9 trillion (approximately USD 25 billion).
- **Technology**: Indian Railways has introduced several technological advancements in recent years, such as the use of GPS-based train tracking, online reservation system, and bio-toilets in trains.
- **Heritage**: Indian Railways has a rich heritage, with some of its trains and stations being over a century old. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and the Nilgiri Mountain Railway are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

6. Centre scraps requirement to seek its nod before launching 'untested' AI- Indian Express

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

Prelims Takeaway
• Information Technology Rules, 2021
• AI

News:
- After facing intense backlash on its **first advisory on election integrity for artificial intelligence (AI) platforms, the IT Ministry has amended it**

Key Highlights
- "Under-tested/unreliable **Artificial Intelligence foundational models)/ LLM/Generative Al, software(s) or algorithm(s) or further development on such models**
  - should be made available to users in India only after appropriately labelling the possible inherent fallibility or unreliability of the output generated
- In its initial advisory issued to online intermediaries like Meta and Google earlier this month
- the government has said that companies will have to seek its "explicit permission" before launching untested AI systems in India.
- While the government had earlier clarified that the advisory would not apply to AI start-ups but to "large" platform
  - the requirement to seek its nod now has been dropped altogether.
- The first advisory was criticized by some startups in the generative AI space, including those invested in the ecosystem abroad, over fears of regulatory overreach of the yet nascent industry by the Indian government.
- similar to the earlier advisory — has been sent as "due diligence" measures that online intermediaries need to follow under the **current Information Technology Rules, 2021.**
- Though the advisories are not legally binding, questions were raised on the legal basis –
  - under which law the government can issue guidelines to generative AI companies since India's current technology laws do not directly cover large language models.

7. Panjab University study sheds light on role, functioning of Technology Transfer Centres- The Print

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

Prelims Takeaway
• Technology Transfer Centres

News:
- **Technology Transfer Centres** (TTOs) are crucial in facilitating the commercialization of innovative ideas, resulting in them being transformed into tangible products and services that benefit society.

Key Highlights
- A new study by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Centre for Policy Research, Panjab University,
  - sheds light on the mechanisms and instruments **used to successfully transfer technology from academia to the industry**

- o with the goal of providing valuable insights to policymakers to strengthen the mechanisms that support innovation and facilitate technology transfer in the country.
- The report offers recommendations on **how to enhance the function of technology transfer, deepen industry-academia partnerships**
  - o create a comprehensive policy ecosystem for technology transfer, and widen the stakeholder network to support grassroots level and indigenous innovations.
- **The report emphasizes the critical role that Technology Transfer Centres** play in expediting the transition of ideas from research laboratories to the marketplace, thereby enhancing the nation's global competitiveness.
- It also offers recommendations to widen stakeholder networks to support grassroot level and indigenous innovations.

8. Here are all 'Made in India' weapons systems showcased during tri-service 'Bharat Shakti' exercise- The Print

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

Prelims Takeaway
• Akash missile system
• MBT Arjun

- The Army's Pokhran range in Rajasthan bore witness to the **live tri-services fire and manoeuvre exercise 'Bharat Shakti'.**

Key Highlights
- A synergised demonstration of indigenous defence capabilities, the exercise lasted for nearly 50 minutes with the Prime Minister and delegates of at least 30 countries in attendance.
- Besides an array on indigenous weapons systems and platforms
  - o the exercise aimed at showcasing the integration of the three forces in areas including communications, training, interoperability and logistics.

T-90 tanks
- **The T-90 Bhishma is a third-generation** Indian variant of the Russian T90S tank.
- These are now manufactured in India under licence from the Russians.

Dhanush artillery guns
- Dhanush is a 155 mm, 45-calibre towed howitzer manufactured by state-owned Advanced Weapons and Equipment India at the Gun Carriage Factory Jabalpur.
- It has a range of 36 km and is a modern update of the 155 mm, 39-calibre Bofors FH 77 gun.

MBT Arjun
- Developed by DRDO, the Main Battle Tank (MBT) Arjun is equipped with the indigenous Fin Stabilised Armour Piercing Discarding Sabot (FSAPDS) ammunition and 120 mm calibre rifled gun.

