

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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Important News Articles

GS II

1. With no Census data to depend on, government scrambling to assess population of vulnerable tribes - 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

Prelims Takeaway

- PM-JANMAN
- PVTGs.

News:

- With the 2021 Census indefinitely delayed, **the government's attempt at using the PM Gati Shakti portal**
- It is aimed to **estimate the total population of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)** across the country hitting one wall after another.

Key Highlights

- The information on population is crucial to the **implementation of the government's ₹24,000 crore PM-JANMAN package for PVTGs.**
- When the package was launched in November 2023 to ensure that PVTG villages had all basic facilities and infrastructure
 - the government said there were around 28 lakh PVTG people in the country.
- The government said its **goal was to plug infrastructural gaps in the around 22,500 habitations they occupy.**
- But by the time the operational guidelines were released in January 2024, the Tribal Affairs Ministry claimed the total population of PVTGs stood at 36.75 lakh.
- By the end of January, the government had further revised the total population tally — pegging it at 44.64 lakh as of January 31, 2024.
- Neither of these estimates had included data from Bihar and Manipur, with officials saying that population of some habitations are yet to be fed into the portal for the rest of the States as well.
- some **districts are using population data from ration distribution charts**, others are using data from as far back as the 2011 Census or surveys conducted in 2015 by government institutes;
- Some infrastructure projects like building connecting roads and anganwadis under the JANMAN package require a population criteria to be met before being sanctioned.
- The Tribal Affairs ministry has told all Ministries working on PM-JANMAN that the population data on the portal is not meant to be static and that it is subject to revision
- The latest available government data from January shows that there are at least 12.70 lakh PVTG households across the country.

2. Government may rejig its stance on Aadhaar as birth date proof, with risk riders - The Hindu

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.

Prelims Takeaway

- EPFO
- Aadhaar

News:

- **To avoid inconvenience to the public and beneficiaries** of government schemes and quell a sense of anxiety about a recent directive to cease the usage of Aadhaar as a proof of 'date of birth'

Key Highlights

- the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) is **likely to issue a clarification soon**
 - that those relying on the ID proof for age may do so after undertaking a "risk-based assessment".
- The UIDAI, in a December 2023 missive, asked all agencies that use Aadhaar to **authenticate identities to delete it from the list of acceptable documents** for verifying a person's date of birth.

- The authority said this was an iteration of its stated position and had been highlighted by different High Court judgments.
- Now, Aadhaar cards come with a prominent disclaimer that **they are “a proof of identity, not of citizenship or date of birth”**.
- UIDAI would not withdraw the directive but would soon issue an advisory for agencies that
 - rely on Aadhaar authentication for welfare benefits and KYC (Know Your Customer) compliance purposes.
- “The birth date and even the address mentioned in Aadhaar are only a reasonable assessment of the age and location of an individual, based on documents provided at the time of enrolment.
- But it cannot be construed as foolproof evidence for either of those details
- **it is up to the concerned entity to decide whether to accept them or** seek more documents after assessing the risks involved in their use cases for Aadhaar authentication
- The date of birth can be verified by using documents such as birth certificates or school-leaving certificates
 - wherever knowing the precise age is critical, be it opening a bank account for a minor or a senior citizen,
 - or transferring pension benefits, he pointed out. Even a passport or driving licence can be used to confirm a person’s age.

Evaluating Impact

- Some entities like the **Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) have already scrapped Aadhaar’s use as birth date proof**,
- while other departments and user agencies are still evaluating the impact.
- Aadhaar is being used for registrations under the GST regime as well, but the date of birth is not vital in those cases.

3. Why have fresh protests erupted in Senegal? - The Hindu

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

News:

- **President Maky Sall postpones presidential elections** originally set for February 25, citing a dispute between the National Assembly and the Constitutional Council.

Prelims Takeaway

- Senegal
- Map Based Questions

Key Highlights

- Opposition legislators forcibly removed from parliament, allowing Sall an additional 10 months in office, **sparking nationwide protests**.
- Critics denounce the **move as a Constitutional coup d’état**.

