

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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### **Important News Articles**

1. Speed up measures for new dam at Mullaperiyar, Kerala tells Central Water Commission - The Hindu
2. PM-Kisan beneficiaries dwindling, Govt adds 34 lakh in special drive - Indian Express
3. UGC releases draft norms on recognition of colleges in India - The Hindu
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5. Centre hikes copra MSP by ₹250-₹300 per quintal for 2024 - The Hindu
6. Indian banks' asset quality improved to decadal high: RBI - The Hindu
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### **Editorials, Gists and Explainers**

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## Important News Articles

### GS I

#### 1. Speed up measures for new dam at Mullaperiyar, Kerala tells Central Water Commission - The Hindu

**Relevance:** Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian sub-continent); factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India).

##### Prelims Takeaway

- Periyar River
- Mullayar river

**News:**

- The State government has urged the Centre to **speed up measures for building a new dam at Mullaperiyar** in Idukki district.

**Key Highlights**

- Kerala is committed to **supplying water to Tamil Nadu** under the Mullaperiyar agreement.
- **The old dam should be decommissioned** and replaced with a new one, allaying the concerns of the people living in the downstream regions
- **the CWC decision to ask Tamil Nadu** to finalise the terms of reference for assessing the safety of the old dam.

**Mullaperiyar Dam**

- The Mullaperiyar, a 126-year-old dam, is located on the confluence of the **Mullayar and Periyar rivers** in Kerala's Idukki district.
- The dam is owned, operated and **maintained by Tamil Nadu**.
- Tamil Nadu maintained it for several purposes, including **irrigation, drinking water supply and hydro-power generation**.

**Periyar River**

- The **Periyar River is the longest river in the state of Kerala** with a length of 244 km.
- It is also known as '**Lifeline of Kerala**' as it is one of the few perennial rivers in the state.
- **Periyar River originates from Sivagiri hills of Western Ghats**, in Tamil Nadu and flows through the Periyar National Park.
- The main tributaries of Periyar are **Muthirapuzha, Mullayar, Cheruthoni, Perinjankutti**.

### GS II

#### 2. PM-Kisan beneficiaries dwindling, Govt adds 34 lakh in special drive - Indian Express

**Relevance:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

##### Prelims Takeaway

- PM-Kisan
- Central Sector Scheme

**News:**

- Number of **PM-Kisan beneficiaries dropping by over 20 per cent** to 8.12 crore now from a peak of 10.47 crore in April-July 2022

**Key Highlights**

- The government has **added back 34 lakh farmers under the "saturation drive"** since the launch of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra on November 15.
- With the drop in the number of beneficiaries, **the annual disbursement of funds under the PM-Kisan too declined**.

**PM-Kisan**

- Under PM-Kisan, eligible farmers' families receive **Rs 6,000 a year in three equal instalments through DBT every four months**.

- The scheme was launched on February 24, 2019, **just ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.**
  - It is a **Central Sector Scheme with 100% funding** from the Government of India.
  - It is being implemented by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.**
  - The entire **responsibility** of identification of beneficiary farmer families **rests with the State / UT Governments.**
- Objective:**
- **To supplement the financial needs of the Small and Marginal Farmers** in procuring various inputs to ensure proper crop health and appropriate yields

### 3. UGC releases draft norms on recognition of colleges in India - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) has **published the draft guidelines on recognition of colleges.**

**Key Highlights**

- The **higher education regulatory authority** has sought comments from the public on the new guidelines named the **“UGC (Recognition of Colleges under Clause (f) of Section 2 of the UGC Act) Regulations, 2023”**.
- The proposed **guidelines will be applicable to colleges** as defined under the UGC Act.
- The draft guidelines state that a **college should be affiliated to a university** in accordance with the provisions of UGC (Affiliation of Colleges by Universities) Regulations.
- An official communication about the **All India Higher Education Survey code** issued by the Ministry of Education should also be provided to the UGC.
- “All existing Colleges shall have to obtain UGC recognition under Section 2(f) within three years from the date of notification of these Regulations.

