

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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Important News Articles

GS II

1. Fill vacancies in CIC, SICs, top court tells Centre, States - The Hindu

Relevance: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

News :

- The Supreme Court directed the Centre and the States to **immediately take steps** to fill up vacancies in the Central Information Commission (CIC) and State Information Commissions (SIC).
- The court **expressed apprehension** of these bodies becoming defunct.
- This might also **damage the citizens' right** to know under the Right to Information (RTI Act) a "dead letter".

Prelims Takeaway

- Chief Information Commission
- RTI Act

Time-bound Order

- The Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India gave the Centre three weeks **to collect data** from the States **regarding**
 - the sanctioned strength of the CIC and SICs
 - existing and anticipated vacancies till March 31, 2024
 - the pending cases.

Facts of the Petition

- The petitioner **argued** that
 - the continuing **vacancies**, making RTI almost redundant.
 - a Supreme Court **judgement** in 2019 that directed the government to fill vacancies of information bodies was cited.
 - the **delay** violates the order of the court.
 - cases were **piling up** in these Information Commissions
 - many of the bodies had **stopped accepting cases**.

State of Recruitments in the Various Information Commissions of the Country

- **CIC itself** was functioning without a Chief Information Commissioner.
- Only four Information Commissioners are functioning presently and they will retire soon.
- The Jharkhand SIC, the Tripura SIC and the Telangana SICs had been **defunct**.
- Other SICs, including in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal, were almost **crippled** by vacancies and a huge backlog.

2. SC puts Maharashtra Speaker on deadline over defection pleas - The Hindu

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

News:

- The **Supreme Court** recently directed Maharashtra Assembly Speaker to decide **disqualification petitions** against the Maharashtra Chief Minister by December 31, 2023.

The Anti-Defection Law

- The **Anti-Defection Law** passed in **1985** through the **52nd amendment** to the Constitution added the **Tenth Schedule** to the Indian Constitution.
- It aimed to combat "**the evil of political defections**".
- According to it, a **member of a House** belonging to any political party becomes **disqualified**, if
 - he **voluntarily** gives up his **membership** of such political party
 - he **votes or abstains from voting** in such House **contrary to directions** issued by his political party and such act has not been **condoned** by the party
 - If any **independently** elected member **joins any political party**.
 - If any **nominated member** joins any political party after the **expiry of six months**.

Prelims Takeaway

- The Anti-Defection Law
- Supreme Court of India

Power play

Recent judgments in which the SC dealt with the power of Speakers under the Tenth Schedule:

■ In *Keisham Meghachandra Singh versus Manipur Speaker (2020)*, a three-judge Bench led by Justice R.F. Nariman said **Speakers should decide disqualification petitions within a maximum three months unless there are "exceptional circumstances"**

■ In the *Karnataka MLAs' disqualification case (2019)*, a three-judge Bench led by Justice N.V. Ramana had held **that a Speaker who cannot stay aloof from the pressures and wishes of his political party does not deserve to occupy his chair**



Exceptions

- If a member goes out of his party as a result of a **merger of the party** with another party.
 - A merger takes place when two-thirds of the members of the party have agreed to such merger.
- If a member, after being elected as the **presiding officer** of the House, **voluntarily gives up the membership** of his party or **rejoins it** after he ceases to hold that office.

Powers of Speaker with regard to Anti-Defection Law

- **Any question** regarding disqualification arising out of defection is to be decided by the **presiding officer** of the House.
- After the **Kihoto Hollohan case**, the Supreme Court declared that the **decision** of the **presiding officer is not final**
- It is **subject to judicial review** on the grounds of **malafide, perversity, etc.**

3. India seeks formal talks at WTO for reforms in dispute resolution body - Indian Express

Relevance: Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

News:

- India is gearing up for the **upcoming World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial conference**, which is just four months away.
- It has pressed for early start of formal talks on getting the **dispute settlement system in the world body functioning** again.

