

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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## Important News Articles

### GS II

#### 1. Ahead of LS poll, Election Commission transfers six Home Secretaries, one DGP- the hindu

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

#### Prelims Takeaway

- MCC
- ECI

**News:**

- Within 48 hours of announcing the election schedule, **the Election Commission instructed state government to the transfer of a host of senior officials in various States**
- Officers including the Home Secretaries of Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand as well as the Director-General of Police of West Bengal, Rajeev Kumar.

**Key Highlights**

- The transfers, according to the commission, are part of its efforts to maintain a level playing field and ensure the integrity of the electoral process.

**'Level playing field'**

- While announcing the schedule, the CEC had said that the commission would ensure a level playing field for all political parties.
- The poll body also ordered the removal of the Secretaries of General Administrative Departments of Mizoram and Himachal Pradesh.

**Model Code of Conduct**

- The Model Code of Conduct was agreed to by **all the political parties in 1968**.
- The Election Commission first effectively put to use the Model Code of Conduct in the year 1991 to ensure fair elections and a level playing field.
- As soon as the code kicks in, the party in power — whether at the Centre or in the States — **should ensure that it does not use its official position for campaigning**.
- The party must also avoid advertising at the cost of the public exchequer or using official mass media for publicity on achievements to improve chances of victory in the elections.
- The ruling party also cannot use government transport or machinery for campaigning.
- **Holding public meetings during the 48-hour period** before the hour fixed for the closing of the poll is also prohibited. The 48-hour period is known as “election silence”.
- The MCC evolved as part of the ECI's drive to ensure free and fair elections and was the result of a consensus among major political parties.
- It has no statutory backing.
- In other words anybody breaching the MCC can't be proceeded against under any clause of the Code. The EC uses moral sanction or censure for its enforcement.

#### 2. OPS cannot use 'Two Leaves' symbol and flag of AIADMK: HC- The Hindu

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

**News:**

- **The Madras High Court restrained expelled AIADMK leader** from using the party's flag, 'Two Leaves' symbol and official letterhead.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968

### Election Symbols

- **The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968** empowers the Election Commission to recognise political parties and allot symbols.
- The EC is the only authority to decide issues on a dispute or a merger under the order.
  - The Supreme Court (SC) upheld its validity in **Sadiq Ali and another vs. ECI** in 1971.
- It applies to disputes in recognised national and state parties.
- For splits in registered but unrecognised parties, the EC usually advises the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court.
- In almost all disputes decided by the EC so far, a clear majority of party delegates/office bearers, MPs and MLAs have supported one of the factions.
- **Before 1968**, the EC issued notifications and executive orders under the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961.
- **The splinter group of the party** - other than the group that got the party symbol - had to register itself as a separate party.

### 3. Bonds in buckets: who got how much in the first two years - The Hindu

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

#### News:

- The Supreme Court strike down the Electoral Bonds Scheme with significant reason
- scheme **violates the right to information under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution**
- It highlighted the “deep association” between money and politics, and how economic inequality contributes to political inequality
- by increasing the possibility of quid pro quo arrangements for those with the ability to contribute larger amounts to political parties.
- These arrangements, the court said, could result in favorable policy changes and government licenses which the voters have a right to know about
- public interest in free and fair elections must outweigh the private interest of donor confidentiality.

#### Argument in favor of electoral bond

- By protecting the confidentiality of donors, the apprehension of political retribution would also be greatly reduced
- **the right to information under Article 19(1)(a) can only be restricted on the grounds listed in Article 19(2)**, which does not include the purpose of curbing black money,

#### Section 29C of the Representation of People Act, 1951

- **Before it was amended by the Finance Act, 2017**, required all political parties to declare any contributions higher than Rs. 20,000.
- The amendment to the section, which exempted political parties from making declarations for donations received through electoral bonds, **was struck down by the court.**

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Finance Act, 2017
- Section 29C of the Representation of People Act, 1951

## Details of bond purchases and encashments

Last week, the Election Commission of India (ECI) put up the list of donors who purchased electoral bonds and the political parties that encashed them. On Monday, the Supreme Court asked the State of Bank of India to make a "complete disclosure" of electoral bonds data including their unique hidden serial numbers by Thursday. While the numbers that link the purchasers and the donors are awaited, the following tables take a look at the share of bonds purchased and encashed across various dates, for which information is currently available in the public domain. **By Rebecca Rose Varghese and Gautam Doshi**

**2019 LS polls:** The table looks at the companies/individuals with the highest share in total electoral bonds purchased between April 12, 2019 and May 10, 2019 coinciding with the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. It also looks at the parties that got the highest share of the bonds encashed between April 12, 2019 and May 22, 2019

