

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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Important News Articles

GS II

1. UPSC tightens rules for appointment of State police chiefs - The Hindu

Relevance : Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

News :

- UPSC has tightened the rules for appointment of State Police Chiefs.

What are the Rules ?

- Only police officers with at least six months of service **left before retirement** will be considered for appointment as the Director General of Police of a State.
- The **guidelines of UPSC** have been amended in this regard.
- The Empanelment Committee constituted by the UPSC **will not assess** Indian Police Service (IPS) officers on central deputation for a State DGP's post-
 - if the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informs the State government that it will not be possible to relieve the officers.
- The guidelines **allow officers with 25 years** experience to be appointed as a DGP
- The **earlier requirement of a minimum 30 years** of service was required for the post.
- The **number of shortlisted officers** cannot exceed three but may consist of less than three officers in "exceptional circumstances".
- Officers **will not be included** in the panel unless they themselves are willing

Why Change in the Rules ?

- The amendments **make explicit** what have been considered unwritten norms
- Some States **have appointed DGPs** on the verge of retirement
- A number of States have **appointed acting DGPs** to avoid the UPSC-selected panel of eligible officers.
- The guidelines **were revised to discourage** States from appointing "favourite officers" about to retire, in a bid to extend their tenure.
- States **send names of officers** to be included in the panel, sometimes the names selected by UPSC are not acceptable to them.
- The clause about **not to include** the names of officers on central deputation in the UPSC panel against the Centre's consent has always been implied but has never previously been defined.

States' Bypassing UPSC

- States such as Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana have all appointed "**in-charge**" DGPs, or DGPs with "**full additional charge**".
- Uttar Pradesh has **not had a full-time** DGP since 2022.
- In Punjab Former DGP has moved the Central Administrative Tribunal against the appointment of a **new acting DGP in the State.**
 - He was transferred midway through his term, although UPSC rules stipulate a two-year fixed tenure for a State DGP.
- In June 2023, Punjab **passed a legislation** to independently appoint the State DGP.
 - However, the Punjab Police (Amendment) Bill, 2023 is yet to get the Governor's assent, without which it cannot become a law.
- Though the police is a State subject, the IPS officers who are constituents of the All India Services are appointed by the UPSC **on behalf of the Union government.**
 - Their services are **placed under** State cadres.

The Guidelines of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India

- The UPSC had first framed guidelines **for the preparation of a panel** for appointment to the post of State DGPs in 2009,
- The guidelines **came after** the Supreme Court verdict in the police reforms case of 2006.
- The **verdict stated**

Prelims Takeaway

- Punjab Police (Amendment) Bill, 2023
- UPSC Guidelines for Appointment of State Police Chiefs

- The DGP be **selected by** the State government from amongst the three senior-most officers of the department
- The officers have been **empanelled for** promotion to that rank by the UPSC
- The **basis of empanelment** is
 - on the basis of their length of service,
 - very good service record
 - range of experience for heading the police force.
- The committee **to appoint the State DGP** is headed by the UPSC Chairman
- The committee **includes**
 - the Union Home Secretary,
 - the State's Chief Secretary
 - the DGP of State
 - one of the heads of the Central Armed Police Forces nominated by the MHA who is not from the same State cadre.

Defining experience

- The revised **guidelines indicate** the relevant areas to assess the range of experience of an IPS officer to head a State police department.
- It requires **ten years of experience** in areas such as
 - law and order
 - crime branch
 - economic offences wing
 - intelligence wing,
 - deputation to **central bodies** such as
 - The Intelligence Bureau
 - Research and Analysis Wing,
 - Central Bureau of Investigation

2. Biggest China Antarctic fleet sails to build research station - Indian Express

Relevance: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

News:

- Two Chinese icebreaker research vessels and a cargo ship are set to **sail for Antarctica..**
- The vessel is aimed at the construction of **China's fifth station** on the world's southernmost continent.

Chinese Developments in Antarctica So Far

- **Work** on the first Chinese station in the Pacific sector **began** in 2018.
- It will be **used to conduct research** on the region's environment, state television reported.

About China's New Research Station in Antarctica

- China's biggest flotilla of research vessels deployed to the Antarctic will **focus on building the station** near the Ross Sea, a deep Southern Ocean Bay.
- The facility is **expected to include** an observatory with a satellite ground station.
- The Station should help **China fill in a major gap** in its ability to access the
- The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) is observing these developments. .
- The station is also **well situated to collect**
 - signals intelligence over Australia and New Zealand
 - telemetry data on rockets launched from Australia's new Arnhem Space Centre,
- The five-month mission **will include a survey** on the impact of climate change.
- The mission, China's 40th to the Antarctic, **will also cooperate** with countries including the United States, Britain, and Russia on **logistics** supply.