**University Grants Commission (UGC)**

- It came into existence on 28th December, 1953 and became a **statutory body by an Act of Parliament in 1956**, for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in university education.
- It also regulates the recognition of **fake universities, autonomous colleges**, deemed to be universities, and distance education institutions.
- The head office of the UGC is located in **New Delhi.**

#### Prelims Takeaway

- University Grants Commission
- All India Higher Education Survey

### 4. Hurriyat chief's outfit an unlawful association: Centre - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) declared the Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (**Masarat Alam faction**) as an **“unlawful association”** under the anti-terror Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for five years.

**Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)**

- It was first enacted in 1967 to **deal with secessionist movements** and anti-national activities.
- It was amended several times, most recently in 2019, to include provisions related to **terrorist financing, cyber-terrorism, individual designation**, and seizure of property.
- It empowers the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** to **investigate** and prosecute cases under UAPA across the country.
- It provides for the **death penalty and life imprisonment** as the highest punishments for terrorist acts.
- It allows for the **detention of suspects without charge or trial for up to 180 days**, and for the denial of bail to the accused unless the court is satisfied that they are not guilty.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- National Investigation Agency
- Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)

## GS III

### 5. Centre hikes copra MSP by ₹250-₹300 per quintal for 2024 - The Hindu

**Relevance:** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.

**News:**

- The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)**, which met here, has decided to **increase the minimum support price (MSP)** for copra.

**Copra**

- Milling copra is used to **extract oil**, while ball/edible copra is **consumed as a dry fruit** and used for religious purposes.
- Kerala and Tamil Nadu** are major producers of milling copra, whereas **ball copra** is produced predominantly in **Karnataka**.
- A higher MSP will not only ensure **better remunerative returns** to the coconut growers
- It will **incentivise farmers to expand copra production** to meet the growing demand for coconut products both domestically and internationally
- National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (**NAFED**) and National Cooperative Consumers' Federation (**NCCF**) will continue to act as **Central Nodal Agencies (CNAs)** for procurement of copra and de-husked coconut under Price Support Scheme (PSS).

#### Prelims Takeaway

- National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd.
- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs

### 6. Indian banks' asset quality improved to decadal high: RBI - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently reported a **continued improvement** in Gross Non-Performing Assets (**GNPA**) ratio of Indian Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs).
- GNPA ratio drops to a **decadal low of 3.2%** at end-September 2023.

**Contributing Factors**

- During 2022-23, **45% reduction** in SCBs' GNPA attributed to **recoveries and upgradations**.
- SCBs' consolidated balance sheet records a 12.2% growth in 2022-23, driven by the **fastest expansion of bank credit** in over a decade.
- SCBs exhibit double-digit expansion in combined balance sheets, supported by **sustained credit growth**.
- Higher lending rates** and **lower provisioning requirements** contribute to improved profitability and strengthened capital positions.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)
- Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs)
- NBFCs

### On a strong footing

Higher lending rates, lower provisioning needs boosted banks' profitability and shored up capital positions during 2022-23, says RBI



■ Combined balance sheet of UCBS expanded by 2.3% in 2022-23

■ UCBS' capital buffers, profitability improved

■ NBFCs also showed better profitability, asset quality in 2022-23

■ Capital to Risk Asset Ratio higher than the norms for NBFCs

### RBI's Outlook

- Banks should **guard against credit losses** despite higher capital buffers.
- **Qualitative metrics** like enhanced disclosures, strong code of conduct, and clear governance structures will **contribute to financial stability**.
- Macroeconomic uncertainties persist globally, but the Indian banking system is well-positioned for **further improvement** with **better asset quality, high capital adequacy** and **robust profitability**.
- NBFCs should focus on **broadbasing their funding sources** and reduce overdependence on **bank funding**.
- Banks and NBFCs were urged to **strengthen balance sheets** through robust governance and risk management practices.