Repeat of Previous Violence

- Sonko, barred from the Presidential race in January, had previously received a two-year prison sentence for alleged immoral behavior.

President Sall's Controversial Stance on Term Limits

- Sall, who took office in 2012 amid resistance against his predecessor's third term, justifies a potential third term based on a reinterpretation of the constitutional clock.
- Speculation arises about Sall's motives to consolidate power between the delayed elections.

Senegal's Democratic Record

- Senegal historically known for **smooth power transitions in its multi-party democratic system**.
- Never experienced a military coup or civil war since gaining independence in 1960.
- President Sall played a key role in regional efforts to remove Yahya Jammeh in the Gambia, promoting democratic governance in the West African region.

Concerns About Regional Stability

- Senegal's departure from its democratic tradition contrasts with neighboring countries facing military takeovers (Guinea, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger).
- Calls for major powers to reconsider their role in the region to address the recurring threat of military dictatorships in African countries.

4. Greek PM Mitsotakis to attend this week's Raisina Dialogue - The Hindu/ Greek PM's India visit on Feb 21; focus on strategic ties - Indian Express

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

Prelims Takeaway

- Raisina dialogue
- Greece

News:

- **Greece's Prime Minister** will travel to Delhi next week as the **chief guest for the Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA) annual Raisina Dialogue.**

Key Highlights

- Greek's PM will be one of several international dignitaries arriving for the conference **organised by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF)**
 - and is expected to include several Foreign Ministers and Deputy Foreign Ministers from European countries, including Latvia, Romania, Estonia, Serbia
 - and the Netherlands, and neighbouring countries like Nepal, Vietnam, as well as other Ministers from other parts of the world.
- **The Raisina Dialogue coincides this year with the G-20 Foreign Minister's Meeting hosted by Brazil on February 21-22**
 - and while the External Affairs Minister will stay in Delhi to host the conference, most G-20 Foreign Ministers are expected to be in Rio de Janeiro.
- According to sources, Ukraine's Deputy Foreign Minister is also expected to speak at the event.
- **"India-Greece relations have been elevated to 'Strategic Partnership'** during PM Modi's visit to Greece in August 2023.
- They are based on shared cultural values, commitment to foster economic growth, collaboration in the fields of security and defence, shipping, maritime and marked by convergence on regional and global issues
- India and Greece have been negotiating a migration and mobility agreement to facilitate legal "skilled migration" between the two countries since 2022, but have yet to conclude it.
- This is the ninth edition of the Raisina dialogue, organised by the MEA-ORF since 2016.
- Previous editions have had keynote addresses by leaders of Denmark, Rwanda, Israel, the European Commission, Italy, and others.

5. How long will 5 members override 188 nations: India on UNSC reform - Indian Express

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

Prelims Takeaway

- UNSC
- Security Council Reform

News:

- India has questioned **how much longer can the will of five permanent members of the powerful UN body continue** to override the collective voice of the world organisation's 188 member states.

Key Highlights

- India's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador, speaking at the Inter-Governmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform
 - stressed that "equity" must be the cornerstone of global efforts to reform the 15-nation UN body.
- **"Equity demands that every nation, irrespective of its size or power, be afforded an equal opportunity to shape global decision-making**
- the five permanent members of the Council – **China, France, Russia, the UK and the US**

- whose exclusive veto rights have the power to impact decision-making in the Security Council on matters of maintenance of international peace and security.
- **The Council's other 10 members are elected for two-year terms** to the non-permanent category and they do not have veto powers.
- Expanding only in the non-permanent category of the Council will not solve the problem.
- It will in fact widen the difference between permanent and non-permanent members even more, thereby perpetuating inequities instead of removing

GS III

6. After PAC nod, hike in reporting limits for Ministries' spending proposed - Indian Express

Relevance: Government Budgeting

News:

- After a gap of about 18 years, **the government is set to revise its financial limits for 'New Service' and 'New Instruments of Service'** after getting approval from Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

