

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



Date: 27 Oct. 2023

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2. PM Modi chairs meeting of 43rd edition of PRAGATI - AIR
3. India's green hydrogen move may worsen pollution if steps are not in place, says study - The Hindu
4. Punjab farm fires down by 53%, but air quality likely to worsen in Capital - The Hindu/ City's AQI may hit 'very poor', brace for worse this weekend - Indian Express
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Important News Articles

GS II

1. SC allows surrogacy, strikes down rule banning use of donor gametes - The Hindu

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

News:

- The Supreme Court has **protected the right** of parenthood of a woman, suffering from a rare medical condition.
- The court **stayed the operation of a law** which threatened to wreck her hopes to become a mother through surrogacy.

Prelims Takeaway

- The Surrogacy Law in India
- Assisted Reproductive Technology

Right of Parenthood v Statute

- The woman **suffers from** the Mayer Rokitansky Kuster Hauser (MRKH) syndrome.
- Medical **board records showed** she has “absent ovaries and absent uterus, hence she **cannot produce** her own eggs/oocytes”.
- The couple had **begun the process** of gestational surrogacy, through a donor, in 2022.
- However, a government notification on March 14, 2023 amended the law, **banning the use of donor gametes**.
- It said “intending couples” must **use their own gametes** for surrogacy.
- The petition was filed in the Supreme Court **challenging the amendment as a violation** of a woman’s right to parenthood.

The Opinion of the Hon’ble Supreme Court

- The Supreme Court is of the opinion that the amendment is **not in consonance** with main provisions of the Surrogacy Act.
- The amendment is **prima facie contrary** to the main provisions of the Surrogacy Act both in form as well as in substance.
- The Court is of the opinion that the **amendment is a hurdle** for the intending couple and prevents them from achieving parenthood through surrogacy.

The Point of View of Petitioner

- The petitioner argued that the **amended Paragraph 1(d) of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022**, by ruling out the use of donor eggs had made it impossible for the couple to continue with the process of surrogacy in order to achieve parenthood.
- The petitioner further argued that the 2023 amendment **contradicted the Sections 2(r) and 4 of the Surrogacy Act, 2021** which recognised the situation when a medical condition would require a couple to opt for gestational surrogacy in order to become parents.
- The petitioner cited that the Rule 14(a) of the Surrogacy Rules **the medical or congenital conditions** owing to which a woman could choose to become a mother through gestational surrogacy.
- **The medical or congenital conditions included** “having no uterus or missing uterus or abnormal uterus (like **hypoplastic** uterus or **intrauterine** adhesions or thin **endometrium** or small unicornuate uterus, T-shaped uterus) or if the **uterus** is surgically **removed** due to any medical condition such as **gynaecological cancer**”.

Woman’s Choice v Legal Hurdles

- The Rule made it clear that the **choice was solely** that of the woman. He said his client had **begun** the surrogacy process months **before the amendment**, which cannot be implemented **retrospectively**.
- The **government countered** that the process of surrogacy cannot be availed under the law unless the child was “**genetically related**” to the intended couple. This **exempted** the use of donor eggs.

The Order of the Court over Right of Women

- The Court ordered that the **law** permitting gestational surrogacy was “**woman-centric**”.

- The decision to have a surrogate child was entirely based on the **woman's inability** to become a mother owing to her medical or congenital condition.
- **Such a condition included :**
 - the “**absence** of a uterus
 - **repeatedly failed** pregnancies,
 - **multiple pregnancies**
 - an **illness** which makes it **impossible** for her to carry a pregnancy to term would make the pregnancy **life-threatening**”.

The Interpretations of the Court Over the Questions of Law

- The amendment **cannot contradict Rule 14(a)**.
- The rule **specifically recognises the absence of a uterus** or any allied condition as a medical indication necessitating gestational surrogacy.
- Addressing the **government's contention** that the surrogate child should be “genetically related” to the couple, the court pointed out that the child would be **related to the husband**.
- “In this regard, it may be noted that the expression ‘**genetically**’ related to the intending couple has to be read as being **related to the husband** when Rule 14(a) applies,” the court interpreted.

