

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



Date: **16 Sep. 2023**

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2. Jal Jeevan Mission remains a pipe dream - The Hindu
3. India, Canada hit pause on FTA talks amid strain in ties - Indian Express
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EDITORIALS, GISTS AND EXPLAINERS

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2. May all be free of illness - Indian Express

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Important News Articles

GS II

1. A 'platform' will assess 'top' 50 judges before appointment in SC: CJI - The Hindu

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.

News:

- The Chief Justice of India said the **apex court with a young team** of distinguished scholars, interns and law researchers had **prepared a "broad platform"**.
- Its **aim is to assess every one of the "top 50 judges"** in the country who would be considered for appointment as judges of the Supreme Court.

Prelims Takeaway

- National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC)
- Collegium system

Key Points

- "In the collegium system there is **no factual data to evaluate people** who are being considered for appointment to the Supreme Court.
- The idea is to make the **process of appointments to the Supreme Court transparent** by identifying definite parameters of selection.
- the process **cannot be held in the public realm.**

Collegium System

- Judges of the **higher judiciary are appointed through the collegium system.**
- The collegium, **consisting of the Chief Justice of India and the four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court**, decides on appointments, elevations, and transfers of Judges.
- The term "**collegium**" is **not mentioned in the Indian Constitution** but has been established through judicial pronouncements.

Evolution of Collegium system

First Judges Case (1981)

- It declared that the **"primacy" of the CJI's (Chief Justice of India) recommendation** on judicial appointments and transfers **can be refused for "cogent reasons."**
- The ruling gave the **Executive primacy over the Judiciary in judicial appointments** for the next 12 years.

Second Judges Case (1993)

- SC introduced the **Collegium system, holding that "consultation" really meant "concurrence"**.
- It added that it was not the CJI's individual opinion, but an institutional opinion formed in **consultation with the two senior-most judges in the SC.**

Third Judges Case (1998)

- SC on the President's reference (**Article 143**) **expanded the Collegium to a five-member body**, comprising the CJI and four of his senior-most colleagues.

Fourth Judges Case (2015)

- Collegium system of appointing judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts with a new body called the **National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) was replaced through:**
 - The 99th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2014
 - The National Judicial Appointments Commission Act of 2014
- However, in 2015, the **Supreme Court declared both the 99th Constitutional Amendment as well as the NJAC Act as unconstitutional** and void in the fourth judge case.
- Consequently, the **earlier collegium system became operative again.**
- As of now, the **appointments are made on the basis of several criteria** which include:
 - Seniority
 - regional representation
 - merit while following a Memorandum of Procedure moulded through the Three Judges Cases.

2. Jal Jeevan Mission remains a pipe dream - The Hindu

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

News:

- In Mahoba district of **Uttar Pradesh** which has seen a **dramatic spike in official tap water** connections under the Jal Jeevan Mission Scheme.
- residents say they only have pipes, not taps, and **there is often no actual supply of water flowing through them.**

Prelims Takeaway

- Jal Shakti Ministry
- The Jal Jeevan Mission

Claim vs reality

- Even in villages which have been officially certified as having **100% coverage of functional household tap connections (FHTC)**, **several households do not actually have taps.**
- Some do have taps, but are **not getting any water through them**; even in the best case scenario, **such households get no more than two hours of water.**
- According to the **scheme's definitions**, **an FHTC household is one where at least 55 litres of potable water per person a day is made available to every household.**
- There is variation in the JJM's official dashboard reports and actual data.

Still reliant on groundwater

- In few districts of Uttar Pradesh, villages have **been marked as having a tap connection.**
- But in **reality, only half the households have taps and no water** actually flows through them.
- Noting that **half the village is in a low-lying area**, without a submersible pump, water simply did not make it to most houses.
- The village is **still reliant on groundwater** from handpumps for domestic drinking purposes.

Water treatment efforts

- Women in some villages **continue to walk to the several handpumps** or to the village well to draw water.
- Few **region are water-scarce so people historically relied on lakes and ponds** for irrigation.
- but the region's rocky sub-surface means that **perennial sources of groundwater are few.**
- Water is often contaminated, the Mahoba administration has commissioned five large water treatment plants

The Jal Jeevan Mission

- It is the **foundation of the Rashtriya Jal Jeevan Kosh.**
- It was launched in 2019 with the **aim to supply 55 liters of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024.**
- It comes under **Jal Shakti Ministry.**
- **Objective**
 - Rainwater harvesting and water conservation are also the most important aspects of the mission.
 - Using recycled water and recharging structures
 - Development of the watercourse
 - focusing on planting trees.
 - Traditional and other water bodies are being renovated.