Prelims Takeaway

- Appropriations
- Grants

Key Highlights

- The panel has approved the **Finance Ministry's proposal to raise the reporting limit for new policy-related expenditure** by ministries/departments to above Rs 50 crore
 - but not exceeding Rs 100 crore along with mandating prior approval of Parliament for spending over Rs 100 crore.
- The approval, which has come in line with expansion in GDP growth and the Budget size, has fixed the reporting limit for 'New Instrument of Service'
 - to up to 20 per cent of the original appropriation or up to Rs 100 crore, whichever is higher.
- **The last such revision had come into effect in 2006.**
- Due to the low financial limits for new policy-related expenditure earlier, there has been a reported increase in the number of supplementary proposals from the ministries/departments.
- The time taken in seeking Parliament's approval would then cause delay in execution of projects, the report said.

New Service (NS) and New Instrument of Service (NIS)

- New Service (NS) refers to **expenditure arising out of a new policy decision, not brought to the notice of Parliament earlier**, including a new activity or a new investment.
- New Instrument of Service (NIS) refers to **relatively large expenditure arising out of important expansion of an existing policy.**
- The financial limits for 'New Service/New Instrument of Service' are applied whenever **the expenditure is incurred on account of the expansion of an existing policy.**
- According to the report, a substantial growth in budget size has diminished the delegated powers of the ministries leading to voluminous proposal(s) being forwarded, for reporting/approval of the Parliament.
- The PAC and the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) have been pointing to the **growing instances of unnecessary supplementary, re-appropriations not adhering to the NS/NIS limits;** and re-appropriations without reporting to Parliament or without obtaining prior approval of the Finance Ministry.
- the PAC had raised concerns over excess expenditure, ranging between 10.04 per cent to 79.77 per cent,
 - incurred during FY 2019-20 for grants/appropriations even after obtaining high amounts of supplementary grants by the ministries/departments to meet their additional requirements.
- While explaining the need for the proposed revision, the Department of Expenditure under the Finance Ministry in its submission to the PAC said
 - that in the last four financial years, the ministry took 2,500 tokens to the notice of the Parliament for re-appropriation.

7. Joblessness rising in country with education levels: study - The Hindu

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

News:

- According to a study by IIM Lucknow, India's economy is witnessing a **stagnating employment growth, weakening employment elasticity** and **slow structural transformation**.
- Additionally, structural problems are brewing in the labour market such as **low female labour force participation** and a **rise in the unemployment rate (UR) with education levels**.

Prelims Takeaway

- MGNREGA
- Unemployment
- Labour Force Participation Rate

Trends in Employment Growth

- Surge in output and employment from 1987-88 to 2004-05, followed by 'jobless growth' from 2004-05 to 2018-19, and a minimal rebound afterward.
- Agricultural sector, though employing the most youth, contributed low value-added to the overall economy, resulting in significant employment challenges.
- Economic growth hasn't translated into job creation and has rather resulted in net labour displacement.

Policy Recommendations for Growth

- The study suggests identifying and promoting the labour-intensive manufacturing sector to achieve inclusive growth.
- Additionally, examining the quality and decency of jobs alongside job quantity is important.
- As there is a strong linkage between productivity and job decency.

Education Levels in Labour Market

- There is a significant gender disparity in the labour market and a growing level of unemployment for the highly educated youth than the less educated.
- In 2020-21, the total labour force in India stood at an estimated 556.1 million.
- Out of this total, 292.2 million (54.9%) were self-employed, 22.8% were in regular employment and an estimated 22.3% were in casual employment.
- The UR for the illiterate and less educated class (below primary) was 0.57% and 1.13% respectively.
- But for the highly educated class (graduates and above), it was 14.73% in 2020-21 for the age group '15-29 years'

Gender Disparity in Labour Market

- There is a persistence of gender-based disparity in the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in rural and urban areas.
- Additionally, the decline of LFPR is higher for females as compared to males from 1983 to 2020-21.
- The overall female Work Force Participation Rate (WFPR) for those aged 15-59 in 2020-21 stood at 32.46%, a full 44.55 percentage points below that of men.
- Further, the total percentage of male WFPR (81.10%) in the same year for aged 15-59 years is more than twice the rate for female adults (33.79%).