2. PM Modi chairs meeting of 43rd edition of PRAGATI - AIR

Relevance: e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

News:

- Recently, the Prime Minister chaired the meeting of the **43rd edition of PRAGATI, involving Centre and State governments.**

Prelims Takeaway

- PRAGATI Platform
- CPGRAMS

Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI) Platform

- Launched on March 25, 2015, it is a **multi-purpose and multi-modal platform** that is **aimed at addressing common man's grievances.**
- It also **monitors and reviews important programmes and projects of the Government** of India as well as projects flagged by State Governments.
- It is also a **robust system for bringing e-transparency and e-accountability** with real-time presence and exchange among the key stakeholders.
- This platform is combined with the **three latest technologies** namely
 - Video-conferencing
 - Digital data management
 - Geo-spatial technology
- It provides a **unique combination for cooperative federalism.**
 - This is done by bringing the **Chief Secretaries of the states** and the Secretaries of the GOI on one platform.
 - The PM can **discuss the issues at ground level with this platform.**
 - He can communicate with concerned state and central officials with full information.

Key features

- It works on a **three-tier system.**
- The Prime Minister **will conduct a meeting every month.**
 - He will **interact with secretaries and chief secretaries** of the GOI via video conferencing.
- Issues to be flagged before the PM is **picked up from the available database** regarding public grievances, on-going Programmes and pending projects.
- The system will **ride on, strengthen, and re-engineer the data bases of**
 - the CPGRAMS for grievances
 - the Project Monitoring Group (PMG)
 - the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
 - PRAGATI provides an interface and platform for all these three aspects.
- It will also take into consideration **various correspondences to the PM's office** by the common people or from high dignitaries of States and/or developers of public projects.

Public Grievances

- The issues flagged are **uploaded seven days prior to the PRAGATI day**.
- These issues **can be viewed by the Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries** after entering into the application.
- Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries will be **able to see the issues pertaining to their Department /State**.
- Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries have to **put their comments and updates about the flagged issues** within three days
- One day, Tuesday, is available to the PMO team **to review the data entered** by the Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries.
- The design is such that when **PM reviews the issue**, he should have on his screen the issue as well as the **latest updates and visuals** regarding the same.

GS III**3. India's green hydrogen move may worsen pollution if steps are not in place, says study - The Hindu**

Relevance : Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

News :

- India's plans to produce 'green hydrogen' where the gas is produced **without resulting in fossil fuel emissions**.
- The process **might end up worsening** pollution if proper checks and balances are not in place.
- A study has been **presented by** environmental and energy think-tank, Climate Risk Horizons (CRH).

National Green Hydrogen Mission

- India's National Green Hydrogen Mission, **expects to manufacture** five million tonnes by 2030.
- The mission is **piloted by** the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- This **would require** the installation of **renewable energy capacity** worth 125 GW (1 GW is 1,000 megawatts) and the use of 250,000 gigawatt-hr units of power.
- This requirement is **equivalent to** about 13% of India's present electricity generation.

The Present Status of the Renewable Energy Capacity of India

- As of August 2023, India's total renewable energy (RE) **capacity** (excluding hydropower dams bigger than 25 MW) **stood at** 131 GW.
- The 2030 green hydrogen plan thus envisages **adding an equivalent RE** capacity by 2030.
- This is **over and above** the 500 GW of RE capacity that India has committed to install by 2030 as part of its Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement.
- To put that in perspective, India **installed only** 15 GW of new solar and wind capacity in 2023, against the 45 GW per year needed to reach the 2030 target.

Using coal-based power

- The MNRE has **defined green hydrogen** as hydrogen produced in a way that emits **no more than 2 kg of carbon dioxide per kg** of such hydrogen.
- **Currently**, producing 1 kg of 'grey hydrogen', as it is known, ends up emitting **9 kg of carbon dioxide**.
- While a **detailed methodology** is awaited, the definition as it stands leaves a lot to interpretation.
- The main concern is **that if electrolyzers**, which split water to produce hydrogen and oxygen, **were run 24x7**, they would be expected to operate even at night when no solar power is available.
- This would then **mean tapping into conventional** coal-fired electricity.
- India's coal-powered grid in general, it will in fact **increase carbon emissions**, since about 70% of the electricity on the grid is coal-generated more in non-daylight hours when solar generation is nil.
- The vast majority of **projects have not disclosed** their source of electricity. It is also not clear **if those few projects that have committed** to meet 100% of their requirement from these sources.

Costly Diversion

- AS per report, another challenge is that India's standards **allow the use of biomass** or the production of green hydrogen
- This **also results in** carbon emissions when burnt.
- Moreover, **diverting scarce renewable energy capacity** towards the production of green hydrogen might mean inadequate clean electricity being made available for consumers.
- India's **ambitious renewable energy target** of 450 GW by 2030 already requires huge investment.
- The green hydrogen mission **will require an additional** 125 GW of RE.
- The MNRE needs to **guard against the risk** that **finance** for RE projects that would otherwise decarbonise the electricity grid will instead be diverted to produce green hydrogen.
- This would :
 - delay India's **journey to net zero**
 - undermine a **nascent industry**.
 - deny States and electricity consumers the **cost benefits** that cheap renewable energy has to offer.