3. India, Canada hit pause on FTA talks amid strain in ties - Indian Express

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

News:

- recently, the Prime Minister expressed concern over **"anti-India activities of extremist elements"** in Canada, at his meeting with Canadian counterpart on the sidelines of the G20 Summit
- The two countries are learnt to have **"paused" their negotiations on a bilateral free trade agreement.**
- India-Canada talks on a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** are expected to resume after the resolution of the issues between the two countries.

Prelims Takeaway

- Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)
- Free trade agreement

trade relations:

- In 2022, **India was Canada's 10th largest trading partner.**
- since 2018, **India has also been the largest source of international students in Canada,**

- **India's total exports to Canada added up to US\$ 4.10 billion** in 2022-23, up from US\$ 3.76 billion in 2021-22.
- **India's imports from Canada added up to US\$ 4.05 billion** in 2022-23, up from US\$ 3.13 billion in 2021-22.
- **Canadian Pension Funds have cumulatively invested** around US\$ 55 billion in India.
- **Over 600 Canadian companies have a presence in India**, and over 1,000 companies are actively pursuing business in the Indian market.
- Indian companies in Canada are active in **Information Technology, software, steel, natural resources and banking sectors**.
- Major items of exports to Canada include **gems, jewellery and precious stones, pharmaceutical products, ready-made garments**, mechanical appliances, organic chemicals.
- On the other hand, **India imports pulses, newsprint, wood pulp, asbestos, potash, iron scrap, copper, minerals and industrial chemicals from Canada**.

4. Govt. notifies 31 Benches of GST Appellate Tribunal - The Hindu/ FinMin notifies 31 state benches of GSTAT - Indian Express

Relevance: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

News:

- The Finance Ministry recently notified the **constitution of 31 Appellate Tribunals** across 28 States and eight Union Territories for the **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**.
- This sets the stage to resolve a **growing number of taxpayer disputes** with the Revenue Department.

Prelims Takeaway

- GST Appellate Tribunals
- GST

GST Appellate Tribunals (GSTATs)

- The **Central Goods and Service Tax Act, 2017, Section 109** mandates for the constitution of a GSTAT and its Benches.
- The GSTAT will be the **specialized appellate authority for resolving disputes under the GST laws**.

Composition

- The GST Tribunal will have **one principal bench in New Delhi**.
- It will have as **many benches or boards in states** as decided by each state **subject to approval of the council**.
- **North-eastern states** could opt for **one bench for 2-3 states** and an **additional bench for very far-flung areas**.
- The principal bench and state boards would have **two technical and two judicial members each**, with equal representation from the Centre and states.
- However, all four members would not sit for hearing each case.
 - It depends on the threshold or value of dues involved.

Significance

- Expedite the **process of adjudication**
- **Provide tax certainty** especially in recurring litigative issues.
- Help in **bolstering business sentiments** and **ease of doing business** in the country

GS III

5. UNDP and NABARD sign MoU to co-create data-driven innovations in agriculture - The Economic Times

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

News:

- Recently, the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** and the **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to **co-create data-driven digital public good, which includes DiCRA**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Data in Climate Resilient Agriculture (DiCRA)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Data in Climate Resilient Agriculture (DiCRA)

- It is a collaborative **digital public good** which provides **open access to key geospatial datasets pertinent to climate resilient agriculture**.
- It is **curated by UNDP and partner organisations to inform public investments** in agriculture and already provides intelligence on climate resilience for 50 million hectares of farmland across India.
- It is **guided by the digital public good principles of open access**, open software, open code, and open APIs.
- It **uses cutting-edge data science and machine learning** to identify farms that are resilient to climate change and those that are highly vulnerable.
- **NABARD will host and maintain the DiCRA platform**.
- It uses its key geospatial datasets **for policymaking, research, and development activities, with UNDP's technical support**.
- This five-year technical cooperation is envisaged to foster **collective climate action and create innovative platforms and new product offerings** to enhance economic empowerment in rural India.
- Such open data innovations can highlight best practices, **optimise agriculture investments and shelter populations from risk**.