Companies that bought electoral bonds	% of total purchase
Keventer Foodpark Infra	13.1%
Madantia Ltd.	12.5%
MEIL*	8.4%
Essel Mining & Industries	3.4%
Vedanta	3.3%
PHL Fininvest	2.7%
Lakshmi Niwas Mittal	2.4%
Sun Pharma	2.1%
Navayuga Engineering Company	2.0%
Interglobe Real Estate	1.3%
Grasim Industries	1.3%
Finolex Cables	1.3%
Bajaj Finance	1.3%
Haldia Energy	1%
Bharti Airtel	1%
Parties that encashed electoral bonds	% of total encashed
Bharatiya Janata Party	84%
Congress	8%
All India Trinamool Congress	2.9%
Bharat Rashtra Samithi	1.8%

\* Keventer Foodpark Infra bought ₹195 crore worth of bonds (13.1% of total purchases in the period), followed by Madantia Ltd. (12.5%) and Megha Engineering and Infrastructures\* (8.4%). In case of parties, the BJP encashed ₹1,771.5 crore worth of electoral bonds in the period (84% of bonds encashed) followed by the Congress at 8%

\* It is important to note that in this bucket, the full list of donors has not been revealed yet. For instance, parties could have encashed some amount of the bonds that they received in the 15 days before April 12, 2019 as well

**Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Delhi polls:** The table looks at the companies/individuals with the highest share in total electoral bonds purchased between July 5, 2019 and January 22, 2020, just before and during polls in these States. It also looks at the parties that got the highest share of the electoral bonds encashed between July 11, 2019 and February 3, 2020

Companies that bought electoral bonds	% of total purchase
Infina Finance	9.8%
DLF Commercial Developers	8.4%
Avees Trading Finance	6.7%
NOC Ltd.	5.6%
Navayuga Engineering Company	4.2%
Cipla Ltd.	4.2%
MKJ Enterprises	4%
Kaypee Enterprises	3.9%
UPL Ltd.	2.8%
Torrent Power	2.8%
S D Corporation	2.8%
Raju Kumar Sharma	2.8%
DLF Luxury Homes	2.8%
Apco Infotech	2.8%
Haldia Energy	1.9%
Mahalaxmi Vidyut Pvt. Ltd.	1.7%
Ultra Tech Cement	1.4%
Torrent Pharmaceuticals	1.4%
Prestige Southcity Holdings	1.4%
Prestige Notting Hill Investments	1.4%
Parties that encashed electoral bonds	% of total encashed
Bharatiya Janata Party	70.5%
All India Trinamool Congress	13.3%
Biju Janata Dal	5.6%
Shiv Sena	4.7%
Nationalist Congress Party	3.2%
Congress	2.2%

\* The share of Infina Finance was 9.8% of total purchases in the period, followed by DLF Commercial Developers Ltd. (8.4%). In case of parties, BJP's share was 70.5% of the total bonds encashed followed by the All India Trinamool Congress at 13.3%

**Oct.-Nov. 2020:** The table looks at the companies/individuals with the highest share in total electoral bonds purchased between October 19, 2020 and October 28, 2020. It also looks at the parties with the highest share in the electoral bonds encashed between October 22, 2020 and November 7, 2020. This period also coincided with the Bihar elections

Companies that bought electoral bonds	% of total purchase
Future Gaming and Hotel Services	53.1%
MEIL	7.1%
Essel Mining & Industries	7.1%
Haldia Energy	5.3%
Utkal Alumina International	3.5%
Ultra Tech Cement	3.5%
Grasim Industries	3.5%
S N Mohanty (Individual)	2.8%
Welspun Corporation	2.5%
Penguin Trading & Agencies	1.8%
Jindal Saw	1.8%
G R InfraProjects	1.8%
Ardent Steel	1.4%
Genus Power Infrastructures	1.1%
Bajaj Auto Ltd.	1.1%
Parties that encashed electoral bonds	% of total encashed
YSR Congress Party	31.5%
DMK	28.3%
Biju Janata Dal	23.7%
Bharatiya Janata Party	7.4%
All India Trinamool Congress	6.2%
Congress	1.1%
Aam Aadmi Party	1.1%

\* Future Gaming and Hotel Services formed 53.1% of total purchases in the period, followed by Megha Engineering and Infrastructures (7.1%). In case of parties, YSR Congress Party's share was 31.5% of the total bonds encashed followed by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's 28.3% and Biju Janata Dal's 23.7%

\* The donor and purchaser lists were sourced from the ECI's disclosure on March 14  
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**Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Puducherry**  
The table looks at the companies/individuals with the highest share in total electoral bonds purchased between January 4, 2021 and April 9, 2021. It also looks at the parties with the highest share in the electoral bonds encashed between January 7, 2021 and April 19, 2021. The period coincides with the State elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Puducherry