Expectations for Future

- Several large power utilities in India have announced **ambitious plans** to scale up green hydrogen production.
- The Centre's green hydrogen mission has **committed nearly** ₹20,000 crore to develop and expand the industry.

4. Punjab farm fires down by 53%, but air quality likely to worsen in Capital - The Hindu/ City's AQI may hit 'very poor', brace for worse this weekend - Indian Express

Relevance: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

News:

- According to the Centre's **Air Quality Early Warning System**, Delhi's air quality remained in the 'poor' category for the fourth day in a row.
- It is expected to **deteriorate further over the weekend**.

Prelims Takeaway

- National Air Quality Index
- Graded Response Action Plan

The Reasons

- Delhi experiences a significant increase in air pollution **due to the prevailing northwest wind direction**.
- The **rising number of farm fires in Punjab and Haryana** is expected to contribute to Delhi's pollution levels.

National Air Quality Index

- Launched in **2014** with outline '**One Number - One Color - One Description**' for the **common man to judge the air quality** within his vicinity.
- **Developed by the CPCB** in consultation with **IIT-Kanpur** and an expert group comprising **medical and air-quality professionals**.
- The **measurement** of air quality is based on **eight pollutants**
 - Particulate Matter (PM10)
 - Particulate Matter (PM2.5)
 - Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2)
 - Sulphur Dioxide (SO2)
 - Carbon Monoxide (CO)
 - Ozone (O3)

- Ammonia (NH₃)
- Lead (Pb)
- AQI has **six categories of air quality** namely **Good, Satisfactory, Moderately Polluted, Poor, Very Poor and Severe.**

Graded Response Action Plan

- Formulated in **2016** and notified in 2017 **for Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR).**
- These are **institutionalised measures** to be taken when air quality deteriorates, hence works only as an **emergency measure.**
- It includes the measures to be taken by **different government agencies**
 - To prevent worsening of Air Quality of Delhi-NCR
 - To prevent PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} levels from going beyond the 'moderate' national Air Quality Index (AQI) category.
- If air quality reaches the **severe+ stage**, GRAP talks about **shutting down schools** and **implementing the odd-even** road-space rationing scheme.

5. ISRO to hold more tests for Gaganyaan in coming months - The Hindu

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

News:

- Following the recent **successful Test Vehicle-D1 (TV-D1) mission**, ISRO has planned **additional test missions for the Gaganyaan program.**

Prelims Takeaway

- Gaganyaan Mission
- Test Vehicle-D1 Mission
- ISRO

Upcoming Test Missions

- They include **TV-D2, the G-X unmanned orbital demonstration flight, Integrated Air-Drop Test (IADT) and a Pad Abort Test.**
- **The G-X mission**
 - It will feature an **unmanned crew module with a service module**, along with the 'female' **robot astronaut Vyommitra.**
 - It will **test control systems, a "reduced version" of the life support system, thermal protection systems, and parachute systems.**
- **The TV-D2 mission**
 - It will demonstrate **in-flight abort capability** under different initial conditions compared to the launch vehicle.
 - It will have a **control system for reorienting the crew module's attitude** after separation.

Reusing TV-D1 Crew Module

- TV-D1 demonstrated the **in-flight abort of the Crew Escape System (CES)** at 1.2 Mach speed and **crew module recovery from the sea.**
- ISRO is exploring the **possibility of reusing the TV-D1 crew module** recovered from the sea after a parachute-assisted splash-down.

6. Tax base widens, trend of migration of individuals towards higher income: CBDT - Indian Express/ 'Super rich' incomes' share ebbing amid middle-class mobility: CBDT - The Hindu

Relevance: Economy

News:

- **Individual tax returns increased** to 6.37 crore in Assessment Year (AY) 2021-22 from 3.36 crore in AY 2013-14, marking a **90% increase over nine years.**

