

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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## Important News Articles

### GS II

#### 1. Home Ministry cancels FCRA registration of Centre for Policy Research - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- The **Union Home Ministry has cancelled the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)** registration of the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), a prominent public policy research institution in New Delhi.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- FCRA
- Centre for Policy Research

#### Chronology of Suspension

- FCRA registration suspended for CPR on grounds of violation.

#### Reasons for Cancellation

- The Home Ministry cites "violation" as grounds for cancellation, specifically noting that CPR published reports on "current affairs programs," deemed a violation of FCRA.

#### CPR's Compliance and Perspective

- CPR maintains it has operated within the legal framework**, conducting globally recognized high-quality research on issues significant to Indian public life and policy-making.
- CPR remains committed to its core goals and believes the matter will be resolved in accordance with constitutional values.

#### Income Tax Department's Actions (2023)

- Tax Exemption Cancellation:** In 2023, the Income Tax department cancels CPR's tax exemption status.
- Allegations:** CPR is accused of making payments to individuals who haven't filed personal Income Tax returns, and the nature of books published by CPR is questioned.

#### CPR's Response to IT Department

- CPR denies allegations** raised by the IT department.
- The FCRA registration cancellation adds to the challenges faced by CPR, which is actively contesting the allegations brought forth by both the Home Ministry and the Income Tax department.

#### 2. ICMR starts revising current National Essential Diagnostics List for first time - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has commenced the **revision process for the National Essential Diagnostics List (NEDL)**,
  - citing the need for an update since its initial release in 2019.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Indian Council of Medical Research
- NEDL

#### Purpose of NEDL

- The NEDL serves to catalogue fundamental diagnostic tests deemed essential at various healthcare levels
  - including village, sub-health centers, health and wellness centers, and primary health centers.



- It **aims to ensure the availability of crucial tests** across the healthcare pyramid, aligning with World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations from 2018.

#### Criteria for Inclusion

- ICMR emphasises that the inclusion of diagnostic tests in the NEDL is based on careful consideration of disease burden data
  - alignment with national programs, and adherence to Indian public health standards.
- The **Council outlines essential diagnostic tests** as those prioritizing healthcare needs, considering disease prevalence, public health relevance,

#### Stakeholder Involvement

- Stakeholders are urged to **assess the essentiality of proposed tests**, considering disease burden, alignment with public health standards, and availability of equipment, infrastructure, and manpower.
- The suggested diagnostic **tests should focus on high disease burden** conditions with clear impacts on disease diagnosis and management.
- **Alignment with Indian Public Health Standards** for 2022 is emphasized in the proposal.

### 3. What is 'prior approval', and why is it needed before investigating public officials accused of corruption?- Indian Express

**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 Supreme Court delivers a split verdict** on the plea by former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister to **quash an FIR related to an alleged skill development scam.**

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Centre for Public Interest Litigation
- CBI v R R Kishore

#### Key Highlights

##### Dissenting Opinions on 'Previous Approval' Requirement

- 2 judges hold differing views on whether the Andhra Pradesh CID needed 'previous approval' from the state government before initiating an inquiry into the allegations against Naidu.

##### Justice Bose's Perspective

- Asserts that **prior approval was necessary** for the CID's inquiry.
- Points out the **absence of approval** during the inquiry initiation.

##### Justice Trivedi's Perspective

- **Argues that approval is required** only for offences committed post-2018, when the requirement was introduced.

##### Evolution of 'Previous Approval' Requirement

##### Delhi Special Police Establishment Act Amendment (2003)

- Required approval for investigating corruption offenses **if the official held a rank higher than joint secretary.**
- Struck down by the Supreme Court in 2014.

##### Prevention of Corruption Act Amendment (2018)

- Introduced a similar 'previous approval' provision as Section 17A.
- Approval required for investigations involving public servants committing offenses during official duties.

##### Challenge to the Provision by CPIL (2018)

- Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL)
- Challenges constitutionality, arguing it hinders investigations and protects corrupt officials.

- Refers to a 2014 case where a similar requirement was struck down.

### SC's Previous Stance on Retroactive Application

Constitution Bench Decision (2023)

- Officials cannot claim immunity under Section 6A retrospectively, even for offenses predating its removal (**CBI v R R Kishore**).
- **Rakesh Asthana Case** (2018-2022)
- Former Delhi Police Commissioner investigated for bribery.
- Opinion against prior approval by Additional Solicitor General P S Narasimha.
- Case adjourned and declared infructuous after Asthana's retirement in 2022.

## 4. India's KABIL acquires five lithium blocks in Argentina - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- Recently, **India announced the acquisition of five lithium blocks in Argentina.**
- The Mines Ministry, through Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL), signed an agreement with Argentina's State-owned CAMYEN.

**Key Highlights**

- With this agreement, KABIL has obtained Exploration and Exclusivity Rights for five blocks.
- The agreement will allow the State-owned entity to evaluate, prospect, and explore.
- Upon subsequent discovery of lithium minerals, exploitation rights for commercial production have also been granted.
- This is the **first-ever lithium exploration** and mining project undertaken by a government company in India.
- This will not only boost the country's quest for sourcing lithium but also **bring in technical and operational experience** for brine-type lithium exploration, exploitation, and extraction.
- **India's lithium requirements**, amounting to around ₹24,000 crore, are met through imports, with the majority of supplies coming from China.
- **Lithium, often called 'white gold'**, forms the cornerstone of the country's transition to green energy options.
- It is used across various categories, **including energy storage solutions, batteries for mobile phones, and in EVs.**
- Argentina is part of the world's "Lithium Triangle", along with Chile and Bolivia, and the three together have more than half of the world's total lithium resources.
- **Argentina also has the distinction of having the second-largest lithium** resources, third-largest lithium reserves and fourth-largest production in the world.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Argentina
- 'white gold',

## 5. These PM-JANMAN beneficiaries make sure no one is left out - The Hindu

**Relevance:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

**News:**

- The government's **PM-JANMAN package**, aimed at developing **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**,
  - witnesses the active involvement of women beneficiaries who serve as messengers to extend the benefits to the remotest community members.

**Key Highlights**

**PM Releases Funds for Pucca Houses**

- The Prime Minister releases the first instalment of funds under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN),

#### Prelims Takeaway

- PVTG
- PM-JANMAN

- o focusing on essential facilities for PVTGs, such as pucca houses, power, and water connections.

### Women as Janman Sangis (Volunteers)

- Key beneficiaries, including women from the Pahari Korba tribe,
  - o are becoming Janman Sangis, volunteering to educate their communities about the schemes under the package.

### Objectives of PM-JANMAN Campaign

- The PM-JANMAN campaign, launched on November 15

### Objective:

- **aims to provide basic facilities to 22,000 habitations** with an estimated 36 lakh people from PVTG communities, focusing on 11 interventions of nine Ministries.
- The PVTGs are considered the most backward among the Scheduled Tribes.

### Information and Education Campaign

- The **package includes an information and education campaign**, conducting camps in PVTG habitations
  - o to register inhabitants for essential documents such as Aadhaar, PM Jan Dhan cards, caste certificates, Kisan Samman Nidhi cards, etc.

### Financial Allocations

- **The Union Cabinet approves a plan** to spend over ₹24,000 crore on the package over the next three years.
- Projects worth ₹4,700 crore, including the construction of pucca homes for one lakh beneficiary families, have already been sanctioned.

## GS III

## 6. Defence upgrade roadmap: Apex body led by PM, MoD sci-tech unit - Indian Express

**Relevance:** Defence

**News:**

- An expert committee led by former Principal Scientific Advisor Prof **K Vijay Raghavan** has recommended the creation of a **Defense Technology Council**.
- **Objective:** To determine India's defense technology roadmap and decide on major defence projects and their execution.