Impact of Public Policies

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and similar initiatives have positive effects on rural livelihoods.
- These policies raise wages, increase female labour force participation and improve bargaining power among low-caste workers.

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

8. Is Russia testing a new anti-satellite weapon? - The Hindu

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

Context:

- **Russia** is actively working towards a formidable new development in space technology, focusing on creating a **nuclear anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon**.

<p>Nature of the Weapon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports suggest the Russian capability could involve a space-based anti-satellite weapon, violating the Outer Space Treaty (OST). • Speculations on its nuclear nature or nuclear-powered satellite raise security concerns, although not directly addressed by official statements. • Russia's historical ASAT capabilities date back to at least 1968, posing risks of space debris and violations of international agreements. <p>Anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons are designed to debilitate and/or destroy satellites that are already in orbit and operational. • ASAT weapons contravene the Outer Space Treaty (OST) by breaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Article VII, which holds signatories responsible for damaging satellites owned by other parties ◦ Article IX, which urges parties to avoid causing "harmful contamination" of space. • All of these attacks can be launched from the air, low orbit, or even ground installations. • There are many countries which have this capability, but only four countries, including India, have demonstrated their ASAT capabilities. 	<p>Types of ASATs</p> <p>1. Kinetic energy methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They destroy satellites in orbit by rocketing into them or detonating an explosive near them, and blowing them to pieces. • Because of the low gravity and lack of an atmosphere, the resulting debris can stay in orbit for a long time depending on their size. <p>2. Non-kinetic methods: They use non-physical attacks such as cyber-attacks, jamming, and even lasers to blind satellites without physically destroying them.</p> <p>Potential Threats and Implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space-based nuclear weapons pose risks of electromagnetic pulse (EMP) and release of charged particles, impacting satellites and causing radiation-induced disturbances. • Concerns about the Kessler effect highlight the potential for a cascade of debris collisions, endangering space infrastructure. • Historical instances like the Starfish Prime test highlight the devastating impact of high-altitude nuclear detonations on satellites and space infrastructure.
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Conclusion

- The emergence of alleged Russian space-based weaponry raises **significant geopolitical concerns**.
- It underscores the need for **transparency, diplomatic dialogue**, and efforts to **safeguard space assets and stability**.

9. Recalibrating merit in the age of Artificial Intelligence - The Hindu

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

Context:

- **Meritocracy**, rewarding individuals based on abilities and achievements, has been extensively debated on its **societal impacts**.
- The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) introduces new complexities, reshaping traditional notions of merit and meritocracy.

Critiques of Meritocracy

- Michael Young, a British sociologist, foresaw a dystopian meritocratic world in his satirical book, *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (1958).
- He envisioned a future, specifically 2034, as a society where social class and mobility were determined solely by intelligence and effort.
- Sandel argues that meritocracy fosters a sense of entitlement among the successful and resentment among those left behind, thereby eroding social cohesion.

Post-Structuralist Perspective

- Critical theorists and post-structuralists challenge meritocracy for masking power dynamics.
- They say that meritocracy can perpetuate social hierarchies by legitimising the status of the elite under the guise of fairness and neutrality.
- They argue that concepts of merit are socially constructed and reflect the biases and interests of those in power.
- On the other hand, Adrian Wooldridge acknowledges meritocracy's potential for reform but highlights unintended consequences such as hereditary privileges.

AI's Disruptive Influence on Meritocracy

- Introducing Artificial Intelligence (AI) into this equation completely complicates the idea of reforming meritocracy.
- AI, with its rapidly evolving capabilities, will be reshaping merit and the idea of meritocracy in six ways.
 1. AI, by its very nature, challenges human-centric definitions of merit.
 2. Access to AI tools becomes a determinant of advantage, overshadowing traditional notion of individual merit.
 3. AI trained on historical data can perpetuate and even exacerbate biases present in that data, leading to discriminatory outcomes.
 4. AI's ability to perform tasks (that involve routine, predictable tasks) previously done by humans leads to job displacement.
 5. AI polarises the workforce into high-skill, high-wage roles and low-skill, low-wage jobs, exacerbating socioeconomic disparities.
 6. The opaque nature of many AI algorithms, coupled with the concentration of power in a few tech giants, poses significant challenges to accountability.

