

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



**Date: 21 Feb. 2024**

### **Important News Articles**

1. Kutch villagers' treasure hunt helps unearth Harappan site near Dholavira - Times of India
2. Maharashtra clears 10% quota for all Marathas - The Hindu/ Third time lucky? Why the new law is unlike two previous bids to provide reservation to Marathas - Indian Express
3. Small scale fishing should be exempted from WTO talks - Indian Express
4. 'INDUS-X' summit: India, US looking at advancing defence collaboration - The Print
5. WHO launches digital health platform agreed upon in India's G20 presidency - Indian Express
6. MCA plans to introduce 'leniency plus' regime to crack down on cartels - The Hindu
7. FINALLY A CHIP FABRICATION PLANT IN INDIA? THE PROGRESS SO FAR - Indian Express
8. Anoxic marine basins are among the best candidates for deep-sea carbon sequestration, say scientists - Phys.org

### **Editorials, Gists and Explainers**

9. Having panchayats as self-governing institutions - The Hindu
10. GREENING GROWTH - Indian Express

### **Quick Look**

1. Exercise Milan
2. Rules that edge out women from jobs due to marriage illegal: SC
3. Article 142
4. National Council for Transgender Persons
5. On the right to maintenance for divorced Muslim women

## Important News Articles

### GSI

#### 1. Kutch villagers' treasure hunt helps unearth Harappan site near Dholavira - Times of India

**Relevance:** Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

**News:**

- **Morodharo yielded a large quantity of Harappan pottery**, similar to those found in dholavira.

**Morodharo**

- It is a fortified settlement **dating back to the Harappan era**.
- It is located in Gujarat

**Features**

- The settlement looks mature (2,600-1,900 BCE) to late (1,900-1,300 BCE) Harappan.
- The fortification measures 102 m east to the west and 58 m north to the south.
- It has a 10x10 m platform on the south-west side and a well on the north-east.
- Burial cairns, **which are mounds of stones to demarcate a boundary**, are also found here.
- Harappan pottery with perforated jar sherds, reserved slipware, and terracotta cakes were unearthed.
- All these items have a **striking resemblance to those found in Dholavira**.



**Indus Valley Civilization Important Sites**

- Kalibangan (Rajasthan), Lothal, Dholavira, Rangpur, Surkotda (Gujarat), Banawali (Haryana), Ropar (Punjab).
- Harappa (on river Ravi), Mohenjodaro (on the Indus River in Sindh), Chanhudaro (in Sindh).
- The civilization was first discovered during an excavation **campaign under Sir John Hubert Marshall** in 1921–22 at Harappa following the discovery of seals by J Fleet.
- Harappan ruins were discovered by Marshall, Rai Bahadur Daya Ram Sahni and Madho Sarup Vats.
- The Indus Valley cities show a level of sophistication and advancement not seen in other contemporary civilizations.
- There were two parts: a **citadel and the lower town**.
- Most cities **had a Great Bath**.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Indus Valley Civilization
- Harappan pottery

### TIMELESS TREASURES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a fortified settlement dating back to the Harappan era</li> <li>• The fortification measures 102 m east to the west and 58 m north to the south</li> <li>• The thickness of the wall is an average of 3.3 m</li> <li>• It has a 10X10 m platform on the south-west side and a well on the north-east side</li> <li>• Burial cairns, which are mounds of stones to demarcate a boundary, found</li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: center; color: white;"><b>Perforated jar sherds</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harappan pottery with perforated jar sherds, reserved slipware, and terracotta cakes unearthed</li> <li>• All these items found have a striking resemblance to those found in Dholavira</li> </ul>
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>LODRANI</b> Dholavira • Rapar GUJARAT</p>	



## GS II

### 2. Maharashtra clears 10% quota for all Marathas - The Hindu/ Third time lucky? Why the new law is unlike two previous bids to provide reservation to Marathas - Indian Express

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

**News:**

- The Maharashtra Assembly has unanimously passed a Bill to set **aside 10% reservation for the Marathas** under socially and educationally backward categories in jobs and education

**Prelims Takeaway**

- State Backward Class Commission
- Constitution Bench

**Key Highlights**

- The Bill was formulated based on a **report of the Justice (retired) Sunil B Shukre** -led Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission (MSBCC).

