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By



SOURCES



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Important News Articles

GS II

1. EWS seats not filled? Schools can carry it forward to next yr: HC - 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

- Article 21
- RTE Act

News:

- The Delhi High Court ruled that **carrying forward unfilled vacancies in the Economically Weaker Section/Disadvantaged Group (EWS/DG)** category is valid
- The ruling was related to a particular class.

Key Highlights

- A single-judge bench observed that **carrying forward unfilled EWS/DG** vacancies to the next class in the subsequent year **does not violate** the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act or any other legal provision.
- **Admitting EWS/DG students to the extent of at least 25%** of the strength of its entry-level class is the statutory obligation of every school, which falls within Section 2(n)(iv) of the RTE Act.
- If a school defaults, there is nothing illegal in directing it to make up the deficit in the next higher class in the next year," the HC underscored.

RTE Act

- The RTE Act **aims to provide primary education to all children aged 6 to 14 years.**
- It enforces Education as a **Fundamental Right (Article 21).**
- **The act mandates 25% reservation for disadvantaged sections** of the society where disadvantaged groups include:
 - SCs and STs
 - Socially Backward Class
 - Differently abled
- It also makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age appropriate class.
- It had a clause for **"No Detention Policy"** which has been removed under The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Act, 2019.

2. Banked on 2011 caste census report to revise BC list: Kerala - The Hindu

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

- Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India
- Caste census

News:

- **The Kerala government** told the Supreme Court that it had pinned its hopes on a **caste census held by the Centre in 2011 to identify socio-economic Backward Classes in the State**

Key Highlights

- The State is facing contempt proceedings in the Supreme Court for **"wilfully disobeying" judicial orders to periodically revise its Backward Class list**
 - in order to ensure equitable distribution of the benefits of reservation in public employment.
- While States like Bihar **have held its own caste survey ahead of the Lok Sabha election**
- The State had requested the Centre on November 4, 2022, for a copy of the 2011 caste survey data report in order to identify Backward Classes in Kerala.
- The report was forwarded to the Kerala State Commission for Backward Classes chairman only in May 2023.

- As per the state government, the report was not at all helpful for identification of socially and educationally backward classes within the State of Kerala.

Caste Census

- Conducted by - **Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation – Urban Areas.**
- Ministry of Rural Development** – Rural Areas
- Ministry of Home Affairs:** Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India – responsible for the caste census.

3. Kejriwal unveils new solar policy, says will help cut power bill to zero - The Hindu/ Install rooftop solar panels and get zero electricity bills: CM announces new policy - 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-KUSUM
- SRISTI Scheme

News:

- Delhi Chief Minister** unveiled the **Delhi Solar Policy-2024**
- under the policy, consumers installing solar power panels on their rooftops will be given generation-based incentives.

Key Highlights

- According to the government, **around 20% of Delhi's electricity consumption will come from solar power by 2027.**
- The government will spend ₹570 crores for the implementation of the policy.
- The Chief Minister said the scheme would help cut households' power bills to zero if their electricity consumption is below 200 units a month after adjusting against the electricity they generate.

India initiative toward becoming solar power

- Solar Park Scheme:** The Solar Park Scheme plans to build a number of solar parks, each with a capacity of nearly 500 MW, across several states.
- Rooftop Solar Scheme:** The Rooftop Solar Scheme aims to harness solar power by installing solar panels on the roof of houses.
- National Solar Mission:** It is a major initiative of the Government of India and State Governments to promote ecologically sustainable growth while addressing India's energy security challenge.
- SRISTI Scheme:** Sustainable rooftop implementation of Solar transfiguration of India (SRISTI) scheme to promote rooftop solar power projects in India.
- International Solar Alliance:** International Solar Alliance is an action-oriented, member-driven, collaborative platform for increased deployment of solar energy technologies.
- Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM):** The PM-KUSUM scheme was launched by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) to support installation of off-grid solar pumps in rural areas and reduce dependence on grid, in grid-connected areas.

4. Taliban minister discusses regional ties with diplomats of 11 countries - Indian Express

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

News:

- Taliban's Foreign minister held a meeting of diplomats from 11 neighbouring** and regional countries, including India
- He proposed establishing a "region-centric narrative."

Objective of meeting

- It aimed at **developing regional cooperation** for a positive and constructive engagement between Afghanistan and regional countries."

