

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



Date: 19 Jan. 2024

Important News Articles

1. India says it hopes to resolve issue of troops in Maldives - The Hindu/ Jaishankar, Maldives minister meet in Uganda: 'Will boost ties' - Indian Express
2. Sub-categorisation of SCs: panel to look into even distribution of benefits - The Hindu
3. China widens trade highway in South America with new mega port project - The Hindu
4. The train from China - Indian Express
5. China, Philippines agree to ease tensions - The Hindu/ China, Philippines agree on lowering tensions over South China Sea - Indian Express
6. 'Coaching centres cannot enrol students below 16 years of age' - The Hindu
7. GM crops will make edible oil cheaper: govt. - The Hindu

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

1. Iran, Pak, the Baloch militancy - Indian Express
2. How satellites track the weather - The Hindu
3. Smaller citizens - The Hindu/ Young and struggling - Indian Express

Quick Look

1. Competition Commission of India (CCI)
2. Steadfast Defender 2024
3. Second-Generation Distress Alert Transmitter (DAT-SG)
4. Thiruvalluvar Day
5. Qanat System
6. Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)
7. GM Crop

Important News Articles

GS II

1. India says it hopes to resolve issue of troops in Maldives - The Hindu/ Jaishankar, Maldives minister meet in Uganda: 'Will boost ties' - Indian Express

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

News:

Prelims Takeaway

- Gulf of Aden
- Strait of Malacca

- Recently, India said **it continues to hope for a resolution of the tussle** with the Maldives over stationing of Indian troops in the islands
- The Maldivian government set a deadline of March 15 for their removal.

Key Highlights

- The date for the removal of troops is significant, as the next Maldives Majlis or Parliamentary elections are due to be held on March 17
 - Especially important for Mr. Muizzu after his ruling coalition lost the Male Mayoral election this week.
- Mr. Muizzu is the first Maldivian President not to make his first visit abroad to India.

Importance of Maldives

- The Maldives are crucial for **maintaining the region's political stability** and security, as well as for safeguarding Indian commerce and investment.
- India and Maldives clearly have a responsibility to ensure stability and security in the Indian Ocean.
- Due to the **strategic significance of the Maldives' geographic location** in relation to important international shipping lanes (ISLs).
- The **Indian Ocean is a major route for the transfer of energy** and trade around the world.
- The **Strait of Malacca and the Gulf of Aden**, two chokepoints in the western Indian Ocean, are located on either side of the Maldives, which is situated physically like a **"toll gate"** between them.
- Maldives supports India's permanent membership and India's candidature for a non-permanent seat to the year 2020-21.

2. Sub-categorisation of SCs: panel to look into even distribution of benefits - 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:

Prelims Takeaway

- Madiga Community
- Sub-categorization among SCs

- The Union government has **established a five-member committee** to assess and devise a fair method for the distribution of benefits, schemes, and initiatives among the more than 1,200 Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India.
- The **primary focus is on addressing the grievances of the most backward** communities that have been overshadowed by relatively forward and dominant ones.

Background

- Simultaneously, the Supreme Court is set to deliberate on the permissibility of sub-categorization among SCs and Scheduled Tribes.

- The committee, **chaired by the Cabinet Secretary**, is mandated to avoid discussing reservation-related questions currently sub-judice.

Madiga Community's Struggle

- The Madiga community, **constituting 50% of Telangana's SC population**, has been advocating for sub-categorization since 1994.
- Previous commissions have acknowledged the feasibility of sub-categorization, emphasising the need for targeted benefits.

State-Level Attempts and Legal Considerations

- States like **Punjab, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu** have attempted state-level reservation laws for sub-categorization, pending the Supreme Court's decision.
- In 2005, **the Union government considered legal options**, with opinions divided on the constitutional amendment's necessity.
- Legal experts argue for a comprehensive caste census and socio-economic data to justify sub-categorization.

3. China widens trade highway in South America with new mega port project - The Hindu

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

News:

- In September, a delegation of **Brazilian farmers and officials visited the Peruvian town of Chancay**, where a new \$3.5 billion Chinese mega port is under construction.

Prelims Takeaway

- Map Based questions
- Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

Key Highlights

- This port, **majority-owned by China's Cosco Shipping**, represents Beijing's ambitious push to enhance trade ties with South America
 - surpassing the U.S. as the region's largest trade partner over the past decade.

Chancay Mega Port Overview

- The \$3.5 billion deep water port, controlled by China, is set to begin operations later this year.
- It is located 80 kilometres north of Lima and is the first Chinese-controlled port in South America.