**Narayan Rane committee**

- In a first bid for a special law for Marathas, the government brought in an ordinance giving 16% reservation in government jobs and education to the community, ahead of the 2014 elections.
- It was based on the recommendations of a **Narayan Rane-led committee**, which was not a statutory backward class commission.

**Gaikwad Commission**

- The Gaikwad panel gave its report in November 2018, after a survey of 43,629 families
- The report said that 76.86% of the Maratha families were engaged in agriculture and agriculture labour (combined)
  - 6% were in government and semi-government services, 3% in private services, 4% in trade and industry, and 9% in non-agricultural physical labour.
- The legislation was first challenged in the Bombay High Court, which ruled that the quota granted under the Act was not “justifiable”
  - And reduced it to 12% in education and 13% in government jobs.
- The matter went to the Supreme Court, and in May 2021, a Constitution Bench struck down the quota altogether
- the Court “**left it open to the State to collect relevant data to find out whether a particular case or community** is to be included in the backward class”.
- It was based on this that the **Justice Shukre panel was formed**
  - With the Shinde government’s brief for it being to go in for a large-scale survey,
- It calls for separate reservation to the Marathas to increase their representation in government jobs and developed sectors.

### 3. Small scale fishing should be exempted from WTO talks - Indian Express

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

**News:**

- The **National Fishworkers Forum (NFF's)** asking it to protect the interest of small fishermen at **WTO**

**Prelims Takeaway**

- WTO
- National Fishworkers Forum

**Key Highlights**

- Farmers send a request to the commerce ministry **to push the World Trade Organization (WTO) to keep small-scale fishing out of fisheries subsidies** negotiations later this month.

- Commerce Ministry officials maintain that India will push against any form of curbs on its subsidies to poor fishermen at the WTO
    - Also seek a moratorium on fishing subsidies from advanced countries including the US and EU during the upcoming inter-ministerial.
  - India is the **only country where small-scale fishers fish in large numbers**
- Fishermen are not responsible for decline in fish**
- It is because of other factors like **industrial pollution, global warming and coastal degradation which has affected the fishers**
  - NFF further told the government that there is a need for a **robust domestic fisheries policy**
    - Aligns with international negotiations and without a cohesive national policy to define small-scale, artisanal and indigenous fish worker rights
    - Their unique characteristics and fishing methods, India's position at the WTO may lack the necessary foundation for effective representation.
  - The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS) was signed in 2022 **at the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) of the WTO**
    - But covered only illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and overfished stocks – consisting two out of the three pillars under consideration.
  - Under the AFS, **only a two-year special and differential treatment (S&D) exemption** was made available for **developing** countries and **least developed** countries (LDCs).

#### 4. 'INDUS-X' summit: India, US looking at advancing defence collaboration - The Print

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

**News:**

- India and the United States are set to strengthen their strategic cooperation during the two-day 'INDUS-X' summit.
- The summit would be specifically focused on **advancing bilateral defence innovation and collaboration.**

**India-US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X)**

- It was launched in **June 2023**, during the state visit of the Prime Minister of India to the US.
- It aims to drive **strategic technology partnerships** and **defence industrial cooperation** between **India and the US.**
- **Objectives**
  - Expand strategic technology partnerships and defence industrial cooperation.
  - Establish a defence innovation bridge encompassing joint challenges, academia engagement, industry-startup connect, and investment in defence projects.
- The initiative aims to explore possibilities for **co-producing jet engines, long-range artillery, and infantry vehicles.**
- It is organized by **India's Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)** and the **US Department of Defence.**
  - This is in collaboration with the US-India Business Council and the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM).