Support of Two Ice Breakers

- The two icebreakers, Xuelong 1 and Xuelong 2, **the name means** "Snow Dragon" in Chinese, set sail from Shanghai to Antarctica.

Prelims Takeaway

- Xuelong 1
- Tianhui

- The cargo ship “Tianhui”, or “Divine Blessings”, **taking construction material for the station**, set off from the eastern port of Zhangjiagang.
- The two icebreakers **will also conduct environmental surveys** in
 - the Prydz Bay, the Astronaut Sea in southeast Antarctic
 - in the Ross Sea and Amundsen Sea in the west.

3. Rajya Sabha privilege panel to review pleas against members - The Hindu

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

News:

- The **Privileges Committee of Rajya Sabha** called for a meeting recently to **review the pending complaints** against House members.
- The meeting comes in the backdrop of the **Supreme Court’s observations** expressing concern about the **indefinite suspension of parliamentarians**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Parliamentary Privileges
- Committee of Privileges

Parliamentary Privileges

- These are **special rights, immunities and exemptions** enjoyed by the **two Houses of Parliament, their committees and their members**.
- These privileges are defined in **Article 105** of the Indian Constitution.
- Parliament has not made **any special law** to exhaustively codify all the privileges.
- They are rather based **on five sources** namely
 - Constitutional provisions
 - Various laws made by Parliament
 - Rules of both the Houses
 - Parliamentary Conventions
 - Judicial Interpretations

Breach of Privilege

- A breach of privilege is a **violation of any of the privileges of MPs/Parliament**.
- This may include **publishing of news items, editorials or statements** made in newspaper/magazine/TV interviews or in public speeches.

Committee of Privileges

- This committee consists of **15 members in Lok Sabha** (10 in case of Rajya Sabha) **nominated by the Presiding Officer**.
- In the **Rajya Sabha**, the **deputy chairperson** heads the committee of privileges.

Powers and Functions

- It **examines every question** involving a breach of privilege of the House or of the members or of any Committee thereof referred to it.
- It **determines whether a breach of privilege is involved** and makes **suitable recommendations** in its report.
- It also states the **procedure to be followed by the House** in giving effect to its recommendations.
- When a question of privilege is **referred** to the Committee
 - **By the House:** The report of the Committee is presented by the Chairman or, in his absence, by any member of the Committee.
 - **By the Speaker:** The report of the Committee is presented to the Speaker who may pass final orders thereon or direct that it be laid on the Table of the House.
- The Speaker/Chairman may refer to the Committee **any petition regarding the disqualification of a member on the ground of defection**.

Terms of Suspension

- The maximum period of suspension is for the **remainder of the session**.
- Suspended members **cannot enter the chamber or attend the meetings** of the committees.
- He will not be **eligible to give notice for discussion or submission**.
- He loses the **right to get a reply** to his questions.

4. Govt to depute national level monitors to oversee livestock schemes' implementation - Indian Express

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

News:

- The Indian government will **deploy National Level Monitors (NLM)** to oversee the implementation of **livestock schemes**.
- The **monitored schemes** include National Livestock Mission, Rashtriya Gokul Mission among others.

Prelims Takeaway

- National Level Monitors
- National Livestock Mission
- Rashtriya Gokul Mission

Monitoring Types

- NLMs will conduct **two types of monitoring viz. regular and special**
- Objectives of monitoring include **ensuring program implementation**
 - aligns with Ministry guidelines
 - follows prescribed processes
 - gathers feedback from villagers
 - maintains transparency in beneficiary selection
 - validates the distribution of incentives and data uploads.
- NLMs may be deployed to **verify facts or conduct preliminary inquiries** in response to **serious complaints** from people's representatives and farmers regarding **fund misutilization or irregularities**.

Current Monitoring Methods

- Currently, the department **monitors scheme implementation with participating states** through
 - progress reports
 - management information systems
 - review meetings
 - video conferencing sessions

Importance of Monitoring

- The government's focus on monitoring such schemes is significant **due to the sector's rising contribution to the economy**.
- NLMs aim to provide **unbiased and objective monitoring**, with **individual NLMs** selected from **retired Civil/Defence Services Officers and academia**.

Economic Contribution of the Livestock Sector

- The livestock sector's contribution to agriculture output has **increased** from 24.32% in 2014-2015 to **30.87% in 2020-21**.
- The livestock sector has **grown at a compound annual growth rate of 7.93%** from 2014-15 to 2020-21.
- The value of the livestock sector's output is significant, with **milk alone surpassing the combined value of paddy and wheat**.