Prelims Takeaway

- World Trade Organisation
- WTO Dispute Settlement

Informal Talks on Reforming WTO Dispute Settlement System

- The dispute settlement system within the WTO has **become non-functional due to actions primarily taken by the United States.**
- The US is now engaging in discussions about **reforming the Dispute Settlement Body, in informal ways.**
- Informal discussions pose challenges for **WTO members with limited ambassador presence, hindering their participation.**
- Other logistics challenges, including not having **enough translators is also hampering broader participation** in informal discussions.
- India, during the 'senior officials' meeting in Geneva, has called for **shifting negotiations to a formal committee** setting to enable greater member involvement and resource deployment.

WTO Dispute Settlement

- A **dispute arises** when a member government believes another member government is **violating an agreement** that it has **made in the WTO.**
- There are **two main ways** to settle a dispute once a complaint has been filed in the WTO

- The parties find a mutually agreed solution, particularly during the phase of bilateral consultations.
- Through adjudication which are binding upon the parties once adopted by the Dispute Settlement Body.
- There are **three main stages to the WTO dispute settlement process**
 - Consultations between the parties.
 - Adjudication by panels and, if applicable, by the Appellate Body.
 - The implementation of the ruling
 - It includes the possibility of countermeasures in the event of failure by the losing party to implement the ruling.

WTO's Appellate Body

- The Appellate Body, **set up in 1995**, is a **standing committee of seven members**.
- It **presides over appeals** against judgments passed in trade-related disputes brought by WTO members.
- Countries can approach the Appellate Body if they feel the **report of the panel** set up to examine the issue **needs to be reviewed on points of law**.
- However, **existing evidence is not re-examined** but **legal interpretations are reviewed**.
- The Appellate Body can **uphold, modify, or reverse the legal findings of the panel** that heard the dispute.
- The appellate body at the WTO **stopped functioning from December 2019**, but the **panels are still working**.

4. West Asia conflict could trigger 'dual shock' in commodity markets: World Bank - Indian Express

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

News:

- The World Bank has **assessed the impact** of the West Asia Conflict on the world economy in its report.
- The **name of the report** is Commodity Markets Outlook.
- The World Bank has **cautioned** that West Asia Conflict can lead to energy market turmoil and intensification of food insecurity.

Prelims Takeaway

- Commodity Markets Outlook
- Arab oil embargo in 1973

India and World Food Market

- **Ban on exports of non-basmati rice** by India has caused disruptions in food security.
 - India **accounts for** nearly 40 per cent of the world's rice exports.
- **A cut in India's fertiliser subsidy** for the second half of the season could further impact demand.
- Rice prices **will remain high** in 2024 assuming India maintains export curbs.

Perspectives of World Market

- Fears of **potential El Niño** impacts in crucial rice-growing areas.
- At the **end of 2022** more than 700 million people—nearly a tenth of the global population—were undernourished.
- High **oil prices may** lead to inflation that can escalate undernutrition.
- The **fluctuations** are triggered by
 - Ban on export of food and fertilisers
 - Price controls.
 - Price subsidies.
- A **better option** is to
 - improve social safety nets
 - diversify food sources
 - increase efficiency in food production and trade.

Stable 2024 and 2025 Expected

- As per World Bank, Oil prices are **expected to average** \$90 a barrel this quarter before falling to \$81 a barrel in 2024 as global economic growth slows.

- **Overall commodity prices** are projected to fall 4.1% in 2024.
- Prices of **agricultural commodities** are expected to decline next year as supplies rise.
- Prices of **base metals** are also projected to drop 5% in 2024.
- **Commodity prices** are expected to stabilise in 2025.