Prelims Takeaway

- North-West Frontier Province
- Taliban

- This is the first publicised meeting between the Taliban foreign minister and diplomats from India based in Kabul.
- Since June 2022, **India has stationed a technical team**, with the stated objective of delivering humanitarian aid and support to Afghanistan.
- regional cooperation could be focused on exploring region-centric and engagement pathways based on common regional benefits
 - Creating a region-centric narrative for positive and constructive engagement with the Afghan government to tackle existing and potential threats in the region;

History of India-Afghanistan Relations

- The contact between the **people of modern-day India and Afghanistan has existed since the days of the Indus Valley Civilization.**
- A number of **invaders invaded the northern regions of India between the 10th century to the mid 18th century** by a number of invaders
- **Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan** was one of the prominent leaders of the Indian independence movement and active supporters of the Indian National Congress.
- Even though the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) became the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan
- unanimous Pashtun support for the Indian freedom struggle led to great sympathy in India for the cause of Pashtun autonomy and freedom.
- The Indian government **continued to support Pashtun leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in lobbying for greater Pashtun freedom in the NWFP.**

5. To push cyber infra, Govt may push use of made in India products - Indian Express

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

News:

- India is poised to recommend the **use of domestically developed cybersecurity products and services**, particularly for critical sectors such as banking, telecom, and energy.
- The initiative is driven by the need to **enhance national security** in the face of escalating cybersecurity threats.

The National Cybersecurity Reference Framework (NCRF)

- The government has formulated the NCRF, a comprehensive policy to **establish a clear framework for cybersecurity, outlining roles and responsibilities.**
- The NCRF **draws upon existing legislations, policies, and guidelines** to provide an implementable measure.
- It has been developed by the **National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC)** with support from the **National Cybersecurity Coordinator (NCSC)**.
 - NCIIPC reports to the Prime Minister's Office.
- However, the NCRF is a guideline i.e. its **recommendations will not be binding.**
- It was shared privately with companies and other government departments for consultation last year, but is yet to be made public.

Cybersecurity Budget Allocation

- The NCRF may recommend that enterprises allocate **at least 10% of their total IT budget** specifically for cybersecurity.
- This allocation should be **separate from general IT resources**, aligning with global best practices and aiming to enhance organizational cybersecurity posture.

Regulatory Oversight

- The NCRF could also suggest that regulators overseeing critical sectors **define information security requirements.**

Prelims Takeaway

- National Cybersecurity Reference Framework (NCRF)
- Indian Computer Emergency Response Team

- Additionally, these regulators may need effective **Information Security Management Systems (ISMS)** instances to **access sensitive data** related to critical sector operations.
- It may prescribe that national nodal agencies develop platforms and processes for **machine-processing of data** from different entities.
 - This approach aims to facilitate **sectoral and cross-sectoral analysis** of audit compliance, audit effectiveness, and grading of auditors.

Rising Cybersecurity Incidents

- Recent high-profile cyber attacks, including the **2022 breach of AIIMS Delhi systems**, have underscored the urgency for a robust cybersecurity framework.
- The lack of an overarching framework has prompted concerns among union ministers, emphasizing the need for sector-specific legislations.

GS III

6. Govt brings non-urea fertilisers under price control, fixes profit margins - Indian Express

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.

Prelims Takeaway

- Non-urea fertilisers
- Nutrient Based Subsidy

News:

- The Indian government **has brought fertilisers that receive nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) support under “reasonable pricing” controls.**

Key Highlights

- Government to notify **di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), muriate of potash (MOP) and all other such fertilizer to be under “reasonable pricing” controls.**
- **NBS fertilisers** — unlike urea, whose maximum retail price (MRP) is fixed by the government — are technically decontrolled.
- Under the NBS scheme, introduced in April 2010, their **MRPs are supposed to be market-determined and set by the individual companies selling them.**
- The government merely pays a fixed per-tonne subsidy on each of these fertilisers, linked to their nutrient content or specific percentage of nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P), potassium (K) and sulphur (S).
- The guidelines, have **prescribed maximum profit margins that will be allowed for fertiliser companies** – 8% for importers, 10% for manufacturers and 12% for integrated manufacturers
- The new guidelines impose indirect MRP controls on non-urea fertilisers by capping the profits that companies can earn from their sales.
- These will be based on their **“total cost of sales”, which would cover cost of production/ import, administrative overheads, selling and distribution overheads, and net interest and financing charges.**
- Deduction for dealer’s margin will be allowed to the extent of 2% of the MRP for DAP and MOP, and 4% for all other NBS fertilisers.
- The guidelines have mandated fertiliser companies to “self-assess” unreasonable profits, based on the cost auditor’s report along with audited cost data approved by their board of directors.
- This report and data has to be furnished to the DoF by October 10 of the following fiscal year.