GS II

5. Rajnath urges Kukis, Meiteis to build trust through dialogue - The Hindu

Relevance : Security challenges and their management in border areas- linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

News:

- Defence minister Rajnath Singh appealed to Manipur's warring Kuki and Meitei **communities** to sit together and remove their trust deficit through conversations.

The Current Situation in and around Manipur

- The Northeast **had been peaceful** in the last nine years
- The problem of insurgency was **either finished or it ebbed**
- Manipur incident is **an exception**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Airstrike in Mizoram
- Railway Network to the Myanmar
- India-Thailand Highway Connectivity

- The Government of India is **making efforts** to cover the trust deficit among various communities.
- A Kuki militants shot dead a police officer in the **India-Myanmar border town** of Moreh in Manipur.
- The **situation among the tribal communities** of Mizoram is much better as compared to Manipur which is highly unstable.

Airstrike History of India in the North-east

- The Indian Air Force had carried out airstrikes in Aizawl in 1966 during the **early days** of the Mizo uprising.
- This is the **first and only time** that India carried out an airstrike in its own civilian territory.

The Efforts of Centre Government in the North-East

- The **road and rail connectivity** in the Northeast improved significantly under Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government.
- The Central Government **built 4,000 km of roads** in the last nine years.
- Northeast's picture would change further once an ambitious **highway project to connect Thailand** is completed.
- The Centre **allocated over** Rs 1.34 lakh crore for the North-east Infrastructure Development.
- Work is going on to **take the railway network** to the Myanmar border in Mizoram.
 - The 223 km railway line will be built from Sairang to the international border.
- Mizoram's development is **of paramount importance** as it is an entry point of India's growing political, business and cultural activities with the East Asian countries.
- The **centre made an amendment** to an Act and brought bamboo from the category of tree to grass
- Now people in the North-East **can grow bamboo** on their land and make and sell their bamboo products.

6. October gross GST collections climb to ₹1.72 lakh crore - The Hindu/ GST revenue surges 13% in Oct, second-highest since its rollout in 2017 - Indian Express

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

News:

- The goods and services tax (GST) revenue **registered a massive resurgence** in October 2023
- Tax collections reached the **second-highest monthly tally** of Rs 1.72 lakh crore since the GST implementation.

Prelims Takeaway

- Goods and Service Tax (GST)
- Compensation Cess

Growth Facts and Statistics

- This represents a **robust growth** of 13.4% compared to the GST collection in October 2022.
- This in **backdrop of developments** in September 2023 when growth in indirect tax collections had slowed to a 27-month low of 10.2%.
- Domestic **transactions and services imports** played a significant role in driving the uptick.
- GST **compensation cess collections** reached a record high in October 2023.
- **Preliminary calculations** suggest GST levies on imported goods experienced a faster growth of 13.9% in October
- The collections **have outpaced** the growth from domestic transactions.
- April 2023 recorded the **highest-ever GST** revenue of Rs 1.87 lakh crore.

Average GST Collection

- In the first half of the Financial Year 2023-24, , the average gross monthly GST collection in the fiscal year 2023-24 **stands at** Rs 1.66 lakh crore
 - This marks an **11% increase** compared to the same period last year.
 - **The budgeted growth** of CGST+SGST+Compensation Cess was estimated to be 12% revenue in the first half of the Financial Year 2023-24.

7. In FSSAI index, nearly all major states slip on food safety compared to 2019 - Indian Express

Relevance: Food processing and related industries in India- scope' and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management.

News:

- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** recent data reveals a **decline in scores in 2023** compared to 2019 for most large states.

Prelims Takeaway

- State Food Safety Index
- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India

State Food Safety Index (SFSI)

- FSSAI introduced the **State Food Safety Index (SFSI) in 2019**, assessed out of 100 points based on **five parameters** namely
 - Human Resources and Institutional Data
 - Compliance
 - Food Testing Infrastructure
 - Training and Capacity Building
 - Consumer Empowerment

Score Declines

- The **most significant fall in scores was in Maharashtra**, with a decrease from 74 in 2019 to 45 in 2023.
- The worst decline was in the **'Food Testing Infrastructure' parameter**, where most states recorded lower scores in 2023 compared to 2019.
- **'Compliance'** and **'Human Resources and Institutional Data'** parameters also saw a **decline** in scores.
- **'Consumer Empowerment'** scores **remained largely consistent**, with Tamil Nadu being the top performer in 2023.
- The only parameter that saw improvement was **'Training and Capacity Building.'**
 - The average score for this parameter increased from 3.5 points out of 10 in 2019 to 5 points out of 8 in 2023.