Three Scenarios of Disruption of Global Oil Supply

- A “**small disruption**” scenario, -roughly equivalent to the reduction seen during the Libyan civil war in 2011
 - The global oil supply would be **reduced** by 500,000 to 2 million barrels per day leading to price rise of oil to a range of \$93-\$102 a barrel.
- In a “**medium disruption**” scenario—roughly equivalent to the Iraq war in 2003
 - The global oil supply would be curtailed by 3 million to 5 million barrels per day, which could drive oil prices to \$109-\$121 a barrel.
- In a “**large disruption**” scenario—comparable to the Arab oil embargo in 1973
 - The global oil supply would shrink by 6 million to 8 million barrels per day, which could drive prices to \$140-\$157 a barrel.

Russian Oil and Price Fluctuations

- There is **redirection of Russian exports** from EU and G7 countries to China, India and Türkiye, the World Bank.
- The price cap on **Russian crude oil** introduced in late 2022 appears increasingly unenforceable given the recent spike in Urals prices.
- The price cap has **not created significant supply disruptions**, with the volume of Russian oil production and exports remaining relatively constant.
- There has been **increasing uncertainty** regarding the discount at which Russian oil trades.

Impact on Gold Prices

- Policymakers need to **remain concerned about gold in particular**.
- Gold prices have **risen about 8%** since the onset of the conflict.
- Gold prices have a **unique relationship** to geopolitical concerns.
 - They rise in periods of conflict and uncertainty often signalling an erosion of investor confidence.
- Gold prices **would likely increase** from already high levels as investors shift to safe-haven assets.

GS III

5. Chinese vessel begins research off the coast of Sri Lanka amid India's concerns - The Hindu

Relevance: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

News:

- Chinese **research vessel** Shiyan 6 has arrived at Sri Lanka's' coast.
- It is set to **begin its two-day research** off the Sri Lankan coast
- This has led to the **raising of the concerns** by India and the United States.

Background

- The research will be pursued off Sri Lanka's **western coast**.
- **In collaboration** with Sri Lanka's National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) and the University of Ruhuna.
- It is marine scientific research. Earlier the Sri Lankan Authority said that the vessel was at the Colombo port for “replenishment”.
- Both, India and the US **raised concern** over the vessel's visit

Visits by Various Countries on Sri Lanka's Ports

- In September 2023, 'INS Delhi', India's **first indigenously built destroyer** undertook a goodwill visit to Sri Lanka.
- In October 2023 'ROKS Gwanggaeto the Great' of the **Korean Navy** and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) **destroyer** AKEBONO (DD 108) arrived at the Trincomalee harbour.

Prelims Takeaway

- SAGAR
- Strings of Pearl

- Trincomalee **harbour** is **located** on Sri Lanka's north-eastern coast, on an official visit.
- No Transparency of Sri Lanka on Chinese Marine Visit**
- Sri Lankan **assured** Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) would be followed to clear visits of foreign vessels.
 - The **SOP to vet** foreign warships, aircraft, and Marine Scientific Research (MSR) ships, earlier approved by the Cabinet and later subject to revisions.
 - This procedure has **not been followed** in the case of the visit of the Chinese Vessel on Sri Lankan Port.

India's concern in Sri Lanka in the backdrop of China-India relations.

- The Chinese "Forum on the Development of Indian Ocean Island Countries" **sounded in opposition to** India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative.
- China has **formal control** over Sri Lanka's Hambantota port as a part of a 99-year lease.
- A Special Economic Zone **around the** Colombo port city and a new economic commission are funded by China.
- Through **leasing of ports** the Chinese navy to have a permanent presence in the Indian Ocean.
- This Chinese strategy to encircle India is referred to as the Strings of Pearls Strategy and can be executed through such ports.

6. FM urges closer global cooperation to halt smuggling, nab masterminds - The Hindu/ FM calls for inter-govt cooperation to curb smuggling, catch masterminds - Indian Express

Relevance: Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.

News:

- Finance Minister called for **intergovernmental cooperation** to curb smuggling
- This will help in **catching the "brain"** behind such activities instead of smaller fry.
- FM also demanded that **antiques** from museums across the world **should be returned** to their respective countries.