### Non-Performing Assets or NPA

- A Non-performing Asset is a **loan or advance** for which the principal or interest payment has remained **overdue for a period of 90 days**.
  - The NPA ratio is the **proportion of such NPAs in total loans**.
- Banks are required to **classify NPAs** further into **Substandard, Doubtful and Loss assets**.
  - Substandard Assets that have remained NPA for a period less than or equal to 12 months.
  - Doubtful Assets if it has remained in the substandard category for a period of 12 months.
  - Loss Assets: According to the RBI, "Loss asset is considered uncollectible and of such little value that its continuance as a bankable asset is not warranted, although there may be some salvage or recovery value."

## 7. NGT court takes suo motu cognisance of T.N. gas leak - The Hindu

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

### News:

- The southern bench of the NGT recently initiated **suo motu** cognisance of an **ammonia gas leak** from Coromandel International Limited, a fertiliser manufacturing unit in Ennore.
- Residents in Periakuppam, Ernavur, and Burma Nagar report breathlessness, eye, and skin irritation following the leakage.

### Prelims Takeaway

- National Green Tribunal (NGT)
- Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)
- Ammonia

### Serious Health Concerns

- TNPCB inspection reveals ammonia levels in the air at **3 ppm**, exceeding the allowed 24-hour average.
- Ammonia levels are categorized as '**severe**' by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) at more than **1,800 microgram/m<sup>3</sup> (24-hour average)**.
- High ammonia levels may have **acute respiratory effects** on healthy individuals and pose **serious health risks** for those with lung and heart diseases.

### National Green Tribunal (NGT)

- It is a **specialised body** set up under the **National Green Tribunal Act (2010)** for **effective and expeditious disposal** of cases relating to **environmental protection** and **conservation** of forests and other natural resources.
- With the establishment of the NGT, India became the **third country** in the world to set up a **specialised environmental tribunal**, only after Australia and New Zealand
- NGT is guided by the **principles of 'natural justice'**.
- It is mandated to make **disposal of applications** or appeals finally **within 6 months of filing** the same.
- An order/decision/award of Tribunal is executable as a **decree of a civil court**.
- An **appeal** against order/decision/ award of the NGT lies to the **Supreme Court**, generally within **ninety days** from the date of communication.

The NGT deals with **civil cases** under the **seven laws** related to the environment, these include:

- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977
- The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
- The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981

- The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
- The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
- The Biological Diversity Act, 2002

**Structure of NGT**

- The Tribunal comprises the **Chairperson**, the **Judicial Members** and **Expert Members**.
- They shall hold **office** for a term of **three years** or till the age of **sixty-five** years, whichever is earlier
- They are not eligible for **reappointment**.
- The **Chairperson** is appointed by the **Central Government** in consultation with the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)**.
- A **Selection Committee** shall be formed by the **central government** to appoint the Judicial Members and Expert Members.



**Mentorship**  
India

## Editorials, Gists and Explainers

### 1. Growth charts - WHO standards versus India crafted - The Hindu

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

**Context:**

- **High levels of child undernutrition** have been a persistent problem in India.
- It is **driven by multiple determinants** such as food intake, health, sanitation, women's status and poverty.

**Measuring Undernutrition**

- The most common measures of childhood undernutrition are based on **anthropometric standards** such as **stunting** and **wasting**.
- **India**, like most other countries, uses the globally accepted **World Health Organization (WHO) Growth Standards** to measure malnutrition.

**Challenges with WHO Growth Standards**

- The WHO standards are based on the **Multicentre Growth Reference Study (MGRS)** conducted in **six countries** between 1997 and 2003.
- This raises concerns about the **applicability to India**.
- The sample for India in the MGRS was drawn from a set of **privileged households living in South Delhi**.
- This may lead to potential **overestimation of undernutrition** in the Indian context.

**Sampling Concerns and Inequality**

- Comparisons with other large datasets may be **invalid** due to difficulties in finding **equivalent samples with a favourable growth environment**, as defined by the MGRS.
- An adequate number of equivalent samples are difficult to find in **large-scale surveys** in India because of **inequality** and **underrepresentation** of the rich in data sets.