Companies that bought electoral bonds	% of total purchase
Future Gaming and Hotel Services	14.8%
MEIL	10.6%
Haldia Energy	7.5%
Essel Mining & Industries	7.4%
Rungta Sons Pvt.Ltd.	6.8%
Phillips Carbon Black	4.1%
Honeywell Properties	4.1%
Bharti Telemedia	4.1%
Vedanta	3.4%
Infina Finance	3.4%
Rahul Bhatia	2.7%
Chander Commercials	2.7%
Misriall Mines	2%
DLF Commercial Developers	1.4%
Torrent Power	1%
Torrent Pharmaceuticals	1%
Parties that encashed electoral bonds	% of total encashed
Bharatiya Janata Party	39.7%
Biju Janata Dal	15.7%
DMK	14.4%
All India Trinamool Congress	11%
YSR Congress Party	8.9%
Congress	8.9%

\* Future Gaming and Hotel Services formed 14.8% of total purchases in the period, followed by Megha Engineering and Infrastructures (10.6%), Haldia Energy (7.5%), Essel mining at 7.4% and Rungta Sons (6.8%). In case of parties, Bharatiya Janata Party's share was 39.7% of the total bonds encashed followed by the Biju Janata Dal's 15.7%, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's 14.4% and All India Trinamool Congress' 11%

## 4. India-U.S. tri-service exercise Tiger Triumph commences -The Hindu

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

**News:**

- Tiger Triumph, the tri-service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise between India and the U.S. commenced on the Eastern seaboard

**Key Highlights**

- The exercise is aimed at developing interoperability for conducting HADR operations and refining Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
  - to enable rapid and smooth coordination between forces of both countries
  - The harbour phase is scheduled for March 18 to 25. Personnel from both navies would participate in training visits, subject matter expert exchanges, sports events and social interactions,
- On completion of the Harbour Phase, the ships would sail for the sea phase and undertake maritime, amphibious and HADR operations in accordance with injected situations, it added.

**HADR**

- India has emerged first responder in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) at global level,
- The objective of the workshop on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) is to exchange information

### Prelims Takeaway

- HADR

- share the best practices on risk reduction and resilience, integration of Armed Forces in a regional response and disaster infrastructure and for promoting global collaboration among SCO members.
- The main goals of SCO are strengthening mutual trust and neighborliness among the member states
  - promoting the effective cooperation in politics, trade, economy, technology and culture as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection and other areas.
- Making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.

### GS III

#### 5. Multi-purpose app SAKHI to assist Gaganyaan crew- The Hindu

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

##### Prelims Takeaway

- ISRO
- SAKHI

**News:**

- The Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) facility at Thumba in Thiruvananthapuram, has developed a multi-purpose app
- It will help astronauts on the Gaganyaan space flight mission carry out a range of tasks such as looking up vital technical information or communicating with one another.

**Key Highlights**

- The **Space-borne Assistant and Knowledge Hub for Crew Interaction (SAKHI)** will, among other things, monitor the health of the astronauts, help them stay connected with Earth and even alert them about their dietary schedules.
- The space facility has successfully tested an **engineering model of the custom-built, hand-held smart device featuring SAKHI.**
- The development of a flight model is in progress.
- The VSSC describes the application as an indispensable assistant to the crew.
- SAKHI will ensure that they have all the required data at their fingertips
- The ISRO is hoping to launch the Gaganyaan mission in 2025.

#### 6. Spring season 'disappearing' in many States, shows study - The Hindu

**Relevance:** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

##### Prelims Takeaway

- IPCC
- Paris Accord

**News:**

- Analysis of records since 1970 reveals **increased warming between Dec. and Feb. across country; at 2.3 degrees Celsius**
- Manipur records the biggest jump in temperature in the winter months

**Key Highlights**

- Indian States have been gradually registering a withdrawal of spring, a period of relatively benign weather between the winter of January and the scorching summer of April
  - A 50-year analysis of meteorological records suggests.

**Significant trend**

- Every region analysed had a 'net warming' during winter.
- Meteorologists have earlier ascribed the warming of winter in South India and the lack of rainfall in the North in winter due to
  - An aberration in the pattern of Western Disturbances and the jet stream, winds that originate in the Mediterranean and bring moisture to North India during winter.

**Climate Change:**

- **Since 1880, the average global temperature has risen by 1.1°C**, of which the majority of warming has happened after 1975 (NASA GISS).