Prelims Takeaway

- World Customs Organization
- Global Conference on Cooperation in Enforcement Matters

India's Voice on Smuggling Matters.

- Technology and actionable information **are important tools** in curbing smuggling.
- Smuggling **endangers** wild flora and fauna.
- The issue was **discussed** at the Global Conference on Cooperation in Enforcement Matters organised by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI).
- The **nature** of smuggled or illegally traded goods has not changed over the last 50-60 years
- It **includes** precious metals, narcotics, and precious reserves from forest or marine life.
- The World Customs Organisation **can play in curbing** smuggling.
- Gold, cigarettes, narcotics, antiques and wildlife materials **are priority smuggling items.**

Way Forward

- Smuggling is a **multidimensional** issue with a detrimental impact on the economy of a country and national security,
- Sharing intelligence, increasing communication, and implementing joint operations to identify and intercept smuggled goods can **help in stopping** it.

7. Researchers identify a new mushroom species from the Western Ghats - The Hindu

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

News:

- Recently, a **new mushroom species** has been found on the campus of the **Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI)** in Palode, India.

Prelims Takeaway

- *Candolleomyces albosquamosus*
- Western Ghats

Candolleomyces albosquamosus

- Researchers identified and described the new species as a **member of the Candolleomyces genus**, a relatively **small genus with only 35 recognized species globally**.
- The newly discovered species, named **Candolleomyces albosquamosus**, is **characterized by**
 - its small size
 - honey-yellow cap with white woolly scale-like structures
 - cylindrical white stem i.e. 'stipe'
- It reaches a **height of approximately 58 mm**.
- The honey-yellow coloured pileus **turns brownish-gray or brownish-beige with age**.
- Its habitats include **dead logs or bamboo culms** in the natural forest.

Significance of the Discovery

- The discovery is important not just **because a new species was found**, but also because mushrooms play a crucial role in the **decomposition of plant litter in tropical forests**, especially in the Western Ghats region.
- This discovery sheds light on the **rich biodiversity of the Western Ghats** and **encourages further exploration of fungal diversity** in the region.

8. LAUNCH OF 25T BOLLARD PULL TUG 'MAHABALI' - PIB

Relevance: Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

News:

- Recently, the **Indian Navy** commissioned **Mahabali Tug** at Shoft Shipyard Pvt. Ltd., Gujarat.

Mahabali Tug

- India **has launched** the 25 ton Bollard Pull Tug named "Mahabali".
- The tug is **indigenously developed by** Shoft Shipyard located in Bharuch, Gujarat.

Features of the Tug

- It is **one of three** such tugs commissioned by India.
- It is a **collaborative effort** between the Ministry of Defence and the Shipyard.
- It is within the **classification** rules set forth by the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS).

Significance of the Tug

- It **will aid** naval ships and submarines during berthing and unberthing operations,
- It **will help** marine vessels in navigating through confined waters.
- It is **equipped** to enhance firefighting capabilities for ships.
- It can **aid in** limited Search and Rescue Operations.

Prelims Takeaway

- Mahabali Tug
- Indian Register of Shipping
- Bollard Pull tug

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

1. The expansion of settlements into flood-prone areas - The Hindu

Relevance: Disaster and Disaster Management

Context:

- A study led by the World Bank and published in Nature reveals that flood risk in many Indian cities is on the rise **due to urban expansion into flood-prone areas.**
- Since 1985, **human settlements in such areas have more than doubled.**
- This **unsustainable urbanization** poses a significant risk to the country.

India's Risk Profile

- India ranks as the **third-highest contributor to global settlements expanding into flood-prone zones**, following China and the US from 1985 to 2015.
- While India is **not among the top 20 countries with the most exposure to flood hazards**, it still **faces significant risks** of flood-related issues in the future if unchecked.

Who Is Most Affected?

- **Informal structures and low-income populations** are disproportionately affected by flood risks, **often residing in low-lying, flood-prone areas.**
- Governance processes and environmental regulations have **not effectively curbed urban expansion into flood-prone regions.**
- Violations of government regulations are common, such as the construction of structures on river floodplains.