**Genetic Growth Potential and Maternal Heights**

- Another issue is the difference in **genetic growth potential** of Indians and the **influence of maternal heights** on child growth.
- Maternal height is considered a non-modifiable factor, but low average maternal heights reflect **intergenerational poverty** and **women's poor status**.
- An appropriate indicator of a deficient environment, such as stunting, needs to capture this deprivation as well.

**Concerns about Standards**

- Concerns arise about the **standards being too plastic** considering the issues of maternal heights and genetic potential.
- **Inappropriately high standards** leading to a misdiagnosis of the situation leading to potential overfeeding and a rise in overweight and obesity.
- Despite concerns, **dietary gaps in children persist**, highlighting the need for improved quality in nutrition programs.
- **Multiple interventions** such as better sanitation, access to health care, childcare services and so on are required for **better nutritional outcomes**.

**Distal Determinants of Stunting**

- **Gaps in distal determinants of stunting include** livelihoods, poverty, education, and women's empowerment.
- Addressing these gaps requires **comprehensive interventions** for better nutritional outcomes.
- These goals are inextricably linked to the **overall development** of the country, with **equitable distribution of resources**.
- Using the **appropriate standards** is also important for international comparisons and intra-country trends.



**ICMR's Recommendation**

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has formed a committee to **revise growth references for India**.
- The committee recommends a **rigorous nationwide study** to examine child growth for potential development of national growth charts.
- Despite ongoing debates, it is argued to **stick** to the aspirationally high but achievable **standards suggested by the WHO-MGRS**.

## 2. The quest for 'happiness' in the Viksit Bharat odyssey - The Hindu

**Relevance:** Economy

**Context:**

- Viksit Bharat's launch with the aim of making India a **developed nation by 2047** raises questions about the **conventional focus on economic growth**.
- Critics argue that the **Euro-centric notion of development** needs reimagining, advocating for a **more holistic approach**.

**Happiness-Centric Development**

- Proposes a shift from 'Viksit Bharat' to 'Happy India-Developed India' (Khushhal Bharat-Viksit Bharat) as the central pursuit.
- Challenges the idea that economic growth alone leads to happiness, emphasising the need to prioritize mental health and well-being.

**Global Scenario**

- Wealthy nations have only performed on GDP and per capita income but have failed miserably in the context of social and psychological well-being indicators.
- The World Happiness Report 2023 shows many developed nations have poor happiness markers.
- India's case is also crucial because it is ranked 126 out of 137 countries despite being the fifth-largest economy.
- According to the report's parameters, Finland, Denmark, Iceland and the Netherlands are the happiest countries, achieving development without social disruption.

**Happiness Metrics**

- Since its inception in 2012, the World Happiness Report has devised a robust method to measure and calculate happiness.
- The happiness matrix includes six variables viz.
  - GDP per capita
  - Healthy life expectancy at birth
  - Generosity
  - Social support
  - Freedom to make life choices
  - Perception of corruption
- The Happiness Report of 2023 placed extra emphasis on trust and benevolence in crisis situations such as COVID-19.
- The report also highlighted the importance of social connections and relationships in contributing to happiness and well-being.

**The Relevance of Happiness-Induced Development for India**

- A happiness-induced development model is pertinent for India, considering its social relationships and cultural mandates.
- The current model of mere economic development is criticised for being highly disruptive to our social order.

**Way Forward**

- Social indicators should be included in development planning, moving beyond GDP as the sole measure.
- Specific indices already developed could make the agenda for Viksit Bharat@2047 more inclusive and comprehensive.
  - For example, indices like the Human Development Index, Social Development Index, Green Index, International Human Suffering Index etc.

## 3. Making health our top priority in 2024 - The Hindu

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

**Context:**

- The Navratri festivities in Gujarat underscored the alarming trend of **heart-related issues** affecting a **diverse age group**.
- It challenges the myth that NCDs primarily affect the elderly signifying a **paradigm shift in India's disease burden**.
- **Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and respiratory diseases have become a **predominant public health concern**.