- The current international agenda as reflected in the **Paris Accord is to limit the warming to 1.5°C from pre-industrial levels** to secure a livable future for all.
- A 2°C rise will set a chain of irreversible reactions in Earth's climate.
- Despite the scientific community and activists pushing for long to take climate action, a lack of political will, institutional changes and industry accountability have kept us way beyond the target.
- At current policy rates, **we are projected to reach a 2.8°C rise by 2100.**

## 7. Vaccine for dengue may be out in markets by mid-2026, says IIL - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- Vaccine for dengue could be available commercially as early as mid-2026.
- Indian Immunologicals Limited has finished the first phase of clinical trials to determine the safety of the vaccine,

**Key Highlights**

- IIL is a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Dairy Development Board, established in 1982.
- “The company is also developing a vaccine for the Zika virus and for the Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD).
- The virus, first identified in 1957 in Karnataka’s forests, is reported to have infected 400 to 500 people annually since then.
- Transmission in humans occurs through an infected tick’s bites or due to contact with an infected animal, especially a sick or dead monkey. T
- The disease is as yet limited to Karnataka and its border areas.

**Dengue**

- Dengue is a mosquito-borne tropical disease caused by the dengue virus (Genus Flavivirus)
- transmitted by several species of female mosquito within the genus **Aedes**, principally **Aedes aegypti**.
- This mosquito also transmits **chikungunya, yellow fever and Zika infection**.
- There are 4 distinct, but closely related, serotypes (separate groups within a species of microorganisms that all share a similar characteristic) of the virus that cause dengue (DEN-1, DEN-2, DEN-3 and DEN-4).

### Prelims Takeaway

- Dengue
- Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD).

## 8. Plastic chemicals more than estimated: report - The Hindu

**Relevance:** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

**News:**

- **At least 3,000 more chemicals are in plastics** — from food packaging to toys to medical devices — than previously estimated by environmental agencies
- A report published recently, found, raising questions over pollution and consumer safety.

**Key Highlights**

- While the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had previously identified around **13,000 plastic chemicals**,
  - the report by a team of European scientists found more than 16,000 chemicals in plastics
  - a quarter of which are thought to be hazardous to human health and the environment.
- To robustly solve plastic pollution, we have to look at the full life cycle of plastics and have to address the chemicals issue
- That’s because **plastic chemicals can leach into water and food**.
- Such impacts include fertility issues and cardiovascular disease.

### Prelims Takeaway

- UNEP
- Global Plastic Pollution Treaty

- Scientists flagged the need for greater **transparency on what chemicals — including additives, processing aids, and impurities** — are going into plastics - including recycled products.
- A quarter of the identified chemicals lack basic information on their basic chemical identity, the report said.
- That's something a plastics treaty could help to address.
- Negotiations continue next month in Ottawa, Canada, with the aim of finalizing a treaty come December in the South Korean city of Busan.

#### UN Global Plastic Pollution Treaty

- In 2022, UN Member States agreed to start negotiating a new global plastic pollution treaty to end plastic pollution.
- This global plastic pollution treaty will be a legally binding, international agreement to end plastic pollution defining what measures to take, how and when to implement them.
- **UNEA Resolution 5/14:** Under this, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) was established to deliver a **global plastics treaty by 2025**.
- The INC began its work during the second half of 2022, **aiming to complete the negotiations by the end of 2024**.
- First session of the INC (INC-1) took place in Punta del Este, Uruguay from 28 November to 2 December 2022.
- Second session (INC-2) in Paris, France from 29 May to 2 June 2023.
- Third session (INC-3) in Nairobi, Kenya from 13 to 19 November 2023.
- **The fourth session (INC-4)** is Scheduled to take place at the Shaw Centre in Ottawa, Canada.+

## Editorials, Gists and Explainers

### 9. All eyes are now on the Indian Ocean region- The Hindu

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

**context:**

- While the Indian government's focus from January 2021 was fixed on the Indo-Pacific with a sustained endeavour to strengthen the Quad
- policy attention has shifted back to the Indian Ocean since October 2023.
- Of course, the Indo-Pacific strategy covers both the Pacific and Indian Oceans, but when danger deepens, the immediate neighbourhood matters more than distant shores.



**The policy shift**

- The Maldives, seems to be heading on a collision course with India.
- Despite New Delhi's patience and diplomatic tact, Male continues to deepen its embrace of China.
- In contrast, Sri Lanka showed greater sensitivity to India's security concerns by imposing a year-long moratorium on foreign research ships, including Chinese ones, to its ports.
- Last month, India's SAGAR policy produced a valuable dividend
  - as the Prime Ministers of India and Mauritius inaugurated a new airstrip and a jetty in the Agaléga Islands
  - boosting Mauritius's capability to curb illegal activities in its vast Extended Economic Zone.
- Both the Western Indian Ocean littered with island nations and the Northern Indian Ocean stretching from the Arabian Sea to the Suez have become active geographies again.
- A clear pattern is emerging behind Beijing's quest for naval bases in Djibouti, Kyaukphyu, Gwadar, and Hambantota.
- India and the U.S., he underlined, were key stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific region. Cooperation helps them in addressing the strategic competition with China.
- Collaboration in underwater domain awareness has been identified as a key goal in dealing with the "emerging" threats.