Recommended Actions

- Comprehensive **scientific mapping of flood-prone areas** in every city is essential.
- Urban governments should prioritise **making housing in these areas flood-resilient**, especially for low-income residents.
- **Adaptation strategies** must **differentiate between low-income and elite structures** to address flood risks effectively.
- **Sustainable urban planning** that recognizes the challenges and risks associated with flood-prone areas is crucial for India's growing cities.

2. Issues in electoral bonds case - Indian Express

Relevance: Polity

Context:

- A **five-judge bench of the Supreme Court**, led by Chief Justice of India, is set to hear **petitions challenging the constitutional validity** of the **Centre's electoral bonds scheme.**
- The scheme, **introduced in 2018, enables anonymous donations to political parties**, and its legality has been a subject of contention since its inception.

Electoral Bonds

- Electoral bonds are interest-free “bearer instruments” that allow individuals or Indian corporations to make anonymous donations to political parties.
- They are available in denominations from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1 crore and can be purchased from authorised SBI branches with KYC compliance.
- Political parties can encash these bonds within 15 days of receiving them to fund their electoral expenses.
- Electoral bonds can only be purchased during specific 10-day windows in January, April, July, and October.
- **They can only be donated to political parties**
 - o Registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951
 - o Securing at least 1% of the votes polled in the last election to the House of the People or a Legislative Assembly.

Why Were Electoral Bonds Introduced?

- It was introduced to bring transparency to political funding and reduce anonymous cash donations.
- The scheme aimed to clean the system of political funding in India.

Previous Court Rulings

- In April 2019, a three-judge bench directed political parties to submit details of electoral bonds to the Election Commission of India (ECI).
- In March 2021, a three-judge bench dismissed a request to halt the sale of new bonds, stating that the scheme’s operations were not impenetrable.
- SC said that bonds had been issued in the past, “without any impediment,” and it had already ordered “certain safeguards” by way of its April 2019 interim order.
- The recent development involves a referral of the case to a five-judge bench, which will now decide on the scheme’s constitutionality.

Petitioners Demands

- Several petitions have challenged the electoral bonds scheme.
- They seek to have political parties classified as public offices, subject to the Right to Information Act, and require political parties to disclose their income and expenditure.

ECI’s Stance

- The Election Commission of India objected to amendments exempting political parties from disclosing donations through electoral bonds.
- It expressed concerns about unchecked foreign funding of political parties and its potential influence on Indian policies.

Centre’s Stance

- The Attorney General argued that citizens’ right to know is subject to reasonable restrictions and that there can be no general right to access information without such restrictions.
- He defended the scheme, stating that it promotes clean money contributions, adheres to tax obligations, and does not violate existing rights.

Quick Look

1. Nanoflorets

- The flower is made of carbon nanostructure.
- It is made with the help of dendritic fibrous nanosilica and acetylene gas.
- The new nano structure is blacker than black.
- The material is called the material carbon nanoflorets.
- The nanoflorets also didn't easily dissipate the heat generated into the environment, making the material a good candidate to heat other materials, like water, using solar energy.

2. E- Commerce

- The fifth annual study conducted across 12 e-commerce platforms by Fairwork India, presents a grim picture of working conditions for India's gig workers.
 - Only three platforms Bigbasket, Flipkart, and Urban Company had a minimum wage policy to ensure all workers earn at least hourly local minimum wage after factoring in work-related costs.
- E-Commerce is defined as the buying and selling of goods and services including digital products over digital and electronic networks.
- It draws on technologies such as mobile commerce, electronic funds transfer, supply chain management, Internet marketing, online transaction processing, electronic data interchange (EDI), inventory management systems, and automated data collection systems.