### Proposed Defense Technology Council

- Chaired by the **Prime Minister**.
- **Vice Presidents:** Defense Minister and National Security Advisor
- **Executive Committee:** Chaired by the Chief of Defence Staff.
- Principal Scientific Advisor, three service chiefs, and their vice chiefs as members.
- Representation from academia and industry with two members from each sector.

### Background

- The nine-member Vijay Raghavan panel was set up by the government **to review the functioning of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- The **review comes amid concerns about project delays**, as highlighted by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense and the Comptroller and Auditor General.

### Prelims Takeaway

- Defense Technology Council
- Chief of Defence Staff
- DRDO

### Committee Observations on DRDO

- DRDO should focus on **research and development for defence** and avoid involvement in productization, production cycles and product management.
- There is a necessity to **identify expertise** within India and internationally **for specific defence technologies**.
- The Defense Technology Council aims to **streamline decision-making** and identify the **right players for specific defence technologies**.

### Creation of Department of Defense Science, Technology and Innovation

- The Committee also proposed a **separate department under the Defense Ministry** - the Department of Defence Science, Technology, and Innovation.
- Headed by a **technocrat**.
- **Purpose**
  - Promoting defence research and development in academia and start-up ecosystem.
  - Serving as the secretariat for the Defense Technology Council.
- As the DTC secretariat, this department will **draw scientists from DRDO and academia**.
- It will build a **repository of knowledge on production expertise** and **conduct background research** aiding decisions on technology production.
- Moreover, the department will **operate labs for testing and certification**.

## 7. RBI panel proposes framework for state guarantees - Indian Express

**Relevance:** Economy

**News:**

- A Reserve Bank working group has proposed that state governments in India to **charge a minimum fee for guarantees** extended by them on loans.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- State Guarantees
- Reserve Bank of India

### Working Group Background

- The **32nd Conference of the State Finance Secretaries** in July 2022 led to the establishment of a Working Group **to address risks associated with state government guarantees**.
- The group aimed to assess the fiscal risks of guarantees extended by state governments on **their fiscal health and the banking system**.

### Key Recommendations

- Recommends the state governments to **charge a minimum guarantee fee for guarantees extended**.
- Suggests an **additional risk premium** based on the **risk category and tenor** of the underlying loan.
- Proposes fixing a **ceiling for incremental guarantees issued** during a year at 5% of Revenue Receipts or 0.5% of Gross State Domestic Product, whichever is less.

### Comprehensive Assessment and Risk Classification

- Recommends the state governments to **classify projects/activities** as high risk, medium risk, and low risk and **assign appropriate risk weights** before extending guarantees.
- The **purpose for which government guarantees are issued** should be **clearly defined**.
- There should not be any distinction made between Conditional/Unconditional, Financial/Performance guarantees concerning fiscal risk assessment.
- States should consider the risk of guarantees being invoked and undertake a **comprehensive assessment of loan proposals** without solely relying on state guarantees.



## GS I

### 1. Rainfall rising in over half of India's sub-districts, says four-decade study - The Hindu

**Relevance:** Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone. etc., geographical features and their location-changes in critical geographical features (including water-bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes.

**News:**

- **Rainfall is increasing in more than half of India's 4,400-odd tehsils or sub-districts**, according to a granular analysis of changes in the Indian monsoon, conducted for the first time at the tehsil level.
- 55% of tehsils have seen a rise in rainfall, about 11% of them have experienced decreasing rainfall.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Southwest monsoon
- North east monsoon

#### Key Highlights

- More worryingly, this decrease occurred **largely during the critical southwest monsoon**.
- Most of these tehsils are in the Indo-Gangetic plains — which contribute to more than half of India's agricultural production
  - as well as in northeastern India, and the Indian Himalayan region.

#### 1. Extremes at the district level

- An analysis at the district level reveals that **30% of India's districts witnessed several more years of deficient rainfall** and 38% saw many years of excessive rainfall.

#### 2. Increasingly erratic rainfall patterns

- Rainfall from the northeast monsoon — that sets in during October, November and December, primarily in peninsular India
  - It has increased by more than 10% over the last decade (2012-2022) in approximately 80% of tehsils in Tamil Nadu, 44% in Telangana, and 39% in Andhra Pradesh, respectively.
- **The southwest monsoon accounts for nearly 76%** of India's annual rainfall, with about 11% coming from the northeast monsoon.
- Several tehsils of **Maharashtra and Goa, Odisha and West Bengal** on the east coast have also been **reporting increasing rainfall** during these winter months.
  - This increase could partly be **attributed to cyclonic activity** in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal.
- With increasing extreme weather events, **hyper-local climate risk assessments and action plans are the way to go for India** to keep leading in climate action and disaster risk reduction.

## GS II

### 2. India defends Iran, cites its position of no compromise against terrorism - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- India expressed **support for Iran's missile strikes on alleged terror camps** in Pakistan's Balochistan province, characterizing it as an act of self-defense.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Rupee-Rial trade
- Map based question



### Key Highlights

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) highlighted its uncompromising stance on terrorism while refraining from commenting on Iran's strikes in Kurdish areas of Iraq and Syria on the same day.
- 1. Bilateral Nature of the Issue**
    - The MEA emphasized that the matter was bilateral between Iran and Pakistan, and India holds a zero-tolerance position on terrorism.
  - 2. International Response and Tensions in West Asia**
    - India's support for Iran's actions contrasts with condemnation** from the White House National Security Council, criticizing the strikes against Iraq as reckless and imprecise.
    - Tensions in West Asia, particularly involving the U.S., Israel's actions in Gaza, U.S. strikes in Yemen, and Houthi rebel attacks, add complexity to the situation.
  - 3. Iran's Perspective**
    - Iran's Foreign Minister reiterated the strikes were aimed at enhancing the security of Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, and the region.
    - He emphasized respecting the sovereignty of Pakistan and Iraq while asserting Iran's commitment to addressing terrorist threats within and outside its borders.

### India and Iran bilateral relation

- Over the years, India's trade with Iran has **seen significant fluctuations**.
- In 2019-20, India's imports from Iran, primarily crude oil, fell by about 90% to USD 1.4 billion compared to USD 13.53 billion in 2018-19.
- Also, Iran has seen a depletion of its rupee reserves in the vostro account, affecting its ability to import key Indian commodities like basmati rice and tea.
- To revive trade between India and Iran, which has been impacted by US and Western sanctions, both nations are considering the option of rupee-rial trade.

### Rupee-Rial trade

- it refers to trade between India and Iran using their respective currencies, the Indian Rupee (INR) and the Iranian Rial (IRR)
  - instead of using widely accepted international currencies like the US Dollar (USD).

## 3. Where do China-Taiwan relations stand? - The Hindu

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

### News:

- On January 13, **Taiwan concluded its democratic elections**, resulting in the election of Lai Ching-te from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as the new President.

### Prelims Takeaway

- Map Based questions
- Taiwan

### Key Highlights

#### 1. Diplomatic Shift

- Shortly after the election, Nauru, a small island nation, announced a diplomatic shift from Taipei to Beijing.

#### 2. Beijing's Strategy

- China has employed a strategy of enticing smaller nations** with promises of financial investment and infrastructure development to reduce Taiwan's diplomatic space.
- The DPP's perceived pro-independence stance has increased pressure from Beijing**, leading to a decline in the number of countries recognizing Taiwan.