- **“Non-urea fertilisers are already under informal price control**, which will definitely continue till the Lok Sabha elections are over.

7. Fingerprints to videos and picture NIA builds its own terror database - Indian Express

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

News:

- The **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** recently established the **National Terrorism Data Fusion & Analysis Centre (NTDFAC)** at its headquarters in Delhi.

Prelims Takeaway

- National Terrorism Data Fusion and Analysis Centre (NTDFAC)
- National Investigation Agency (NIA)

National Terrorism Data Fusion and Analysis Centre (NTDFAC)

- The centre, akin to the **US Global Terrorism Database**, consolidates **information on terrorists**.
 - including those affiliated with groups like Indian Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Khalistani militant organizations.
- This includes **case history, fingerprints, videos, pictures, and social media profiles**.
- It envisions expanding its capabilities by **including voice samples for improved identification**.
- At NTDFAC, the NIA has
 - National Automated Fingerprint Identification System with over 92 lakh records
 - Integrated Monitoring of Terrorism with data on 22,000 terrorist cases
 - National Integrated Database on Arrested Narco-Offenders with data of more than 5 lakh narco offenders etc.

Advance Systems

- The NTDFAC incorporates a **face recognition system**, enabling the **scanning of suspects from CCTV footage**.
- It aims to assist NIA officers and state police forces in identifying and tracking terrorists efficiently.

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

8. Pros and cons of simultaneous elections - The Hindu

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

Context:

- In September last year, a **High-Level Committee (HLC)** led by **Ramnath Kovind**, former President of India, was formed.
- **Objective:** To explore the feasibility of holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and local bodies across all states.
- The HLC has sought **responses from various stakeholders**, including political parties and the Law Commission.

Background of Simultaneous Elections

- Historically, the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies had simultaneous elections during the initial four general election cycles (1952-1967).
- However, subsequent premature dissolutions of the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies led to staggered elections.
- The concept of simultaneous elections was previously suggested by the Election Commission of India (1982) and the Law Commission (1999).

Case for Simultaneous Elections

- Cost Efficiency**
 - Estimated costs for general elections to the Lok Sabha and State assemblies are substantial.
 - Simultaneous elections could significantly reduce government, party, and candidate expenditures.
- Governance**
 - Frequent State elections disrupt governance and policy-making, keeping political parties in a perpetual campaign mode.
 - There are at least 5-6 State elections that happen every year.
 - The Model Code of Conduct during elections limits the announcement of new projects or schemes.
- Administrative Efficiency**
 - Administrative machinery slows down during elections, impacting the efficiency.
 - Paramilitary forces are redeployed for election security, affecting regular duties.
- Social Cohesion:** Frequent high-stakes elections contribute to polarizing campaigns, exacerbating societal divisions.

Challenges of Simultaneous Elections

- Federal and Democratic Concerns**
 - Simultaneous elections may overshadow regional issues, favouring national parties.
 - It may have potential impact on the federal structure and feedback mechanism for governments.
- Constitutional Amendments Needed**
 - Having a fixed five-year term for Lok Sabha and State assemblies requires amendments to Articles 83, 85, 172, and 174.
 - Constitutional changes are needed for the amendment of Article 356.

Recommendations from Law Commission and Parliamentary Committee

- Cycling Elections**
 - Proposal to conduct Lok Sabha and half of State assembly elections in one cycle, with the remaining State elections after two and a half years.
 - Requires amendments to the Constitution and the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- No-Confidence Motion**
 - Recommends mandatory pairing of a 'no-confidence motion' with a 'confidence motion' in the Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly.
 - In case of premature dissolution, the duration of the newly constituted House should be only for the remainder period of the original House.
 - Aims to discourage premature dissolution and encourage exploration of forming an alternate government through realignments.
- Clubbing Bye-Elections:** Recommends clubbing bye-elections caused by death, resignation, or disqualification once a year for efficiency.
- Comparison with Other Parliamentary Democracies**
- South Africa, Sweden, and Germany have fixed tenures for their legislatures, conducting elections simultaneously.