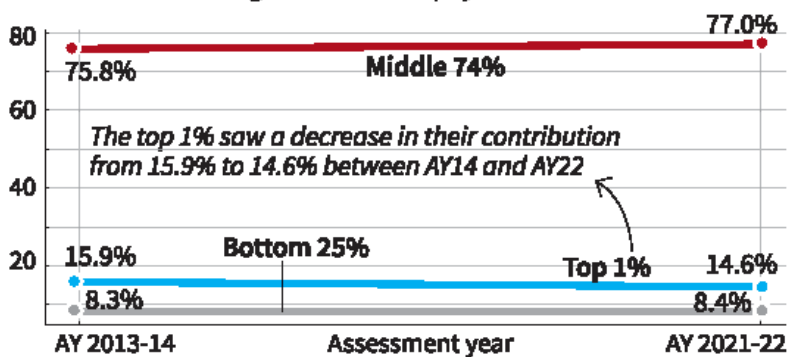
Prelims Takeaway

- Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)
- Income Inequality

- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) attributes this growth to **measures taken by the Income Tax Department** and suggests **robust growth in the gross total income of individuals**.

Marginal shift in contributions

There has been a subtle change in the gross total income contributions among individual taxpayers



Income Groups and Trends

- Returns filed in the **income range of Rs 5-10 lakh and Rs 10-25 lakh by individual taxpayers increased** by 295% and 291% from AY 2013-14 to AY 2021-22, respectively.
- This indicates a **positive trend of migration to higher income groups** among individual taxpayers.

CBDT Response on Income Inequality

- The proportionate contribution of gross total income of the **top 1% individual taxpayers decreased** from 15.9% in AY 2013-14 to 14.6% in AY 2021-22.
- The contribution of the gross total income of the **bottom 25% individual taxpayers increased** from 8.3% in AY 2013-14 to 8.4% in AY 2021-22.
- The **average gross total income for individual taxpayers increased** from about Rs 4.5 lakh in AY 2013-14 to about Rs 7 lakh in AY 2021-22, a 56% increase.

7. India hosting meeting of the United Nations Forum on Forests to deliberate on forest fires and forest certification - PIB

Relevance: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

News:

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is organising a **Country-Led Initiative (CLI) event** as part of the **United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)**.

United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

- UNFF focuses on **managing, conserving, and sustainably developing various types of forests worldwide**.
- It was **established in 2000** by the **UN Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC)**.
- The forum has **universal membership**, and is **composed of all Member States of the United Nations and specialised agencies**.
- India is a founding member** of UNFF.

Purpose of the Country-Led Initiative (CLI)

- The CLI aims to **contribute to UNFF discussions** regarding **implementation of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF)**.
- It facilitates the **exchange of best practices** among UNFF member states for SFM and UNSPF implementation.
- Thematic areas of discussion, this year, include **forest fires and forest certification**.

Prelims Takeaway

- United Nations Forum on Forests
- Sustainable Forest Management
- Forest Certification

Forest Fires

- The world has experienced a significant increase in the scale and duration of wildfires, impacting biodiversity, ecosystems, human well-being, livelihoods, and national economies.
- Approximately 100 million hectares, or 3% of the world's forest area, are affected by fires annually.
- Forest fires have led to unhealthy air quality, loss of human lives, and significant property damage.

UN Forest Instrument and Concerns

- The UN Forest Instrument **promotes sustainable forest management through voluntary instruments** like certification systems.
 - Forest Certification Is a mechanism for forest monitoring, tracing and labelling timber, wood and pulp products and non-timber forest products.
 - It is a process through which quality of management from environmental, social and economic perspectives is judged against a series of agreed standards.
- Some countries view certification measures and requirements **as trade challenges or market barriers**.
- Others see it as **essential for Sustainable Forest Management** and preventing degradation or deforestation.
- A concern is that most consumer markets **recognize certification from select certifying bodies**, disadvantaging others.



Mentorship
India

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

1. Why are the China-Bhutan boundary talks significant? - The Hindu

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

Context:

- China and Bhutan held their **25th round of boundary talks** in Beijing.
- Both countries have **signed a Cooperation Agreement** on the "Responsibilities and Functions of the Joint Technical Team (JTT) on the Delimitation and Demarcation of the Bhutan-China Boundary."
- This advances **their 3-Step Roadmap** initiated in 2021 for border resolution, building on the positive momentum since their last talks in 2016.

Why are the Talks Significant?