Strategic Importance

- Part of China's 'Belt and Road' initiative, the **Chancay port aims to provide China with a direct gateway to South America's** resource-rich region.
- China's trade dominance in South America has helped it gain political, financial, and technological leverage in the region.
- The Chinese President may **inaugurate the port during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Peru**.
- Plans for resolving logistical, sanitary, and bureaucratic hurdles at the border to facilitate Brazilian trucks' access to the port.

US and China Influence in Latin America

- China has overtaken the U.S. as the dominant trade partner** in South America over the last decade.

4. The train from China - Indian Express

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

News:

- China is pursuing the **construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway (CKU-R)** as part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)
- It aims to **enhance connectivity in Central Asia.**

Prelims Takeaway

- Central Asian countries
- China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway (CKU-R)

Key Highlights

- The project, initially **conceived in the 1990s**, is gaining momentum due to geopolitical shifts and the need for alternative trade routes.
- However, it **faces significant challenges, including financial hurdles**, security concerns, and geopolitical complexities.

Current Connectivity and China's Opportunity

- Presently, only **two outlets connect China's Xinjiang to South and Central Asia.**
- China sees an opportunity to **strengthen its presence in the region with the CKU-R**, linking Kashgar to Osh and Andijan, ultimately connecting with the European railway network.

Strategic Significance

- CKU-R is a strategic and economic boon for China, providing a direct link between Xinjiang and Fergana Valley, the heart of Eurasia.
- The **railway aims to boost China's presence in Central Asia, South Caucasus**, and Europe-bound freight, bypassing longer routes through Russia.

Challenges and Hurdles

- Kyrgyzstan's political and financial challenges, including a lack of funds (\$4.7 billion) for its part of the route, hinder progress.
- The fear of **falling into a debt trap** and concerns about Chinese expansionism pose obstacles to the project.

Geopolitical Considerations

- Central Asian geopolitics, including **ties to Russia and Uzbekistan's openness to the West**, add **complexity to the project.**
- China's changing terms of engagement favor bilateral approaches, reducing reliance on consensus-based groups like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Comparison with Russia's Role

- China's trade with Central Asian countries, **surpassing Russia's in some cases**, reflects a **shift in economic influence.**
- Unlike Russia's assertive stance, Chinese diplomats adopt a subtler approach, focusing on economic engagement.
- The project could potentially reshape regional connectivity and influence, **challenging Russia's dominance in the south-north directed connectivity.**

5. China, Philippines agree to ease tensions - The Hindu/ China, Philippines agree on lowering tensions over South China Sea - Indian Express

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

News:

Prelims Takeaway

- South China Sea
- Ren' Ai reef

- China and the Philippines said they have agreed to work on **lowering tensions after a year of public and tense confrontations in the South China Sea** between their ships that have raised concerns of armed engagement in the region.

Key Highlights

- Ren' Ai reef is the Chinese name for what the Philippines call **Ayungin Shoal** and the U.S. calls the Second Thomas Shoal
 - The site of multiple confrontations between the two countries' ships in recent months.
- In November, Manila said that a Chinese coast guard ship and accompanying vessels conducted dangerous maneuvers
 - Blasted a Philippine supply ship with a water cannon in disputed waters. China disputed the account, saying it acted appropriately.
- China and the Philippines said they agreed to **limit tensions at a meeting on the South China Sea** in Shanghai, the eighth in a series that began in 2017.
- The **territorial disputes in the South China Sea** are widely seen as a potential flashpoint for armed conflict.
- Multiple countries have **claimed waters in the South China Sea**, including Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, Malaysia and China.
- Taiwan, a self-ruled island claimed by China, chose a candidate from a party that considers Taiwan independent.

6. 'Coaching centres cannot enrol students below 16 years of age' - The Hindu

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

News:

- The Ministry of Education has recently introduced **comprehensive guidelines to regulate coaching centres**.
- **Objective:** To establish a legal framework and manage the uncontrolled growth of private coaching centres.
- These guidelines are introduced in response to complaints regarding student suicides, fire incidents, and deficiencies in coaching facilities.

Prelims Takeaway

- Ministry of Education Guidelines to regulate Coaching Centres
- Mental Health

Key Guidelines

- **Age Restrictions and Academic Qualifications**
 - Coaching centres cannot enrol students **below 16 years of age**.
 - Student enrolment should be only after **secondary school examination**
 - **Tutors** must have qualifications of at least **graduation**.
 - The coaching centres cannot hire the services of any tutor or person who has been **convicted of any offence involving moral turpitude**.
- **Misleading Promises**
 - Coaching institutes are prohibited from making misleading promises, guaranteeing ranks, or ensuring good marks to parents.
 - **Publication of misleading advertisements** about coaching quality or results is strictly forbidden.