Reimagining Meritocracy in the AI Era

- Recalibrating meritocracy in the face of AI advancements demands a sophisticated understanding of the interplay between technology and societal structures.
- It calls for a reevaluation of how merit is defined and rewarded in light of AI's capabilities and societal implications.

10. What are IPCC's assessment reports? - The Hindu

Relevance: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

Context:

- IPCC recent reports, including the **Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)**, underscore the **urgency to limit temperature rise** and the need for adaptation and mitigation strategies.

IPCC Assessment Reports

- Since 1988, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has produced six assessment reports, three special reports, and methodology reports.
- They provide guidelines for estimating greenhouse gas emissions and removal.
- These documents - prepared by scientists of UNFCCC - examine the science, consequences, adaptation, mitigation and vulnerability aspects of climate change.
- Over the years, these reports have substantiated the fact that the planet is warming and that humans bear primary responsibility.

Key Findings of the AR6

- AR6 warns that the time to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius is running out and we are close to breaching adaptation limits.
- It also suggested options and strategies to mitigate warming and enhance resilience in natural and human-made systems.

Initiation of Seventh Assessment Cycle (AR7)

- Recently, IPCC initiated its seventh cycle (AR7) with the election of an IPCC bureau
- In January 2024, bureau members met for the first time in Turkey to discuss budgeting issues, timelines for the various reports, and the work programme.
- Before this meeting, the co-chairs and rapporteurs of the Informal Group on Lessons Learned had produced a paper consolidating the learnings from the AR6 cycle.
- Guides discussions on report types and the need for adequate input for the second global stocktake in 2028.

- Global Stocktake
- UNFCCC countries conduct a 'global stocktake' (GST) every five years to assess the world's progress towards the goals of the Paris Agreement.
- The GST is a mechanism to measure collective progress, identify gaps, and chart a better course of climate action.
- The first GST started in 2022 and ended at the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the UNFCCC in 2023.

Outputs of the AR7 Cycle

- The Bureau decided to produce full assessment and synthesis reports, methodology reports, and a special report, considering time constraints and stress on resources.
- The full assessment reports will include reports from three Working Groups (as in the previous assessment cycles) plus a synthesis report.
- The two methodology reports will be on short-lived climate forcers (like methane) and on carbon removal, with a special report on climate change and cities.
- The bureau also decided to revise the technical guidelines on impacts and adaptation.

Timeline for Reports

- The countries request assessment reports ready by 2028, aligning with the GST, but the bureau faces challenges in reaching a consensus on the release date.
- Concerns arose over compromised content, incomplete research, and difficulties in engagement with under-represented countries.
- A decision on the timeline with respect to the assessment reports is pending and will be taken at the 61st session of the IPCC.
- However, the special and methodology reports will be published in 2027.

11. ISRO latest launch: why GSLV rocket is called 'naughty boy' - Indian Express

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

Context:

- Recently, ISRO launched the **INSAT-3DS satellite** to **enhance monitoring of Earth's surface, atmosphere, oceans, and environment**.
- It will **augment the capabilities** of the existing two meteorological satellites, **INSAT-3D** and **INSAT-3DR**.
- It will **boost India's weather and climate prediction services, early warnings, and disaster management services**.