STATES WITH STEEPEST INDEX FALL

State	2019	2023
Maharashtra	74	45
Bihar	46	20.5
Gujarat	73	48.5
Andhra Pradesh	47	24
Chhattisgarh	46	27

Source: SFSI reports; all scores out of 100

SAFETY MEASURE

Parameter	Weight
Compliance	28
Consumer Empowerment	19
Human Resources and Institutional Data	18
Food Testing Infrastructure	17
Improvement in SFSI Rank (added in 2023)	10
Training and Capacity Building	8
TOTAL	100

New Parameter

- In 2023, a new parameter, **'Improvement in SFSI Rank'**, was added to assess the state's rank improvement from the previous year.
- The **total score was adjusted** to accommodate this new parameter.
- When excluding the new parameter for comparison purposes, **15 out of 20 large states recorded score declines** from 2019.

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

1. AI and the issue of human-centricity in copyright law - The Hindu

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

News:

- The **Executive Order** in the United States on 'Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (AI)', illustrates the changing attitude of global leaders towards AI regulation.
- **Implementation and the use** of AI without the necessary safeguards can have enormous implications for the future of humanity,
- The changes in **regulatory approaches** are a welcome development.

Ownership and enforcement

- Ownership and enforcement of intellectual property (IP) rights is of primary concern in AI.
- Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Midjourney reasonably beautiful outputs with the help of a couple of text prompts,
- The use of such text has raised a number of copyright-related questions.
- These include whether the use of copyrighted materials, including texts and images, as training data infringes the rights of millions of authors and artists on the Internet.
- A related query revolves around copyright ownership over output generated by AI, autonomously or with inputs from humans.

Issue of Machine to Human Copyright Transfer

- A recent decision of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia in Stephen Thaler vs Shira Perlmutter is remarkable.
- The case provides some insights on whether copyright can exist in work autonomously created by AI.
- In this case, Mr. Thaler owned an AI system named 'Creativity Machine' which he claimed had autonomously created a piece of visual art.
- In his application for copyright registration before the U.S. Copyright Office, 'Creativity Machine' was mentioned as the author of the work.
- Mr. Thaler also added that the copyright of the work would be transferred to him, as the owner of 'Creativity Machine'.
- The court concluded that human creativity was essential to copyright protection.

Documentary Support to Decision

- In a document entitled 'Copyright Registration Guidance: Works Containing Material Generated by Artificial Intelligence', released in March 2023, the copyright office had categorically stated
 - o "copyright can protect only material that is the product of human creativity.
- Fundamentally, the term 'author,' used in both the Constitution and the Copyright Act, excludes nonhumans".
- The office also clarified that copyright applicants had a duty to disclose the inclusion of AI-generated content in any application, followed by detailed guidelines on doing so in registration forms.
- It also initiated a public consultation on various copyright-related questions posed by AI.

The case in India

- In 2020, the Indian Copyright Office registered a work of art called 'Suryast', for which an AI system named "RAGHAV Artificial Intelligence Painting App" was listed as a coauthor.
- The Copyright Office had previously rejected an application in which the same system had been listed as the sole author.
- While India has not affected any legislative changes in the Copyright Act 1957, the Copyright Office ignored the human authorship requirement in Indian copyright law when granting registration with an AI system as a co-author.
- The Copyright Office is also yet to articulate mandatory disclosure requirements on the use of AI or even initiate broader consultations on this important issue.

Report of the Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee

- The 161st Report of the Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce was presented in this regard.
- The report entitled 'Review of the Intellectual Property Rights Regime in India' (July 2021).
- The report had suggested reviewing the Copyright Act 1957 and the Patent Act 1970 to "incorporate the emerging technologies of AI and AI-related inventions in their ambit".
- The report aims to relax the standards for securing copyright and patents.
- The committee did not consider the potential adverse implications of such an approach for the startup ecosystem in India.
- IP rights confer monopoly protection, and as any monopoly rights can have extensive negative consequences on society.
- The need to incentivise authors and inventors through copyright or patents, do not hold with the autonomous creative output of AI systems
 - o since machines are not influenced by such incentives.
- Policymakers and courts in India need to assume against diluting the human-centricity in copyright law.

2. A Tax Treaty Problem - Indian Express

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

News:

- The Supreme Court's recent observations on **tax treaties in India** highlight the **dynamic nature and the challenges** that arise due to **changing legislation and economic conditions**.