**Besides the U.S., where do the U.K., European Union, France, and Germany stand**

- While they are concerned about Beijing's illegal claims in the South China Sea, they must see that a similar kind of assertiveness and hostile intent is building up in the Indian Ocean too.
- But they display a 'studied ambiguity' when it comes to interpreting China's behaviour and the long-term motivations driving it.
- The geographic distance of the European nations from China gives them a sense of security.

**India's other options**

- First, India needs to convey a clear message to its strategic partners that while it is conscious of its Indo-Pacific responsibilities
  - it prioritises the Indian Ocean region.
- Second, a critical audit of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) is needed.
- While IORA is underperforming and has become too amorphous to be effective, the CSC faces the danger of losing a key member
  - The Maldives, if the island nation's partnership with China deepens.
- It may be time for New Delhi to encourage the creation of a new mechanism with the objective of bolstering maritime security and optimizing the potential for the Blue Economy.
- This group could comprise four nations from the neighbourhood (India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Myanmar) and four island states (Mauritius, Seychelles, Comoros, and Madagascar).
- The ninth seat may be kept for the Maldives if it adopts a sensible policy.
- This group can be named the 'Indian Ocean Cooperation Organisation.
- As India aims to become the third largest economy, it should find new budgetary resources for its Navy to make it the third or fourth strongest.

## 10. On FTAs with European countries - The Hindu

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

**context:**

- The India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (**TEPA**) is the latest in India's recent **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)**.
- As its name suggests, the thrust of the FTA is deeper economic engagement with the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.
- It heralds the westward tilt of India's FTAs, being the first with any European country and the western world.

**What does this mean?**

- The successful conclusion of an FTA with developed countries including Switzerland and Norway is a significant positive signal to the world
  - showcasing India's firm commitment to trade liberalisation at a time of rising protectionism across both developed and developing countries.
- For trading partners, an FTA with India is very attractive since it represents surpassing India's high tariff walls to access a large market.

**What are the key features of TEPA?**

- **Investment:** TEPA sets out a target of a \$100 billion investment into India from EFTA countries, and consequent one million jobs over a 15-year period.
- It also provides India the ability to withdraw its tariff concessions if such expected investment is not achieved.
- A closer look at the legal text reveals that for the promised investments and jobs to materialise, two conditions need to be met:
  - India growing at a fast rate of 9.5%,
  - the return on EFTA investments in India exceeding 16% annually over the 15-year timeline
- If India is not satisfied, it can pull back its tariff concessions in a proportionate manner after 18 years.

**Trade in goods:**

- India is mandated to eliminate tariff on most products within seven to 10 years.
- This will benefit EFTA exports of seafood like tuna and salmon, fruits like olives and avocados, coffee capsules,
- With regard to India's exports to EFTA, there will be no material impact since most products face very low or zero tariff for nations which have the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status in EFTA countries.
- For example, value wise, 98% of India's \$1.3 billion merchandise exports to Switzerland are industrial products where tariff is already zero.

**Trade in services:**

- Some key benefits for India include commitments by Norway for access to yoga instructors and practitioners of traditional medicine from India, subject to compliance with its legal framework.
- The nitty-gritties of actual service delivery are often impacted by regulatory requirements in each country.
- A separate annex in the TEPA lays the framework for easing the recognition of qualifications of service suppliers through streamlining the various requirements,
  - including the possibility of achieving equivalence by topping up academic or training requirements
  - rather than having to repeat the entire professional degree.
- Sustainable development: the TEPA's chapter on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD), comprising commitments on environment and labour aspects, represents a first for India in any FTA.

**Intellectual property rights:**

- the EFTA countries are home to several pharmaceutical and high technology MNCs, whose ask has been commitments on protection of intellectual property rights that exceed the WTO's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement. The TEPA represents a nod to some of these.
- For example, India's Patents Act provides for pre-grant opposition of a patent application.



## Quick Look

### 1. Trichoglossum

- Recently, the researchers discovered a new fungus species in Kerala named Trichoglossum syamviswanathii.
- Trichoglossum is a genus of fungus classified within the family Geoglossaceae (Ascomycota), commonly known as “hairy earth tongues” fungus due to their numerous filaments resembling mushrooms.
- They are black, dark, or brown in colour.
- They exhibit saprotrophic behaviour but can also be found as endophytes in plant roots.
- They are globally distributed in tropical and temperate forests at least five out of seven continents of the world.