- The Boundary talks between Bhutan and China were held **after a gap of seven years** and indicate **significant progress** has been made.
- Bhutan and the Tibetan Autonomous Region **share a contiguous border** to Bhutan's north and west of about 470 km.
- Since 1984, Bhutan and China had held **24 rounds of talks** to resolve the disputes until 2016, but the 25th round appeared to have been held up after the Doklam **Standoff** between Indian and Chinese armies in 2017, and then the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019-2021.
- However, the **two sides used the pause** to hold talks at other levels in rapid succession, especially after China threatened to open a new front for a border dispute to Bhutan's east.
- Since then, the Expert Group of diplomats on both sides met in 2021 to agree on a **3-step roadmap**, and the first boundary **delimitation technical talks** were held in August 2023.
- The two sides were "**inching towards**" **completing** the roadmap even before his government demits office ahead of Bhutanese elections in 2024
- Foreign Minister Tandi Dorji's **visit to Beijing indicates** that further progress has indeed been made.

What is the 3-Step Roadmap?

- The 3-Step roadmap **MoU** signed by the Bhutanese Foreign Minister and Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister in 2021,
- The JTT (Joint Technical Team) **was established to implement the roadmap** by the Expert Group in August, 2023.
- Both countries are hoping to **draw a line clearly** delineating Bhutanese and Chinese territory for the first time.
- Bhutan and China **don't have diplomatic ties**, as Bhutan has avoided diplomatic relations with all the United Nations Security Council permanent members.
- The 3-Step Roadmap involves:
 - First, **agreeing to the border** "on the table"
 - Second **visiting the sites** on the ground;
 - Third, formally **demarcating** the boundary.

Why is India watching closely?

- For India, any **hint of closer ties** between China and one of its closest neighbours is a cause for worry.
- This is in **context of the breakdown** in its ties with China over the standoff at the Line of Actual Control from 2020.
- India's worry is over China's **demand for full diplomatic relations** with Bhutan, and opening an Embassy in Thimphu.
- Given **India's challenges** with Chinese projects and funding in other neighbouring countries including Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, any Chinese presence in a small country like Bhutan would be problematic.

Doklam : India v China

- India is **watching the demarcation** discussions over Doklam.

- Amongst the proposals China has placed on the table is an **agreement to “swap” areas** in Doklam under Bhutanese control with areas in Jakarlung and Pasamlung which China claims.
- The Doklam **trijunction cuts** very close to India’s Siliguri corridor a narrow area that connects the North Eastern States to the rest of India.
- India would **not like to see China gain access** to any area closer to it.
- Since the Doklam **standoff** in 2017, China has doubled down on its control of the Doklam plateau
- According to a **recent Pentagon report**, it has continued to build “underground storage facilities , new roads , and new villages in disputed areas in neighbouring Bhutan.
- This has **erased many of the strategic gains** that New Delhi had hoped for after China agreed to step back from the standoff point in 2017.

Conclusion

- However, Bhutan’s leadership has thus far said that **all decisions would consider India’s interests** and has always consulted India on issues of concern.

2. Warming Up, Breaking the Ice - Indian Express

Relevance: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

Context:

- In an emerging multipolar world, India has surprised many observers by hosting the G20 Summit and **balancing interests between the Global North and the Global South.**
- This consensus-based approach is essential **to address the climate crisis and protect vulnerable ecosystems like the Arctic.**

<p style="text-align: center;">Arctic Climate Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Arctic is warming four times faster than the global average, leading to the loss of sea ice and thawing permafrost. • This poses significant climate risks, including the release of stored carbon and triggering irreversible climate tipping points. <p style="text-align: center;">Global South Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change in the Arctic is connected to extreme rainfall events in the Indian summer monsoon, which is critical for agriculture and livelihoods in South Asia. • This interconnectedness underscores the need for collective action to mitigate Arctic climate impacts. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Geopolitical Tensions and Exploitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid development and geopolitical tensions in the Arctic, including Russia’s commercialization of the Northern Sea Route and use of heavy fuel oil, pose challenges to climate preservation. • Other Arctic countries also plan oil and gas development despite concerns. <p style="text-align: center;">Governance Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Arctic Council has been suspended due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, making it difficult to hold countries accountable and monitor Arctic changes. • The Council also lacks Global South representation.
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<p>India’s Role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India’s ability to bridge divides and develop aligned positions among the Global North and South holds promise for united action in safeguarding the Arctic and addressing climate issues. • India can advocate for Arctic governance reforms and climate protection through its leadership.
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3. APAAR ID - Indian Express

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

Context:

- Several state governments recently requested schools to **seek parental consent** for the creation of a new student identity card known as the **Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR).**
- This is part of the ‘**One nation, One Student ID**’ initiative of the Union government, stemming from the new **National Education Policy of 2020.**

Purpose of APAAR

- APAAR is an automated student ID system for lifelong academic tracking in India.
- It simplifies record-keeping and provides access to digital documents via Digilocker.
- Objective: To reduce the burden of physical documents, improve state-level education monitoring and prevent fraud.