Conclusion

- There is a **lack of consensus** among various political parties about the conduct of simultaneous elections.
- The ideal middle ground may be to **conduct the Lok Sabha election in one cycle and all State assembly elections in another cycle** after two and a half years.
- Other recommendations proposed may be adopted through suitable amendments to ensure the **benefits of simultaneous polls** without compromising **democratic and federal principles**.

9. Improving battery technologies for speedy EV adoption - The Hindu

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

Context:

- In the previous year, Indian **EV sales** witnessed a **remarkable 50% growth compared to 2022**.
- Despite constituting only **6% of total vehicle registrations in 2023**, the EV industry anticipates exponential growth, projecting a **\$100 billion market by 2030**.

<p>Significance of EV Batteries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The battery system is the central component of an electric vehicle, accounting for 40% of the total vehicle cost. The growth of the EV market hinges on advancements in battery technology, aiming for better economics and an enhanced user experience. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This includes longer range, faster charging and improved safety <p>Lithium-Ion Battery Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost all the current EVs utilize lithium-ion batteries, featuring two electrodes separated by a liquid electrolyte. Lithium's lightweight nature and efficient electron movement make it the preferred material for EV batteries. Challenges include relatively lower energy density compared to petrol, slow charging, cost concerns, and environmental issues related to lithium mining. 	<p>Approaches to Battery Improvement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Electrode Tweaks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modifying electrode materials while maintaining the lithium-ion battery structure. Has trade-offs between energy density and factors like battery life and toxicity. Sensing and Control Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing safety measures and control systems to enhance battery safety, lifespan, and charging speed. This involves using a Battery Management System (BMS) with sensors and control algorithms. Solid-State Lithium Battery (SSB) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A revolutionary approach replacing the flammable liquid electrolyte with a heat-resistant solid electrolyte. SSBs eliminate the need for a carbon-based anode scaffolding, promising lighter batteries, faster charging, and improved safety. <p>India's Supportive Ecosystem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> India boasts a conducive environment for EV battery progress, featuring a growing market, startup-friendly policies, successful indigenous EV companies and support from academic and research institutions. Fundamental research in material science at top universities and government labs, along with contributions from the semiconductor industry, positions India as a hub for battery technology innovation.
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10. Why some nations have paused UNRWA findings - Indian Express

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

Context:

- UN officials recently urged the countries to reconsider their decision to suspend funding for the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA)**.

<p>Impact on Palestinians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two million Palestinians in Gaza rely on UNRWA services, and these services could be scaled back if funding is not restored. Currently, around 5.9 million Palestinian refugees access UNRWA's services, including education, health, relief, and social services. The US and eight other Western countries, accounting for over half of UNRWA's 2022 budget, cut funding. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This was after Israel accused some staff members of involvement in an October 7 attack. <p>Background on UNRWA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established in 1949, UNRWA aids Palestinians who were displaced during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. It operates in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, providing various programs inside and outside refugee camps. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It includes education, health, relief and social services, microfinance and emergency assistance programmes. <p>Funding of UNRWA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions by donor states like the US. It also gets a limited subsidy from the UN, which is used only for administrative costs, the agency's website said. 	<p>Accusations by Israel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Israel alleges that 12 UNRWA staff members were involved in the October 7 attack. It also claims that Hamas siphons off funds from UNRWA and operates near the agency's facilities, including tunnels. There are also accusations of the agency teaching hatred of Israel in its schools. UNRWA denies all allegations, asserting no links to Hamas. <p>Consequences of Funding Suspension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNRWA plays a vital role in Gaza, providing essential services to those affected by the conflict. If funding is not restored soon, the agency could run out of money for aid work within weeks, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the region.
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Quick Look

1. Humboldt's Enigma

- It is a term used to describe the puzzle of why some mountain regions, especially in the tropics, have exceptionally high biodiversity.
- It is a concept proposed by Alexander von Humboldt in the 19th century who explored the relationship between temperature, altitude, humidity and biodiversity.
- It challenges the conventional wisdom that the most biodiverse areas are the lowland tropical forests.
- The diversity decreases away from the tropics, but mountains have been an important exception which is the essence of Humboldt's enigma.
- The factors that drive biodiversity on mountains are climate, geology and evolutionary processes.
- The eastern Himalayas are cited as an example where climate dissimilarity and diverse geological composition contribute to high biodiversity.