**Statistics and Global Context**

- A World Health Organization (WHO) report, 'Invisible Numbers,' reveals that 66% of deaths in India in 2019 were attributed to NCDs.
- India faces a higher probability of 22% NCD-related deaths before the age of 70 compared to the global probability of 18%.

**Factors Fueling NCDs**

- Behavioural risk factors like unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity, and substance abuse contribute to the rise of NCDs.
- Genetic predisposition, sedentary lifestyles, stress, anxiety, and depression exacerbate the silent epidemic.

**Economic and Health Impact**

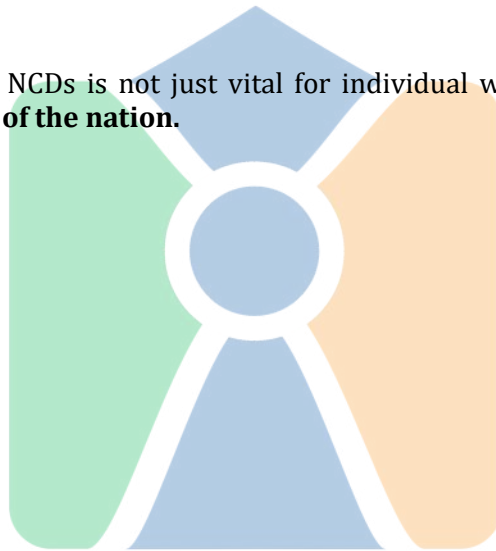
- NCDs pose a substantial economic burden, with estimates suggesting a staggering cost of \$4.58 trillion between 2012 and 2030 in India.
- Cardiovascular diseases and diabetes statistics underline the urgency of addressing the health crisis.
- India bears the dubious distinction of being the diabetes capital with 101 million diabetics.
- Cardiovascular diseases top the mortality charts, and cancer incidence is projected to rise by 57.5% by 2040.

**Individual Responsibility**

- The government has launched initiatives such as the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Stroke; and the 75/25 initiative.
- Despite government initiatives, individuals must take charge of their health, especially as India aims to become a \$5 trillion economy.
- Integrating natural movement into daily routines, opting for 'slow food' over fast food, and undergoing regular health check-ups is recommended.
- Making health a common conversation topic to normalise discussions about well-being is encouraged.

**Conclusion**

- Winning the war against NCDs is not just vital for individual well-being; it's a decisive factor in **safeguarding the health of the nation.**



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## Quick Look

### 1. Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM)

- SLIM, a spacecraft by Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), was launched on September 7, 2023, from Tanegashima spaceport.
- It is a small-scale exploration lander designed for pinpoint landings on the Moon's surface and investigate into the Moon's origins.
- It will also test technology fundamental to exploration in low-gravity environments, an important requirement for future scientific investigation of the solar system.
- No lunar rover is loaded on SLIM.
- Launch vehicle: H-IIA rocket.
- The chosen landing site for SLIM is near a small crater named Shioli in the equatorial region of the Moon.
- SLIM is set to touch down on the near side of the moon close to Mare Nectaris, a lunar sea that, viewed from Earth, appears as a dark spot.
- If successful, Japan would be the 5th country to successfully soft land on the moon.

### 2. INS Imphal

- These ships are equipped with BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles and long-range Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAM).
- The ship has several indigenous weapons systems like medium range Surface-to-Air Missile (SAMs), indigenous torpedo tube launchers, anti-submarine indigenous rocket launchers and 76-mm super rapid gun mount.
- The class also has a total atmospheric control system (TACS) that offers protection to the crew from chemical, biological and nuclear threats.
- It can operate two multi-role helicopters, including Sea King or HAL Dhruv.
- It is amongst the most potent warships built in India.