3. Chhath Pooja

- Chhath is a Hindu festival dedicated to the Sun god and his wife Usha in order to thank them for bestowing the bounties of life on earth.
- The Goddess who is worshipped during the famous Chhath Puja is known as Chhathi Maiya (also known as Usha, wife of the sun god).
- The word chhath means sixth and the festival is celebrated on the sixth day of the month Kartika of the Hindu lunar Bikram Sambat calendar.
- The festival is observed over a period of four days and the rituals include holy bathing, fasting, standing in water for long periods of time, and offering prayers and food to the setting and rising sun.
- The main worshipers, called Parvaitin, are usually women. However, many men also observe this festival as Chhath is not a gender-specific festival.
- The festival is observed most elaborately in Mithila Province of Nepal, Terai-Madhesh region of Nepal, Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand and UP.

4. Subsurface Water Ice Mapping (SWIM) Project

- Recently, NASA's Subsurface Water Ice Mapping (SWIM) project released its fourth set of maps.
- The project uses data from several NASA missions, such as the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO), the 2001 Mars Odyssey, and the defunct Mars Global Surveyor.
- For the first time, the HiRISE (High-Resolution Imaging Science Experiment) data was used to provide the most detailed view of the ice's edge as close to the equator as possible.
- The first phase of the SWIM project, completed in 2019, focused on the northern hemisphere.
- The second phase, completed in 2020, includes the southern hemisphere.
- It aims to locate the best places to access water ice buried under the Martian surface.
- The new map includes sightings of so-called "polygon terrain," where the seasonal expansion and contraction of subsurface ice causes the ground to form polygonal cracks, indicating more ice hidden beneath the surface.

5. Exercise KAZIND-2023

- The Joint Exercise between India and Kazakhstan was instituted as 'Exercise PRABAL DOSTYK' in the year 2016.

- After the second edition, the Exercise was upgraded to a company-level exercise and renamed as 'Exercise KAZIND'.
- The Exercise has been further upgraded as a Bi-service Exercise this year by including the Air Force component.
- In this edition of the Exercise, both sides will practise conduct of Counter Terrorism operations in a sub-conventional environment under United Nations mandate.
- The contingents will jointly rehearse various tactical drills to include Raid, Search and Destroy Operations, Small Team Insertion and Extraction operations, etc.
- The scope of the Exercise also includes conduct of Counter Unmanned Aerial System Operations.

6. Hostile Activity Watch Kernel (HAWK) system

- Recently, the Karnataka Forest Department, along with the Wildlife Trust of India, launched the Hostile Activity Watch Kernel (HAWK) system.
- It is a Cloud Based Information Management System designed to manage interlinked databases of wildlife crime, wildlife criminals, and wildlife mortality.
- It will help officials analyse the information and develop actionable intelligence to prevent wildlife crimes and curb Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT).
- The system connects the entire state forest department in real-time and the access is restricted through access levels.
- This is a large ERP model cloud based system that uses mobile and desktop interfaces to manage data.
- The entire HAWK system is divided into various modules that are interconnected with individual stand alone functions.
- All the data managed by the HAWK system is secured with the government and industry standard security measures are applied to ensure data security.

7. Toll-Operate-Transfer (TOT) Model

- In 2016, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) authorised the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) to monetise public-funded national highway projects and approved the ToT model.
- In the TOT model, public-funded projects, operational for two years, are put up for bidding, wherein the right of collection and appropriation of fees is assigned for a predetermined concession period (30 years) to concessionaires (developers or investors) against the upfront payment of a lump sum amount to NHAI.
- Such assignment of rights shall be based on the toll revenue potential of the identified NH projects.
- Operation & Maintenance (O&M) obligations of such projects shall be with the concessionaire till the completion of the concession period.
- The concessionaires for such projects shall be appointed through a transparent and uniform procurement process within the ambit of a pre-defined and approved implementation framework.
- The TOT model has been developed to encourage private participation in the Highway sector.