#### 3. China-Taiwan Ties and 1992 Consensus

- The main point of contention is President Tsai's **refusal to accept the '1992 consensus,' which acknowledges 'one China.**
- 4. Chinese President's Goals**
- The Chinese President has expressed the goals of rejuvenating the Chinese nation and reunifying Taiwan, considering it a 'sacred territory.'
- Despite China's displeasure, the DPP's electoral victory indicates that the Taiwanese people are not in a rush for reunification.
- 5. Democracy in Taiwan**
- Taiwan's democracy, established in 1996, has strengthened over the years, despite Chinese discontent.
- Taiwan's functioning democracy challenges the notion that the Communist Party of China (CPC) is the sole political option for the Chinese people.

#### 4. Govt proposes repealing Indian Stamp Act, seeks public input on draft Bill - Indian Express

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

**News:**

- The government has **proposed repealing the Indian Stamp Act, 1899** and bringing in a new legislation for the stamp duty regime in the country.
- The Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance has **invited suggestions on the draft 'Indian Stamp Bill, 2023'** from the public within a period of 30 days.

##### Prelims Takeaway

- Seventh Schedule
- 'Indian Stamp Bill, 2023

##### Key Highlights

- "The Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, has prepared a draft 'Indian Stamp Bill, 2023' to align it with the modern stamp duty regime.
- Once enacted, the **Bill shall replace the Indian Stamp Act, 1899**
- The Indian Stamp Act, 1899 **lays down the legal provisions for tax levied in the form of stamps on instruments recording transactions.**
- Stamp duties are **levied by the central government, but within the states are collected and appropriated by the concerned states** in terms of provisions of Article 268 of the Constitution.
- The stamp duties on documents specified in **entry 91 of the union list of the Seventh Schedule including**
  - Bills of exchange, cheques, promissory notes, bills of lading, letters of credit, policies of insurance, transfer of shares, debentures, proxies and receipts) are levied by the Union.
- Other stamp duties on documents are levied and collected by the states.
- The Indian Stamp Act, 1899, a pre-Constitution Act, has been amended from time to time to enable a more modern stamp duty regime, the ministry said.

#### 5. Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh launches the MPLADS e-SAKSHI Mobile Application for the Revised Fund Flow Procedure under MPLAD Scheme - PIB

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

**News:**

- The Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, **launched the MPLADS e-SAKSHI Mobile Application**
- The aim is for the **revised fund flow procedure** under the MPLAD Scheme in New Delhi.

##### Prelims Takeaway

- e-SAKSHI
- MPLADS

### Objective of MPLAD Scheme

- The MPLAD Scheme aims to empower Members of Parliament (MPs) **to recommend developmental projects** focusing on creating durable community assets based on local needs.
- The revised guidelines intend to expand the scheme's scope, emphasizing improved functionality, implementation, and monitoring.

### Benefits of e-SAKSHI Mobile Application

- It will revolutionize how **MPs engage with and manage development projects** in their constituencies, offering convenience and accessibility.
- It enables MPs to propose, track, and oversee projects in real-time, enhancing decision-making and facilitating swift responses to emerging needs.

### Transparency and Accountability

- The **e-SAKSHI mobile app promotes transparency by providing MPs** with instant **updates on the status** and progress of their proposed projects.
- This transparency enhances accountability and builds public trust in the allocation and utilization of MPLADS funds.

### Budget Management Features

- The mobile application incorporates features for budget management, allowing MPs to monitor expenditures related to their recommended projects.
- This ensures financial oversight and responsible use of MPLADS funds.

## GS III

### 6. Greenland has lost 20% more ice than previously thought, says study - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- According to research, **Greenland's ice sheet has lost 20% more ice** than previously estimated due to climate change.
- Earlier studies suggested the **loss of approximately 5,000 gigatons of ice** from the Greenland ice sheet in the last 20 years, a major contributor to rising sea levels.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Global Warming
- Greenland

### New Findings

- Researchers compiled 240,000 satellite images of glacier terminus positions from 1985 to 2022.
- **Almost every glacier in Greenland has experienced thinning or retreat** over the past few decades.
- Over 1,000 gigatons, or **20%, of ice around Greenland's edges have been lost** in the last four decades, not previously accounted for.

### Impact on Sea Levels

- The **lost ice around the edges**, already in the water, has a **minimal direct impact on sea level rise**.
- However, the findings suggest a potential for **increased overall ice melt, facilitating glacier movement towards the sea**.

### Seasonal Sensitivity and Global Warming

- Glaciers in Greenland most susceptible to seasonal changes (expanding in winter, retreating in summer) are also the ones **most sensitive to the impact of global warming**

- They have experienced the most significant retreat since 1985.
- Greenland's ice sheet, the world's second-largest after Antarctica, is estimated to have **contributed over 20% to observed sea level rise since 2002.**

## 7. Govt disburses \*4,415 cr under PLI; low job creation a concern - Indian Express

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

**News:**

- The central government has successfully disbursed **Rs 4,415 crore** under the Production-Linked Incentive (**PLI**) schemes for eight sectors.
- This initiative, launched in 2021, aims to **boost investments, technology adoption, and global competitiveness** in various industries.

### Prelims Takeaway

- Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme
- MSMEs

### Job Creation Concerns and Response

- There have been concerns about **low job creation** despite substantial investments.
- **Employment generation**, both direct and indirect, is reported to be **over 6.78 lakh.**
- The government acknowledges that **tech-driven productions often have limited job opportunities** and such challenges are expected to **evolve with the advent of Industry 4.0.**

### Implementation Challenges and Solutions

- Challenges in the **processing of claims** have been identified, including **prolonged communication** between Project Monitoring Agencies (PMAs) and companies.
- The government has directed ministries and PMAs to **create Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)** to streamline the processing of documents and reduce delays.

### Scheme Achievements

- As of now, 746 applications have been approved in 14 sectors with an expected investment of over Rs 3 lakh crore.
- About 176 MSMEs are among the PLI beneficiaries in sectors like pharma and telecom.
- Exports under the PLI schemes have exceeded Rs 3.2 lakh crore, with notable contributions from electronics, pharma, food processing and telecom sectors.

### Facilitating Foreign Investments and Achievements

- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has established a system to facilitate **visa applications for PLI beneficiary companies.**
- Significant **foreign direct investment growth** is observed since the inception of the PLI scheme for the **electronics segment.**
- **Import substitution of 60 percent** has been achieved in the telecom sector.

## Editorials, Gists and Explainers

### 1. Understanding the Tenth Schedule - The Hindu

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

**Context:**

- The Maharashtra Assembly Speaker has **refused to disqualify MLAs** of the Eknath Shinde faction after recognising it as the real Shiv Sena.
- This has raised **concerns about the application of the Tenth Schedule** and the anti-defection law.



**The Tenth Schedule**

- Enacted in 1985 through the 52nd constitutional amendment to counter defections that destabilised the elected governments.
- Prohibits members from voluntarily leaving their party or voting against party instructions, enforced by the party 'whip'.
  - A 'whip' is a member of the 'legislature party' in a House who is appointed as such by the respective 'political party'.
- The Tenth Schedule originally provided for two exceptions that would not render the members liable for disqualification.
  - One-third members of the 'legislature party' splitting to form a separate group (para 3).
  - Merger of the 'political party' with another party that is approved by two-third members of its 'legislature party' (para 4).

**Issues Arising from Deletion of Para 3**

- Instances of two-third members of a party 'practically' defecting but claiming to be the original political party in order to escape disqualification.
- Instances where more than two-third members of a party merged themselves with another political party to escape disqualification.

**Role of the Speaker and Need for Reforms**

- The authority to decide on the disqualification of members is vested in the Speaker of the House, raising concerns about impartiality.
- Past instances show Speakers favouring ruling dispensations, prompting suggestions for an independent tribunal headed by judges.
- **K. M. Singh versus Speaker of Manipur (2020)**
  - SC recommended Parliament to amend the Constitution to vest these powers in an independent tribunal headed by judges.