Akash missile system
- The Akash is a mid-range surface-to-air missile system developed by DRDO under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).
- The Army and Air Force both operate this missile system which has built-in Electronic Counter-Counter Measures (ECCM) features and can simultaneously engage multiple targets in autonomous mode.

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

9. New policy cuts import duty on EVs with certain riders, likely to benefit global automakers like Tesla- The Print

Relevance: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.
News:
- **The central government approved a new electric vehicle (EV)** policy under which companies setting up EV manufacturing facilities in the country will be allowed limited import of vehicles at a much lower customs duty.

Key Highlights	The government is taking additional steps to promote EVs:
• India pledged to reach **net-zero emissions by 2070.** • This requires reducing emissions from transportation and energy sectors. • To achieve this, a shift towards electric vehicles (EVs) is crucial, particularly two-wheeler and three-wheeler vehicles which dominate Indian roads. • EV sales in India are surging due to a rise in available models, expensive conventional fuel, government subsidies, and the FAME-II program. • This program offers incentives for purchasing electric and hybrid vehicles.	• **Battery Swapping Policy:** This allows swapping depleted batteries for charged ones, reducing charging downtime. • **Subsidies:** Financial aid from the government lowers the upfront cost of EVs. • **E-AMRIT Portal:** This online resource provides information for a smooth transition to EVs. • **New EV Policy with Tax Relief:** This policy aims to attract global manufacturers to India, boosting domestic production and competition. This will lead to lower costs, reduced dependence on oil imports, and cleaner air. • The new policy requires a minimum investment and sets domestic value addition targets for EV manufacturers. • There are also limits on duty-free imports under this scheme.

10. How AI can accelerate production and dissemination of election disinformation- Indian Express

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

Context:

- The impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on elections gained widespread attention following the 2018 Cambridge Analytica scandal, **which underscored the role of social media in influencing electoral dynamics by exploiting user data from platforms like Facebook.**

Key Highlights	Regulatory steps of India
• AI presents three main avenues through which it can exacerbate the spread of disinformation in electoral contexts. • Firstly, it has the capacity to amplify the reach of false information on a massive scale. • Secondly, through the creation of hyper-realistic deep fakes, AI-generated content can sway voter opinions before it can be effectively debunked. • Thirdly, AI enables precise microtargeting, tailoring propaganda to individual voters with unprecedented accuracy, surpassing the effectiveness of traditional bots and automated accounts. • These risks are compounded by reductions in fact-checking and election integrity efforts by major social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. • Although platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook mandate labeling of AI-generated election-related ads, this measure may not be foolproof. • Forecasts suggest that AI will increasingly disseminate harmful content across social media platforms on a near-daily basis by 2024 o potentially influencing elections in over 50 countries and undermining the legitimacy of governments, leading to societal destabilization.	• Recognizing these risks, India has taken regulatory steps to curb misinformation propagated by AI. • The government has called upon digital platforms to implement technical and procedural measures to prevent the spread of harmful misinformation. • The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) intends to establish a legal framework to address deepfakes and disinformation post-elections. • Recently, MeitY issued an advisory to major tech companies like Google and OpenAI, urging them to ensure their services comply with Indian laws and do not compromise electoral integrity. • However, this move faced criticism from some startups in the generative AI sector, fearing excessive regulation that could stifle innovation. • This incident underscores the delicate balance regulators must strike between combating AI-driven misinformation and fostering innovation in the AI sector.

Quick Look

1. Atapaka Bird Sanctuary

- It is situated on the Kolleru Lake in the Indian state Andhra Pradesh. It is the home to a vast repertoire of birds. It is especially known for sheltering Pelicans.
- It spans across two districts namely West Godavari and Krishna. It falls under Kaikalur forest range.
- The common species that can be found in the sanctuary include Cormorants, Common Redshanks, Pied Avocets, Black-winged Stilts, Red-crested Pochards etc.

2. Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis (NASH)

- It is liver inflammation and damage caused by a buildup of fat in the liver. It is part of a group of conditions called nonalcoholic fatty liver disease.
- NASH can get worse and cause scarring of the liver, which leads to cirrhosis. But the disease doesn't always get worse.
- It is similar to the kind of liver disease that is caused by long-term, heavy drinking. But NASH occurs in people who don't drink alcohol.

3. ETHANOL 100 fuel

- It has high-octane rating, typically between 100-105. It proves ideal for high-performance engines, ensuring improved efficiency and power output all while minimizing environmental impact.
- Moreover, ETHANOL 100's versatility shines through, as it can be used in a wide array of vehicles, including flex-fuel vehicles (FFVs) designed to run on gasoline, ethanol or any blend of the two.
- Its practicality and potential to become a mainstream fuel option with the right infrastructure in place. It includes 93-93.5 percent ethanol blended with 5 percent petrol and 1.5 percent co-solvent, which is a binder.

4. SIMA

- Scalable Instructable Multiworld Agent (SIMA) as an AI Agent which can process data and take action themselves.
- It can be called a generalist AI Agent that is capable of doing different kinds of tasks.
- It is like a virtual buddy who can understand and follow instructions in all sorts of virtual environments
- It can accomplish tasks or solve challenges assigned to it. It "understands" commands as it has been trained to process human language.
- One distinct feature of this AI Agent is that it is capable of learning and adapting.

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements with reference to ancient India
1. The concept of Stupa is Buddhist in origin.
2. Stupa was generally a repository of relics.
3. Stupa was a votive and commemorative structure in Buddhist tradition.

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
1. the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) scheme launched by the Ministry of art and culture in 2014.
2. It is aimed at the integrated development of only popular hindu religious, spiritual and heritage sites to provide essential infrastructure

Which one of the following statements is correct?
A. Statement I is correct but statement II is incorrect
B. Statement I is incorrect but Statement II is correct
C. Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement I
D. Both Statement I and Statement II are incorrect and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement I

Q3. Consider the following statements with reference to selection of election commission
1. The Selection Committee will comprise the Prime Minister, Cabinet Minister, and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha or leader of the single largest opposition party and CJI.
2. A Search Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary will suggest five names to the Selection Committee.
3. After recommendation of search committee, the Commission will be appointed by the President

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 about Electoral Bond
1. Electoral Bond is a long term credit tool and an interest free banking instrument.
2. electoral bonds have unique hidden alphanumeric numbers as a security feature which is not visible to the naked eye.
3. A citizen of India or a body incorporated in India will be eligible to purchase the bond.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?
A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

Q5. Consider the following statements about UNESCO accorded World Heritage
1. Darjeeling Himalayan Railway
2. Nilgiri Mountain Railway
3. Kalka Shimla Railway

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?
A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

Q6. Consider the following statements
1. AI algorithms is a type of artificial intelligence technology that can produce various types of content, including text, imagery, audio and synthetic data.
2. Generative AI are instructions that enable machines to analyze data, perform tasks, and make decisions.

Which one of the following statements is correct?

A. Statement I is correct but statement II is incorrect
B. Statement I is incorrect but Statement II is correct
C. Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement I
D. Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement I

Q7. Consider the following statements

1. The NEP 2020 aims to achieve 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education by 2030.
2. The NEP proposes a complete overhaul of the existing school curriculum structure.
3. The NEP promotes vocational training and skill development alongside traditional academic education.

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

1. The T-90 Bhishma is a third-generation Indian variant of the Russian T90S tank manufactured in India under licence from the Russians.
2. MBT Arjun is Developed by DRDO, the Main Battle Tank (MBT) Arjun is equipped with the indigenous Fin Stabilised Armour Piercing Discarding Sabot (FSAPDS) ammunition
3. Akash missile system is a mid-range surface-to-surface missile system developed by DRDO

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

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

Q9. Consider the following statements

1. Stringent regulations are stifling innovation in the Indian AI sector.
2. The existing legal framework is sufficient to address all challenges posed by AI.
3. The government has taken any step towards AI regulation.

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

1. India pledged to reach net-zero emissions by 2070.
2. Battery Swapping Policy allows swapping depleted batteries for charged ones, reducing charging downtime.
3. E-AMRIT Portal provides information for a smooth transition to EVs.