Prelims Track Question

Q1. With reference to Chief Information Commission , consider the following statements

1. The Office of CIC consists of a Chief Information Commissioner and not more than four information commissioners.
2. It is not a constitutional body.
3. The Chief Justice of India plays a role in the appointment of the Chief Information Commissioner.
4. They are not eligible for reappointment.

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

1. If any independently elected member joins any political party.
2. If any nominated member joins any political party after the expiry of six months.
3. If an elected member voluntarily gives up the membership of the party on whose ticket he was elected
4. If a member goes out of his party as a result of a merger of the party with another party.

How many of the above will lead to disqualification of a member of a House belonging to any political party under the "Tenth Schedule" of the Constitution?

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

Q3. Consider the following statements with reference to the WTO Dispute Settlement Process

1. A dispute arises when a member government believes another member government is violating an agreement that it has made in the WTO.
2. The Appellate Body re-examines the existing evidence and reviews the legal interpretations.

3. Currently, the dispute settlement system within the WTO has become non-functional due to actions primarily taken by the United States.
4. There are three ways to settle a dispute once a complaint has been filed in the WTO.

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

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

Q4. With reference to Commodity Market Outlook report, consider the following statements

1. It is published by World Bank
2. It does not cover volatile prices like oil.
3. It is published annually.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding Indian Ocean Rim Association

1. The headquarters of the association are in Colombo.
2. China is not a member of the association.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding World Customs Organization

1. The SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade is developed by the World Customs Organization
2. The headquarters of the organisation are in Brussels, Belgium.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

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

Q7. Which of the following statements about the recently discovered mushroom species "Candolleomyces albosquamosus" in the Western Ghats is correct?

- 1. It is a large mushroom species with a bright red cap.
- 2. It plays a crucial role in decomposing plant litter in tropical forests.

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

Q8. 'Mahabali', which has been in the news recently for indigenization of marine technology, is a kind of

- A. Frigate
- B. Corvette
- C. Offshore Patrol Vessel
- D. None

Q9. Consider the following statements with reference to the study conducted by the World Bank

- 1. Flood risk in many Indian cities is on the rise due to urban expansion into flood-prone areas.
- 2. India ranks as the highest contributor to global settlements expanding into flood-prone zones

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q10. Consider the following

- 1. Registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951
- 2. 'Recognised' in four or more states
- 3. Secured at least 1% of the votes polled in the last election to the House of the People or a Legislative Assembly.

How many of the above criterias must be fulfilled by the political parties to accept electoral bonds?

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



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Prelims Track Answer

Ans.1 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The CIC was established by the Central Government in 2005, under the provisions of the Right to Information Act (2005).
- It consists of a Chief Information Commissioner and not more than ten Information Commissioners. Hence, Statement 1 is not correct.
- It is not a constitutional body. Hence, Statement 2 is correct.
- They are appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of the Prime Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister. Hence, Statement 3 is incorrect.
- The Chief Information Commissioner and an Information Commissioner shall hold office for such term as prescribed by the Central Government or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- They are not eligible for reappointment. Hence, Statement 4 is correct.

Ans. 2 Option B is correct

Explanation

- The Anti-Defection Law passed in 1985 through the 52nd amendment to the Constitution added the Tenth Schedule to the Indian Constitution.
- It aimed to combat “the evil of political defections”.
- According to it, a member of a House belonging to any political party becomes disqualified, if
 - he voluntarily gives up his membership of such political party
 - he votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to directions issued by his political party and such act has not been condoned by the party
- If any independently elected member joins any political party.

- If any nominated member joins any political party after the expiry of six months.
- Exceptions
 - If a member goes out of his party as a result of a merger of the party with another party.
 - If a member, after being elected as the presiding officer of the House, voluntarily gives up the membership of his party or rejoins it after he ceases to hold that office.