**Maharashtra Case Overview**

- Eknath Shinde faction claimed to be the genuine Shiv Sena in June 2022, with 37 out of 55 MLAs.
- The Speaker recognized this faction and validated their whip's appointment based on party strength and the 1999 constitution.
- The Speaker, based on this ruling, refused to disqualify 40 MLAs of the Shinde faction.
- He also refused to disqualify 14 MLAs of the UBT group as the whip instructions could not be physically served on them.

**The Three Test Formula**

- The Supreme Court in Sadiq Ali versus Election Commission of India (1971), laid down the three-test formula for determining the original political party.
  - These include
    - Aims and objects of the party
    - Its affairs as per the party's constitution that reflect inner party democracy
    - Majority in the legislative and organisation wings

**Reforms Needed**

- An authoritative Supreme Court judgement in these matters and setting up of an independent tribunal to decide on disqualification of members is needed.
- Lack of inner party democracy often leads to defections, prompting the need for institutionalising internal democracy through regular inner-party elections monitored by the Election Commission.

## 2. What are light-emitting diodes and why are they prized as light sources? - The Hindu

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

**Context:**

- In 2014, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences predicted the **dominance of Light-Emitting Diodes (LEDs) in the 21st century**, marking a shift from traditional lighting sources.

**Understanding Diodes**

- Diodes are electronic components allowing current flow in only one direction.
- They consist of a p-n junction, where electrons move from the n-type material (its primary charge-carriers are electrons) to the p-type material (its primary charge-carriers are holes), creating a one-way current flow.
- The diode has an anode and a cathode, connected to the p-type and n-type materials, respectively.

**Evolution to LEDs**

- An LED is a diode emitting light through electroluminescence.
- The p-n junction in LEDs allows electrons with more energy than holes to release light upon recombination.
- The band gap, representing the energy difference between electron levels, determines the emitted light's frequency.

**Significance of the Band Gap**

- Particles such as electrons exhibit distinct energy levels, and the band gap establishes the energy range within which electrons are capable of flowing.
- An electric field applied to a material can provide electrons with extra energy to overcome the band gap.
- In LEDs, the band gap plays a crucial role in determining the energy released during the process of electron-hole recombination.

**LED Color Production**

- LEDs can produce red, green, and blue colours, allowing a combination for various hues.
- Despite challenges, gallium nitride enabled the development of blue LEDs, accomplished by Japanese researchers in the late 1980s, ultimately earning them the 2014 Nobel Prize.

**Advantages of LEDs**

- Moore's law and Haitz's law predict exponential growth and efficiency improvements in LEDs over time.
- LEDs are more energy-efficient, durable and cost-effective than incandescent bulbs and fluorescent lamps.
- Applications range from consumer electronics to industrial use, showcasing their versatility and impact on energy conservation.

**Ongoing Innovations and Future Prospects**

- Ongoing research explores new materials like perovskites for more efficient LEDs.
- Organic LEDs and embedded LEDs in skin represent emerging technologies expanding LED applications.

### 3. A new multi alignment - Indian Express

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

**Context:**

- The current international landscape is characterised by **renewed great power rivalry**, notably seen in **conflicts in Europe and West Asia**.
- Despite this, India's approach stands out as it **engages with diverse partners with conflicting interests**.

**Cold War Legacy and Multi-Alignment**

- During the Cold War, India's **non-alignment** was theoretically defined by its equidistance from the two blocs.

- Presently, India practices "**multi-alignment**" driven by national interest and the pursuit of bilateral relationships.

### Recent Diplomatic Engagements

- **India-Russia Phone Conversation**
  - Discussed the "**special and privileged strategic partnership**" between India and Russia.
  - Addressed the **Ukraine conflict** and expressed the intent to **deepen bilateral ties**.
- **External Affairs Minister's Iran Visit**
  - Two-day visit to Iran, focusing on the **development of the Chabahar Port**.

### Balancing Act Amid Global Conflicts

- Early in the **Ukraine conflict**, the **US pressured India** to take a stronger stance against Russia.
- **Iran** is also entangled in a **regional cold war** involving Israel and Saudi Arabia.
- India has managed to **sustain ties** with these nations while **growing its partnership with the US and Europe**.

### Maintaining Core Principles

- The Prime Minister emphasized India's position to Russia that **war cannot be a solution**.
- The External Affairs Minister communicated **zero tolerance for terror** and addressed how **Houthi attacks on merchant vessels affect India's interests**.

### Factors Facilitating India's Global Manoeuvring

- **Economic Rise**
  - India's growing market size and potential for future economic growth provide strategic and diplomatic leverage.
- **Regional Counterbalance to China**
  - As China becomes more assertive in Asia, the US and the West view India as a crucial regional counterbalance.
- **Democratic Credentials**
  - India's status as a liberal, pluralist democracy adds to its attractiveness as a global partner.

### Conclusion

- India's "**multi-alignment**" strategy, rooted in national interest, economic strength, and democratic values, allows it to **navigate global geopolitics effectively**.
- Balancing diverse partnerships while upholding core principles is crucial for **India's continued success on the global stage**.

## Editorials, Gists and Explainers

### 1. A search for deterrence in the Red Sea - The Hindu

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

**Context:**

- The **ongoing conflict in the Red Sea** involving Houthi rebels, Israeli attacks, and the hijacking of ships has raised concerns about the **impact on stability and trade**.
- The **use of modern weaponry** by the rebels adds complexity to the situation.

**Houthi Attacks and Tactics**

- Houthi rebels have targeted merchant shipping using various methods, including drones and anti-ship ballistic missiles.
- Instances of boarding ships and hijacking, such as the case of the Galaxy Leader, indicate the rebels' capabilities and training.
- State support to Houthis makes things more complicated, which in this case points to Iran, and perhaps China.

**Impact on Trade and Stability**

- The conflict poses a growing concern for maritime trade, with potential disruptions and increased rerouting and insurance costs.
- The use of advanced weaponry raises questions about the effectiveness of joint defence exercises and interoperability among maritime forces.
- Similar to past challenges such as piracy, delayed international responses provide adversaries with time to adapt to modern technologies and adopt new tactics, impacting the 'High-Risk Area' for maritime trade.

**International Response**

- **Operation Prosperity Guardian** launched by the US, under the Combined Maritime Force's (CMF) Combined Task Force 153 has seen a tepid response from allies and partners.
- Notable absences include France, Italy, Spain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Japan and Australia.
- The US also plans to designate the Houthis as a specially designated global terrorist group, potentially restricting their access to the global financial system.

**Challenges and Divisions**

- The lack of a unified response indicates divisions among like-minded nations supporting freedom of navigation and maritime security.
- The US allies, including NATO members, operating independently raises questions about the effectiveness of international cooperative mechanisms.

**Need for Calibrated Actions**

- The Houthi rebels seem to exploit the divisions among nations, questioning the US's global dominance.
- The solution requires a ground-based approach to counter the attacks.
- Addressing the supply of weaponry is crucial, and there is a need for a feasible and quick achievable end state.
- Avoiding a state-on-state confrontation and preventing Yemen from becoming a battleground are critical considerations.

## 2. On delisting some Kuki-Zomi tribes - The Hindu

**Relevance:** Polity

**Context:**

- The Centre recently urged the Manipur Government to consider a representation seeking the **delisting of specific Kuki and Zomi tribes** from the ST list of Manipur.
- The request aims to **include the Meiteis in the ST list** by excluding certain Kuki and Zomi tribes.