6. India can now issue OIML certificates: What this means, its significance - Indian Express

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

News:

- Recently, the **Union Consumer Affairs Secretary** announced that **India** has become an **OIML certificate-issuing authority**.
- The **Legal Metrology Division, Department of Consumer Affairs**, is now authorized to issue **OIML certificates**.

Prelims Takeaway

- OIML Certificate
- OIML

OIML or International Organisation of Legal Metrology

- Established in 1955, the OIML is an **international standard-setting body in the field of legal metrology**.
- It develops **model regulations, standards and related documents** for use by **legal metrology authorities and industry**.
- It plays a **crucial role in harmonising national laws and regulations** on the **performance of measuring instruments**.
- **Headquarters:** Paris
- **India** became a **member of the OIML in 1956**.
 - In the same year, India signed the **metric convention**.

OIML Certificate

- It is a **system for issuing, registering and using OIML certificates** and their associated **OIML-type evaluation/test reports** for instruments like digital balances, clinical thermometers, etc.
- With the addition of India, the **number of countries authorized to issue OIML certificates has increased to 13**.
- It is a **single certificate accepted worldwide**.

Significance for Indian Economy

- The move is expected to **help the Indian economy in several ways**, including
 - an increase in exports
 - reducing redundancy
 - saving resources
 - earning of foreign exchange
 - generation of employment

7. 'Exempting millets from GST can lift affordability, boosting consumption' - The Hindu

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

News:

- Recently, **Bharat Biotech Chairman** raised the issue of **exempting millet products from GST to boost consumption.**
- Millets are set to play a **crucial role in India's nutritional and food security.**
- Therefore, stakeholders in nutri-cereals are looking at **sustaining efforts to promote the cereal** in a big way.

Prelims Takeaway

- Millets
- Glycemic Index

Millet

- It is a **collective term** referring to a number of **small-seeded annual grasses** grown as **cereal and fodder crops.**
- These are **cultivated as grain crops, primarily on marginal lands in dry areas** in temperate, subtropical and tropical regions.
- They are raised mainly as **rain-fed Kharif crops** (sowed with the onset of the monsoons) **in India.**
- The **earliest evidence** for these grains has been found in **Indus civilization** and was **one of the first plants domesticated for food.**
- Some of the **common millets available in India** are
 - **Ragi** (Finger millet)
 - **Jowar** (Sorghum)
 - **Sama** (Little millet)
 - **Bajra** (Pearl millet)
 - **Variga** (Proso millet)

Global Distribution

- **India, Nigeria and China are the largest producers of millets** in the world.
 - They account for more than **55%** of the global production.
- It is **grown in about 131 countries** and is the **traditional food for around 60 crore people in Asia & Africa.**
- India is the **largest producer of millet in the world** and accounts for **41%** of global millet production.

Why are Millets Considered Important 'Nutri-Cereals'?

- **Climate Resilient Staple Food Crops**
 - Millets are **drought-resistant, require less water** and can **grow in poor soil conditions.**
 - This makes them a **suitable food crop** for areas with **unpredictable weather patterns and water scarcity.**
- **Rich in nutrients**
 - Millets are a good source of **fiber, protein, vitamins and minerals.**
- **Gluten-free**
 - Millets are naturally **gluten-free**, making them **suitable for people with celiac disease or gluten intolerance.**
- **Adaptable**
 - Millets can be grown in a **variety of soils and climates**, making them a versatile crop option for farmers.
- **Sustainable**
 - Millets are often **grown using traditional farming methods**, which are **more sustainable and environmentally friendly.**

8. Goods trade deficit hits a 10-month high - The Hindu

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

News:

- India's foreign trade hit a fresh trough in August, with goods exports shrinking for the seventh successive month.
- Services exports are estimated to have dropped for the first time in well over a year, and the goods trade deficit hitting a 10-month high.