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

- Stupa, Sanskrit for heap, is a mound-like (hemispherical) burial structure containing relics of Buddhist monks. E.g. Sanchi Stupa built over Buddha relics. **Hence statement 2 is correct.**
- However, the concept of stupa does not have Buddhist origin. The word Stupa is mentioned in the Rigveda, Atharvaveda, Vajasaneyi Samhita, Taittriya Samhita, etc. **Hence statement 1 is not correct.**
- Rigveda refers to a Stupa raised by the King Varuna above the forest in a place having no foundation .The word 'estuka' is also used in the same sense in Rigveda, probably by then anything raised on the ground like a heap/pile might have been known as Stupa. However the Pali word 'thupa' is quite similar to the term 'Stupa'. Thupa means a conical heap, a pile or a mound or a conical or bell shaped shrine containing a relic.
- Stupa is regarded as a monument for veneration. But as Stupa seems to be associated with votive and commemorative and offering purposes; Stupa thus gradually was related to the ritualistic and commemorative with sectarian, affliation with school of philosophical obligatory and was bound by aspects of social- economic life. **Hence statement 3 is correct.**
- The Buddhist texts like the Avadana Satakam, Mahavadana and Stupavadanam mentions about the commemorative aspects of the Stupa even the Jaina literature like Raya Pasenaiya Sutta refers to it. Probably in the later period, due to deep desire of the common mass to worship the lord for the sake of salvation, Stupa acquired its votive character as well.

Answer 2 Option D is correct
Explanation

- The scheme itself has been marred by delays with less than 50 percent (22 projects) completed in the past decade
- The PRASHAD scheme — earlier called PRASAD since 'development of heritage sites' was added to the name only in 2020

- It is aimed at the integrated development of popular religious, spiritual and heritage sites to provide essential infrastructure
- Such as parking, pathways, toilets, illumination, tourist information centres, among others, and promote them as popular tourist destinations.
- Under the scheme, a large number of projects being undertaken are at Hindu pilgrimage sites
- including at the Somnath temple (Gujarat), Srisailam temple (Andhra Pradesh), Kamakhya temple (Assam) and Kedarnath (Uttarakhand), among others.
- Development works have also been sanctioned at other religious and heritage sites, including at Hazratbal shrine and Ajmer Sharif Dargah

Answer 3 Option A is correct
Explanation

- Appointment of the Commission: The Commission will be appointed by the President, upon the recommendation of the Selection Committee.
- The Selection Committee will comprise the Prime Minister, Cabinet Minister, and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha (or leader of the single largest opposition party). **Hence, statement 1 is INcorrect.**
- A Search Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary will suggest five names to the Selection Committee. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The Selection Committee may consider any person other than those suggested by the Search Committee. **Hence, statement 3 is INcorrect.**
- Eligibility criteria: The CEC and ECs must: (i) be persons of integrity, (ii) have knowledge and experience in the management and conduct of elections, and (iii) be or have been Secretary (or equivalent) to the government.
- Term and reappointment: Members of the Election Commission will hold office for six years, or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

Answer 4 Option B is correct
Explanation

- electoral bonds have unique hidden alphanumeric numbers not visible to the naked eye. The report stated this unique number could be used to link buyers of electoral bonds with the political parties to whom they made the donations. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Electoral Bond would be a bearer instrument in the nature of a Promissory Note and an interest free banking instrument. **Hence, statement 1 is INcorrect.**
- A citizen of India or a body incorporated in India will be eligible to purchase the bond. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

Answer 5 Option C is correct
Explanation

- Indian Railways is the proud owner of four UNESCO accorded World Heritage Sites namely Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (1999), Nilgiri Mountain Railway (2005), Kalka Shimla Railway (2008) and Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Mumbai (20**04). Hence, ALL OPTIONS ARE correct.**

Answer 6 Option D is correct
Explanation

- Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence technology that can produce various types of content, including text, imagery, audio and synthetic data.
- AI algorithms are instructions that enable machines to analyze data, perform tasks, and make decisions. It's a subset of machine learning that tells computers to learn and operate independently. All the tasks that AI performs work on specific algorithms. **Hence, BOTH statements are incorrect.**