**Context of Ethnic Conflict**

- The representation follows an eight-month-long ethnic conflict between valley-based Meitei people and hills-based Kuki-Zo (ST) people.
- The conflict arose from a Manipur High Court order directing the State government to recommend Meiteis' inclusion in the ST list.
- Meiteis have argued for ST status because of their inability to own land in the forested hill districts, where only STs can own land.

**Representation's Claim**

- The representation challenges the inclusion of three specific entries in the ST list of Manipur.
- These include "Any Mizo(Lushai) Tribes," "Zou," and "Any Kuki Tribes".
- **Arguments**
  - These tribes are not indigenous to Manipur
  - There had been no mention of these tribes residing in Manipur in pre-Independence Censuses.
- The claims suggest that the inclusion has facilitated illegal immigration and deprived Meiteis of land ownership in hill districts.

**Validity of Representation Claims**
**1. Historical Inclusion**

- The argument that these tribes were not present in Manipur during the first Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) list in 1950 is debunked, as these entries were part of the initial list.
- There is no empirical evidence to show that these tribes' presence in the ST list has aided any form of organised illegal immigration into Manipur.

**2. Backward Classes Commission Recommendations**

- The First Backward Classes Commission recommended specifying individual tribe names in the ST list instead of umbrella tribes.
- Therefore, in 1956, individual tribe names were included, except for "Any Mizo (Lushai) Tribe," retained from the previous list.

**3. Splintering Tendency among Kuki Tribes**

- The Lokur Commission in 1965 observed a "splintering tendency" among Kuki tribes, leading to sub-groups establishing distinct identities.
  - The Lokur Commission opted to categorise tribes as broader groups with sub-tribes, encompassing synonyms.
- The need to address minority groups resulted in the addition of "Any Kuki Tribes" to the ST list in 2002-2003.
- The 2002-2003 addition of "Any Kuki Tribes" led to confusion, prompting the Bhuria Commission to recommend specifying tribe names.

**Implications**

- The representation has potential implications for exacerbating existing divisions between communities in Manipur.
- The government's consideration of delisting certain tribes raises questions about the criteria for defining STs and the ongoing ethnic conflict.



### 3. CUES FOR REFORM - Indian Express

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

**Context:**

- The recently released **Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) for 2023**, titled 'Beyond Basics,' delves into the **educational landscape of rural India**, specifically focusing on **14-18-year-olds**.
- This comprehensive report, conducted by civil society organisation **Pratham**, spans 28 districts in 26 states.

<p><b>Enrollment Trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report revealed a positive trend in enrollment, with 86.8% of 14-18-year-olds enrolled in educational institutions.</li> <li>• Despite initial concerns related to pandemic-induced economic distress, more students are transitioning to secondary education.</li> <li>• However, despite increased enrollment, the report identifies significant challenges in foundational skills, indicating a potential impact on the quality of the future labour force. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Approximately a fourth struggle to read at a Grade 2 level text in the local language</li> <li>○ Over half face difficulties with arithmetic skills expected by Grade 5.</li> <li>○ Girls outperform boys in reading a Class II level text in their native language (76% vs. 70.9%), while boys excel in Math and English reading comprehension.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Enrollment gaps are noticeable by age, with 3.9% non-enrollment for 14-year-olds and 32.6% for 18-year-olds.</li> <li>• Only 5.6% of surveyed youth are currently undergoing vocational training, primarily at the college level.</li> </ul> <p><b>Academic Pressure and Competition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report addresses the pervasive issue of academic pressure, not limited to urban areas.</li> <li>• It suggests reforming pedagogic processes to alleviate pressure on students who must balance academics with responsibilities such as working in family farms.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Digital Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The increasing use of smartphones in rural areas, with 95% of surveyed households possessing them, presents an opportunity to extend education.</li> <li>• ASER recommends flexible classroom designs and time schedules to accommodate this digital shift.</li> <li>• However, there is a need to encourage students and parents to utilise digital technologies for learning purposes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Gender Gaps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASER 2023 observes a narrowing gender gap in school enrollment, with only a 0.2 percentage point difference between males and females.</li> <li>• Girls express a greater desire for higher education, with 7.4% enrolled in undergraduate courses compared to 6.8% of males.</li> <li>• However, career choices and societal norms, including perceived ideal marriage age, contribute to gender-based educational disparities.</li> <li>• The report unveils gender disparities in smartphone ownership and usage too. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 38% of males use smartphones for online services compared to 19% of females.</li> <li>○ Males are twice as likely to use smartphones for practical tasks like reservations and bill payments.</li> <li>○ Only 30% of females have an email compared to 50% of males.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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## Quick Look

### 1. Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)

- Under the scheme, the Centre transfers an amount of Rs 6,000 per year, in three equal instalments, directly into the bank accounts of all landholding farmers irrespective of the size of their land holdings.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme with 100% funding from the Government of India.
- It is being implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- The entire responsibility of identification of beneficiary farmer families rests with the State / UT Governments.
- Objective
  - To supplement the financial needs of the Small and Marginal Farmers in procuring various inputs to ensure proper crop health and appropriate yields.
  - To protect them from falling in the clutches of moneylenders for meeting such expenses and ensure their continuance in the farming activities.
- According to the data with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, every fourth beneficiary added under the PM-Kisan scheme over the past two months is a woman.

### 2. Farsi Language

- The External Affairs Minister recently announced that the Government of India has decided to include Farsi as one of the classical languages in India under the New Education Policy.
- Farsi, also known as Persian Language, is the most widely spoken member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian languages, a subfamily of the Indo-European languages.
- It is the official language of Iran, and two varieties of Persian known as Dari and Tajik are official languages in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, respectively.
- Significant populations of Farsi speakers can be found in other Persian Gulf countries as well as large communities in the US.
- Farsi in Iran is written in a variety of the Arabic script called Perso-Arabic, which has some innovations to account for Persian phonological differences.

### 3. Windfall Tax

- It is a tax levied by governments against certain industries when economic conditions allow those industries to experience significantly above-average profits.
- The term "windfall" refers to an unexpected rise in profits, and the tax on windfall gains is known as the windfall tax.
  - These revenues cannot be linked to anything the company actively pursues, such as its business strategy or expansion.
- A recent example is the sudden rise in the profits of the oil and gas industries due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- Purpose
  - Redistribution of unexpected gains when high prices benefit producers at the expense of consumers
  - To fund social welfare schemes
  - As a supplementary revenue stream for the government
  - As a way for the Government to narrow the country's widening trade deficit

#### 4. 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' Initiative

- Recently, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) launched the 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative.
- The NHAI suggested tagging users to complete the Know Your Customer (KYC) process by the end of January 31 to avoid deactivation.
- Objectives
  - To enhance the efficiency of the Electronic Toll Collection system and provide seamless movement at the Toll Plazas.
  - To discourage user behaviour of using single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle.

#### 5. El Nino and La Nina

- El Nino and La Nina are two opposing climate trends that deviate from the normal conditions and normally run nine to twelve months, but can often extend.
- These events occur every two to seven years on average (El Nino is more frequent than La Nina), but not on a regular basis and together are referred to as the El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle by scientists.
- El Nino is typically known as the warm phase (a band of warmer water spreading from west to east in the equatorial Pacific Ocean) and La Nina is identified as the cold phase (a band of cooler water spreads east-west) of ENSO.
- Both El Nino and La Nina can have global effects on weather, wildfires, ecosystems and economics.

### Quick Look

#### 1. Paramyothecium indicum

- Recently, the scientists discovered a new species of phytopathogenic fungus in Kerala, named 'Paramyothecium indicum'.
  - Phytopathogens are parasites surviving on a plant host.
- They are responsible for "serious plant diseases which might negatively affect crop productivity.
- Paramyothecium leaf spots are a type of fungal disease that can affect a variety of plants.
- Some species of Paramyothecium produce secondary metabolites with bio-herbicidal potentials and, therefore, may find application in controlling weeds.