<p style="text-align: center;">Historical Background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before 1995, India had tax treaties with France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, which allowed lower tax rates for other OECD member countries. India agreed to these terms when the OECD was relatively stable as it sought foreign capital inflows. Since then, 14 countries have joined, including Colombia, Lithuania, and Slovenia. <p style="text-align: center;">Changing Treaty Terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With Colombia, Lithuania, and Slovenia joining the OECD, they sought special terms for withholding taxes on dividends. India only altered its dividend tax treatment in 2020. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investors, so far exempt, were now required to withhold taxes on dividends received in India. The accession of these countries created an opportunity for investors from France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland to request lower rates. This raised the question of whether tax treatment from one treaty could be applied automatically to another. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Unilateral Interpretations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland issued decrees to retroactively apply lower rates from the date of OECD accession. However, Switzerland left room for reversal if India disagreed. However, these were unilateral actions and did not reflect India's position. <p style="text-align: center;">Legal Developments and Disputes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the 2021 <i>Concentrix</i> case, the Delhi High Court allowed treaty terms to be extended without notification, leading to multiple disputes. In February 2022, the Central Board of Direct Taxation (CBDT) issued a circular clarifying its position. However, the Court's favourable ruling remained available to taxpayers. <p style="text-align: center;">The Impact of MFN Provisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Supreme Court's ruling that a notification is required to invoke the MFN provision has reversed tax positions for investors. The interest in using this route has extended to investors from other countries, even when there are minimal investment flows from the countries concerned.
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Conclusion

- The **interpretation and application of tax treaties**, especially with MFN provisions, have **become complex and dynamic**.
- The tax department must **clarify the specific tax treatment** before its application.
- Periodic review of tax treaties** and **enforcement of anti-abuse measures** is necessary to **adapt to changing economic realities** and **ensure fairness in the tax system**.

3. India's own CAR-T cell therapy - Indian Express

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

News:

- The **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** has granted market authorization for **India's first indigenously developed CAR-T cell therapy** called **NexCAR19**.
- This milestone, achieved by **ImmunoACT**, a company incubated by IIT Bombay, paves the way for the **commercial launch of this innovative cancer therapy in India**.

<p style="text-align: center;">CAR-T Cell Therapy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a groundbreaking approach that modifies T-cells, a type of white blood cell, into potent cancer-fighting cells. These genetically enhanced CAR-T cells are reintroduced into the patient's body, where they target and eliminate cancer cells, particularly in blood cancers like leukaemia and lymphomas. It offers the potential for a cure and lifelong benefits, in contrast to treatments like chemotherapy that provide temporary relief. It is particularly promising for non-responsive cancer patients. <p style="text-align: center;">NexCAR19 Therapy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a form of CAR-T therapy developed by ImmunoACT in India, designed to target cancer cells carrying the CD19 protein. It is expected to be available for people with B-cell lymphomas who have not responded to standard treatments and are experiencing relapse or recurrence. Recovery usually occurs within two weeks, with a 70% response rate. Paediatric trials are ongoing, but NexCAR19 has received approval for patients aged 15 and older. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Comparison with International CAR-T Therapies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has shown unique qualities in terms of lower drug-related toxicities, particularly related to neurotoxicity and Cytokine Release Syndrome (CRS). It appears to cause less damage to the central nervous system and minimal CRS. <p style="text-align: center;">Availability and Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NexCAR19 is in the process of obtaining licences and partnering with hospitals. The timeline for offering CAR-T therapy may range from weeks to months, pending government approvals. The therapy is currently priced between Rs 30-40 lakh, with plans to reduce costs to Rs 10-20 lakh as technology advances and manufacturing processes improve. Coverage by insurance will depend on regulatory approval, and discussions with insurers and the government are ongoing.
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TREATMENT FOR SPECIFIC B-CELL CANCERS

NexCAR19 is a prescription drug for B-cell lymphomas, lymphoblastic leukaemias when other treatments have been unsuccessful

PATIENT'S WHITE blood cells are extracted by a machine through a process called leukapheresis and genetically modified, equipping them with the tools to identify and destroy the cancer cells.



NEXCAR19 IS manufactured to an optimal dose for the patient, and typically administered as a single intravenous infusion. Prior to this, the patient is put through chemotherapy to prime the body for the therapy.

HOW NEXCAR19 WORKS



T-cells are naturally made by the body as an advanced defence against viruses and cancer cells.

As T-cells mature, they develop specific connectors (receptors) to target key signals on cancer cells.



However, cancers can limit the inbuilt extent and efficiency with which T-cells are able to seek and fight them. This results in an increase in cancer burden.

Source: ImmunoACT



Scientists have identified certain proteins that are abnormally expressed on the surfaces of specific types of cancer cells. Specially designed receptors can find and bind to these cells.



A safe shell of a virus is used to genetically engineer T-cells so they express Chimeric Antigen Receptors – connectors that target a protein called CD19 on B-cell cancer.

Conclusion

- The introduction of NexCAR19 marks a **significant advancement in cancer treatment in India**.
- It offers hope for cancer patients who have not responded to traditional therapies, with the potential for a more cost-effective and accessible solution in the future.