GSLV Rocket

- The GSLV-F14 rocket carried the satellite to geostationary orbit, boosting weather prediction and disaster management capabilities.
- GSLV is one of the three main rockets used by ISRO for carrying its satellites, the other two being PSLV and LVM3 (earlier called GSLV-MkIII).
- GSLV rocket, dubbed the 'naughty boy,' has faced challenges due to a high failure rate in previous launches.
- Out of 15 launches, four were unsuccessful, a very high failure rate for any rocket, primarily attributed to issues with the cryogenic engine.
 - PSLV, the rocket that ISRO has used the maximum number of times, has failed only twice in its 60 launches,

Cryogenic Engine Challenges

- GSLV is a more powerful rocket than PSLV and can carry much heavier satellites.
- However, its problems have mainly been with the cryogenic engine that powers the third and final stage of the flight.
- GSLV's cryogenic engine, reverse-engineered from a Russian design, has posed difficulties for ISRO.
- The deal with Russia faced opposition from the United States, leading to technology transfer hurdles.
 - The US claimed that it violated provisions of the Missile Technology Control Regime, an international legal framework meant to stop the proliferation of missile technology.
- The deal had to be called off. Russia did supply a few of those cryogenic engines but could not transfer the technology.

Indigenous Cryogenic Technology

- India has developed its own cryogenic engine through decades of research, closer in design to Ariane rockets.
- This indigenously developed cryogenic engine is deployed in LVM3, ISRO's most powerful rocket so far.
 - LVM3 has had seven flights till now, without any trouble.

Future Challenges and Tests

- Despite the recent successful launch, GSLV faces a crucial test with the upcoming NISAR satellite mission.
- NISAR, a collaboration between ISRO and NASA, marks a significant milestone for GSLV's capabilities.



Mentorship
India

Quick Look

1. Jnanpith Award

- Recently, celebrated Urdu poet and Bollywood writer and director Gulzar and Sanskrit scholar Jagadguru Rambhadracharya have been selected for the Jnanpith award,
- Jnanpith Award has achieved the recognition of the highest literary award of the country.
- It is sponsored by the cultural organisation Bharatiya Jnanpith.
- The Award is open for only Indian citizens and is given annually.
- English along with other Indian languages is considered for the Award.
- The prize carries a cash award of Rs. 11 lakhs, a citation, and a bronze replica of Vagdevi (Saraswati), the goddess of learning.

2. Spur-winged Lapwing

- Recently, a team of birdwatchers from Telangana made a remarkable discovery near Warangal - a spur-winged lapwing, believed to be the first sighting of its kind in India.
- The bird, identified as *Vanellus spinosus*, was spotted near Bhattupalle village during the Hyderabad Bird Race organised by Deccan Birders and HSBC.
- Key Features
 - They are medium-large waders with black crown, chest, foreneck stripe and tail.
 - The face, the rest of the neck and belly are white and the wings and back are light brown. The bill and legs are black.
 - Its striking appearance is supplemented by its noisy nature.
- Native Habitat: North Africa, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean
- The species is declining in its northern range, but is abundant in much of tropical Africa, being seen at almost any wetland habitat in its range.
- The species is monotypic: no subspecies are recognised.
- IUCN Status: Least Concern

3. Food Corporation of India (FCI)

- Recently, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has increased the authorised capital of state-run FCI from ₹10,000 crore to ₹21,000 crore to enhance the operational capabilities and fulfil its mandate effectively.
- FCI is a statutory body set up in 1965 under the Food Corporations Act 1964.
- It works under the Department of Food & Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- It has the primary duty to undertake purchase, store, move/transport, distribute and sell food grains and other foodstuffs.
- It was established against the backdrop of a major shortage of grains, especially wheat.
- Objectives of FCI
 - To provide remunerative prices to farmers.
 - To ensure availability, accessibility and affordability of food grains to all people at all times
 - Ensuring food security of the nation by maintaining buffer stocks of food grains.
 - Distribution of food grains throughout the country for the Public Distribution System.

4. Bharat Mart

- The Bharat Mart is India's warehousing facility set up in the United Arab Emirates which would help the Indian exports showcase their products under one roof.
- This is similar to China's Dragon Mart.
- The complex is to be set up in Jebel Ali Free Zone (JAFZA) in Dubai.
- The facility will span over 1 lakh square metres and will be a mix of warehouse, retail and hospitality units.
- It can potentially play a key role in promoting the exports of India's micro, small and medium sectors by providing them with a platform to reach international buyers in the Gulf, West Asia, Africa and Eurasia.
- The facility will help reduce the time and cost of shipping goods between India and other countries.