### 2. Grammy Awards

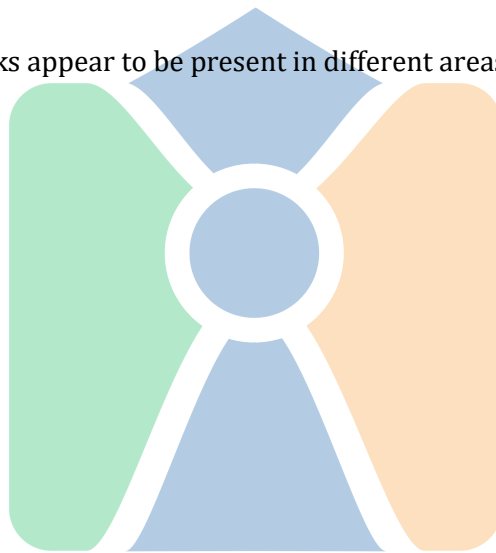
- Grammy Award, originally named Gramophone Award, is presented annually in the United States by the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences to honour artistes in the music industry for their exceptional work in a year.
- It was started in 1959 to respect the performers for the year 1958. Once it was made, the committee decided to call it Grammy as a tribute to Emile Berliner’s gramophone.
- The “General Field” are four awards that are not restricted by genre viz. Album of the Year, Record of the Year, Song of the Year and Best New Artiste
- The honorees receive a golden statuette of a gramophone.
- Shakti, the Indo-jazz supergroup consisting of Ustad Zakir Hussain, John McLaughlin, V Selvaganesh, Ganesh Rajagopalan, and Shankar Mahadevan, wins the Grammy for Best Global Music Album for "This Moment."
- The album, created during Covid, showcases a fusion of Eastern and Western sounds and North Indian classical with Carnatic classical music.

### 3. Gamma Ray Astronomy PeV Energies phase-3 (GRAPES-3) Experiment

- GRAPES-3 is designed to study cosmic rays with an array of air shower detectors and a large area muon detector.
- Located in Ooty, India, it is operated by the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.
- It aims to probe the acceleration of cosmic rays in different astrophysical settings.
- Objectives: To study
  - the origin, acceleration and propagation of  $>10^{14}$  eV cosmic rays in the galaxy and beyond.
  - the existence of “Knee” in the energy spectrum of cosmic rays.
  - the production and/or acceleration of the highest energy ( $\sim 10^{20}$  eV) cosmic rays in the universe.
  - the astronomy of multi-TeV  $\gamma$ -rays from neutron stars and other compact objects.
- The GRAPES-3 experiment recently discovered a new feature in the cosmic-ray proton spectrum at about 166 tera-electron-volt (TeV) energy while measuring the spectrum spanning from 50 TeV to a little over 1 peta-electron-volt (PeV).

## 4. Obelisks

- Obelisks is a newly discovered class of virus-like entities present in the human body.
- It comprises a class of diverse RNAs that have colonized and gone unnoticed in human and global microbiomes.
- Named after the highly symmetrical, rod-like structures formed by their twisted lengths of RNA, the Obelisks' genetic sequences are only around 1,000 characters (nucleotides) in size.
- These mysterious bits of genetic material have no detectable sequences or even structural similarities known to any other biological agents.
- They're also significantly larger than other genetic molecules that coexist inside cells, from plants to bacteria, called plasmids, which are more commonly composed of DNA.
- Obelisks represent their own class of organism. They lie somewhere between viruses and viroids.
- Although the hosts of other obelisks remain unknown, there is a possibility that some of them may be found in bacteria.
- Different types of Obelisks appear to be present in different areas of our bodies.



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**Prelims Track Question****Q1. Consider the following statements**

1. Election Commission has authority to transfer senior officials in various States to assure free and fair elections
2. During “election silence” period holding public meetings by political parties to influence voters are also prohibited.
3. The model code of conduct was enacted by parliament after LPG reform 1991 to ensure free and fair elections

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

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

**Q2. Consider the following statements**

1. The Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 empowers the Election Commission to recognise political parties and allot symbols.
2. The EC is the only authority to decide issues on a dispute or a merger under the rule.
3. For splits in all registered parties, the EC usually advises the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court.

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

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

**Q3. Consider the following with respect to Representation of People Act, 1950**

1. Section 29C of the Act Required all political parties to declare any contributions higher than Rs. 20,000.
2. The act lays down procedures for delimitation of constituencies.
3. It lays procedure for the preparation of electoral rolls and the manner of filling seats and the qualification of voters.