- **Mental Well-being**
 - Coaching centres should take steps for the mental well-being of students.
 - **Immediate intervention mechanisms** for students in distress should be established.
 - Tutors may undergo **training in mental health issues** to effectively communicate improvement areas to students.
- **Counselling System**
 - Coaching centres must have a **counselling system**, and the **institute will not be registered without it**.
 - **Trained counsellors** should be appointed, and information about their availability must be provided to students and parents.
- **Fair and Reasonable Fees**
 - Tuition fees must be fair and reasonable and **receipts for the fee charged must be made available**.
 - Refund policies are specified, ensuring **pro-rata refunds for students** leaving courses mid-way.
 - **Penalties**, including fines up to ₹1 lakh or registration cancellation, for charging exorbitant fees causing stress leading to student suicides or engaging in malpractices.
- **Monitoring and Registration**
 - **Registration** of new and existing coaching centres within **three months of guideline implementation**.
 - **State governments will monitor** coaching centre activities and ensure compliance with eligibility criteria.
- Coaching centres shall have a **website with updated details** of the qualification of tutors, courses/curriculum, duration of completion, hostel facilities, and the fees being charged.

GS III

7. GM crops will make edible oil cheaper: govt. - The Hindu

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

News:

- The Supreme Court recently deliberated on the **cultivation of Genetically Modified (GM) crops**, particularly mustard asserting its commitment to the **well-being of India**.
- The government argued that it would make **quality edible oil more affordable, reducing the country's dependency on imports**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)
- Genetically Modified (GM) Crops
- Dhara Mustard Hybrid-11 (DMH-11)
- Public Interest Litigation (PIL)

Government's Perspective

- **Affordability of Edible Oil:** GM crops, specifically GM mustard, would contribute to making edible oil more cost-effective for the common man by growing oil seeds domestically.
- **Foreign Dependency Reduction**
 - Increasing the cultivation of GM crops aligns with national interests.
 - It reduces the need for importing **approximately 50 to 60% of edible oil**, promoting food security, and lessening foreign dependency.
- **Statistical Support**
 - The government presented statistics from the Directorate of Economic and Statistics, illustrating the increasing demand for edible oil in India.
 - 54% of the demand was met through imports in 2020-21, amounting to around ₹1,15,000 crore.

Supreme Court's Response

- The Supreme Court expressed its focus on what is best for India, underscoring its commitment to national interest.

- While considering PIL petitioners' concerns, the court emphasized the government's duty to **safeguard the people's right to affordable food**.

PIL Petitioners' Position

- The PIL petitioners raised concerns about **environmental damage caused by open field testing of GM crops**, particularly the genetically-engineered variant of mustard known as **Dhara Mustard Hybrid-11 (DMH-11)**.
- They argue that the regulatory system, specifically the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), had **conflicts of interest** and **lacked transparency**.

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

8. Iran, Pak, the Baloch militancy - Indian Express

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

Context:

- The **recent escalation between Iran and Pakistan**, marked by missile strikes and counter-strikes, has added tension to their historically complex relationship.
- Recently, Iranian missiles and drones struck two alleged bases of the **Jaish al-Adl, an anti-Iran Baloch militant group**, in Pakistan's Balochistan province.

Background

1. Historical Ties

• Pre-1979 Islamic Revolution

- Both countries were allies to the United States.
- Joined the Baghdad Pact, later known as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), a military alliance modelled on NATO.
- Iran provided material and weapons support to Pakistan during its 1965 and 1971 wars against India.

- **Post-1979:** Iran's revolution shifted alliances, leading to distrust due to Pakistan's close ties with the US.

2. Geopolitical Differences

- Pakistan aligned with the US post-1979, contributing to Iranian distrust.
- The distrust increased after 9/11 as Islamabad extended unqualified support to the US "War on Terror".
- Iran's focus on exporting the revolution and Pakistan's ties with Arab allies created geopolitical differences.

3. Afghanistan Conflict

- **Opposing sides post-Soviet withdrawal:** Iran backed the Northern Alliance, while Pakistan supported the Taliban.

4. Attempts at Reconciliation

- Periodic attempts to improve ties, influenced by leadership changes.
- Cooperation under leaders like Benazir Bhutto and Asif Ali Zardari, strained during Nawaz Sharif's tenure.