**Key Defence Agreements**

- India and the US have strengthened their defence and strategic ties in recent years through key agreements such as **LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA.**

#### Prelims Takeaway

- 'INDUS-X' Summit
- India's Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)

- These agreements **enhance interoperability** and **facilitate the exchange of high-end military technology and logistics**.

## 5. WHO launches digital health platform agreed upon in India's G20 presidency - Indian Express

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

**News:**

- Recently, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** initiated the **Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH)**.
- This is in alignment with one of the priority areas set during **India's G20 presidency** in 2023.

### Prelims Takeaway

- Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH)
- Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission
- World Health Organisation (WHO)

### Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH)

- It will serve as a platform for **sharing knowledge and digital products** among countries.
- It consists of **four main components** viz.
  - country needs tracker
  - country resource portal (a map of resources available in a country)
  - transformation toolbox for sharing quality-assured digital tools
  - knowledge exchange platform

### India's Commitments

- The Union Health Minister highlighted India's commitment to digital health and emphasized the significance of establishing an institutional framework for it.
- He said the platform will help in **democratising digital health technologies**, especially for countries of the **Global South**.
- He also mentioned India's Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission's efforts in creating an **electronic health record system**.

### Digital Transformation Amid the Pandemic

- India's representative to the UN, highlighted India's digital transformation during the pandemic.
  - including case tracking via digital platforms and managing a massive vaccination drive through the CoWIN platform.
- He emphasized the issuance of digital vaccination certificates and the success of initiatives like Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission and E Sanjeevni teleconsultation platform.

### WHO's Objectives and Support

- The WHO General director stated that GIDH will **support countries in three ways**
  - by listening to their needs
  - by aligning resources to avoid fragmentation and overlap
  - by providing quality assured products
- He also stressed on the need for **common standards** and **shared vision** to prevent fragmentation and overlap in digital health tools.

### Potential and Scope of Digital Health

- The Deputy Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union highlighted the vast potential of digital health.
- While nearly half the world's population lacks access to health services, nearly 90% have access to a 3G connection.

- This underscores the opportunity for **leveraging digital technology to bridge gaps in healthcare access**.

### GS III

## 6. MCA plans to introduce 'leniency plus' regime to crack down on cartels - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- The Corporate Affairs Ministry (MCA) has notified the introduction of **'Leniency plus' regime**

**Key Highlights**

- It will paving the way for the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to roll out a new Cartel detecting tool that is **expected to revolutionise Anti Trus lot enforcement** in the country.
- Under the regime, **companies under investigation for one cartel** would be encouraged to report other unknown cartels to CCI.
- Such a programme helps competition authorities to **discover secret cartels** and to obtain insider evidence of the infringement.

**What is Leniency Plus?**

- Leniency plus is a proactive antitrust enforcement strategy
- It is aimed at **attracting leniency applications by encouraging companies** already under investigation for one cartel to report other cartels unknown to the competition regulator.
- **The benefit:**
  - reduction of penalty in the first cartel to the person disclosing the information, without prejudice to the company obtaining a lesser penalty regarding the newly disclosed cartel.
- While the Competition Act provides a framework for CCI to deal with leniency or lesser penalty applications, it until recently did not recognise leniency plus.

**CCI draft regulation**

- CCI had, in the last year, issued draft Lesser Penalty regulations.
- The draft regulations offer leniency applications in an ongoing cartel inquiry the incentive to disclose the details of another unrelated cartel.
- A leniency plus regime is expected to **further incentivize applicants to come forward with disclosures regarding multiple cartels**, thereby enabling the CCI to save time and resources on cartel investigation.
- This regime is already recognised in jurisdictions like the **UK, US, Singapore and Brazil**.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- CCI
- Leniency plus

## 7. FINALLY A CHIP FABRICATION PLANT IN INDIA? THE PROGRESS SO FAR - Indian Express

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

**News:**

- The Minister of State for Electronics and IT recently confirmed that the **Tata Group and Israeli chip company Tower Semiconductor** have applied to **set up foundries** in the country.