#### 2. Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival

- The 9th edition of the Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival (PPHF), a state festival of Arunachal Pradesh, is about to take place at Seijosa in the Pakke Kessang district.
- Objectives
  - To recognise the role played by the Nyishi tribal group in conserving hornbills in Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR).
  - To raise alternative sources of income for the region
  - To create awareness in the rest of India about the wonders of PTR and its surrounding areas.
- 2023 Theme: "Domutoh Domutoh, Paga hum Domutoh" that translates to 'Let Our Hornbills Remain' in the Nyishi language.
- This year's festival aims to underscore the critical need for preserving these iconic birds.

### 3. Panama Canal

- It is an artificial waterway that connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean.
- It cuts across the Isthmus of Panama and is a conduit for maritime trade.
- It is one of the two most strategic artificial waterways in the world, the other being the Suez Canal.
- It consists of a series of locks that raise and lower the water level to facilitate the passage of ships through the continental divide.
- Recently, scientists discovered a lost forest in the Panama Canal, dating back around 22 million years.

### 4. Blue Economy

- According to the World Bank, the blue economy is the "sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem."
- Fisheries and aquaculture are integral components of the Blue Economy, providing a substantial portion of the world's protein sources.
- Sustainable practices in these sectors are essential for global food security.
- By promoting responsible resource management, the Blue Economy supports the preservation of marine biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Healthy oceans play a crucial role in climate regulation and carbon sequestration.
- Coastal and marine tourism is a significant contributor to the global economy.

### 5. Greenland

- Greenland is an island country that is a part of Denmark.
- It is located between the Arctic and Atlantic oceans.
- Greenland is the world's largest island.
- The citizens of these countries are all Danish nationals.
- With a population of 56,081 (2020 data), it is the least densely populated region in the world.
- Greenland's capital is Nuuk, About a third of the population lives in Nuuk.
- It is the capital and largest city of Greenland.
- Though a part of the continent of North America, Greenland has been politically and culturally associated with Europe.



## Prelims Track Question

**Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA):**

1. FCRA registration can be suspended by the Union Home Ministry on grounds of violation for a maximum initial period of 180 days.
2. FCRA prohibits organizations from publishing reports on current affairs programs.
3. The cancellation of FCRA registration for an organization is subject to a thorough hearing and an opportunity to present its case.

**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 the National Essential Diagnostics List (NEDL):**

1. NEDL includes only diagnostic tests for rare diseases.
2. The World Health Organization recommended the development of NEDL to focus on in-vitro diagnostics exclusively.
3. ICMR has invited stakeholders to propose additional diagnostic tests to the existing NEDL based on factors such as disease burden, alignment with public health standards, and availability of resources.
4. Essential diagnostic tests in NEDL are selected without considering disease prevalence, evidence of efficacy, and comparative cost-effectiveness.

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

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

**Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the 'Previous Approval' Requirement under various legislations:**

1. The 'Previous Approval' requirement was introduced under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946, for

investigating offenses under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

2. The Supreme Court, in 2014, struck down the 'Previous Approval' requirement under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act.
3. The 'Previous Approval' provision was reintroduced in 2018 under the Prevention of Corruption Act, Section 17A, requiring approval for investigating offenses committed by public servants during their official duties.

**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 "White Gold":**

1. White Gold primarily refers to a high-grade variety of refined sugar.
2. The term "White Gold" historically referred to salt during ancient trade routes.
3. Cotton has been colloquially termed "White Gold" due to its historical economic significance.
4. White Gold is exclusively associated with a rare gemstone known for its colorlessness.

**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 Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN):**

1. PM-JANMAN primarily focuses on the development of tribal communities in urban areas.
2. The campaign aims to provide basic facilities such as pucca houses, power, and water connections to habitations where Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) reside.
3. PM-JANMAN includes an information and education campaign to register

inhabitants for essential documents such as Aadhaar, PM Jan Dhan cards, caste certificates, Kisan Samman Nidhi cards, etc.

4. The Union Cabinet has approved a plan to spend over ₹24,000 crore on PM-JANMAN over the next three years.

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

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

**Q6. What is the purpose of the Raghavan Committee, seen in the news recently?**

- A. To suggest reforms on Anti Defection law  
 B. To investigate the financial irregularities in a government department  
 C. To review the functioning of DRDO  
 D. To conduct an inquiry into alleged human rights violations in a particular conflict zone.

**Q7. Consider the following statements with reference to Guarantee Redemption Fund (GRF)**

1. It is established exclusively for the redemption of guarantees provided to State Public Sector Enterprises.
2. It is included in the consolidated fund of the States, allowing flexibility in its usage for various financial commitments.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Q8. Consider the following statements**

1. If an elected member voluntarily gives up his membership of a political party.
2. If a member votes or abstains from voting in the House contrary to any direction issued, without obtaining prior permission.
3. If any independently elected member joins any political party after six months.
4. If a political party merges with another party with the support of at least two-thirds of the members.

**How many of the statements mentioned above constitute the conditions for defection under the Anti-Defection Law?**

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

**Q9. Consider the following statements regarding Light-Emitting Diodes (LEDs)**

1. Diodes are electronic components that allow current to flow in both directions, facilitating versatile applications in electronic circuits.
2. An LED is a diode emitting light through electroluminescence.
3. The band gap in LEDs plays a crucial role in determining the energy emitted during electron-hole recombination.

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

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

**Q10. With reference to Non-Aligned Movement, consider the following statements**

1. It was formed during the Cold War as an organisation of States that did not seek to formally align with or against any major power bloc.
2. The first NAM Summit Conference took place in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1961.
3. The countries of the NAM collectively comprise over 50% of the global population.

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

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

## Prelims Track Question

### Q1. Consider the following statements about the Southwest Monsoon

1. The Southwest Monsoon in India is characterized by the seasonal reversal of winds, bringing moisture-laden air from the Indian Ocean.
2. The onset of the Southwest Monsoon is marked by the arrival of monsoon winds along the Kerala coast around June, known as the "June 1st" phenomenon.
3. The Southwest Monsoon plays a crucial role in India's agriculture, providing the majority of rainfall essential for Kharif crops.

**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 West Asia

1. West Asia, also known as the Middle East, is a region located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, comprising countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Israel, and Jordan.
2. The Suez Canal, a crucial waterway connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea, is located in West Asia.
3. West Asia is home to the majority of the world's proven oil reserves, with significant oil-producing countries like Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran.
4. The Arab Spring, a series of protests and uprisings that began in 2010, primarily affected countries in West Asia, leading to political changes in several nations.

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

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

### Q3. Consider the following statements about China's reunification policy

1. China's reunification policy aims to bring back territories it considers as part of its historical legacy, including Taiwan.

2. The '1992 consensus' is a key element in China's reunification policy, recognizing the existence of 'one China.'
3. The younger generation in Taiwan, influenced by 'Taiwanisation,' generally supports China's reunification policy.

**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 the Indian Stamp Act, 1899

1. The Indian Stamp Act, 1899, is a central legislation that governs the collection of stamp duty on various instruments.
2. Stamp duty is a form of tax levied on legal documents, such as agreements, deeds, and bills of exchange, to make them legally effective.
3. The Act empowers the states to determine the rates of stamp duty on different types of instruments.
4. Non-payment of the required stamp duty can result in the legal documents being rendered invalid or not admissible in court.