How APAAR Works?

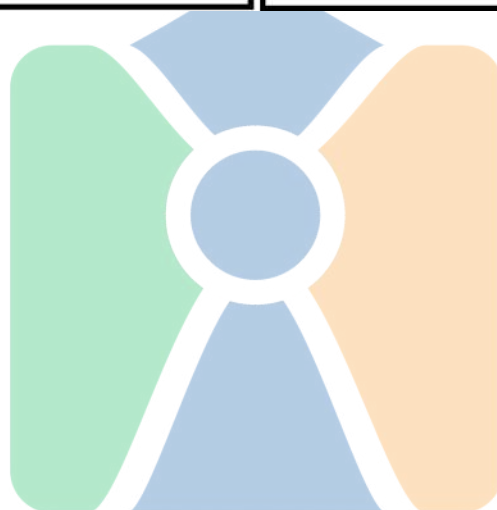
- Each student receives a unique APAAR ID linked to an Academic Bank Credit (ABC) containing their academic records.
- Digital certificates are securely stored in the system by authorised institutions.
- Data can be transferred when students change schools, eliminating the need for physical document transfers.

APAAR Registration

- Students provide basic information for registration, which is verified using their Aadhar number.
- Consent forms are signed and students can choose to share their Aadhar details with the Ministry of Education.
- Registration is voluntary, not mandatory.

Concerns Surrounding APAAR

- Parents and students have concerns about sharing their Aadhar details as they worry that their personal information could be leaked to outside parties.
- Government assures that information is confidential and shared only with the authorised educational entities.
- Students can stop sharing their information at any time but previously processed data remains unaffected.

**Mentorship**
India

Quick Look

1. SENSEX

- Recently, Sensex sank 1.4% to 4-month low on geopolitical, U.S. bond yield worries
- SENSEX is the oldest stock exchange in India and is also termed as BSE (Bombay Stock Exchange).
- It comprises 30 of the largest and most actively-traded stocks on the BSE, providing a gauge of India's economy.
- The index's composition is reviewed in June and December each year.
- Analysts and investors use it to observe the cycles of India's economy and the development and decline of particular industries.

2. Vajra Mushti Kalaga

- It is a unique Indian martial art that incorporates various techniques of hand-to-hand combat like grappling, wrestling, and striking.
- Vajra Mushti, which literally means Thunderbolt Fist, is characterised by the utilization of a knuckleduster, a small metal weapon.
 - It is usually made of animal horns and worn on the knuckles of the fighter.
- The main objective of this Indian martial art form is to neutralise the opponent and counter his weapon.
- It is a form of wrestling different from conventional grappling and entails two jettys taking a swipe at each other's heads with a knuckleduster.
- Whoever draws the blood from the opponent's head first is declared the winner.
- This form of wrestling was popular during the period of the Vijayanagar rulers, who reigned between the 14th and the 17th centuries.

3. Jamrani Dam Multipurpose Project

- The project envisages the construction of a dam near Jamrani village across river Gola, a tributary of river RamGanga, in the Nainital district of Uttarakhand.
- A substantial part of irrigation benefits of the project would flow to the neighbouring state of Uttar Pradesh.
- This project is the seventh project to be included in the PMKSY-AIBP list.

4. Vikram-1 Rocket

- Vikram-1, named after the father of India's space programme, Vikram Sarabhai, is a multi-stage launch vehicle with a capacity to place around 300 kg of payloads in low-earth orbit.
- It has been built by Hyderabad-based Skyroot Aerospace, a space startup.
- It is an all-carbon-fibre-bodied rocket that can place multiple satellites into orbit.
- Being a solid-fuel rocket and using relatively simpler technologies would mean that launching this vehicle would require minimal infrastructure and that the rocket could be assembled and launched within 24 hours from any site.