**Key highlights**

- Aside from boosting domestic job prospects, it will also offer **India leverage in the chip wars** by increasing its say in the geopolitics of technology
  - that has so far been shaped by China and the United States.
- **India is competing** with some of its key allies – **the US and Europe** – to attract chipmakers.

**What are the proposals currently on the table?**

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Semiconductor
- ATMP plant



- India's chip incentive scheme broadly covers three aspects of the ecosystem –
    - full-blown foundries that can manufacture chips
    - packaging plants called ATMP facilities;
    - assembly and testing projects called OSAT plants.
  - So far, US-based Micron Technology has cleared its proposal to set up a \$2.75 billion **ATMP plant**, with the **facility coming up in Gujarat**.
  - The Tata Group is understood to have also applied for an ATMP plant.
- Why is India focusing on semiconductor manufacturing?**
- It is, therefore, clear that building semiconductors domestically is crucial for the government's vision to develop a domestic electronics supply chain
    - eventually **reduce its imports from foreign countries, especially China**
    - which despite its own challenges remains to be the number one destination for such manufacturing.

## 8. Anoxic marine basins are among the best candidates for deep-sea carbon sequestration, say scientists - Phys.org

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

**News:**

- According to scientists, **anoxic marine basins** may be among the most viable places to conduct **large-scale carbon sequestration** in the deep ocean.

### Prelims Takeaway

- Anoxic Marine Basins
- Carbon Sequestration

**Rationale for Carbon Sequestration**

- To achieve climate goals, including limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre industrial levels, **net negative CO2 removal strategies** are essential.
- Sending plant biomass to the seafloor offers a promising method for carbon storage, preventing CO2 and methane release into the atmosphere during decomposition.
- **Anoxic marine basins** are identified as suitable sites for carbon storage.

**Optimal Site: The Black Sea**

- The researchers examined three basins viz. the Black Sea, the Cariaco Basin, and the Orca Basin; assessing their capacity for biomass storage and preservation.
- Among the three basins, the Black Sea emerges as the most viable option due to its depth, isolation, and ongoing anoxia.

**Anoxic Marine Basins**

- They are characterised by **oxygen deficiency** and **isolation from main currents**.
- In most anoxic basins, the water is **extremely stagnant** and can have mixing times of many thousand years.
- They **can't support animal life** and are populated primarily by **microbes and some very specialised fungi** with different metabolisms than creatures in oxygen-rich environments.
- Many anoxic basins also contain **toxic chemicals**, which are produced by geothermal activity or by microbes living in the basins.
- Some also contain **salt domes**, big mounds of hardened salt.
- In some anoxic basins, **methane and other gases collect in reservoirs** beneath the seafloor.
  - The gases can percolate upward, pushing up domes of sediment on the seafloor that are called mud volcanoes.
  - The gases can burst through the soft sediments, creating "mini-eruptions" of wispy columns of sediment-filled water.

**Formation of Anoxic Marine Basins**

- Permanent anoxic basins form when there is a **strong layering of the water column** created in a cup-like formation on the ocean floor.



- The layering is caused by **density differences** due to salt concentration or temperature.
- Once stratification occurs, circulation with the rest of the ocean is minimised, and microorganisms consume the oxygen in the water.

## Editorials, Gists and Explainers

### 9. Having panchayats as self-governing institutions - The Hindu

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

**Context:**

- Three decades after the implementation of the **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts**, the status of devolution in India remains mixed.
- The Amendments envisaged that **local bodies** in India would function as **institutions of local self government**.
- As a follow up, the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** was constituted in 2004 to **strengthen rural local governments**.



**The Current Scenario**

- While some states have made progress in decentralization, many still lag behind.
- The constitutional amendments emphasised fiscal devolution, including the generation of own revenues by panchayats.
- However, a significant portion of panchayat revenues still comes from grants provided by the central and state governments.
  - 80% of the revenue is from the Centre and 15 % from the States.
- Only 1% of revenue is earned through taxes, highlighting the limited financial autonomy of panchayats.