Quick Look

1. Report on Road Accidents by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways

- According to a report from India's Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, road accidents and fatalities are on the rise in the country.
- In 2022, India saw 1,264 accidents and 42 deaths per day due to road crashes, totaling 461,312 accidents and 168,491 deaths for the year.
- The severity of road crashes, measured by the number of people killed per 100 accidents, has increased from 28.2% in 2012 to 36.5% in 2022, with a consistent annual increase.
- Over-speeding was the most common cause of accidents, accounting for 72.3% of accidents and 71.2% of deaths.
- The report also highlighted the need for improved trauma care and traffic calming measures.
- The age group most affected by road crash fatalities was 18-45 years, with approximately 26 children dying daily in road crashes.

2. Purchasing Managers Index

- It is a survey-based measure that asks the respondents about changes in their perception about key business variables as compared with the previous month.
- Purpose: To provide information about current and future business conditions to company decision makers, analysts, and investors.
- It is calculated separately for the manufacturing and services sectors and then a composite index is also constructed.
- The PMI is a number from 0 to 100.
 - A print above 50 means expansion, while a score below that denotes contraction.
 - A reading at 50 indicates no change.
- It is considered a good leading indicator of economic activity.
 - It is usually released at the start of every month.
- PMI is compiled by IHS Markit for more than 40 economies worldwide.

3. Scabies

- It is a parasitic infestation caused by a mite known as *Sarcoptes scabiei*, which causes an itchy rash to form on the skin.
- Untreated, these microscopic mites can live on the skin for months.
- Scabies is often found in the skin folds, but scabies can appear on many parts of the body.
- It is contagious and can spread quickly from person-to-person through close skin contact with an infected individual.
- Scabies symptoms include severe itch, often worse at night; itchy lines (linear burrows) and bumps (papules) on the fingers, wrists, arms, legs, and belt area; larger rash in infants and small children, including on the palms, soles of the feet, ankles, and scalp.
- A more severe type of scabies, called crusted scabies, makes the skin crusty and scaly and affects large areas of the body.
- Scabies is easily treated with medicated skin creams or pills that kill the mites that cause scabies and their eggs.

4. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- It is an inter-governmental body established to combat money laundering, terror financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- It was set up in 1989 out of a G-7 meeting of developed nations in Paris.
- Objective
 - Initially, its objective was to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering.
 - After the 9/11 attacks on the US, the FATF in 2001 expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing.
 - In April 2012, it added efforts to counter the financing of proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).
- The FATF Plenary meets tri-annually to take stock of “Mutual Evaluation Reports” (MERs) of the countries it reviews.
 - The FATF Plenary is the decision making body of the FATF.
- If a country appears to have major deficiencies in its AML/CFT regime, it is put on a list of “jurisdictions under increased monitoring” - “grey list” and if it fails to address FATF concerns, it is put on a “high-risk jurisdictions” list - “black list”.

5. Black Stork

- It is a large bird in the stork family Ciconiidae
- It breeds in swampy, coniferous, and mixed forests.
- It can be found in grasslands, agricultural fields and on the margins of lakes and rivers during winter.
- It is mainly found in Europe, Asia, and African countries.
- It is a long-distance migrant, with European populations wintering in tropical Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asian populations in the Indian subcontinent.
- IUCN: Least concern

6. British Academy Book Prize

- The British Academy Book Prize for Global Cultural Understanding was formerly known as the Nayef Al-Rodhan Prize.
- It was established in 2013 to recognize and celebrate outstanding works of non-fiction known for their rigour, scholarly excellence, and their contribution to global cultural understanding and appreciation.
- The British Academy Book Prize for Global Cultural Understanding is an international non-fiction award with prize money of £25,000.
- Nandini Das, a 49-year-old Indian-born author and Professor in the English faculty at the University of Oxford, won the 2023 British Academy Book Prize for Global Cultural Understanding.
- Her winning book is titled "Courting India: England, Mughal India, and the Origins of Empire"
 - It explores the origins of the British Empire by focusing on the first English ambassador in India, Sir Thomas Roe, in the early 17th century.
- The author is noted for her extensive use of contemporary sources from both Indian and British political figures, officials, and merchants.

7. Creative Cities Network

- Kozhikode in Kerala and Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh have been added to UNESCO's prestigious list of Creative Cities.
- UNESCO announced this on October 31.
- The day coincides with World Cities Day.
- 55 new cities join the prestigious network in 2023
- Kozhikode is recognized for its literary contributions, hosting annual book festivals and the Kerala Literature Festival.
- Gwalior's rich and diverse musical heritage, including Hindustani, folk, and devotional music, earns its place on the list.