Prelims Takeaway

- Trade deficit
- Current account deficit

Trade Deficit

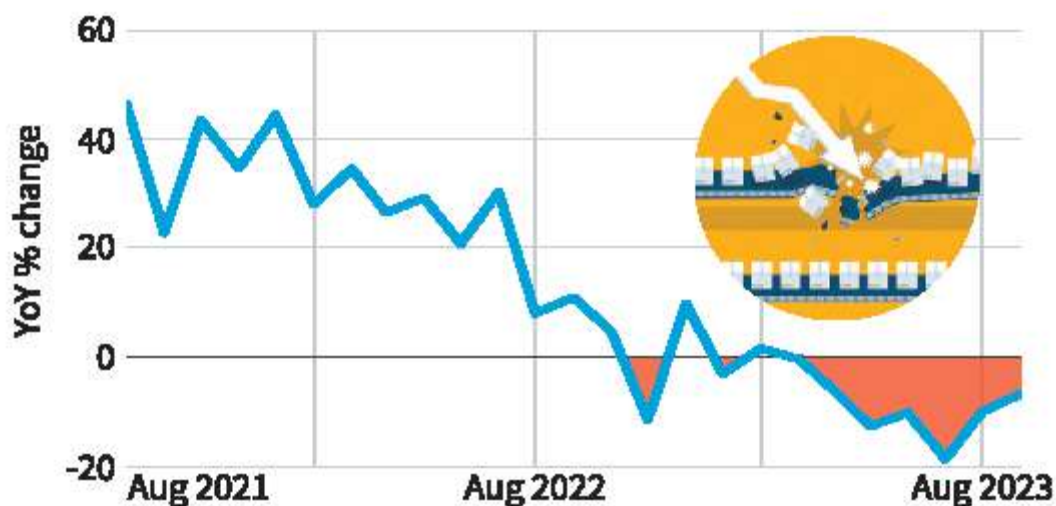
- A trade deficit is an amount by which the cost of a country's imports exceeds its exports.
- The trade deficit in goods shows a rise of demand in the economy.
- It is a part of the Current Account Deficit.

Current Account Deficit

- The current account records exports and imports in goods and services and transfer payments.
- It represents a country's transactions with the rest of the world and, like the capital account, is a component of a country's Balance of Payments (BOP).
- There is a deficit in Current Account if the value of the goods and services imported exceeds the value of those exported.
- Major components are:
 - Goods,
 - Services, and
 - Net earnings on overseas investments (such as interests and dividend) and net transfer of payments over a period of time, such as remittances.
- It is measured as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- The formulae for calculating Current Account Balance is:
 - Current Account Balance = Trade gap + Net current transfers + Net income abroad.
- Trade gap = Exports – Imports

Declining exports

India's exports shrank by 6.86% in August 2023, for the seventh consecutive month compared with the year-earlier period. A look at the year-on-year % change in exports (in \$)



Editorials, Gists and Explainers

1. A GM crop decision that cuts the mustard - The Hindu

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

Context:

- The **adoption of science-based technologies** for crop improvement such as genetic engineering has **become an absolute necessity**.
- This is to address the burgeoning and complex challenge of achieving **global food and nutritional security** under the fast-changing climate.

Genetically Modified (GM) Crops

- They are that type of plants whose DNA has been modified through genetic engineering for embedding a new trait to the plant which does not occur naturally in the species.
- Genetic engineering aims to transcend the genus barrier by introducing an alien gene in the seeds to get the desired effects and the alien gene could be from a plant, an animal or even a soil bacterium.

Current Scenario

- According to the Global Food Security and Nutrition Report, 2019, it is difficult to achieve the 'Zero Hunger' target by 2030.
- Therefore, the emphasis needs to be on accelerating the pace of improving crops genetically.
- In order to increase food production and become self-reliant, we require superior crop varieties and hybrids that
 - provide enhanced yields
 - have wide adaptability across environments
 - require fewer inputs of natural resources.
- The advent of the Green Revolution in the 1960s-70s resulted in enhanced food production.
 - From a mere 50 million tonnes in 1950-51 to over 300 million tonnes in 2020-21.
- However, new biotech/GM crops with improved traits are a must in order to mitigate climate change and produce nutrient-dense food.
- The genetic modification of crops in conjunction with traditional farming has been well documented for
 - increased productivity
 - contributing to global food, feed and fibre security

Recent Developments

- International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) 2020 Report
 - A total of 72 countries have adopted GM crops either as human food or animal feed, as well as for commercial cultivation.
 - They have benefited around 26% of the current world population of 7.6 billion.
- Bt cotton was commercialized as the first GM crop in India more than 20 years ago.
- It has been viewed globally as a great success story in terms of economic advantage to farmers and to the nation.
- Globally, genetic modification has expanded its reach, beyond the major four crops viz. maize, soybean, cotton and canola to other economically important food crops.
- This is for various traits such as insect and herbicide resistance, climate resilience and nutritional quality improvement.
- Global economic gains contributed by GM crops (1996-2018) have amounted to \$224.9 billion in economic benefits to more than 16 million farmers.
 - 95% of the farmers are from developing countries.
- Further, GM food crops, since adoption in 1996 globally have been proven for their biosafety for the last 25 years and more.