**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 pairs**

**Military exercise : participating countries**

1. Exercise Bold Kurukshetra : Indian Army and the Singapore Army
2. Konkan - 23 : India and United Kingdom
3. Tiger Triumph : India and USA

**How many pairs given above are correctly matched?**

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

**Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Trisonic Wind Tunnel established at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC):**

1. Trisonic Wind Tunnel is a facility primarily designed for studying supersonic and hypersonic aerodynamics.
2. The Trisonic Wind Tunnel at VSSC is named after Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, the visionary scientist and founding father of the Indian space program.
3. VSSC's Trisonic Wind Tunnel is equipped with three different speeds of airflow, allowing researchers to simulate various flight conditions.

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

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

**Q6. The Singhbhum Craton, seen in the news recently, is located between**

- A. Malwa plateau and Western Ghats
- B. Karnataka plateau and Telangana plateau
- C. Deccan plateau and Nilgiri range
- D. Chhota Nagpur plateau and the Eastern Ghats

**Q7. Consider the following statements about OBESITY IN INDIA**

1. Despite a significant decline, the prevalence of underweight and thinness continues to be high across genders and age groups.
2. Obesity in women has spiked in the past three decades it increased from 1.2% in 1990 to 9.8% in 2022,
3. Women are more prone to putting on weight because most of them do not have access to or time for physical activities such as walks or gyms.

**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 about plastic management in India**

1. The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, mandate the generators of plastic waste to take steps to minimize generation of plastic waste
2. While laws like the SWM and PWM Rules exist, they often fail to address the specific needs of mountainous regions
3. Despite regulations, waste segregation and proper disposal remain inadequate.

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

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

**Q9. Consider the following statements about FPI**

1. Foreign portfolio investment (FPI) consists of securities and other financial assets passively held by foreign investors.
2. It provides the investor with direct ownership of financial assets and is relatively liquid depending on the volatility of the market.
3. FPI is part of a country's current account and is shown on its Balance of Payments (BOP).

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

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

**Q10. Consider the following statements about OPEC+:**

1. It is a group of oil-exporting countries which meets regularly to decide how much crude oil to sell on the world market.
2. These nations came to an accord towards the end of 2016 "to institutionalize a framework for cooperation between OPEC and non-OPEC producing countries on a regular and sustainable basis."
3. These nations aim to work together on adjusting crude oil production to bring stability to the oil market.

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

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

**Prelims Track Answer****Answer 1 Option A is correct****Explanation**

- Within 48 hours of announcing the election schedule, the Election Commission instructed the state government to transfer a host of senior officials in various States. **Hence, statement 1 is INcorrect.** EC does not have authority to transfer.
- The Model Code of Conduct was agreed to by all the political parties in 1968.
- The Election Commission first effectively put to use the Model Code of
- Conduct in the year 1991 to ensure fair elections and a level playing field.
- Holding public meetings during the 48-hour period before the hour fixed for the closing of the poll is also prohibited. The 48-hour period is known as “election silence”. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The MCC evolved as part of the ECI’s drive to ensure free and fair elections and was the result of a consensus among major political parties.
- It has no statutory backing. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

**Answer 2 Option B is correct****Explanation**

- In almost all disputes decided by the EC so far, a clear majority of party delegates/office bearers, MPs and MLAs have supported one of the factions.
- The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968 empowers the Election Commission to recognise political parties and allot symbols. **Hence, statement 1 is INcorrect.**
- The EC is the only authority to decide issues on a dispute or a merger under the order.
- The Supreme Court (SC) upheld its validity in Sadiq Ali and another vs. ECI in 1971. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It applies to disputes in recognised national and state parties.
- For splits in registered but unrecognised parties, the EC usually advises the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court. **Hence, statement 3 is INcorrect.**

- In almost all disputes decided by the EC so far, a clear majority of party delegates/office bearers, MPs and MLAs have supported one of the factions.
- Before 1968, the EC issued notifications and executive orders under the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961.

**Answer 3 Option B is correct****Explanation**

- AS per Section 29C of the Representation of People Act, 1951, before it was amended by the Finance Act, 2017, required all political parties to declare any contributions higher than Rs. 20,000. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- Electoral Bonds Scheme violates the right to information under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution
- Key Provisions of Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1950
  - Lays down procedures for delimitation of constituencies. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
  - Provides for the allocation of seats in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Councils of States.
  - Lays procedure for the preparation of electoral rolls and the manner of filling seats.
  - Lays down the qualification of voters. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

**Answer 4 Option C is correct.****Explanations**

- Exercise Bold Kurukshetra took place between Indian Army and the Singapore Army at Jodhpur Military Station
- Exercise La Perouse – 2023 took place between Royal Australian Navy, French Navy, Indian Navy, Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force, Royal Navy and the United States Navy in Indian Ocean Region
- Konkan – 23 exercise took place between India and United Kingdom at Konkan Coast, India

- Tiger Triumph, the tri-service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise between India and the U.S. commenced on the Eastern seaboard .  
**Hence all options are correct**

**Answer 5 Option B is correct**

**Explanation**

- Trisonic Wind Tunnel is indeed a facility designed to study aerodynamics in the supersonic and hypersonic regimes. It allows researchers to simulate conditions that are encountered by vehicles traveling at high speeds, such as spacecraft and missiles.