**Avenues for Revenue Generation**

- Various State Panchayati Raj Acts have provisions for taxation and non-tax revenue that can be collected and utilised by panchayats.
- These include property tax, cess on land revenue, tax on profession, advertisement, and user charges.
- Non-tax revenue avenues include fees, rent, income from investments, and innovative projects like rural business hubs and renewable energy initiatives.
- Panchayats are expected to establish a conducive environment for taxation by implementing appropriate financial regulations.
  - This includes making decisions regarding the tax and non-tax bases, determining their rates, defining exemption areas, and enacting effective tax management and enforcement laws for collection.

**The Role of Gram Sabhas**

- Gram sabhas play a crucial role in fostering self-sufficiency and sustainable development
- by leveraging local resources for revenue generation.
- They can be engaged in planning, decision-making, and implementation of revenue-generating initiatives.
- They have the authority to impose taxes, fees, and levies, directing the funds towards local development projects, public services, and social welfare programmes.
- They need to promote entrepreneurship, and foster partnerships with external stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of revenue generation efforts.

**Need for Equitable Sharing and Empowerment**

- There is a disparity in tax collection responsibilities among different tiers of panchayats, with gram panchayats bearing the primary burden.
- Equitable sharing of revenue generation responsibilities among all tiers is essential for sustainable development.
- However, the dependency on grants from central and state finance commissions has led to a decline in efforts towards revenue generation.
- Several factors contribute to the reluctance in revenue generation, including the "freebie culture" and political concerns about popularity.
- There is a need for education and awareness among elected representatives and the public on the significance of revenue generation for local development.

## 10. GREENING GROWTH - Indian Express

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

**Context:**

- The governments in developing countries face a complex dilemma - a **political-economy challenge** - necessitating a fine balancing.
- This includes **regulating projects with potential environmental impacts** while also **promoting investment and infrastructure development** to spur economic growth and alleviate poverty.

**Environmental Clearance and the EIA Rules**

- The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) rules aimed to strike a balance between development and environmental protection.
  - The rules were enacted in 2006 under the Environmental (Protection) Act.
- Environmental Clearance (EC) is mandatory for various projects, including mining, thermal plants, and infrastructure programs.
- However, according to reports, the balance between environment and industry seems to be tilting far too much towards the latter.

**Loopholes in the EIA**

- In 2017, the government introduced a loophole to the EIA, granting a six-month moratorium to companies lacking EC compliance.
- This one-time window was made indefinite in 2021, leading to criticism and legal challenges.
- Over 100 projects, between 2017 and 2024, received ex post facto environmental clearance under the diluted EIA, raising concerns about environmental degradation.
  - These include coal, iron and bauxite mines, steel and iron factories, cement plants and limestone quarries

**Political and Ideological Variances**

- Environmental clearances have been contentious across different governments and ideological spectrums.
- The Environment Ministry has been labelled both "anti-business" and "anti-environment" at various times.
- However, weakening the EIA and the National Green Tribunal is a matter of grave concern.

**Urgent Need for Action**

- India's low ranking in the Environmental Performance Index underscores the urgency of addressing environmental concerns.
- Viewing both environment and development as complementary rather than competing interests is crucial.

**Call for Robust Policy Framework**

- Embracing environmentalism as a part of development and vice versa can position India as a global leader in sustainability.
- For this, India requires a robust policy and regulatory framework that facilitates business while ensuring careful assessment of project impacts.
- Constantly exploiting loopholes undermines environmental protection efforts and hampers long-term sustainable growth.





## Quick Look

### 1. Exercise Milan

- It is a biennial multilateral naval exercise that began in 1995 with the participation of only four countries viz. Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand.
- Since then, the exercise has transitioned leaps and bounds in terms of the number of participants and complexity of exercises.
- It has significantly expanded in scope and scale to become the largest exercise held by India.
- Originally conceived in consonance with India's Look East Policy, it expanded with the GoI's 'Act East Policy' and Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative to include participation from other Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs).