In edible oil deficit, a focus on mustard

- India faces a major deficit in edible oils, with 60% of its demand being met by imports.
 - Mustard is one of the most important edible oil crops in India, however, its per hectare yield is very low when compared to the global average.
 - Thus, increasing the productivity of mustard is vital for the economic well-being of farmers and self-sufficiency in edible oil production.
 - Using genetic engineering, extensive research has been carried out to create a GM mustard hybrid, DMH-11.
 - The GM mustard hybrid is based on the barnase/barstar system.
 - This system works on the principle of removing male fertility in one parent and restoring it in the offspring.
 - The herbicide tolerance gene has been deployed as a selection marker for developing the GM mustard.
 - With higher vigour and yield, it will facilitate an increase in domestic production of edible oils as well as enhanced farm incomes.
- #### Aiding self-reliance
- On October 25, 2022, the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) approved the release of DMH-11 and its parental line for cultivation.
 - This will help boost the vibrant genetic engineering research sector in the country and enable the generation of new crop varieties with improved traits.
 - It paves the way for the breeding of mustard hybrids for higher yields and also to ensure resistance to diseases and improve oil quality.
 - This advancement will benefit farmers by increasing yield per hectare, also leading to an increase in their incomes.
 - It would also help reduce the oil-import burden and help achieve much-needed self-reliance in edible oil production.

Conclusion

- The **environmental release of DMH-11** marks the **beginning of a new era in self-reliance and sustainability in agriculture**.
- **More improved GM food crops** are needed to **boost the profitability of Indian farmers**.

2. May all be free of illness - Indian Express

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

Context:

- In 2018, the government launched the **Ayushman Bharat programme**.

- **Objective:** To provide **comprehensive healthcare services for everyone**, no matter where they live or what their economic status.
- Focusing on a **holistic, need-based approach**, it covers **prevention, promotion and care** across primary, secondary and tertiary levels.
- This is through **health and wellness centres (HWCs)** and the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)**.

Ayushman Bhav Campaign

- Recently, the Indian President launched the “Ayushman Bhav” Campaign.
- Objective: To provide saturation coverage of healthcare services, reaching every village and town in the country.
- Initiated by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, it is a comprehensive nationwide healthcare initiative.
- Focus Areas
 - Comprehensive coverage
 - Developing awareness about PM-JAY
 - Creating health account IDs
 - Providing health services including disease screenings and management of multiple illnesses in villages as well as urban wards.
 - like tuberculosis, hypertension, sickle cell disease and diabetes
- Target: To reach over 6.45 lakh villages and 2.55 lakh gram panchayats.
- It is designed in line with the “Antyodaya” principle to make sure that no one is left behind in the quest for universal health coverage.
- To facilitate this, the campaign will have activities such as sewa pakhwada, which would include organ donation drives, cleanliness drives (swachhata abhiyan) and blood donation initiatives.

Three Core Pillars

- Strengthening the groundwork for delivery of healthcare services, this campaign broadens Ayushman Bharat’s reach using three core pillars
 - Ayushman Apke Dwar 3.0
 - Ayushman Sabha
 - Ayushman Mela
- These pillars enhance service delivery by focusing on comprehensive coverage, collaborative awareness-building and community-centred efforts.

Ayushman Apke Dwar 3.0

- Objective: To ensure that every eligible beneficiary receives their Ayushman card, leaving no one without access to affordable healthcare services.
- It will build on the success of its earlier versions (1.0 and 2.0)
- This is by expanding Ayushman card distribution with enhanced utilisation of Ayushman Bharat services, ensuring widespread coverage.
- It will **ensure** the provision of Ayushman cards to around 60 crore beneficiaries under the PM-JAY scheme.

Ayushman Sabhas

- It will promote awareness of various healthcare schemes and services available in the country.
- It will be spearheaded by the village health, sanitation and nutrition committees (VHSNCs).
- It will serve as a platform for citizens to
 - gain knowledge about communicable and non-communicable diseases
 - voice their concerns about healthcare services
 - promote social accountability of healthcare systems
 - exemplify the principle of “jan bhagidari se jan kalyan”
- These gatherings will include activities like
 - distributing PM-JAY cards
 - showcasing empanelled hospitals
 - creating Ayushman Bharat Health Account IDs
 - screening services
 - organising talks to raise awareness about various diseases with participation from MPs/MLAs, PM-JAY beneficiaries, Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres beneficiaries, tuberculosis champions and more to motivate the community.