5. International Single Species Action Plan

- Recently, the 14th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP14) adopted the Single Species Action Plan for the conservation of the Hawksbill Turtle.
- The International Single Species Action Plan is the key instrument developed under the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA).
- Purpose: Implementing coordinated measures to restore migratory waterbird species to a favourable conservation status.
- International cooperation among the species' range states is essential for the implementation of these action plans.



Mentorship
India

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India

1. PVTGs are identified based on their distinct cultural and socio-economic characteristics.
2. PVTGs are eligible for specially tailored development programs and schemes to address their unique needs.
3. There are more than 75 PVTGs in India, as identified by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

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 Aadhaar in India

1. Aadhaar is a 16-digit unique identification number issued to every resident of India by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).
2. Aadhaar authentication can be used for accessing various government services and subsidies.
3. Aadhaar is mandatory for all individuals, and failure to obtain it can lead to legal consequences.

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

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

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding Africa

1. The Sahara Desert, the world's largest hot desert, is located in the northern part of Africa.
2. The African Union (AU) is a continental union consisting of 55 member states, with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.
3. Lake Victoria, one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world, is shared by three African countries: Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

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

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

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Raisina Dialogue

1. Raisina Dialogue is an annual multilateral conference held in New Delhi, India.
2. It is organized by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Observer Research Foundation.
3. The dialogue primarily focuses on geopolitics and geo-economics, bringing together leaders from government, business, and academia.
4. The first edition of the Raisina Dialogue took place in 2014.

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

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

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

1. The UNSC has 15 members, out of which 5 are permanent members with veto power.
2. The presidency of the UNSC rotates among its members on a monthly basis.
3. The UNSC is primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security.

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

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

Q6. Consider the following statements

1. New Service (NS) refers to expenditure arising out of a new policy decision, not brought to the notice of Parliament earlier
2. New Instrument of Service (NIS) refers to relatively large expenditure arising out of important expansion of an existing policy.

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

Q7. Consider the following statements about Anti-Satellite Weapons (ASAT)

1. Anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons are designed to debilitate and/or destroy satellites that are already in orbit and operational.
2. In March 2019, India successfully conducted an anti-satellite missile test, making India the first country to have demonstrated the ASAT technology.

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. Recently, Sora, an AI model was developed by OpenAI. What is the primary purpose of Sora?

- A. To drive autonomous vehicles.
- B. To analyse trends within extensive financial datasets.
- C. To generate realistic human-like voices.
- D. To generate videos based on text instructions.

Q9. Consider the following statements with reference to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

1. It is a United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change.
2. It was established by the World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
3. The IPCC does not itself engage in scientific research.

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

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

Q10. Consider the following statements with reference to the INSAT-3DS

1. It will enhance monitoring of Earth's surface, atmosphere, oceans, and environment.
2. It will be launched by using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
3. It is fully funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology.

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 C is correct

Explanation

- PVTGs are identified based on specific criteria, including pre-agricultural level of technology, stagnant or declining population, extremely low literacy rates, and subsistence level of economy. Their distinct cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic characteristics are considered in the identification process. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- PVTGs are entitled to special development programs and schemes aimed at improving their health, education, and socio-economic status. These initiatives are designed to address their unique vulnerabilities and promote inclusive development. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- There were 75 PVTGs in India. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

Answer 2 Option A is correct

Explanation

- Aadhaar is a 12-digit unique identification number, not 16 digits. It is issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to residents of India. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect**
- Aadhaar authentication is widely used for accessing various government services, subsidies, and benefits. It serves as a proof of identity and residence for individuals. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- While Aadhaar has been linked to various services to streamline processes, it is not mandatory for all individuals. The Supreme Court of India, in its judgment, has clarified that Aadhaar cannot be made mandatory for certain services, and failure to obtain it does not lead to legal consequences. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**

Answer 3 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The Sahara Desert, the world's largest hot desert, occupies a significant portion of the northern part of Africa. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- The African Union (AU) consists of 55 member states, but its headquarters are located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, not Nairobi, Kenya. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**
- Lake Victoria, one of the largest freshwater lakes globally, is shared by three East African countries: Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