2. Nitrogen Hypoxia

- Hypoxia is a medical term for a state of insufficient oxygen in the body.
- Nitrogen hypoxia is a process where pure nitrogen gas, or nitrogen gas at concentrations high enough to be lethal, is inhaled to the point of causing asphyxiation.
- It is a relatively new alternative to more common forms of capital punishment, like lethal injection and electrocution.
- In this method of execution, a respirator mask is placed over the inmate's face, and pure nitrogen is pumped into the person's lungs instead of oxygen.
- It leads to unconsciousness and then death from lack of oxygen.
- Recently, Alabama successfully executed a man who spent decades on death row using a new method called nitrogen hypoxia.

3. Alpenglow

- It is a natural phenomenon when mountain slopes are illuminated by the sun as it rises or sets.
- The slopes turn a rosy, reddish, or orange hue depending on the angle of the sun and atmospheric conditions.
 - This is because these are the longest warm rays of electromagnetic waves (light) that reach various surfaces.
 - Cold rays are shorter and disappear faster in the atmosphere.
- It occurs during the twilight hours before or after sunset; and can also occur in the first minutes after the sun rises or sets.
- It can change quickly depending on how fast the sun sets on any given day.

4. Singchung Bugun Village Community Reserve

- It is a 17-square-kilometre biodiversity hotspot located in Arunachal Pradesh, near the famous Eagle nest Wildlife Sanctuary.
- It is home to critically endangered species such as the passerine bird Bugun Liocichla (*Liocichlabugunorum*), which is named after the Buguns community.
- It was one of the first bird species to be discovered in India since the country's independence in 1947, and it lives only on the Buguns' community lands.
- The Buguns are an indigenous community with a population of about 2,000 people, spread across 12 villages that are dotted outside the forests of Eagle nest Wildlife Sanctuary.

5. International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- The ICJ, also known as the World Court, is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN).
- It was established in June 1945 by the Charter of the UN and began work in April 1946.
- It is supported by a Registry, its permanent administrative secretariat, which operates independently of the United Nations Secretariat.
- All hearings of the ICJ are conducted publicly. The official languages of the Court are French and English.
- The ICJ serves two main functions viz.
 - Contentious Cases: It acts as a dispute settlement body between two member states, addressing several issues such as land frontiers, maritime boundaries, territorial sovereignty, diplomatic relations etc.
 - Advisory Opinions: It can provide advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by UN bodies or specialized agencies, clarifying lawful functioning or strengthening authority in relation to member states.
 - The court's judgments in contentious cases are final and binding on the parties to a case, and without appeal.
- Composition
 - It comprises 15 judges from different countries, each elected to nine-year terms by majority votes in the UN General Assembly and the Security Council.
 - One-third of the judges are elected every three years.
 - The ICJ Statute allows a state party involved in a case without a judge of its nationality on the bench to appoint a judge ad hoc for that specific case.

6. Shahi Idgah and Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple Dispute

- Raja Veer Singh Bundela of Orchha had also built a temple on the same premises in 1618 and the mosque was built by Aurangzeb in 1670 on the site of an earlier temple.
- The Krishna Janmasthan temple in Mathura is believed to have been built around 2,000 years ago, in the 1st century CE.
- A survey has been ordered due to demands by Hindu representatives for complete ownership of the premises where the Keshava Deva temple was destroyed on the orders of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in 1670.
- The area was regarded as nazul land — non-agricultural state land owned by the Marathas, and then the British.
- The temple was originally built in 1618 during the reign of Jahangir and was patronized by Aurangzeb's brother and rival, Dara Shukoh.
- In 1815, the Raja of Benaras purchased the 13.77-acre land from the East India Company.
- Later, the Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Trust was established

7. National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC)

- NCIIPC is a government organization that protects critical information infrastructure (CII) for the public. It was established in 2014 and is based in New Delhi.
- The NCIIPC's mission is to protect critical information infrastructure from unauthorized access, modification, use, disclosure, disruption, incapacitation, or destruction.
- It also provides advice to reduce the vulnerabilities of critical information infrastructure from cyber terrorism, cyber warfare, and other threats.
- The NCIIPC defines CII as computer resources whose incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating impact on national security, economy, public health, or safety.

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in the context of Indian governance

1. EWS reservation is applicable in educational institutions and public employment.
2. The eligibility criteria for EWS reservation is solely based on the annual family income.
3. The EWS reservation is implemented as per the 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act.