Ayushman Melas

- To advance the Ayushman Bhav initiative, Ayushman Melas will serve as an efficient platform to
 - tackle a broad spectrum of health concerns
 - reach a large audience efficiently
 - boost healthcare service utilisation
- It will be held every week at 1.6 lakh HWCs in villages.
- They will also take place at community health centres, organised by medical colleges at the block level.
- This will be pivotal in spreading awareness of healthcare services among vulnerable and impoverished populations.
- These melas, offering specialised services such as ENT, eye, and psychiatric care at the block level aim to
 - enhance access to specialised care
 - build trust between the community and the health system
 - improve health-seeking behaviour and literacy
 - foster greater engagement with medical colleges and extend healthcare services to every ailing individual in need.

Conclusion

- In the context of **optimum healthcare delivery vision**, the unwavering pursuit of **comprehensive healthcare coverage is not just a goal**.
- It’s a **commitment in the service of humanity** in line with ancient wisdom found in this verse from the **Brihadaranyaka Upanishad**
 - Sarve bhavantu sukhinah/Sarve santu niramayah/Sarve bhadrani pashyantu/Ma kashcid dukkha bhagbhavet
 - May all be happy, may all be free from illness. May all see what is auspicious, may no one suffer in any way.
- Ayushman Bhav is the **embodiment of the same commitment** to delivering healthcare.
- It fosters the prospects of **robust health for every citizen and the nation as a whole**.

Quick Look

1. Sukhoi Su-30MKI

- It is a twinjet multirole air superiority fighter developed by Russia's Sukhoi and built under license by India's Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- A variant of the Sukhoi Su-30, it is a heavy, all-weather, long-range fighter.
- The IAF is looking to add new weapons, avionics and sensors and engines on the Su-30MKIs to keep them contemporary for the next few decades.

2. Pampaphoneus biccai

- It belongs to the early therapsid clade called Dinocephalians.
- It lived just before the largest extinction event in the history of Earth.
 - That event eliminated 86 percent of all animal species across the globe.
- Before the extinction event, dinocephalians were one of the major groups of large terrestrial animals that thrived on land.
- They were medium to large-sized creatures with both carnivorous and herbivorous representatives.
- They had thick cranial bones, which led to the group's name, which translates to "terrible head" in Greek.
- These animals are rare in other parts of the world but well-known in South Africa and Russia.
- It is the only known species in Brazil.

3. K2-18b Exoplanet

- It was first discovered in 2015, more than 120 light-years from Earth, during the space agency's K2 mission.
- It is 8.6 times bigger than Earth.
- It could be a "Hycean" world with a hydrogen-rich atmosphere and a surface covered by ocean water.
- Now, a new investigation with the Webb telescope has revealed traces of carbon-bearing molecules in its atmosphere, including methane and carbon dioxide.

4. Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) of India

- It is a non-profit circulation-auditing organisation initiated in 1948.
- It certifies and audits the circulations of major publications, including newspapers and magazines in India.
- Headquarters: Mumbai

5. Decarbonisation

- It refers to the process of reducing or eliminating carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and other greenhouse gas emissions from various sectors of the economy such as energy, transportation, industry, and agriculture.
- The goal of decarbonization is to mitigate climate change and limit global warming by transitioning to low-carbon or carbon-neutral technologies and practices.

6. Hunga-Tonga Volcano

- Tonga's Hunga Tonga is a volcanic island.
- The volcano is part of the highly active Tonga-Kermadec Islands volcanic arc, a subduction zone that runs north-northeast from New Zealand to Fiji.
- The convergent boundary where the Pacific Plate subducts beneath the Indo-Australian Plate forms the island arc.
- It is located in the western South Pacific Ocean, alongside the caldera rim of a much larger undersea edifice.
- Over the last few decades, it has erupted regularly.

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements about Collegium System

1. Judges of the higher judiciary and subordinate judiciary are appointed through the collegium system.
2. The collegium, consisting of the Chief Justice of India and the four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court, decides on appointments of judges.
3. The term "collegium" is not mentioned in the Indian Constitution but has been established through judicial pronouncements.