8. A New Perspective of Haemoglobin

- Scientists have recently found that haemoglobin serves a functional role outside of the bloodstream.
- Haemoglobin is a kind of protein.
- This helps in expanding our understanding of the significance of haemoglobin in various biological processes.
- Haemoglobin has now been found to be present in various tissues and organs, indicating its involvement in multiple physiological processes.
- This finding can potentially revolutionise the field of medicine by providing new insights into diseases and developing targeted therapies.
- One of the prime features of this discovery is that haemoglobin functions as a signalling molecule outside the blood.
- It acts as a heme sensor, regulating various cellular processes such as oxygen sensing, metabolism, and signalling pathways.
- Additionally, researchers have found that haemoglobin can alleviate oxidative stress and inflammation, thereby promoting tissue repair and regeneration.

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements, with reference to the guidelines of UPSC for the appoints of DGP's in the States

1. The guidelines allow officers with 30 years experience to be appointed as a DGP.
2. The number of shortlisted officers cannot exceed four.
3. Officers will not be included in the panel unless they themselves are willing.

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

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

Q2. With reference to , China's Research Station in Antarctica which has remained in news recently, consider the following statements

1. It will be China's fifth research station in Antarctica.
2. Xuelong-2 is the cargo ship for the station.
3. Tianhui is the ice-breaker for the mission.
4. The research station is being built near Ross Sea.

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

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

Q3. With reference to the Terms of Suspension of MPs, consider the following statements

1. The maximum period of suspension is for the remainder of the session.
2. He still can receive replies to his questions.
3. Suspended members cannot attend the meetings of the committees.
4. He will be eligible to give notice for discussion or submission.

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

- A. Only one
- B. Only two

C. Only three

D. All four

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Rashtriya Gokul Mission

1. It is implemented for development and conservation of indigenous bovine breeds.
2. The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying is its Nodal Ministry.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

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

Q5. With reference to India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, consider the following statements

1. The length of the project is more than 2000 Km.
2. Tamu Town, which is part of the project, is located in Thailand.
3. The project is being implemented by the Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways.

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

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

Q6. Compensation Cess, that often remains in news, is related to

- A. Securities Transaction Tax
- B. Capital Gains Tax
- C. Corporate Tax
- D. Goods and Services Tax

Q7. Consider the following

1. Human Resources and Institutional Data
2. Food Testing Infrastructure
3. Training and Capacity Building
4. Consumer Empowerment

How many of the above parameters are considered in the calculation of the State Food Safety Index (SFSI)?

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

Q8. With reference to , the Performer's Rights under the Copyright Act, 1957 consider the following statements

- 1. These rights are for artists, including singers and actors, for their performances in literary works, movies, and songs.
- 2. These rights protect the artist's work for 20 years after the performance.
- 3. These rights cannot be transferred or sold through an agreement.

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 the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) Status under the WTO

- 1. Under MFN, a WTO member country is obliged to treat other trading nations in a non-discriminatory manner.

- 2. India has accorded MFN status to all the WTO members, including Pakistan.

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

Q10. Consider the following statements with reference to NexCAR19 Therapy

- 1. It is India's first indigenously developed CAR-T cell therapy.
- 2. It is designed to target cancer cells carrying the CD19 protein.
- 3. It is expected to be available for people with B-cell lymphomas who have not responded to standard treatments
- 4. It has shown unique qualities in terms of lower drug-related toxicities

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

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

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

- The guidelines allow officers with 25 years experience to be appointed as a DGP. **Hence, Statement 1 is incorrect.**
- The earlier requirement of a minimum 30 years of service was required for the post.
- The number of shortlisted officers cannot exceed three but may consist of less than three officers in “exceptional circumstances”. **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- Officers will not be included in the panel unless they themselves are willing. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**
- The Empanelment Committee constituted by the UPSC will not assess Indian Police Service (IPS) officers on central deputation for a State DGP's post-
 - if the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informs the State government that it will not be possible to relieve the officers.