Recent Escalation

• Balochistan Dynamics

- The 909-km Iran-Pakistan border, known as the Goldsmith Line, stretches from a tripoint with Afghanistan to the northern Arabian Sea.
- Ethnic Baloch live on either side of the line, in the Pakistani province of Balochistan, and the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchestan.

- Their marginalisation in both countries in subsequent years fuelled several separatist movements.
- Baloch insurgencies, targeting military and civilian sites, led to recent cross-border strikes.
- **Jaish al-Adl**
 - Iranian strikes targeted alleged bases of Jaish al-Adl, a Sunni militant group.
 - Pakistani response targeted Baloch Liberation Army and Baloch Liberation Front.
- **Civilian Casualties and Retaliation**
 - Both countries claim civilian casualties in attacks by the other.
 - Retaliatory strikes and summoning diplomats signal heightened tensions.
 - Iran and Pakistan have earlier cooperated to combat the Baloch insurgency.



Implications and Future Scenario

● India's Perspective

- Over the past few decades, India's ties with Iran have developed a meaningful dimension.
- They have cooperated in the energy sector, despite the US sanctions on Iran, and India's rapidly improving ties with the Americans.
- India has been involved in the planning and building of the Chabahar port,
- India mentioned its "uncompromising position of zero tolerance towards terrorism", acknowledging self-defence actions.
- India has long maintained that Pakistan supports militants.

● De-escalation Challenges

- Economic challenges and insurgency on the Afghan border for Pakistan and pressing concerns for Iran limit potential for further escalation.
 - Both countries are likely to seek de-escalation after making statements through strikes.
- ##### ● Potential Mediators
- International actors, including China and Russia, could play a role in facilitating dialogue.
 - Regional forums such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation may be considered.

9. How satellites track the weather - The Hindu

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

Context:

- **Large parts of North India**, including states such as Bihar, UP, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Delhi, and Punjab, have been experiencing **heavy fog since December 2023**.
- IMD has been employing data from satellites like **INSAT 3D** and **INSAT 3DR** to **monitor and communicate weather conditions**, specifically focusing on fog alerts.

Satellite Maps and Their Interpretation

- The maps are generated by the INSAT 3D satellite, utilising an RGB imager that determines colours based on solar reflectance and brightness temperature.
 - Solar reflectance is a ratio of the amount of solar energy reflected by a surface and the amount of solar energy incident on it.
 - Brightness temperature relates to the object's temperature and the brightness of its surface.
- The colour composition is determined by three wavelengths viz. 0.5 micrometers (green), 1.6 micrometers (red), and 10.8 micrometers (blue), producing a detailed image.

Tracking Snow

- The maps help track snow by analysing solar reflectance and shortwave infrared radiation.
- Snow strongly absorbs radiation at 1.6 micrometers, making the red component of the colour scheme weak when the satellite tracks snow-covered regions.

Night Microphysics Data

- This component determines two colours based on the strength of the difference between two signals.
- Red colour is determined by the difference between thermal infrared signals at 12 micrometers and 10 micrometers.
- Green colour varies based on the difference between thermal infrared and middle infrared signals (10.8 micrometers and 3.9 micrometers).
- Blue colour is determined by the strength of a thermal infrared signal at 10.8 micrometers.

Applications and Weather Analysis

- The colour schemes aid in analysing different cloud types, initial stages of convection, maturing stages of a thunderstorm, identifying snow areas, and detecting fires.
- Combining day and night microphysics data helps atmospheric scientists study moisture droplets, temperature differences, and track the formation, evolution, and depletion of weather events.

Weather Satellite Data Collection

- INSAT 3D and INSAT 3DR use radiometers to make spectral measurements, capturing useful properties of radiation.
- Atmospheric sounders on the satellites measure temperature, humidity, and water vapour as a function of their heights from the ground.
- Combining radiometer and sounder measurements provides insights into various atmospheric characteristics.

Evolution of Weather Satellites in India

- INSAT 3DR's radiometer is an upgraded version of the Very High Resolution Radiometer (VHRR) used in earlier satellites like Kalpana 1 and INSAT 3A.
- The INSAT 3D and 3DR satellites are currently active in geostationary orbits around the earth.
- Each new satellite, including INSAT 3DS expected in February 2024, is an improved version, enhancing spatial resolution, spectral channels and overall functionality.

Conclusion

- Understanding satellite data plays a crucial role in **monitoring and predicting weather conditions**, enabling authorities to **issue timely alerts and warnings** to the public.
- The advancements in technology continue to **enhance the capabilities of weather satellites**, contributing to more **accurate and comprehensive weather analysis**.