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

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

Q2. Consider the following statements about The Jal Jeevan Mission

1. It is the foundation of the Rashtriya Jal Jeevan Kosh.
2. It was launched in 2019 with the aim to supply 55 liters of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024.
3. It comes under Jal Shakti Ministry

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

1. Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) is a trade pact between two or more countries which establishes a framework for expanding trade and resolving outstanding disputes between countries.
2. Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) is a bilateral agreement in which two countries sit together and decide the conditions for private investments by citizens and firms of the two countries.

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

Q4. Consider the following statements about GST Appellate Tribunals (GSTATs)

1. The Constitution of India mandates for the constitution of a GSTAT and its Benches.
2. It is the specialized appellate authority for resolving disputes under the GST laws.
3. It will have as many benches or boards in states as decided by each state subject to approval of the council.

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 Data in Climate Resilient Agriculture (DiCRA)

1. It is a collaborative digital public good which provides open access to key geospatial datasets pertinent to climate resilient agriculture
2. It is curated by UNDP and partner organisations to inform public investments in agriculture
3. NABARD will host and maintain the DiCRA platform

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

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

Q6. With reference to the International Organisation of Legal Metrology (OIML), consider the following statements

1. It is an international standard-setting body for metrology.
2. India is the only OIML certificate-issuing country from Asia.

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

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

Q7. Consider the following statements with reference to Millets.

1. It is a collective term referring to a number of small-seeded annual grasses grown as cereal and fodder crops.
2. They are gluten free and low glycemic index food.
3. They are drought-resistant and can grow in poor soil conditions.

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

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

Q8. Consider the following statements about Current Account

1. It records exports and imports in goods and services and transfer payments.
2. It is a component of a country's Balance of Payments (BOP).
3. There is a deficit in Current Account if the value of the goods and services imported exceeds the value of those exported.
4. It is measured as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

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

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

Q9. Which of the following statements define a GM crop?

- A. A crop that has undergone genetic engineering to introduce specific traits or characteristics.
- B. A crop that is grown using organic farming methods without synthetic inputs.
- C. Any crop that has been produced through traditional breeding methods.
- D. Any crop that is cultivated in controlled environments to minimize genetic modifications.

Q10. Consider the following statements about PM Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)

1. It is the world's largest health insurance scheme that is fully financed by the government.
2. It provides a cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per family member per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization in India.
3. It is an entitlement-based scheme that targets the beneficiaries as identified by latest Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data.

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

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

Prelims Track Ans.

Ans. 1 Option B is correct

Explanation

- Judges of the higher judiciary are appointed through the collegium system.
- Appointment of subordinate judiciary is not done through collegium. Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.
- The collegium, consisting of the Chief Justice of India and the four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court, decides on appointments, elevations, and transfers of Judges. Hence, statement 2 is correct.
- The term "collegium" is not mentioned in the Indian Constitution but has been established through judicial pronouncements. Hence, statement 3 is correct.

Ans. 2 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The Jal Jeevan Mission is the foundation of the Rashtriya Jal Jeevan Kosh. Hence, statement 1 is correct.
- It was launched in 2019 with the aim to supply 55 liters of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024. Hence, statement 2 is correct.
- It comes under Jal Shakti Ministry. Hence, statement 3 is correct.
- Objective: Rainwater harvesting and water conservation are also the most important aspects of the mission.

Ans. 3 Option D is correct

Explanation

- Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT): It is a bilateral agreement in which two countries sit together and decide the conditions for private investments by citizens and firms of the two countries. Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.
- Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA): It is a trade pact between two or more countries which establishes a framework for expanding trade and resolving outstanding

disputes between countries. Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.

Ans. 4 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The Central Goods and Service Tax Act, 2017, Section 109 mandates for the constitution of a GSTAT and its Benches. Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.
- The GSTAT will be the specialized appellate authority for resolving disputes under the GST laws. Hence, statement 2 is correct.
- The GST Tribunal will have one principal bench in New Delhi.
- It will have as many benches or boards in states as decided by each state subject to approval of the council. Hence, statement 3 is correct.
- North-eastern states could opt for one bench for 2-3 states and an additional bench for very far-flung areas.
- The principal bench and state boards would have two technical and two judicial members each, with equal representation from the Centre and states.