### 3. Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)

- It consists of securities and other financial assets passively held by foreign investors.
- It does not provide the investor with direct ownership of financial assets and is relatively liquid depending on the volatility of the market.
- FPI is more liquid, volatile and therefore riskier than FDI.
- FPI is often referred to as "hot money" because of its tendency to flee at the first signs of trouble in an economy.
- It is part of a country's capital account and is shown on its Balance of Payments (BOP).
- Examples: Stocks, bonds, mutual funds, exchange traded funds, American Depositary Receipts (ADRs) and Global Depositary Receipts (GDRs).

### 4. Colombo Security Conclave (CSC)

- It is a regional security grouping comprising India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Mauritius.
- The CSC, initially known as the Trilateral for Maritime Security Cooperation, evolved out of trilateral meetings between NSAs and Deputy NSAs from India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka, starting in 2011.
- Current members of CSC include India, Maldives, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka, while Bangladesh and Seychelles are the two observer nations.
- A permanent secretariat, based in Colombo, was established in 2021 to coordinate all activities and implement decisions made at the NSA level.

### 5. Central Water Commission (CWC)

- It is a premier technical organisation in India in the field of water resources.

- It is presently functioning as an attached office of the Ministry of Jal Shakti
- The Commission is entrusted with the general responsibilities of initiating, coordinating, and furthering, in consultation with the State Governments concerned, schemes for control, conservation, and utilisation of water resources throughout the country
- Objective: Flood Control, Irrigation, Navigation, Drinking Water Supply, and Water Power Development.
- It also undertakes the investigation, construction, and execution of any such schemes as required

## 6. Black-necked Grebe

- The black-necked grebe, or eared grebe, is a member of the grebe family of water birds.
- Its Scientific Name is *Podiceps nigricollis*
- It has a widespread breeding area, with migratory populations covering an extensive range of Eurasia and North America, while a resident population is also found in subtropical Africa.
- It usually measures between 28 and 34 centimetres in length and weighs 265 to 450 grams.
- Its breeding plumage features a distinctive ochre-coloured plumage that extends behind its eye and over its ear coverts.
- The rest of the upper parts, including the head, neck, and breast, are coloured black to blackish brown.

## 7. Hokersar Wetland

- Known as the 'Queen Wetland of Kashmir', Hokersar (also known as Hokera) is a Ramsar site located in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir.
- It is spread over an area of 13.75 sq. km (1375 ha) in the northwest Himalayan Biogeographic province of Kashmir, in the backyard the snow draped Pir Panjal range with an altitude of 1584 m.
- It is a natural perennial wetland contiguous to the Jhelum basin.
- It gets water from the Doodhganga River (Tributary of Jhelum).
- It is the only site with remaining reed beds of Jammu and Kashmir.

## Prelims Track Question

### Q1. Consider the following statements about Periyar River

1. The Periyar River is the longest river in the state of Kerala with a length of 244 km.
2. It is also known as 'Lifeline of Kerala' as it is one of the few perennial rivers in the state.
3. Periyar River originates from Sivagiri hills of Western Ghats, in Tamil Nadu and flows through the Periyar National Park.
4. The main tributaries of Periyar are Muthirapuzha, Mullayar, Cheruthoni, Perinjankutti.

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

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

### Q2. Consider the following statements about Central Sector Schemes

1. Schemes are entirely funded and implemented by the central government.
2. The primary focus of the Schemes is on subjects listed in the State List of the Constitution.
3. The funding pattern for Central Sector Schemes is shared between the central and state governments.

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

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

### Q3. Consider the following statements about All India Survey on Higher Education

1. AISHE annually released by the Department of Higher Education
2. AISHE 2020-2021, which showed a 7.5% increase in student enrolments across the country compared to 2019-20.
3. The survey revealed that during the Covid-19 pandemic began, there was a 7% rise in enrolments in distance education programmes.
4. To portray the status of higher education in the country, the Ministry has

endeavoured to conduct an annual web-based AISHE since 2010-11.

5. Data for the survey is being collected on several parameters such as teachers, student enrolment, programmes, examination results, education finance, infrastructure.