10. Smaller citizens - The Hindu/ Young and struggling - Indian Express

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

Context:

- The past two decades have seen intense debates on schooling and foundational literacy-numeracy in India, leading to significant policy shifts.
- The **Right to Education (RTE) Act**, enacted over a decade ago, aimed at **universal elementary schooling**.
- The recently launched **National Education Policy (NEP)** in 2020 takes a comprehensive approach to providing **quality education for the entire age range** - from age three to university.

ASER 2023 Focus

- Unlike previous country-wide ASER surveys, ASER 2023 is more targeted, focusing on one or two rural districts in each state.
- The primary goal is to assess the status of the relatively understudied age group of 14 to 18.

Enrollment Trends and Pressures

- Enrollment levels for elementary school-age children are nearly universal.
 - UDISE data shows that Std VIII enrolment in India doubled from 11 million in 2005-2006 to 22 million in 2020-21.
- The transition rate from elementary school (Std VIII) to secondary school (Std IX) also is high at 88.81 percent nationally.
- Thus, today more children in India have more years of schooling than ever before.
- However, rising pressures on individuals and institutions accompany this progress.
- ASER 2022 highlighted academic competition, coaching, and heavy expenditure, especially for students with parents having limited education.
 - The proportion of children opting for private tuition increased from 25% in 2018 to 30% in 2022.

NEP 2020 Goals and Challenges

- NEP 2020 emphasises the goal of 100% secondary school enrollment.
- ASER 2023 data reveals that over 85% of youth (age 14-18) in surveyed rural districts are enrolled, but this progress comes with challenges.
- The aspirations of parents for their children contribute to academic pressures, calling for examination reforms and flexibility, as suggested by NEP 2020.

Learning Levels and Urgent Need for Improvement

- Basic learning levels, as indicated by the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and ASER, have shown little improvement over the last decade.
- NEP 2020 stresses the urgent need for basic reading and arithmetic skills by Std III, leading to the NIPUN Bharat initiative.
- While early grades receive attention, there is a critical need for a comprehensive strategy to improve learning, particularly for upper primary grades.

Challenges in Middle School Education

- ASER data from 2014 to 2022 reveals flat learning trajectories in middle school grades (Std V-VIII), with minimal improvement in basic learning levels.
- A comprehensive strategy for learning improvement, starting with basic skills, is urgently needed for upper primary grades.
- ASER 2023 data shows that 45% of youth (14-18 age group) have basic arithmetic proficiency, emphasising the need for catch-up efforts in foundational numeracy.

NEP 2020 and Way Forward

- NEP 2020 re-imagines the "foundation stage" (age 3 to 8), with the government's NIPUN Bharat mission actively working on restructuring.
- Efforts in early grades are visible, but there's a call for similar initiatives to translate reform ideas into action for middle and secondary school.
- Continuous tracking of outcomes is crucial for improvement and eventual success.

Quick Look

1. Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- It is a statutory body of the Government of India responsible for enforcing the Competition Act, 2002.
- The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 (MRTP Act) was repealed and replaced by the Competition Act, 2002, on the recommendations of the Raghavan committee.
- The Commission consists of one Chairperson and six Members who shall be appointed by the Central Government.
 - The Chairperson and other Members shall be whole-time Members.
- The Chairperson and every other Member shall be a person of ability, integrity and standing and who has been, or
 - is qualified to be a judge of a High Court
 - has special knowledge of, and professional experience of not less than 15 years in international trade, economics, business, commerce, law, finance, accountancy, management, industry, public affairs, administration or in any other matter which, in the opinion of the Central Government, may be useful to the Commission.
- The commission is a quasi-judicial body which gives opinions to statutory authorities and also deals with other cases.

2. Steadfast Defender 2024

- NATO is initiating its most extensive exercise since the Cold War, focusing on the reinforcement of European allies bordering Russia and its eastern flank in the event of a conflict with a "near-peer" adversary.
- Approximately 90,000 troops are set to participate in the Steadfast Defender-2024 drills, scheduled to continue through May.
- The exercise will involve more than 50 ships, ranging from aircraft carriers to destroyers, over 80 fighter jets, helicopters, and drones, along with at least 1,100 combat vehicles, including 133 tanks and 533 infantry fighting vehicles.
- This exercise surpasses the scale of previous events, with the last comparable exercises being Reforger in 1988 during the Cold War, involving 125,000 participants, and Trident Juncture in 2018, which had 50,000 participants.
- The drills aim to rehearse the execution of regional plans, representing the alliance's first defence plans developed in decades.
- It signifies NATO's proactive approach to addressing contemporary security concerns, particularly with regard to potential conflicts involving a significant adversary like Russia.