**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 about e-SAKSHI

1. e-SAKSHI is a mobile application launched under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS).
2. The primary objective of e-SAKSHI is to enhance transparency, accessibility, and efficiency in the execution of MPLADS.
3. The mobile application facilitates communication between Members of Parliament (MPs) and relevant authorities, streamlining the proposal, tracking, and oversight of development projects.



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

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

**Q6. The Atlantification phenomenon often seen in news is most closely related to which of the following water bodies?**

- A. Norwegian Sea
- B. Hudson Bay
- C. Barents Sea
- D. Kara Sea

**Q7. Consider the following statements with reference to PLI Scheme**

1. The scheme aims to scale up domestic manufacturing capability, accompanied by higher import substitution and employment generation.
2. Under the scheme, only the domestic companies receive financial rewards for manufacturing in India.
3. Initially targeted at three industries, the scheme currently covers around 25 sectors.

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

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

**Q8. What is the primary objective of the Operation Prosperity Guardian, seen in the news recently?**

- A. To protect the Red Sea Commerce.
- B. To provide border security to the NATO members.

- C. To provide humanitarian assistance in war stricken Gaza.

- D. To undertake counterterrorism operations.

**Q9. Consider the following statements regarding Scheduled Tribes**

1. The Constitution defines the criteria for recognition of Scheduled Tribes.
2. Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) impart quality education to ST children in remote areas.

**Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?**

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

**Q10. With reference to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), consider the following statements**

1. It surveys children aged 6 to 14 to track trends in school enrolment, attendance and reading and arithmetic abilities.
2. It is released by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with NITI Aayog.
3. The ASER 2023 report reveals that males are twice as likely to use smartphones for practical tasks.

**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 A is correct

#### Explanation

- FCRA registration can be suspended by the Union Home Ministry on grounds of violation. The initial suspension period is for a maximum of 180 days. This provides the government with a tool to temporarily restrict an organization's ability to receive foreign contributions in case of alleged violations. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- FCRA does not explicitly prohibit organizations from publishing reports on current affairs programs. The act primarily regulates the acceptance and utilization of foreign contributions to ensure they are not detrimental to national interest. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**
- The cancellation of FCRA registration is not always subject to a thorough hearing and an opportunity to present the case. In some instances, the cancellation may occur without adequate opportunity for the organization to be heard, leading to concerns about due process. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**

### Answer 2 Option A is correct

#### Explanation

- NEDL is not limited to diagnostic tests for rare diseases. It encompasses essential and basic tests that should be available at various levels of healthcare facilities, addressing a broader spectrum of health concerns. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect**
- While the World Health Organization recommended the development of NEDL, it is not exclusively focused on in-vitro diagnostics. NEDL includes various types of essential diagnostic tests required at different healthcare levels. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**
- ICMR has indeed invited stakeholders to propose additional diagnostic tests to the existing NEDL. The criteria for proposals include factors such as the essential nature of the test, disease burden, alignment with public health standards, and resource availability. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- Essential diagnostic tests in NEDL are selected based on considerations such as disease prevalence, public health relevance, evidence of efficacy, accuracy, and comparative cost-effectiveness. These

factors ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the tests' impact and utility. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect**

### Answer 3 Option C is correct

#### Explanation

- The 'Previous Approval' requirement was introduced under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946, specifically under Section 6A.
- This provision mandated seeking approval from the central government before investigating alleged offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- The Supreme Court did strike down the 'Previous Approval' requirement under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act in 2014.
- This decision had implications for investigations into corruption offences involving public servants. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The 'Previous Approval' provision was reintroduced in 2018 under the Prevention of Corruption Act as Section 17A.
- This provision mandates seeking approval from the central or state government or a competent authority before initiating an inquiry or investigation into offenses committed by public servants during their official duties. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

### Answer 4 Option B is correct

#### Explanation

- "White Gold" historically refers to a valuable commodity, but it is not primarily associated with refined sugar. The term has been used to denote various valuable substances throughout history. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect**
- Historically, "White Gold" referred to salt during ancient trade routes. Salt was a valuable and essential commodity, often considered as precious as gold in certain historical contexts. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- Cotton has been colloquially termed "White Gold" due to its historical economic significance. The phrase reflects the economic importance of cotton, particularly during periods when it was a major cash crop. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

- "White Gold" is not exclusively associated with a rare colorless gemstone. The term has historical and economic connotations related to various commodities, but it is not commonly used in the context of gemstones.

**Hence, statement 4 is incorrect**

**Answer 5 Option C is correct**

**Explanation**

- PM-JANMAN primarily focuses on the development of tribal communities, but the emphasis is on habitations where Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) reside, which may include rural as well as urban areas. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect**
- PM-JANMAN aims to provide basic facilities such as pucca houses, power, and water connections to habitations where Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) reside.
- The focus is on 22,000 habitations with an estimated 36 lakh people from PVTG communities. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- PM-JANMAN includes an information and education campaign, conducting camps in PVTG habitations to register inhabitants for essential documents like Aadhaar, PM Jan Dhan cards, caste certificates, Kisan Samman Nidhi cards, etc. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- The Union Cabinet has indeed approved a plan to spend over ₹24,000 crore on PM-JANMAN over the next three years. Projects worth ₹4,700 crore have already been sanctioned, including the construction of pucca homes. **Hence, statement 4 is correct**

**Answer 6 Option C is correct**

**Explanation**

- The nine-member Vijay Raghavan panel was set up by the government to review the functioning of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- The review comes amid concerns about project delays, as highlighted by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense and the Comptroller and Auditor General.
- It recommended the creation of a Defense Technology Council to determine India's defense technology roadmap, chaired by the Prime Minister.

- It recommended DRDO to focus on research and development for defence and avoid involvement in productization, production cycles and product management.
- The Committee also proposed a separate department under the Defense Ministry - the Department of Defence Science, Technology, and Innovation.

**Answer 7 Option D is correct**

**Explanation**

- Guarantee Redemption Fund (GRF) was established in the Public Account of India from 1999-2000.
- Purpose: Redemption of guarantees given to Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), Financial Institutions, etc. by the Union Government whenever such guarantees are invoked. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- The fund is fed through budgetary appropriations with an annual provision in the Budget Estimates (BE).
- On the recommendations of the Twelfth Finance Commission, fifteen States have set up a Guarantee Redemption Fund.
- This fund is maintained outside the consolidated fund of the States in the public account and is not to be used for any other purpose, except for redemption of loans. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**

**Answer 8 Option B is correct**

**Explanation**

- The Tenth Schedule, popularly known as the Anti-Defection Act, was included in the Constitution via the 52nd Amendment Act, 1985.
- It sets the provisions for disqualification of elected members on the grounds of defection to another political party.
- Grounds of Disqualification
  - If an elected member voluntarily gives up his membership of a political party. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
  - If he votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party or anyone authorized to do so, without obtaining prior permission. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
  - If any independently elected member joins any political party. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

- If any nominated member joins any political party after the expiry of six months.
- If a political party merges with another party, its members will not lose their seats, but this merger must have the support of at least two-thirds of the members of that party in the House. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect.**

**Answer 9 Option B is correct**

**Explanation**

- Diodes are electronic components allowing current flow in only one direction.
- They consist of a p-n junction, where electrons move from the n-type material to the p-type material, creating a one-way current flow. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- An LED is a diode emitting light through electroluminescence. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The p-n junction in LEDs allows electrons with more energy than holes to release light upon recombination.
- The band gap, representing the energy difference between electron levels, determines the emitted light's frequency.
- In LEDs, the band gap plays a crucial role in determining the energy released during the process of electron-hole recombination. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

- LEDs are more energy-efficient, durable and cost-effective than incandescent bulbs and fluorescent lamps.
- Applications range from consumer electronics to industrial use, showcasing their versatility and impact on energy conservation.