Answer 7 Option B is correct
Explanation

- The NEP 2020 focuses on achieving 100% GER in school education (preschool to secondary level) by 2030. It aims to bring more children into the education system and reduce drop-out rates. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**

- The NEP introduces a new 5+3+3+4 curricular structure for school education, replacing the traditional 10+2 system. This structure emphasizes holistic development with a focus on foundational learning in the early years. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- A key feature of the NEP is the integration of vocational training within the school curriculum. This aims to equip students with employable skills alongside their academic studies, preparing them for diverse career paths. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 8 Option B is correct
Explanation

- T-90 tanks : The T-90 Bhishma is a third-generation Indian variant of the Russian T90S tank.
- These are now manufactured in India under licence from the Russians.
- Dhanush artillery guns : Dhanush is a 155 mm, 45-calibre towed howitzer manufactured by state-owned Advanced Weapons and Equipment India at the Gun Carriage Factory Jabalpur.
- It has a range of 36 km and is a modern update of the 155 mm, 39-calibre Bofors FH 77 gun.
- MBT Arjun : Developed by DRDO, the Main Battle Tank (MBT) Arjun is equipped with the indigenous Fin Stabilised Armour Piercing Discarding Sabot (FSAPDS) ammunition and 120 mm calibre rifled gun. **Hence, statement 1 and 2 are correct.**
- Akash missile system :The Akash is a mid-range surface-to-air missile system developed by DRDO under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP). **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

Answer 9 Option A is correct
Explanation

- India currently lacks specific AI regulations. While existing legal frameworks offer some guidance, the absence of clear regulations might create uncertainty for businesses, hindering responsible AI development. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect**

- The Information Technology Act (2000) and sectoral regulations provide a foundation for data privacy and security in AI. However, these frameworks might not adequately address emerging concerns like:
- Algorithmic Bias: AI systems can perpetuate societal biases present in the data they are trained on.
- Explainability: Understanding how AI systems reach decisions is crucial for ensuring fairness and accountability.
- Liability: Determining who is responsible for malfunctions or misuse of AI systems requires clear legal guidelines. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The government acknowledges the need for a robust AI regulatory framework. Initiatives like NITI Aayog's 2018 discussion paper on "Working Group on Artificial Intelligence" outline potential principles for responsible AI development and deployment. This suggests a proactive approach to prepare for future regulations. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**

Answer 10 Option C is correct
Explanation
- This requires reducing emissions from transportation and energy sectors.
- To achieve this, a shift towards electric vehicles (EVs) is crucial, particularly two-wheeler and three-wheeler vehicles which dominate Indian roads.
- EV sales in India are surging due to a rise in available models, expensive conventional fuel, government subsidies, and the FAME-II program.
- This program offers incentives for purchasing electric and hybrid vehicles.
- The government is taking additional steps to promote EVs:
- Battery Swapping Policy: This allows swapping depleted batteries for charged ones, reducing charging downtime.
- Subsidies: Financial aid from the government lowers the upfront cost of EVs.
- E-AMRIT Portal: This online resource provides information for a smooth transition to EVs. **Hence, all statements are correct.**

Mentorship
India

Our mission is crystal clear – to provide the finest UPSC mentorship and guidance available in India. We recognize that the path to success in the UPSC examination is both demanding and multifaceted. This is precisely why we have developed a comprehensive approach that goes beyond conventional coaching. Our commitment lies in fostering excellence by equipping aspirants with the necessary tools, knowledge, and unwavering support to not only excel in the examination but also in life itself.

Mentorship India represents more than just an organization; it is a community of ambitious individuals bound together by the shared objective of conquering the UPSC examination. We warmly invite you to embark on this transformative journey alongside us. Whether you are a novice taking your initial steps or a seasoned aspirant aiming for the pinnacle, Mentorship India is your dependable companion in the relentless pursuit of excellence.

+91 9999 057869
www.mentorshipindia.com

A-92, Third Floor, Hari Nagar
Delhi - 110064

@mentorship.india