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

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

### Q4. Consider the following statements about the National Investigation Agency (NIA)

1. NIA was established under the Ministry of Home Affairs to combat terrorism and other offenses affecting the sovereignty and integrity of India.
2. NIA has jurisdiction over offenses committed outside India that have implications for the country's security.
3. The agency is empowered to investigate and prosecute offenses listed in the Schedule of the National Investigation Agency Act.
4. NIA operates exclusively under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister's Office

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

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

### Q5. The government declares MSP for which of the following crops

1. Paddy
2. Bajra
3. Jowar
4. Maize
5. Arhar
6. Copra

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

- A. Only three
- B. Only four
- C. Only five
- D. All six

**Q6. With reference to Scheduled Banks, consider the following statements**

1. These are registered in the Second Schedule to the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
2. These banks are not authorised to borrow money from the RBI for routine banking purposes.
3. They cannot become members of the clearing house.

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

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

**Q7. Consider the following laws**

1. Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
2. Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
3. Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
4. Forest Rights Act, 2006

**How many of the laws mentioned above fall under the jurisdiction of the National Green Tribunal (NGT)?**

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

**Q8. Consider the following statements regarding the World Health Organization (WHO) Growth Standards**

1. These are based on the Multicentre Growth Reference Study (MGRS) conducted in six countries.
2. India uses the globally accepted World Health Organization (WHO) Growth Standards to measure malnutrition.
3. The MGRS sample for India was drawn from a set of privileged households living in South Delhi.

**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 with reference to World Happiness Report 2023**

1. It uses four key factors to measure happiness viz. income, health, freedom and absence of corruption.
2. It is released annually by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

**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. What is the objective of the 75/25 initiative launched by the India government?**

- A. A plan to increase agricultural exports by 75% and reduce imports by 25%.
- B. A program aimed at reducing carbon emissions by 75% by 2025
- C. A strategy to prioritize economic development with a 75% focus on infrastructure and 25% on social welfare.
- D. An initiative to screen and provide standard care to 75 million individuals suffering from hypertension and diabetes by 2025.

## Prelims Track Answer

### Answer 1 Option D is correct

#### Explanation

- The Periyar River is the longest river in the state of Kerala with a length of 244 km. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- It is also known as 'Lifeline of Kerala' as it is one of the few perennial rivers in the state. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- Periyar River originates from Sivagiri hills of Western Ghats, in Tamil Nadu and flows through the Periyar National Park. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- The main tributaries of Periyar are Muthirapuzha, Mullayar, Cheruthoni, Perinjankutti. **Hence, statement 4 is correct**

### Answer 2 Option A is correct

#### Explanation

- Central Sector Schemes are funded and implemented by the central government.
- These schemes cover subjects from the Union List, and the funding is entirely borne by the central government. Examples of Central Sector Schemes include the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- The primary focus of Central Sector Schemes is on subjects listed in the Union List of the Constitution, not the State List.
- Union List subjects are those on which only the central government can legislate.
- Therefore, Central Sector Schemes address issues that fall within the exclusive domain of the central government. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**
- Unlike Centrally Sponsored Schemes, where funding is shared between the central and state governments, Central Sector Schemes are entirely funded by the central government.
- The funding pattern for these schemes is 100% central, with no financial contribution required from the state governments. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect**

### Answer 3 Option D is correct

#### Explanation

- The Union Ministry of Education released data from the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), 2020-2021, which showed a 7.5% increase in student enrolments across the country compared to 2019-20. **Hence, statement 1 and 2 are correct**

- The survey also revealed that in 2020-21, the year when the Covid-19 pandemic began, there was a 7% rise in enrolments in distance education programmes. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

What is the AISHE?