### 2. Rules that edge out women from jobs due to marriage illegal: SC

- In a recent order, the Supreme Court made a significant ruling against gender discrimination in the Military Nursing Service.
- The court condemned the termination of employment based on marriage as a clear case of gender discrimination and inequality.
- It emphasized that rules penalizing marriage and domestic involvement for women employees are unconstitutional.
- It also stated that such patriarchal rules undermine human dignity, right to non-discrimination and fair treatment.

### 3. Article 142

- It provides a unique power to the Supreme Court, to do complete justice between the parties, where at times law or statute may not provide a remedy.
- In such instances, the Court can go beyond its usual limits to settle a dispute in a way that matches the specifics of the case.
- Such orders of SC are enforceable throughout the territory of India as prescribed by any law made by Parliament or order of the President of India.
- While exercising power under this article, the court
  - Should not ignore the substantive rights of a litigant under the existing law.
  - Can not use the power to supplant substantive law applicable to a case.
  - Cannot exercise the jurisdiction in violation of the statute.
  - Cannot ignore express statutory provisions.

### 4. National Council for Transgender Persons

- Recently, the National Council for Transgender Persons (NCTP) convened its meeting under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- It is a statutory body constituted under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019 to safeguard the rights of transgender persons in India.
- It is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the provisions of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.
- Objectives

- To focus on livelihood issues and raise awareness about the trans community for achieving the goal of social justice.
- To ensure the establishment of transgender welfare boards in all states
- To ensure that essential needs of the transgender community, like housing, food, healthcare, and education are met.
- Functions
  - It advises the Central Government on the formulation of policies, programmes, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons.
  - It reviews and coordinates the activities of all the departments of Government and other Governmental and non-Governmental Organisations which are dealing with matters relating to transgender persons.
  - It redresses the grievances of transgender persons.
  - Performs such other functions as may be prescribed by the Central Government.

## 5. National Council for Transgender Persons

- In a plethora of judgments recently such as *Arshiya Rizvi v. State of U.P. and Anr (2022)*, *Razia v. State of U.P. (2022)*, and *Shakila Khatun v. State of U.P (2023)*
  - the Allahabad High Court has reaffirmed a divorced Muslim woman's right to claim maintenance under Section 125 of the CrPC
  - even after the completion of the iddat period as long as she does not marry.



**Mentorship**  
India

## Prelims Track Question

**Q.1 Consider the following statements regarding the Indus Valley Civilization:**

1. The Indus Valley Civilization was contemporaneous with the ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations.
2. The script of the Indus Valley Civilization remains undeciphered, limiting our understanding of their written records.
3. The cities of the Indus Valley Civilization were well-planned, with advanced drainage systems and grid-like street patterns.

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

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

**Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the State Backward Class Commission in India**

1. The State Backward Class Commission is responsible for identifying socially and educationally backward classes and recommending measures for their advancement.
2. The recommendations of the State Backward Class Commission are binding on the respective state governments.
3. The National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) is the apex body overseeing the functioning of State Backward Class Commissions.
4. The State Backward Class Commission is mandated to conduct regular surveys to assess the social and educational status of backward classes.

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

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

**Q3. Consider the following statements regarding India's fisheries at the World Trade Organization (WTO)**

1. India is a net exporter of fish and seafood, contributing significantly to the global fisheries trade.
2. India has raised concerns at the WTO regarding subsidies provided by certain countries to their fishing industries, affecting the livelihoods of Indian fishermen.
3. The Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) within the WTO includes provisions addressing fisheries subsidies to promote sustainable fishing practices.