Ans.2 Option B is correct**Explanation**

- China is building a new Research Station in Antarctica.
- China has four research stations in the Antarctic built from 1985 to 2014.
- It is estimated the fifth could be finished by 2024. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- The mission, China's 40th to the Antarctic, will also cooperate with countries including the United States, Britain, and Russia on logistics supply.
- The two icebreakers, Xuelong 1 and Xuelong 2, the name means “Snow Dragon” in Chinese, set sail from Shanghai to Antarctica. **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The cargo ship “Tianhui”, or “Divine Blessings”, taking construction material for the station, set off from the eastern port of Zhangjiagang. **Hence, Statement 3 is incorrect.**

- China's biggest flotilla of research vessels deployed to the Antarctic will focus on building the station near the Ross Sea, a deep Southern Ocean Bay. **Hence, Statement 4 is correct.**

Ans. 3 Option B is correct**Explanation**

- Terms of Suspension
 - The maximum period of suspension is for the remainder of the session. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
 - Suspended members cannot enter the chamber or attend the meetings of the committees. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
 - He will not be eligible to give notice for discussion or submission. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect.**
 - He loses the right to get a reply to his questions. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**

Ans.4 Option D is correct**Explanation**

- Rashtriya Gokul Mission is being implemented for development and conservation of indigenous bovine breeds since December 2014. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The scheme is also continued under umbrella scheme Rashtriya Pashudhan Vikas Yojna from 2021 to 2026 with a budget outlay of Rs.2400 crore.
- Objectives
 - To enhance productivity of bovines and increase milk production in a sustainable manner using advanced technologies.
 - To propagate use of high genetic merit bulls for breeding purposes.
 - To enhance Artificial insemination coverage through strengthening breeding network and delivery of Artificial insemination services at farmers doorstep.

- To promote indigenous cattle & buffalo rearing and conservation in a scientific and holistic manner.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

Ans. 5 Option C is correct

Explanation

- India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway is a significant regional connectivity project that aims to establish a road link between these three countries.
- The highway will span a distance of approximately 1,360 kilometres (845 miles). **Hence, Statement 1 is incorrect.**
- It starts from Moreh in Manipur, India, and passes through Tamu in Myanmar before reaching Mae Sot in Thailand. **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- It was first proposed by the former Prime Minister of India and was approved at a ministerial-level meeting between India, Myanmar and Thailand in April 2002.
- The India-Myanmar Friendship Road forms the first segment of the IMT Highway.
- On the Indian side, the project is being implemented by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) with the cooperation of its counterparts in Myanmar and Thailand. **Hence, Statement 3 is incorrect.**

Ans. 6 Option D is correct

Explanation

- Compensation Cess is related to Goods and Services Tax. **Hence, Option D is correct.**
- GST compensation cess collections reached a record high in October 2023.
- GST Compensation Cess is imposed as a levy in addition to the regular GST taxes.
- The cess is imposed on the supply of certain luxurious and demerit goods and services that attract 28 per cent GST.
- The cess rate usually ranges from 1% to 25% and is levied over and above the GST rate.

Ans. 7 Option D is correct

Explanation

- FSSAI introduced the State Food Safety Index (SFSI) in 2019, to create a competitive and positive change in the food safety ecosystem in the country.
- It is assessed out of 100 points based on five parameters namely
 - Human Resources and Institutional Data
 - Compliance
 - Food Testing Infrastructure
 - Training and Capacity Building
 - Consumer Empowerment. **Hence, option D is correct.**
- In 2023, a new parameter, 'Improvement in SFSI Rank', was added to assess the state's rank improvement from the previous year.
- The total score was adjusted to accommodate this new parameter.

Ans. 8 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The Copyright Act of 1957 has a provision called Section 38 which recognizes "Performer's Rights" for artists, including singers and actors, for their performances in literary works, movies, and songs. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- These rights protect the artist's work for 50 years after the performance. **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- This amendment was made in 2012 to protect artists and ensure they receive royalties for their work.
- These rights cannot be transferred or sold through an agreement, and production houses cannot buy them out. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**
- This ensures that the artist retains ownership of their work and receives fair compensation for it.

Ans. 9 Option A is correct

Explanation

- World Trade Organization (WTO) members commit to treating other members equally so they can all benefit from each other's lowest tariffs, highest import quotas and fewest trade barriers for goods and services.

- This principle of non-discrimination is known as Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
 - There are some exceptions, such as when members strike bilateral trade agreements or when members offer developing countries special access to their markets.
 - When a country receives MFN status, it is expected to lower trade barriers and decrease tariffs.
 - It is also expected to open up the market to trade in more commodities and free flow of goods.
 - India suspended Pakistan's MFN status in 2019 after a suicide attack by a Pakistan-based Islamist group killed 40 police. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- Ans. 10 Option D is correct**
- Explanation**
- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has granted market authorization for India's first indigenously developed CAR-T cell therapy called NexCAR19. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
 - It is developed by ImmunoACT in India, designed to target cancer cells carrying the CD19 protein. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
 - It is expected to be available for people with B-cell lymphomas who have not responded to standard treatments and are experiencing relapse or recurrence. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
 - It has shown unique qualities in terms of lower drug-related toxicities, particularly related to neurotoxicity and Cytokine Release Syndrome (CRS). **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**
 - It appears to cause less damage to the central nervous system and minimal CRS.

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