**Hence, statement 1 is correct**

- The Trisonic Wind Tunnel at VSSC is not named after Dr. Vikram Sarabhai. It is actually named after Dr. Satish Dhawan, who succeeded Dr. Vikram Sarabhai as the Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**
- The term "Trisonic" implies the presence of three different speeds of airflow in the wind tunnel. This feature allows researchers to conduct experiments at subsonic, transonic, and supersonic speeds, providing a comprehensive understanding of aerodynamic behavior. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

**Answer 6 Option D is correct**

**Explanation**

- Singhbhum Craton is a vast swathe of rocky land that stretches mainly across parts of Jharkhand and Odisha, between the Chhota Nagpur plateau and the Eastern Ghats. **Hence, option D is correct.**
- This ancient part of the Earth's crust has been found in previous research to date back to 3.5 billion years ago.
- The craton's oldest rock assemblages are largely volcanic and sedimentary rocks also known as greenstone successions.
- The Singhbhum Craton's unique geological features, including its greenstone belts, provide invaluable information about Earth's surface and atmospheric processes.

- This is crucial for hypothesising early habitable conditions and the emergence of life on Earth.

**Answer 7 Option C is correct**

**Explanation**

- Despite a significant decline, the prevalence of underweight and thinness continues to be high across genders and age groups.
- Obesity in women has spiked in the past three decades — it increased from 1.2% in 1990 to 9.8% in 2022,
- Women are more prone to putting on weight because most of them do not have access to or time for physical activities such as walks or gyms. **All the statements are correct**

**Answer 8 Option C is correct**

**Explanation**

- The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, mandate the generators of plastic waste to take steps to minimize generation of plastic waste, not to litter the plastic waste, ensure segregated storage of waste at source & hand over segregated waste in accordance with rules.
- A Patchy Solution: While laws like the SWM and PWM Rules exist, they often fail to address the specific needs of mountainous regions. State-level initiatives like bans on plastic use are commendable but face challenges in enforcement and infrastructure creation.
- A Waste Management Gap: Despite regulations, waste segregation and proper disposal remain inadequate. Overflowing landfills contribute further to the pollution, jeopardizing the entire ecosystem.
- Finding Solutions: To tackle this crisis, we need:
  - Investment and Empowerment: Allocate resources, build infrastructure, and empower local governments to manage waste effectively considering the region's delicate ecosystem. **All the statements are correct**

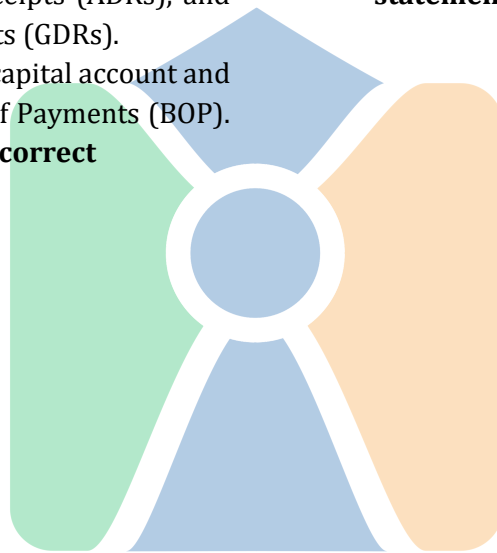


**Answer 9 Option A is correct****Explanation**

- Foreign portfolio investment (FPI) consists of securities and other financial assets passively held by foreign investors. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- It does not provide the investor with direct ownership of financial assets and is relatively liquid depending on the volatility of the market. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**
- Examples of FPIs include stocks, bonds, mutual funds, exchange traded funds, American Depositary Receipts (ADRs), and Global Depositary Receipts (GDRs).
- FPI is part of a country's capital account and is shown on its Balance of Payments (BOP). **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**

**Answer 10 Option C is correct****Explanation**

- It is a group of oil-exporting countries which meets regularly to decide how much crude oil to sell on the world market.
- These nations came to an accord towards the end of 2016 "to institutionalize a framework for cooperation between OPEC and non-OPEC producing countries on a regular and sustainable basis."
- These nations aim to work together on adjusting crude oil production to bring stability to the oil market. **All the statements are correct**

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