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 Caste Census in India

1. The last caste-based census in India was conducted in the year 2011.
2. The Census Act of 1948 allows for the collection of data on caste during the decennial census.
3. The demand for a new caste census has been primarily based on the need for updated socio-economic data.
4. The responsibility of conducting a caste census lies with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

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 Solar Policy

1. The National Solar Mission aims to achieve 20 GW of solar capacity by 2030.
2. The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) scheme promotes solar energy use in the agricultural sector.
3. The Solar Rooftop Subsidy Scheme provides financial incentives to

individual households for installing solar panels on rooftops.

4. The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an initiative aimed at promoting solar energy cooperation among countries lying fully or partially between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn.

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

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

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Taliban

1. The Taliban originated in Afghanistan in the early 1990s.
2. The Taliban adheres to an interpretation of Islamic law known as Sharia.
3. The Taliban controlled Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021.

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

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

Q5. Consider the following statements with reference to the National Cybersecurity Reference Framework (NCRF)

1. It is a framework that sets the standard for cybersecurity in India.
2. It has been drawn up by the Department of Science and Technology.
3. Its recommendations are binding in nature.

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

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

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) in India

1. NBS is applicable to all fertilizers, including urea, in India.
2. Under NBS, subsidies are provided based on the nutrient content of

fertilizers like nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P), potassium (K), and sulfur (S).

3. The introduction of NBS in India aimed to rationalize fertilizer pricing and encourage balanced nutrient use in agriculture.

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

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

Q7. With reference to the National Terrorism Data Fusion & Analysis Centre (NTDFAC), consider the following statements

1. It is a central repository for terrorist-related information.
2. It includes a face recognition system to identify suspects from CCTV footage.
3. It aims to solely assist the NIA officers in their investigations.

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

1. Simultaneous elections have never been conducted for both the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies in India.
2. The Election Commission of India is responsible for conducting polls to the Parliament, the state assemblies and the legislative councils.

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

Q9. Consider the following statements regarding the Electric Vehicles (EVs)

1. Lithium-ion batteries, used in almost all current EVs, are preferred due to their high energy density compared to petrol.
2. The Solid-State Lithium Batteries (SSB) aims to address challenges such as flammable electrolytes and the need for a carbon-based anode scaffolding.
3. The government has launched the FAME India Scheme to promote electric vehicles (EVs) in the country,

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

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

Q10. Consider the following statements about the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA)

1. It provides aid to Palestinians who were displaced during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.
2. It provides services in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.
3. It is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions from UN Member States.

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

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

Prelims Track Answer

Answer 1 Option C is correct

Explanation

- EWS reservation is indeed applicable in educational institutions and public employment.
- The 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act, which came into effect in 2019, introduced the provision for 10% reservation for economically weaker sections in addition to the existing reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The eligibility criteria for EWS reservation is primarily based on the annual family income.
- To qualify as economically weaker, a family's gross annual income should be below a certain threshold, as determined by the government. Other factors such as landholding and residential house are also considered in some cases. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The EWS reservation is implemented as per the 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act.
- This constitutional amendment introduced Article 15(6) and Article 16(6), allowing the state to provide for the advancement of economically weaker sections by making special provisions for their admission to educational institutions and their appointment to posts in the services under the state. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 2 Option A is correct

Explanation

- The last caste-based census in India was indeed conducted in the year 2011. However, the data collected during the census was not officially released due to various reasons, and the demand for a fresh caste census has gained prominence since then. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Census Act of 1948 empowers the government to collect data on caste during the decennial census. However, it is important to note that the decision to include or exclude specific questions, such as those related to caste, is a policy matter decided by the government. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The demand for a new caste census has primarily been based on the need for

updated socio-economic data. Advocates argue that an updated caste census could provide more accurate and current information, aiding in the formulation of targeted welfare policies and addressing social disparities. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

- The responsibility of conducting the census lies with the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, under the Ministry of Home Affairs. However, the decision to include specific questions, such as those related to caste, is a policy decision made by the government. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect.**

Answer 3 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The National Solar Mission, now known as the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM), was launched with the goal of achieving 100 GW of solar capacity by 2022, not 20 GW by 2030. The target was subsequently increased to 175 GW by 2022, with a further ambition to achieve 500 GW by 2030. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) scheme indeed promotes solar energy use in the agricultural sector.
- It aims to install solar pumps and grid-connected solar power plants in rural areas to enhance farmer incomes and provide clean energy. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The Solar Rooftop Subsidy Scheme provides financial incentives to individual households for installing solar panels on rooftops.
- The scheme encourages the adoption of solar energy at the individual level. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an initiative aimed at promoting solar energy cooperation among countries lying fully or partially between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn.
- It was launched during the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris and seeks to mobilize over a trillion dollars of investment into solar projects by 2030. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**