5. Sea Cucumber

- This species is a part of a larger animal group called echinoderms and is invertebrates that lives on the seafloor.
- Their body shape is similar to that of a cucumber, but they have small tentacle-like tube feet that are used for locomotion and feeding.
- They are found in all marine environments throughout the world, from shallow to deep-sea environments.
- These are benthic, meaning they live on the ocean floor.
- They excrete inorganic nitrogen and phosphorus, enhancing the productivity of benthic biota.
- Unlike most terrestrial animals, sea cucumber eggs undergo external fertilization

- Conservation status
 - CITES: Appendix II
 - Wildlife Protection Act of 1972: Schedule I

6. *Alcalus fontinalis*

- It is a newly discovered species of frog.
- It was discovered in the Namdapha Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh.
- The frog appeared to be a mix of a bush frog and a water frog.
- The new species stands out from its congeners due to a unique combination of morphological features.
- These include a snout-vent length of 27–28 mm in males and 29.9–36.2 mm in females, a disc on fingers and toes with a horizontal/transverse groove on the dorsal surface, wrinkled dorsal skin, and a pair of faint dorsolateral stripes on the back.



Mentorship
India

Prelims Track Question

Q1. With reference to Surrogacy (Regulations) Act, 2021, consider the following statements

1. A divorcee cannot avail surrogacy in India.
2. The violations of regulations may lead to the maximum imprisonment of seven years.
3. Only altruistic surrogacy is allowed in India.

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 the PRAGATI Platform, consider the following statements:

Statement-I: The platform promotes Cooperative Federalism.

Statement-II: The platform works in two-tier systems.

Which one of the following statements is correct with respect to the above statements?

- A. Statement I is correct but statement II is incorrect
- B. Statement I is incorrect but Statement II is correct
- C. Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement I
- D. Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement I

Q3. With reference to National Green Hydrogen Mission of India, consider the following statements

1. The mission expects to manufacture five million tonnes of Green Hydrogen by 2030.
2. The mission is piloted by the Ministry of Power.
3. SIGHT is the sub-mission of the mission.

4. This mission aims at the installation of renewable energy capacity worth 125 GW by 2030.

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 air pollutants :

1. Carbon Monoxide
2. Ozone
3. Ammonia
4. Lead

How many of the above given pollutants is/are included in the National Air Quality Index ?

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

Q5. TV-D2 Mission and G-X Missions, which have remained in news recently, are related to which among the following Mission ?

- A. ADITYA
- B. Venus Orbiter Mission
- C. NISAR
- D. Gaganyaan

Q6. With reference to Income Tax Slabs in India, consider the following statements

1. There are three kinds of age groups under the slabs.
2. Slab Rates that are applied to FY 2023-24 are for the Assessment Year 2024-25.
3. Under the old regime tax structure, people below the age of 60 are required to pay the highest tax rate on the income of Rs. 10 Lakh or above.

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

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

Q7. Which among the following statements is *not* correct in context of the United Nations Forum on Forest ?

- A. The 2023 Session of the Forum was held in New York.
- B. The forum has universal membership, and is composed of all Member States of the United Nations and specialised agencies.
- C. It was established by the United Nations Environment Program.
- D. India is a founding member of UNFF.

Q8. With reference to Geography of Bhutan, consider the following statements

1. Gangkhar Puensum , the highest point in Bhutan, is known as the highest unclimbed mountain in the world.
2. The river Brahmaputra does not flow through Bhutan.
3. Haa Valley is located in Bhutan.

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

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

Q9. With reference to the Arctic Council consider the following statements

1. It was set up by the Ottawa Declaration.
2. The member countries are provided military security from other countries.
3. India is one of its founding members.

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 on Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR)

1. It is part of the 'One nation, One Student ID' initiative of the Union government.
2. It is an automated student ID system for lifelong academic tracking in India.
3. Its registration has been made mandatory by the Government.

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

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

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

- Under the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, a woman who is a widow or a divorcee between the age of 35 to 45 years or a couple, defined as a legally married woman and man, can avail of surrogacy if they have a medical condition necessitating this option. **Hence, Statement 1 is incorrect.**
- It also bans commercial surrogacy, which is punishable with a jail term of 10 years and a fine of up to Rs 10 lakhs. **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The law allows only altruistic surrogacy where no money exchanges hands and where a surrogate mother is genetically related to those seeking a child. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**

Ans. 2 Option A is correct**Explanation****Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI) Platform**

- It was launched on March 25, 2015, it is a multi-purpose and multi-modal platform that is aimed at addressing common man's grievances.
- It also monitors and reviews important programmes and projects of the Government of India as well as projects flagged by State Governments.
- It provides a unique combination for cooperative federalism. This is done by bringing the Chief Secretaries of the states and the Secretaries of the GOI on one platform. **Hence, Statement-I is correct.**
- The PM can discuss the issues at ground level with this platform.
- It works on a three-tier system. **Hence, Statement-II is incorrect.**
- The Prime Minister will conduct a meeting every month.