Ans. 5 Option D is correct

Explanation

- It is a collaborative digital public good which provides open access to key geospatial datasets pertinent to climate resilient agriculture. Hence, statement 1 is correct.
- It is curated by UNDP and partner organisations to inform public investments in agriculture and already provides intelligence on climate resilience for 50 million hectares of farmland across India. Hence, statement 2 is correct.
- It is guided by the digital public good principles of open access, open software, open code, and open APIs.
- It uses cutting-edge data science and machine learning to identify farms that are resilient to climate change and those that are highly vulnerable.
- NABARD will host and maintain the DiCRA platform. Hence, statement 3 is correct.

- It uses its key geospatial datasets for policymaking, research, and development activities, with UNDP's technical support.
- This five-year technical cooperation is envisaged to foster collective climate action and create innovative platforms and new product offerings to enhance economic empowerment in rural India.
- Such open data innovations can highlight best practices, optimise agriculture investments and shelter populations from risk.

Ans. 6 Option B is correct

Explanation

- International Organisation of Legal Metrology is an international standard-setting body in the field of legal metrology. Hence, statement 1 is correct.
- It develops model regulations, standards and related documents for use by legal metrology authorities and industry.
- It plays a crucial role in harmonising national laws and regulations on the performance of measuring instruments.
- Headquarters: Paris
- Recently, India became an OIML certificate-issuing authority.
- Other certificate-issuing countries: Australia, Switzerland, China, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, France, United Kingdom, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, and Slovakia. Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.

Ans. 7 Option D is correct

Explanation

- Millet is a collective term referring to a number of small-seeded annual grasses grown as cereal and fodder crops. Hence, statement 1 is correct.
- These are cultivated as grain crops, primarily on marginal lands in dry areas in temperate, subtropical and tropical regions.
- The earliest evidence for these grains has been found in Indus civilization and was one of the first plants domesticated for food.
- Millets are drought-resistant, require less water and can grow in poor soil conditions. Hence, statement 3 is correct.

- Millets are a good source of fiber, protein, vitamins and minerals.
- Millets are naturally gluten-free, making them suitable for people with celiac disease or gluten intolerance.
- Millets are low on the Glycemic Index making them Diabetes friendly. Hence, statement 2 is correct.
- Millets can be grown in a variety of soils and climates, making them a versatile crop option for farmers.
- Millets are often grown using traditional farming methods, which are more sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Ans. 8 Option D is correct

Explanation

Current Account Deficit

- The current account records exports and imports in goods and services and transfer payments. Hence, statement 1 is correct.
- It represents a country's transactions with the rest of the world and, like the capital account, is a component of a country's Balance of Payments (BOP). Hence, statement 2 is correct.
- There is a deficit in Current Account if the value of the goods and services imported exceeds the value of those exported. Hence, statement 3 is correct.
- Major components are: Goods, Services, and Net earnings on overseas investments (such as interests and dividend) and net transfer of payments over a period of time, such as remittances.
- It is measured as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Hence, statement 4 is correct.
- The formulae for calculating Current Account Balance is:
 - Current Account Balance = Trade gap + Net current transfers + Net income abroad.
 - Trade gap = Exports – Imports

Ans. 9 Option A is correct

Explanation

- Genetically Modified (GM) Crops are that type of plants whose DNA has been modified through genetic engineering for embedding a new trait to the plant which does not occur

naturally in the species. Hence, Option A is correct

- It aims to transcend the genus barrier by introducing an alien gene in the seeds to get the desired effects and the alien gene could be from a plant, an animal or even a soil bacterium.
- All GM crops in India require approval from the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) for use in commercial production.

Ans. 10 Option A is correct

Explanation

- PM-JAY is the world's largest health insurance scheme fully financed by the government. Hence, statement 1 is correct.
- Launched in February 2018, it offers a sum insured of Rs.5 lakh per family for secondary care and tertiary care. Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.

- Health Benefit Packages covers surgery, medical and day care treatments, cost of medicines and diagnostics.
- It is an entitlement-based scheme that targets the beneficiaries as identified by latest Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data. Hence, statement 3 is correct.
- The funding for the scheme is shared – 60:40 for all states and UTs with their own legislature, 90:10 in Northeast states and Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal and Uttarakhand and 100% Central funding for UTs without legislature.
- The National Health Authority (NHA) has been constituted as an autonomous entity under the Society Registration Act, 1860 for effective implementation of PM-JAY in alliance with state governments.

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