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

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

**Q4. What is the focus area of the INDUS-X initiative, seen in the news recently?**

- A. Renewable Energy Solutions
- B. Defence cooperation and innovation
- C. Cybersecurity cooperation
- D. Space exploration

**Q5. Consider the following statements about Global Initiative on Digital Health**

1. India, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) has launched this initiative.
2. It is the first such global initiative aimed at data convergence, interface of health platforms and investments in the digital health space around the globe.

**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

**Q6. Consider the following statements about leniency plus regime?**

1. Leniency plus is a proactive antitrust enforcement strategy
2. Competition Commission of India (CCI) to roll out a new Cartel detecting tool that is expected to revolutionise Anti Trus lot enforcement in the country.



3. Under the regime, companies under investigation for one cartel would be encouraged to report other unknown cartels to CCI.

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

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

**Q.7 Consider the following statements regarding semiconductors**

1. Semiconductors are materials that have electrical conductivity between conductors and insulators.
2. Uranium is the most widely used material in the manufacturing of semiconductors.
3. Doping is a process used in semiconductor manufacturing to intentionally introduce impurities for modifying its electrical properties.

**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 with reference to Anoxic Marine Basins**

1. They form when there is a strong layering of the water column created in a cup-like formation on the ocean floor.
2. They are one of the world's most productive ecosystems with a wide range of species diversity.

3. In most anoxic basins, the water is extremely stagnant and can have mixing times of many thousand years.

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

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

**Q9. Consider the following statements about Gram Sabha**

1. The term Gram Sabha is not defined in the Constitution of India.
2. It is a permanent and the primary body of the Panchayati Raj system.

**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**

1. The Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report is prepared to get Environment Clearance (EC) for a project.
2. Category A and Category B projects require mandatory environmental clearance.

**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

## Prelims Track Answer

### Answer 1 Option C is correct

#### Explanation

- The Indus Valley Civilization, also known as the Harappan Civilization, existed roughly from 3300 BCE to 1300 BCE. It was contemporaneous with ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, making it one of the world's earliest urban cultures. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- Despite numerous attempts, the script of the Indus Valley Civilization has not been deciphered, and its meaning remains a mystery. This limitation hinders our understanding of the civilization's written records, and historians rely heavily on archaeological findings and material culture for insights into their society. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, such as Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, were known for their advanced urban planning. They featured well-organized street grids, sophisticated drainage systems, and an overall sense of civic order. The advanced planning and engineering of these cities reflect the high level of civilization achieved by the people of the Indus Valley. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

### Answer 2 Option A is correct

#### Explanation

- State Backward Class Commissions are indeed tasked with identifying backward classes, assessing their social and educational status, and recommending measures for their advancement to the respective state governments. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- While the recommendations of the State Backward Class Commission are influential and serve as a guide for the state government, they are not always binding. The extent to which these recommendations are binding depends on the legal provisions and policies of each state. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) is a separate and independent body at the national level. It is not the apex body overseeing the functioning of State Backward Class Commissions. The NCBC deals with the inclusion and exclusion of communities in

the Central List of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and recommends reservation percentages for OBCs. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**

- State Backward Class Commissions often conduct surveys and studies to assess the social and educational status of backward classes. These assessments help in formulating policies and recommendations for the welfare and advancement of these communities. **Hence, statement 4 is correct**

### Answer 3 Option C is correct

#### Explanation

- India is indeed a significant player in the global fisheries trade. It is one of the top fish-producing countries and is known for exporting various fish and seafood products to international markets. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- India, along with several other developing countries, has raised concerns at the WTO regarding subsidies provided by some developed countries to their fishing industries. These subsidies can distort global fish markets and negatively impact the livelihoods of fishermen in developing countries. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) within the WTO indeed includes provisions related to fisheries subsidies. The negotiations on fisheries subsidies aim to promote sustainable fishing practices by addressing harmful subsidies that contribute to overfishing and depletion of marine resources. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

### Answer 4 Option B is correct

#### Explanation

- India-US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) was launched in June 2023, during the state visit of the Prime Minister of India to the US.
- It aims to drive strategic technology partnerships and defence industrial cooperation between India and the US. **Hence, option B is correct.**
- The initiative aims to explore possibilities for co-producing jet engines, long-range artillery, and infantry vehicles.
- It is organized by India's Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) and the US Department of Defence.