Answer 4 Option D is correct**Explanation**

- The Taliban originated in Afghanistan in the early 1990s. It emerged during the Afghan Civil War and eventually seized control of Kabul in 1996. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Taliban adheres to an interpretation of Islamic law known as Sharia. Their rule in Afghanistan was characterized by the strict implementation of their interpretation of Islamic principles. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The Taliban controlled Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021. They took control of the country in 1996, but their rule was interrupted in 2001 when the United States and its allies intervened following the 9/11 attacks. The Taliban regained control in 2021 after the U.S. withdrawal. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 5 Option A is correct**Explanation**

- The government has formulated the National Cybersecurity Reference Framework (NCRF), a comprehensive policy to establish a clear framework for cybersecurity, outlining roles and responsibilities. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The NCRF draws upon existing legislations, policies, and guidelines to provide an implementable measure.
- It has been developed by the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC) with support from the National Cybersecurity Coordinator (NCSC). **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- However, the NCRF is a guideline i.e. its recommendations will not be binding. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- It was shared privately with companies and other government departments for consultation last year, but is yet to be made public.

Answer 6 Option B is correct**Explanation**

- Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) is not applicable to urea. Urea is under a different subsidy mechanism, and its Maximum Retail Price (MRP) is fixed by the government. NBS

applies to non-urea fertilizers. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**

- Under NBS, subsidies are indeed provided based on the nutrient content of fertilizers like nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P), potassium (K), and sulfur (S). The subsidy is linked to the specific nutrient composition, encouraging the use of balanced nutrients in agriculture. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The introduction of NBS in India aimed to rationalize fertilizer pricing and encourage balanced nutrient use in agriculture. By providing subsidies based on nutrient content, it seeks to promote the judicious use of fertilizers and enhance soil health. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 7 Option B is correct**Explanation**

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) recently established the National Terrorism Data Fusion & Analysis Centre (NTDFAC) at its headquarters in Delhi.
- The centre, akin to the US Global Terrorism Database, consolidates information on terrorists. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- This includes case history, fingerprints, videos, pictures, and social media profiles.
- The NTDFAC incorporates a face recognition system, enabling the scanning of suspects from CCTV footage. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It aims to assist NIA officers and state police forces in identifying and tracking terrorists efficiently. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

Answer 8 Option B is correct**Explanation**

- In September last year, a High-Level Committee (HLC) led by Ramnath Kovind, former President of India, was formed to explore the feasibility of holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and local bodies across all states.
- Historically, the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies had simultaneous elections during the initial four general election cycles (1952-1967). **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- However, subsequent premature dissolutions of the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies led to staggered elections.

- The Election Commission is responsible for conducting polls to the offices of the President and Vice-President of India, Parliament, the state assemblies and the legislative councils. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

Answer 9 Option A is correct

Explanation

- In the previous year, Indian EV sales witnessed a remarkable 50% growth compared to 2022.
- Almost all the current EVs utilize lithium-ion batteries, featuring two electrodes separated by a liquid electrolyte.
- Lithium's lightweight nature and efficient electron movement make it the preferred material for EV batteries.
- Challenges include relatively lower energy density compared to petrol, slow charging, cost concerns, and environmental issues related to lithium mining. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- Solid-State Lithium Battery (SSB) is a revolutionary approach replacing the flammable liquid electrolyte with a heat-resistant solid electrolyte.
- SSBs eliminate the need for a carbon-based anode scaffolding, promising lighter batteries, faster charging, and improved safety. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The FAME India Scheme, aimed at promoting electric vehicles (EVs) in the

country, has taken significant strides to incentivize the adoption of EVs and expand the electric mobility infrastructure. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 10 Option B is correct

Explanation

- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a UN agency that supports the relief and human development of Palestinian refugees who were displaced during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It operates in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, providing various programs inside and outside refugee camps. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It includes education, health, relief and social services, microfinance and emergency assistance programmes.
- UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions by donor states like the US.
- It also gets a limited subsidy from the UN, which is used only for administrative costs, the agency's website said. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- UNRWA is unique in that it delivers services directly to its beneficiaries.
- It reports only to the UNGA.


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