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

- India's National Green Hydrogen Mission, expects to manufacture five million tonnes by 2030. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- The mission is piloted by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE). **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- This mission aims at the installation of renewable energy capacity worth 125 GW by 2030. **Hence, Statement 4 is correct.**

- This requirement is equivalent to about 13% of India's present electricity generation.

Sub Schemes of Mission

- **Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition Programme (SIGHT):** It will fund the domestic manufacturing of electrolyzers and produce green hydrogen. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**
- **Green Hydrogen Hubs:** States and regions capable of supporting large scale production and/or utilisation of hydrogen will be identified and developed as Green Hydrogen Hubs.

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

- The measurement of air quality under National Air Quality Index is based on eight pollutants :
 - Particulate Matter (PM10)
 - Particulate Matter (PM2.5)
 - Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2)
 - Sulphur Dioxide (SO2)
 - Carbon Monoxide (CO)
 - Ozone (O3)
 - Ammonia (NH3)
 - Lead (Pb)

Hence, Option D is correct.

Ans. 5 Option D is correct**Explanation**

- Following the recent successful Test Vehicle-D1 (TV-D1) mission, ISRO has planned additional test missions for the Gaganyaan program.
- The Upcoming Test Missions of ISRO include TV-D2, the G-X unmanned orbital demonstration flight, Integrated Air-Drop Test (IADT) and a Pad Abort Test. **Hence, Option D is correct.**

Ans. 6 Option C is correct**Explanation**

- The income tax slabs are different under the old and the new tax regimes.
- The slab rates under the old tax regime are divided into three categories :
 - Indian Residents aged < 60 years + All the non-residents
 - 60 to 80 years of age
 - Resident Senior citizens More than 80 years: Resident Super senior citizens. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**

- In India, the Income Tax applies to individuals based on a slab system, where different tax rates are assigned to different income ranges.
- As the person's income increases, the tax rates also increase.
- Slab Rates that are applied to FY 2023-24 are for the Assessment Year 2024-25. **Hence, Statement 2 is correct.**
- Under the old regime tax structure, people below the age of 60 are required to pay the highest tax rate on the income of Rs. 10 Lakh or above i.e. 30%. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**

Ans. 7 Option C is correct

Explanation

- UNFF focuses on managing, conserving, and sustainably developing various types of forests worldwide.
- It was established in 2000 by the UN Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). **Hence, Option C is incorrect.**
- The forum has universal membership, and is composed of all Member States of the United Nations and specialised agencies. **Hence, Option B is correct.**
- India is a founding member of UNFF. **Hence, Option D is correct.**
- The eighteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF18), held in New York from May 8-12, 2023. **Hence, Option A is correct.**

Ans. 8 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The southern mountains of Bhutan are 200 meters above sea level and the northern mountains are almost 7000 meters above sea level.
- Bhutan is mostly covered with forests, "72.5%" of the land is covered with forests.
- The constitutional law of Bhutan mandates maintaining "60%" of the forest land all the time.
- The highest point of Bhutan is Gangkhar Puensum and is known as the highest unclimbed mountain in the world. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- The capital of Bhutan is Thimpu which is situated in the western part of the country.
- Many rivers of it flow in the river Brahmaputra that flows in India making an isolated valley region and most of the population lives in this region. However, the river Brahmaputra does

not flow through Bhutan. **Hence, Statement 2 is correct.**

- Bhutan has many valleys such as Haa Valley, Paro Valley and so on and these valleys are linked by many passes. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**

Ans. 9 Option A is correct

Explanation

- The Arctic Council is a high-level intergovernmental body set up in 1996 by the Ottawa declaration. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Objective: To promote cooperation, coordination and interaction among the The Ottawa Declaration declares Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America as a member of the Arctic Council.
- India has observer status. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- Arctic States together with the indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants.
- The Ottawa Declaration states that no military security is to be provided. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**

Ans. 10 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR) is part of the 'One nation, One Student ID' initiative of the Union government, stemming from the new National Education Policy of 2020. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is an automated student ID system for lifelong academic tracking in India. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It simplifies record-keeping and provides access to digital documents via Digilocker.
- Objective: To reduce the burden of physical documents, improve state-level education monitoring and prevent fraud.
- Each student receives a unique APAAR ID linked to an Academic Bank Credit (ABC) containing their academic records.
- Students provide basic information for registration, which is verified using their Aadhar number.
- Consent forms are signed and students can choose to share their Aadhar details with the Ministry of Education.
- Registration is voluntary, not mandatory. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

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