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

- Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) initiated the Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH).
- It is one of the key deliverables of India's G-20 Presidency. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is the first such global initiative aimed at data convergence, the interface of health platforms and investments in the digital health space around the globe. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It will serve as a platform for sharing knowledge and digital products among countries.
- It consists of four main components viz.
  - country needs tracker
  - country resource portal (a map of resources available in a country)
  - transformation toolbox for sharing quality-assured digital tools
  - knowledge exchange platform
- It will ensure inclusivity, integration, and alignment of healthcare goals by not leaving anyone behind.

**Answer 6 Option D is correct****Explanation**

- Leniency plus is a proactive antitrust enforcement strategy **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- It is aimed at attracting leniency applications by encouraging companies already under investigation for one cartel to report other cartels unknown to the competition regulator.
- It will paving the way for the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to roll out a new Cartel detecting tool that is expected to revolutionise Anti Trus lot enforcement in the country. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- Under the regime, companies under investigation for one cartel would be encouraged to report other unknown cartels to CCI. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- Such a programme helps competition authorities to discover secret cartels and to obtain insider evidence of the infringement.

**Answer 7 Option B is correct****Explanation**

- Semiconductors are materials that have an intermediate level of electrical conductivity, falling between conductors (materials with high conductivity) and insulators (materials with low conductivity). The conductivity of semiconductors can be altered based on external factors like temperature or doping. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- Silicon is indeed the most widely used material in the manufacturing of semiconductors. It possesses favorable electrical properties and is abundant in nature, making it a popular choice for the fabrication of electronic devices such as transistors and integrated circuits. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**
- Doping is a crucial process in semiconductor manufacturing where controlled amounts of specific impurities are intentionally introduced into the semiconductor material. This is done to modify the electrical properties of the material, allowing for the customization of its conductivity and other characteristics. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

**Answer 8 Option A is correct****Explanation**

- Anoxic Marine Basins are characterised by oxygen deficiency and isolation from main currents.
- In most anoxic basins, the water is extremely stagnant and can have mixing times of many thousand years. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- They can't support animal life and are populated primarily by microbes and some very specialised fungi with different metabolisms than creatures in oxygen-rich environments. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- Many anoxic basins also contain toxic chemicals, which are produced by geothermal activity or by microbes living in the basins.
- In some anoxic basins, methane and other gases collect in reservoirs beneath the seafloor.
- Permanent anoxic basins form when there is a strong layering of the water column created in a cup-like formation on the ocean floor. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**



**Answer 9 Option B is correct****Explanation**

- The Gram Sabha is the fulcrum of the Panchayati Raj and village development.
- The term Gram Sabha is defined in the Constitution of India under Article 243(b). **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- Gram Sabha is the primary body of the Panchayati Raj system and by far the largest. It is a permanent body. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Members of the Gram Sabha: Persons, those who are above 18 years of age and living in the village and whose names are included in the electoral rolls for the Panchayat at the village level.
- All decisions of the Panchayat are taken through the Gram Sabha and no decision is official and valid without the consent of the Gram Sabha.

**Answer 10 Option A is correct****Explanation**

- Environment Impact Assessment can be defined as the study for predicting the effect of a proposed activity/project on the environment.
- An EIA report is prepared to get Environment Clearance (EC) for a project. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- A process of 'Public Hearing' is conducted before the issue of 'Consent to Establish (NOC)' by state regulators. Concerns of people living in the proposed project area are heard.
- It is statutory under the Environment Protection Act, 1986 for some projects.
  - Category A projects require mandatory environmental clearance and thus they do not undergo the screening process.
  - Category B projects undergo a screening process and they are classified into two types viz. Category B1 projects (Mandatory requires EIA) and Category B2 projects (Do not require EIA). **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**

  
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