**Answer 10 Option C is correct**

**Explanation**

- The Non-Aligned Movement was formed during the Cold War as an organization of States that did not seek to formally align themselves with either the United States or the Soviet Union, but sought to remain independent or neutral. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The basic concept for the group originated in 1955 during discussions that took place at the Asia-Africa Bandung Conference held in Indonesia.
- The first NAM Summit Conference took place in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in September 1961. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It was an initiative of then PM Jawaharlal Nehru, Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah, Indonesian President Sukarno, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito.
- The countries of the NAM represent nearly two-thirds of the United Nations' members and contain 55% of the world population. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**



## Prelims Track Answer

### Answer 1 Option C is correct

#### Explanation

- The Southwest Monsoon is a result of the seasonal reversal of winds. During summer, the high temperatures over the Indian subcontinent create low-pressure areas, drawing moist air from the southwest, including the Indian Ocean. This moisture-laden air brings rainfall to the region. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The onset of the Southwest Monsoon in India occurs with the arrival of monsoon winds along the Kerala coast around June 1st.
- This marks the official beginning of the monsoon season in the country. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The Southwest Monsoon is vital for Indian agriculture, especially for Kharif crops like rice, sugarcane, cotton, and pulses.
- The majority of the country's annual rainfall, approximately 70-90%, is received during the monsoon season, supporting crop growth and ensuring water availability. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

### Answer 2 Option C is correct

#### Explanation

- West Asia, also known as the Middle East, is a region that lies at the convergence of Europe, Asia, and Africa. It includes countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, and others. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Suez Canal is not located in West Asia. It is situated in northeastern Egypt, connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea. Egypt is part of North Africa, not West Asia. **Hence, statement 2 is INCORRECT.**
- West Asia is indeed home to the majority of the world's proven oil reserves. Significant oil-producing countries in the region include Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and others. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- The Arab Spring, which began in 2010, primarily affected countries in North Africa and West Asia. It led to widespread protests, political changes, and uprisings in several nations, including Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**

### Answer 3 Option B is correct

#### Explanation

- China's reunification policy focuses on territories it considers integral to its historical legacy, with Taiwan being a primary target for reunification. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The '1992 consensus' is a crucial aspect of China's reunification policy. It signifies an understanding between the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Communist Party of China (CPC) that acknowledges the existence of 'one China.'
- However, Taiwan, under President Tsai Ing-wen, has rejected this consensus, contributing to tensions. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The younger generation in Taiwan, influenced by 'Taiwanisation,' generally opposes China's reunification policy.
- This generation identifies strongly as Taiwanese and has grown up in a democratic political environment, often viewing reunification with China unfavorably. **Hence, statement 3 is INCORRECT.**

### Answer 4 Option D is correct

#### Explanation

- The Indian Stamp Act, 1899, is a central legislation that provides the legal framework for the imposition and collection of stamp duty on various instruments. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Stamp duty is a tax levied on certain types of documents to give them legal validity. These documents include agreements, deeds, bills of exchange, and others. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- While the Indian Stamp Act is a central law, it empowers the states to prescribe the rates of stamp duty applicable to different types of instruments. States have the flexibility to determine their stamp duty rates. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- Non-payment or insufficient payment of the required stamp duty can result in legal consequences. Documents that have not been properly stamped may not be admitted as evidence in courts and can be rendered invalid. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**



**Answer 5 Option C is correct****Explanation**

- e-SAKSHI is a mobile application launched specifically for Members of Parliament (MPs) under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS). **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The primary objective of e-SAKSHI is to enhance transparency, accessibility, and efficiency in the execution of MPLADS, allowing for better management of development projects. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The mobile application facilitates communication between MPs and relevant authorities, streamlining the entire process of proposing, tracking, and overseeing development projects in their constituencies. It aims to improve decision-making processes and enhance the exchange of information. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

**Answer 6 Option C is correct****Explanation**

- The Barents Sea borders the Norwegian and Greenland Sea in the west, the Arctic Sea in the north and the Kara Sea in the east.
- It is divided between Russia and Norway as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- Scientists recently discovered that some parts of the Barents Sea have started to closely resemble the Atlantic. They call this phenomenon "Atlantification". **Hence, option C is correct.**
- Human-caused global climate change has been accelerating the Atlantification process and this will in turn significantly affect the weather patterns, ocean circulations, and the entire Arctic ecosystem.

**Answer 7 Option A is correct****Explanation**

- The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme was conceived to scale up domestic manufacturing capability, accompanied by higher import substitution and employment generation. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Launched in March 2020, the scheme initially targeted three industries viz. Mobile and allied Component Manufacturing; Electrical Component Manufacturing; and Medical Devices.

- Later, it was extended to 14 sectors. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- In the PLI scheme, domestic and foreign companies receive financial rewards for manufacturing in India, based on a percentage of their revenue over up to five years. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The incentives given, are calculated on the basis of incremental sales.

**Answer 8 Option C is correct****Explanation**

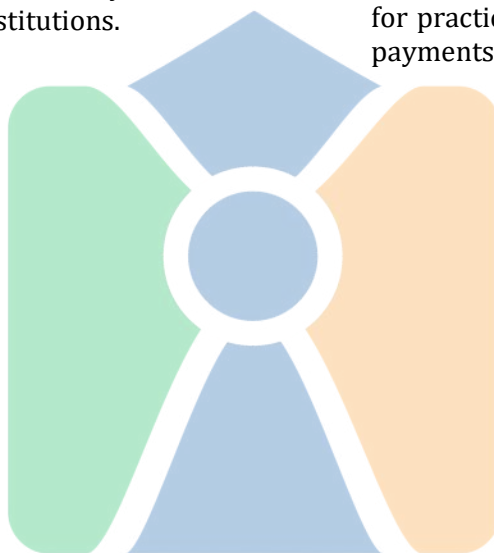
- The US has introduced Operation Prosperity Guardian, an enhanced naval protection force in the southern Red Sea to counter Houthi attacks on merchant shipping under the Combined Task Force 153 (CTF 153). **Hence, option C is correct.**
- The Houthi attacks, initially focused on supporting Hamas in Gaza, have escalated to target merchant tankers in the Bab el-Mandeb strait.
- Operation Prosperity Guardian includes participation from the UK, with HMS Diamond contributing alongside three US destroyers.
- The participating nations will conduct joint patrols in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

**Answer 9 Option A is correct****Explanation**

- As per Census-1931, Schedule tribes are termed as "backward tribes" living in the "Excluded" and "Partially Excluded" areas.
- The Constitution does not define the criteria for recognition of Scheduled Tribes. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- However, Article 366(25) of the Constitution only provides the process to define Scheduled Tribes.
- Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY) is a market-linked tribal entrepreneurship development program for forming clusters of tribal SHGs and strengthening them into Tribal Producer Companies.
- Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) started in the year 1997-98 to impart quality education to ST children in remote areas. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

**Answer 10 Option B is correct****Explanation**

- The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) for 2023, titled 'Beyond Basics,' was recently released by NGO Pratham. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- It has been surveying children aged 6 to 14 since 2005 to track trends in school enrolment, attendance and reading and arithmetic abilities. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The report revealed a positive trend in enrollment, with 86.8% of 14-18-year-olds enrolled in educational institutions.
- Only 5.6% of surveyed youth are currently undergoing vocational training, primarily at the college level.
- It observes a narrowing gender gap in school enrollment, with only a 0.2 percentage point difference between males and females.
- Girls express a greater desire for higher education, with 7.4% enrolled in undergraduate courses compared to 6.8% of males.
- 38% of males use smartphones for online services compared to 19% of females.
- Males are twice as likely to use smartphones for practical tasks like reservations and bill payments. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

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