- To portray the status of higher education in the country, the Ministry of Education has endeavoured to conduct an annual web-based AISHE since 2010-11. **Hence, statement 4 is correct**
- Data is being collected on several parameters such as teachers, student enrolment, programmes, examination results, education finance, infrastructure.
- Indicators of educational development such as Institution Density, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Pupil-teacher ratio, Gender Parity Index, Per Student Expenditure will also be calculated from the data collected through AISHE. **Hence, statement 5 is correct**

### Answer 4 Option C is correct

#### Explanation

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) was indeed established under the Ministry of Home Affairs. It was created to combat terrorism and other offenses that pose a threat to the sovereignty and integrity of India. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- NIA has the authority to investigate and prosecute offenses committed outside India that have implications for the country's security. This includes cases of terrorism with international connections. **Hence, statement 2 is correct**
- The NIA Act empowers the agency to investigate and prosecute offenses listed in the Schedule of the Act.
- These offenses include terrorism, cyber terrorism, and offenses under various other laws that have national implications. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**
- NIA operates under the overall supervision of the Ministry of Home Affairs, not the Prime Minister's Office.
- The agency works within the legal framework established by the NIA Act and is subject to the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect**

**Answer 5 Option D is correct****Explanation**

- The CACP (Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices) recommends MSP for 22 mandated crops.
- The mandated crops contain 14 Kharif crops, 6 Rabi crops, and two other commercial crops.
- For sugarcane, FRP is declared by the Department of Food & Public Distribution.
- Twenty-two crops covered under MSP are Paddy, Bajra, Jowar, Maize, Arhar, Ragi, Moong, Groundnut-in-shell, Urad, Soyabean, Nigerseed, Sunflower, Sesamum, Cotton, Barley, Wheat, Gram, Rapeseed/Mustardseed, Masur (lentil), Jute, Copra and Safflower.
- The MSP for Toria and De-Husked coconut is fixed by the Department based on MSPs of Rapeseed/Mustardseed and Copra, respectively. **Hence all options are correct**

**Answer 6 Option A is correct****Explanation**

- A scheduled bank is a banking company or institution with a minimum paid-up capital of Rs. 5 lakhs that does not harm depositors' interests.
- These are registered in the Second Schedule to the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- They are strictly regulated by the RBI.
- They are permitted to borrow money from the RBI at the bank rate for regular banking purposes. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- They offer higher returns to their depositors, thus, they are required to maintain a higher CRR.
- They can become members of the clearing house unlike the Non Scheduled banks. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

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

- National Green Tribunal (NGT) is a specialised body set up under the National Green Tribunal Act (2010) for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- With the establishment of the NGT, India became the third country in the world to set up a specialised environmental tribunal, only after Australia and New Zealand

- The NGT deals with civil cases under the seven laws related to the environment, these include:
  - The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
  - The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977
  - The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
  - The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
  - The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
  - The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
  - The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

**Hence, option B is correct.**

**Answer 8 Option C is correct****Explanation**

- The most common measures of childhood undernutrition are based on anthropometric standards such as stunting and wasting.
- India, like most other countries, uses the globally accepted World Health Organization (WHO) Growth Standards to measure malnutrition. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The WHO standards are based on the Multicentre Growth Reference Study (MGRS) conducted in six countries between 1997 and 2003. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The sample for India in the MGRS was drawn from a set of privileged households living in South Delhi. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- This may lead to potential overestimation of undernutrition in the Indian context.

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

- Since 2012, the World Happiness Report has been released annually as part of the International Day of Happiness celebration. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The ranking uses six key factors to measure happiness - social support, income, health, freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- Besides ranking the countries, the report also looks at the state of the world in 2023.
- For the sixth year in a row, Finland has been crowned as the happiest nation, followed by Denmark and Iceland.
- India's rank in the World Happiness Report improved from 136 in 2022 to 126 this year.



- However, India is placed far below its neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka (63), China (74) and Pakistan (108), among others.

**Answer 10 Option D is correct**

**Explanation**

- The Union Health Ministry launched the 75/25 initiative, aimed at screening and providing standard of care for 75 million

individuals with hypertension and diabetes by 2025. **Hence, option D is correct.**

- By prioritizing hypertension and diabetes, two prevalent NCDs, the aim is to improve the overall well-being of millions of individuals.
- This initiative acknowledges the significance of early detection, treatment, and adherence to Standard Care protocols in combating NCDs.



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