Answer 4 Option A is correct

Explanation

- The Raisina Dialogue is indeed an annual multilateral conference held in New Delhi, India. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- The dialogue is organized by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, in collaboration with the Observer Research Foundation (ORF). **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The Raisina Dialogue is known for its focus on geopolitics and geo-economics, providing a platform for leaders from government, business, and academia to discuss global issues. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- The first edition of the Raisina Dialogue took place in 2016, not 2014. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect**

Answer 5 Option D is correct

Explanation

- The UNSC consists of 15 members, of which 5 are permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) with the power of veto. The remaining 10 members are elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- The presidency of the UNSC rotates monthly among its members in alphabetical order of their names in English. The presidency changes on the first day of each month. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The primary responsibility of the UNSC is to maintain international peace and security, as mandated by the United Nations Charter. It can take various measures, including the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the imposition of sanctions, and the authorization of the use of force. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 6 Option C is correct

Explanation

- New Service (NS) refers to expenditure arising out of a new policy decision, not brought to the notice of Parliament earlier, including a new activity or a new investment. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- New Instrument of Service (NIS) refers to relatively large expenditure arising out of important expansion of an existing policy. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The financial limits for 'New Service/New Instrument of Service' are applied whenever the expenditure is incurred on account of the expansion of an existing policy.

Answer 7 Option A is correct**Explanation**

- Anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons are designed to debilitate and/or destroy satellites that are already in orbit and operational. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- All of these attacks can be launched from the air, low orbit, or even ground installations.
- There are many countries which have this capability, but only four countries, including India, have demonstrated their ASAT capabilities.
- In March 2019, India successfully conducted Mission Shakti, an anti-satellite missile test, making India the fourth country in the world to have demonstrated the ability to destroy a satellite in orbit. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- Types of ASATs
 - Kinetic energy methods: They destroy satellites in orbit by rocketing into them or detonating an explosive near them, and blowing them to pieces.
 - Non-kinetic methods: They use non-physical attacks such as cyber-attacks, jamming, and even lasers to blind satellites without physically destroying them.

Answer 8 Option D is correct**Explanation**

- Sora is an AI model developed by OpenAI - built on past research in DALL·E and GPT models - and can generate videos based on text instructions.
- It can create full videos in one go or add more to already created videos to make them longer.
- It can produce videos up to one minute in duration, ensuring high visual quality and accuracy.
- It can generate complex scenes with various characters, precise actions, and detailed backgrounds.
- It can also animate a static image, transforming it into a dynamic video presentation. **Hence, option D is correct.**

Answer 9 Option A is correct**Explanation**

- The IPCC is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**

- It was established by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1988. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- Objective: To assess scientific, technical, and socio-economic information relevant to the understanding of human-induced climate change, potential impacts of climate change, and options for mitigation and adaptation.
- The main activity of the IPCC is the preparation of reports assessing the state of knowledge of climate change.
 - These include assessment reports, special reports and methodology reports.
- The IPCC does not itself engage in scientific research. Instead, it asks scientists from around the world to go through all the relevant scientific literature related to climate change and draw up logical conclusions. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- Membership: It has 195 Member countries including India.

Answer 10 Option A is correct**Explanation**

- Recently, ISRO launched the INSAT-3DS satellite to enhance monitoring of Earth's surface, atmosphere, oceans, and environment. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is a follow-on mission of Third Generation Meteorological Satellite from Geostationary Orbit
- The GSLV-F14 rocket carried the satellite to geostationary orbit, boosting weather prediction and disaster management capabilities. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The primary objectives of the mission are
 - To monitor Earth's surface, carry out Oceanic observations and its environment in various spectral channels of meteorological importance.
 - To provide the vertical profile of various meteorological parameters of the Atmosphere.
 - To provide the Data Collection and Data Dissemination capabilities from the Data Collection Platforms (DCPs).
 - To provide Satellite Aided Search and Rescue services.
- The mission is fully funded by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES). **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

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