3. Second-Generation Distress Alert Transmitter (DAT-SG)

- ISRO has recently achieved a milestone in maritime safety with the second-generation Distress Alert Transmitter (DAT-SG).
- Operational since 2010, it has become a crucial tool for fishermen at sea, offering real-time distress signal capabilities.
 - The DAT-SG is the evolution of the initial Distress Alert Transmitter launched in 2010.
- This feature not only confirms the receipt of emergency messages but also reassures fishermen that their signals are being addressed promptly.
- In addition to transmitting distress signals, the DAT-SG can receive messages from the control centre.
- This two-way communication enhances the system's effectiveness, ensuring a more comprehensive response to emergency situations.

4. Thiruvalluvar Day

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India paid tributes to Saint Thiruvalluvar on Thiruvalluvar Day.
- Thiruvalluvar was a poet and philosopher, and is regarded as a cultural icon by Tamils.
- His most popular work is Thirukkural, a collection of couplets on ethics, politics, economy and love.
- His primary work Thirukkural contains 1330 couplets (kurals) that are divided into 133 sections of 10 couplets each.
- The text is divided into three parts with teachings on dharma, artha, and kama (virtue, wealth and love).
- Each section covers a wide range of topics and imparts moral, ethical, and practical guidance to the readers.
- The couplets are composed in a concise and poetic form, making them easily memorable and quotable.

5. Qanat System

- It is an ancient type of water-supply system, developed and still used in arid regions of the world.
- It taps underground mountain water sources trapped in and beneath the upper reaches of alluvial fans and channels the water downhill through a series of gently sloping tunnels.
 - The quality of water coming from the mountains is much better than water on the plains.
 - It'll have lower salinity and be better for crops and people.
- The qanats have been used for centuries in arid and semi-arid parts of north Africa, the Middle East and Asia, where water supplies are limited.
- It's known by a variety of names, "foggara" in north Africa, "falaj" in Oman and "qarez" in parts of Asia.
- Many old qanats are still used in Iran and Afghanistan, chiefly for irrigation.
- Some of the region's qanat systems, like those in Iran, are protected under heritage status.
- The qanat is sustainable as it works with gravity and no electricity is needed.
- It can also be used to create clean energy.

6. Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

- Antimicrobials – including antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antiparasitic – are medicines used to prevent and treat infections in humans, animals and plants.
- AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.
- As a result of drug resistance, antibiotics and other antimicrobial medicines become ineffective and infections become increasingly difficult or impossible to treat.
- It is estimated that bacterial AMR was directly responsible for 1.27 million global deaths in 2019 and 4,95 million deaths were associated with drug resistant infections.

7. GM Crop

- Conventional plant breeding involves crossing species of the same genus to provide the offspring with the desired traits of both parents.
- Genetic engineering aims to transcend the genus barrier by introducing an alien gene in the seeds to get the desired effects.
- The alien gene could be from a plant, an animal or even a soil bacterium.
 - Eg. Bt cotton has alien genes from soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt).
- It allows the crop to develop a protein, toxic to the common pest pink bollworm.
- In Bt brinjal, a gene allows the plant to resist attacks of fruit and shoot borer.
- Seeds produced using genetic engineering are called Genetically Modified Seeds.



Mentorship
India

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Strait of Malacca

1. The Strait of Malacca is a narrow, natural waterway connecting the South China Sea to the Andaman Sea and the Indian Ocean.
2. It is one of the world's busiest and most important shipping channels, facilitating the movement of goods between the Pacific and Indian Oceans.
3. The Strait of Malacca is entirely within the territorial waters of Indonesia.

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 Madiga Community

1. The Madiga community has been advocating for the sub-categorization of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India since the 1990s.
2. The demand for sub-categorization is primarily focused on the equitable distribution of benefits and reservations within the SC category.
3. The Madiga community constitutes a significant portion of the Scheduled Castes in Telangana and has expressed concerns about the unequal distribution of benefits within the SC category.

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

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

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Chancay Mega Port

1. Chancay Mega Port is located in Brazil and is a major gateway for South American exports to China.
2. The port is expected to become a regional hub, connecting copper exports from the Andean nation and soy from western Brazil to China.
3. Chancay Mega Port is solely owned by the Peruvian government, with no involvement of foreign entities.