Ans.3 Option B is correct

Explanation

- A dispute arises when a member government believes another member government is violating an agreement that it has made in the WTO. Hence, statement 1 is correct.
- There are two main ways to settle a dispute once a complaint has been filed in the WTO. Hence, statement 4 is incorrect.
- The parties find a mutually agreed solution, particularly during the phase of bilateral consultations.
- Through adjudication which are binding upon the parties once adopted by the Dispute Settlement Body.
- The Appellate Body, presides over appeals against judgments passed in trade-related disputes brought by WTO members.
- Countries can approach the Appellate Body if they feel the report of the panel set up to examine the issue needs to be reviewed on points of law.
- However, existing evidence is not re-examined but legal interpretations are reviewed. Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.
- The dispute settlement system within the WTO has become non-functional due to actions primarily taken by the United States. Hence, statement 3 is correct.

Ans. 4 Option A is correct

Explanation

- Commodity Market Outlook report is published by the World Bank. Hence, Statement 1 is correct.

- It provides market analysis for major commodity groups - energy, metals, agriculture, precious metals, and fertilizers.
- The report forecasts prices for 46 key commodities, including oil. Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.
- The report is published twice in the year i.e. in April and October. Hence, Statement 3 is incorrect.

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

- The President of South Africa, of South Africa in 1995 laid down the vision of the Indian Ocean Rim Association.
- In March 1997, there was the creation of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (then known as the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation)
- Headquarters: Ebene, Mauritius. Hence, Statement 1 is incorrect.
- Currently, IORA has 23 Member States and 11 Dialogue Partners.
- Members: Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Yemen. Hence, Statement 2 is correct.

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

- The World Customs Organization (WCO) was established in 1952.
- It represents 183 Customs administrations across the globe.
- It collectively processes approximately 98% of world trade.
- It has its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Hence, Statement 2 is correct.
- Some Important Conventions/Mechanism under WCO.
- The SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade. Hence, Statement 1 is correct.
- The International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS Convention).

- The International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs procedures (revised Kyoto Convention or RKC).

Ans. 7 Option B is correct**Explanation**

- Recently, a new mushroom species has been found on the campus of the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI) in Palode, India.
- The newly discovered species, named *Candolleomyces albosquamosus*, is characterized by its small size, honey-yellow cap with white woolly scale-like structures and cylindrical white stem i.e. 'stipe' Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.
- It reaches a height of approximately 58 mm.
- Its habitats include dead logs or bamboo culms in the natural forest.
- The discovery is important not just because a new species was found, but also because mushrooms play a crucial role in the decomposition of plant litter in tropical forests, especially in the Western Ghats region. Hence, statement 2 is correct.

Ans. 8 Option D is correct**Explanation**

- India has launched the 25 ton Bollard Pull Tug named Mahabali. Hence, Option D is correct.
- The tug is indigenously developed by Shoft Shipyard located in Bharuch, Gujarat.
- It is one of three such tugs commissioned by India.
- It is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Defence and the Shipyard.
- It is within the classification rules set forth by the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS).

Ans. 9 Option C is correct**Explanation**

- A study led by the World Bank and published in Nature reveals that flood risk in many Indian cities is on the rise due to urban expansion into flood-prone areas. Hence, statement 1 is correct.
- Since 1985, human settlements in such areas have more than doubled.

- India ranks as the third-highest contributor to global settlements expanding into flood-prone zones, following China and the US from 1985 to 2015. Hence, statement 2 is correct.
 - While India is not among the top 20 countries with the most exposure to flood hazards, it still faces significant risks of flood-related issues in the future if unchecked.
- Ans. 10 Option B is correct**
- Explanation**
- Electoral bonds are interest-free "bearer instruments" that allow individuals or Indian corporations to make anonymous donations to political parties.
 - They are available in denominations from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1 crore and can be purchased from authorised SBI branches with KYC compliance.
 - Political parties can encash these bonds within 15 days of receiving them to fund their electoral expenses.
 - They can only be donated to political parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951
 - securing at least 1% of the votes polled in the last election to the House of the People or a Legislative Assembly. Hence, option B is correct.



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