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

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

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway (CKU-R)

1. CKU-R is a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aimed at bolstering regional connectivity in Central Asia.
2. Financial constraints and the fear of falling into a debt trap have been major hurdles for the timely progress of CKU-R, particularly in Kyrgyzstan.
3. CKU-R is designed to connect Xinjiang with Fergana Valley, subsequently linking to the European railway network through Turkmenistan, Iran, and Turkey.
4. Russia has been a vocal supporter of CKU-R, recognizing its potential to enhance regional economic cooperation.

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 Ren' Ai Reef

1. Ren' Ai Reef is a disputed maritime feature in the South China Sea.
2. It is claimed by multiple countries, including China, Vietnam, and the Philippines.
3. Ren' Ai Reef is known for its rich biodiversity, making it a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
4. The reef is strategically significant due to its location near major international shipping routes.

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

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

Q6. With reference to the recently released guidelines by the Ministry of Education

to regulate Coaching Centres, consider the following statements

1. Coaching centres cannot enrol students below 18 years of age.
2. An institute will not be registered unless it has a counselling system.
3. If a student leaves a course mid-way, he/she will be refunded out of the fees deposited earlier for the remaining period on a pro-rata basis.
4. State governments will monitor coaching centre activities and ensure compliance with eligibility criteria.

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

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

Q7. With reference to GM Crops, consider the following statements

1. In India, only Cotton is currently commercially cultivated as a GM crop.
2. Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) is the apex body that allows for commercial release of GM crops.
3. All transgenic organisms are GMOs, but not all GMOs are transgenic.

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

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

Q8. Consider the following statements on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

1. It aims to link the Western part of China (Xinjiang province) to the Gwadar Port in Balochistan, Pakistan.

2. It is a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

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

Q9. Consider the following statements with reference to INSAT 3D satellite

1. It has a RGB imager whose images' colours are determined by two factors.
2. It is currently active in geostationary orbits around the earth.
3. It uses radiometers to make spectral measurements, capturing useful properties of radiation.

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 NIPUN BHARAT Initiative

1. It aims to ensure that every child attains foundational literacy and numeracy by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27.
2. It is one of the components of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
3. It is implemented by the NITI Aayog.

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

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

Prelims Track Answer

Answer 1 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The Strait of Malacca is a narrow, natural waterway that connects the South China Sea to the Andaman Sea and the Indian Ocean.
- It is situated between the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian island of Sumatra. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- The Strait of Malacca is indeed one of the world's busiest and most important shipping channels.
- It serves as a crucial maritime route, facilitating the movement of goods and oil between the Pacific and Indian Oceans.
- Many major international shipping routes pass through this strategic chokepoint. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The Strait of Malacca is not entirely within the territorial waters of Indonesia.
- It is shared by three countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.
- The northern part belongs to Thailand. The international boundaries of these countries are marked by the Strait, making it an international waterway. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**

Answer 2 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The Madiga community has indeed been advocating for the sub-categorization of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India since the 1990s.
- They seek a more nuanced distribution of benefits within the broader SC category. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- The demand for sub-categorization is primarily aimed at achieving a fair and equitable distribution of benefits, reservations, and initiatives among the various communities within the Scheduled Castes.
- This is to address concerns that certain communities within the SC category may be receiving a disproportionate share of benefits. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The Madiga community constitutes a significant portion of the Scheduled Castes in Telangana, and they have expressed concerns about the unequal distribution of benefits within the SC category.
- They argue that benefits, including reservations, meant for the SC category have

been unevenly distributed, with some communities receiving more advantages than others. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

Answer 3 Option A is correct

Explanation

- Chancay Mega Port is not located in Brazil; it is situated in Peru. It is not a major gateway for South American exports to China; instead, it is being developed by China as part of its strategic infrastructure projects. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- The port is indeed expected to become a regional hub, facilitating the export of copper from the Andean nation and soy from western Brazil to China. It aims to boost trade ties between South America and China. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- Chancay Mega Port is not solely owned by the Peruvian government. It is majority-owned by the Chinese state-owned firm Cosco Shipping, which holds a 60% stake in the port.
- The remaining 40% is controlled by local miner Volcan, in which Glencore owns a stake. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**

Answer 4 Option C is correct

Explanation

- CKU-R is indeed a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to improve connectivity and promote economic cooperation, particularly in Central Asia. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- Financial constraints and concerns about falling into a debt trap have been significant obstacles for CKU-R, especially in Kyrgyzstan.
- The country lacks the necessary funds for its portion of the railway construction, and the fear of increasing debt to China is viewed as a threat to sovereignty. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- CKU-R is designed to connect Xinjiang to Fergana Valley, and from there, it aims to link with the European railway network through Turkmenistan, Iran, and Turkey.
- This alignment is expected to enhance China's presence in Central Asia and facilitate Europe-bound freight. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- Russia's stance toward CKU-R has been relatively muted. There is no strong indication that Russia has been a vocal

supporter of the project, and its position may be subject to change due to geopolitical considerations. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect**

Answer 5 Option B is correct

Explanation

- Ren' Ai Reef is indeed a disputed maritime feature in the South China Sea. It has been at the center of territorial disputes among several countries. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- Multiple countries, including China, Vietnam, and the Philippines, claim sovereignty over Ren' Ai Reef, contributing to regional tensions. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- Ren' Ai Reef is not known for its rich biodiversity, and it is not a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The reef's significance is primarily geopolitical, given the territorial disputes surrounding it. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**
- Ren' Ai Reef is strategically significant due to its location near major international shipping routes.
- Its geopolitical importance is heightened by its proximity to key maritime routes in the South China Sea. **Hence, statement 4 is correct**

Answer 6 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The Ministry of Education has recently introduced comprehensive guidelines to regulate coaching centres.
- Objective: To establish a legal framework and manage the uncontrolled growth of private coaching centres.
- Coaching centres cannot enrol students below 16 years of age and only after secondary school examination. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- Tutors must have qualifications of at least graduation.
- Coaching institutes are prohibited from making misleading promises, guaranteeing ranks, or ensuring good marks to parents.
- Coaching centres must have a counselling system, and the institute will not be registered without it.
- Tutors may undergo training in mental health issues to effectively communicate improvement areas to students. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

- Tuition fees must be fair and reasonable and receipts for the fee charged must be made available.
- Refund policies are specified, ensuring pro-rata refunds for students leaving courses mid-way. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- Registration of new and existing coaching centres within three months of guideline implementation.
- State governments will monitor coaching centre activities and ensure compliance with eligibility criteria. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**

Answer 7 Option C is correct

Explanation

- Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) and transgenic organism are two terms that are used interchangeably.
- Although both have altered genomes, a transgenic organism is a GMO containing a DNA sequence or a gene from a different species.
- While a GMO is an animal, plant, or microbe whose DNA has been altered using genetic engineering techniques.
- Thus, all transgenic organisms are GMOs, but not all GMOs are transgenic. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- In India, only Cotton is currently commercially cultivated as a GM crop. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The GEAC approved the environmental release of GM mustard hybrid DMH-11, bringing it closer to full commercial cultivation.
- Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) is the apex body that allows for commercial release of GM crops. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- GEAC functions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).

Answer 8 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The CPEC is a bilateral project between Pakistan and China.
- It aims to link the Western part of China (Xinjiang province) to the Gwadar Port in Balochistan, Pakistan via Khunjerab Pass in the Northern Parts of Pakistan. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is intended to promote connectivity across Pakistan with a network of highways,

railways, and pipelines accompanied by energy, industrial, and other infrastructure development projects.

- It will pave the way for China to access the Middle East and Africa from Gwadar Port, enabling China to access the Indian Ocean.
- CPEC is a part of the Belt and Road Initiative. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

Answer 9 Option D is correct

Explanation

- According to a paper published by IMD scientists, the INSAT 3D satellite has a red-green-blue, or RGB, imager whose images' colours are determined by two factors viz. solar reflectance and brightness temperature. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The colour composition is determined by three wavelengths viz. 0.5 micrometers (green), 1.6 micrometers (red), and 10.8 micrometers (blue), producing a detailed image.
- The colour schemes aid in analysing different cloud types, initial stages of convection, maturing stages of a thunderstorm, identifying snow areas, and detecting fires.
- The INSAT 3D and 3DR satellites are currently active in geostationary orbits around the earth, at inclinations of 82 degrees and 74 degrees east longitudes

respectively. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

- Both INSAT 3D and INSAT 3DR use radiometers to make their spectral measurements. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- Combining radiometer and sounder measurements provides insights into various atmospheric characteristics.

Answer 10 Option B is correct

Explanation

- National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat) was launched as a National Mission in 2021.
- Objective: To ensure that every child in the country necessarily attains foundational literacy and numeracy by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- A five-tier implementation mechanism will be set up at the National- State- District- Block- School level in all States and UTs, under the aegis of the centrally sponsored scheme of Samagra Shiksha.
- It is one of the components of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Implementing agency: The Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

Mentorship India

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

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

+91 9999 057869
www.mentorshipindia.com

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

 @mentorship.india