

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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## **Important News Articles**

1. India will work with Sri Lanka on its debt treatment: Nirmala - The Hindu
2. Difficult to press for women's quota before LS poll: SC - The Hindu
3. Modi, Sunak discuss Gaza, FTA progress - Indian Express
4. FinMin launches amnesty scheme for filing appeals against GST demand orders - Indian Express/ FinMin unveils amnesty for GST demand order appeals - The Hindu
5. National dam safety team faults planning, design of Kaleshwaram project's barrage in Telangana - The Hindu
6. DPIIT conducts PM GatiShakti Webinar with States/UTs and Line Ministries/Departments - PIB
7. India's forex reserves rise by \$2.57 bn - Indian Express

## **Editorials, Gists and Explainers**

1. A Matter of Greying - Indian Express
2. How air pollution impacts economic growth: The evidence in research - Indian Express
3. Direct listing on foreign exchanges: What does it mean for Indian cos? - Indian Express

## **Quick Look**

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2. Zika Virus
3. Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation System
4. Non-Performing Asset
5. Trojan Asteroids
6. Comprehensive National Security Strategy

**Important News Articles****GS II****1. India will work with Sri Lanka on its debt treatment: Nirmala - The Hindu**

**Relevance :** India and its neighbourhood- relations.

**News:**

- India will continue **collaborating with Sri Lanka on debt treatment**.
- Sri Lanka is attempting to **emerge from the 2022 grave economic crisis**.

**Sri Lankan Efforts to Reduce its Debts**

- **China, India and Japan**, are the major creditors of Sri Lanka during the crisis.
- Sri Lanka is preparing a **common agreement plan** for all.
- This will help Sri Lanka in gaining a **second tranche of the IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF)**.
- Recently Sri Lanka had undergone the **first review of the 48-month EFF** supported programme of the Fund.
- If Sri Lanka reaches an agreement with its major creditors, it will have **access to \$330 million** from the IMF.

**Areas of Cooperation between India and Sri Lanka**

- **Inter-grid connectivity**
- **Aviation**
- **Power projects**
- **Oil exploration** in the northern town of Mannar

**Visit of Indian FM to Sri Lanka**

- The Indian Finance Minister **visited Trincomalee and Jaffna** in the island's north and east.
- **No new agreements** were inked during the visit.
- Some previously-discussed **projects were firmed up**.
- India and Sri Lanka exchanged a **MoU on \$15 million grant assistance from India** for the **promotion of Buddhist ties** between the countries
- \$10 million out of the amount will fund **solar electrification of religious places**.
- The President of Sri Lanka thanked India for the nearly **\$4 billion Indian assistance** to Sri Lanka, during its economic crash.

**'Naam 200'**

- Sri Lanka hosted the 'Naam 200' event, held to mark **two centuries since the arrival of Sri Lanka's Malaiyaha Tamils**.
- The Indian Finance Minister was **Guest of Honour** at the event.
- They were **brought down by British planters** to work in **Sri Lanka's coffee and tea plantations**.

**Housing, Commerce and Technology Agreements in Sri Lanka**

- Both countries launched the foundation stone laying ceremony for **10,000 houses being built in the hill country**, with Indian grant assistance.
- India earlier launched a **4000 houses project in Sri Lanka in 2016**.
- The 12th round of negotiations on the stalled **Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA)** between Sri Lanka and India also took place.

**Prelims Takeaway**

- Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement
- Extended Fund Facility
- Naam 200

## 2. Difficult to press for women's quota before LS poll: SC - The Hindu

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

**News:**

- The **Supreme Court** welcomed the constitutional amendment **reserving one-third of the seats for women** in Parliament, State legislatures, and the Delhi Legislative Assembly.
- The court recognized its relevance for **attaining gender parity in politics**.
- The court has apprehension about stepping in to **ensure the implementation of the quota law** before the general election in 2024.

**Prelims Takeaway**

- 106th Constitutional Amendment Act
- Basic Structure Doctrine

**Petitioner's Demands**

- A petition in the Supreme court **questioned a clause in the law**.
  - The reservation should be **implemented only after the next Census** followed by a delimitation exercise.
- The petitioner urged the court to **declare the "offending" clause "void ab-initio"**.
- He argued that a constitutional amendment passed by the Parliament should **not be made to wait indefinitely**.
- It was settled law that a **constitutional amendment cannot be held back** unless it was found to be **ultra-vires** the Constitution.

**Arguments for earlier execution of the Bill**

- The petition **referred** to the
  - **73rd and 74th constitutional amendments of 1993**.
    - These constitutional amendments gave women one-third representation in local body elections.
  - **77th constitutional amendment** extending reservations for promotions in jobs for the SC's and ST's.
  - **10% EWS reservation** in educational institutions and public employment.
- He argued that all these amendments were given effect **without calling for Census data**.
- Also, in the present amendment, there is **no requirement for census figures or for the conduct of delimitation exercises**.
  - This is because the number of seats reserved - 33% - is already declared and will be from the existing seats.
- He stressed that the Act **should be implemented immediately and before the General Elections** in letter and spirit.

## 3. Modi, Sunak discuss Gaza, FTA progress - Indian Express

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

**News :**

- The PM of India and his British counterpart had a **telephonic conversation** recently.

**Discussions between India and UK**

- They discussed the **developments in West Asia** and **conflict between Israel and Hamas**.
- They **expressed deep concern** on
  - terrorism
  - worsening security situation
  - the loss of civilian lives.
- They **agreed on**
  - the need for regional peace, security, stability
  - continued humanitarian assistance

**Prelims Takeaway**

- Bilateral Comprehensive Strategic Partnership
- Free trade Agreement
- India and UK Relations



**Economic Developments between India and UK**

- Both countries are expecting an **early conclusion** of a mutually beneficial Free Trade Agreement.
- The statement said the two leaders reiterated their commitment to continuing
- to strengthen **bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership**.

**Free Trade Agreement**

- The FTA between India and the UK is **expected to**
- enhance economic growth and prosperity
- increasing import and export flows
- increasing investment flows
- enhancing productivity
- a more efficient allocation of resources
- greater openness to international competition.

**GS III****4. FinMin launches amnesty scheme for filing appeals against GST demand orders - Indian Express/ FinMin unveils amnesty for GST demand order appeals - The Hindu**

**Relevance:** Government Budgeting  
**News:**

- The Finance Ministry recently launched an **amnesty scheme for filing appeals** against Goods and Services Tax (GST) demand orders.

**Features of the Amnesty Scheme**

- The scheme will be **open till January 31, 2024**
- Available for entities that were **unable to submit their appeals** against orders issued by the tax officer **on or before March 31, 2023**.
- So far, the GST law **allowed an assessee to file an appeal** against an assessment order seeking taxes **within three months** of the tax officer passing such a demand order.
  - This can be extended by **one more month**.
- The entities willing to avail of the scheme will have to **pre-deposit 12.5 percent of the tax demand**, against 10 per cent currently.
- The scheme would be a **lifeline** for those who might have **missed the appeal deadline**.
- This initiative can also **promote enhanced compliance** among taxpayers.
- It encourages **better cooperation with tax authorities** and a willingness to resolve disputes or clarify tax matters.

**Benefits of the Scheme**

- Allows **disputes to be resolved more efficiently**.
- May **reduce the burden on the legal system**.
- Benefits both taxpayers and the tax administration by **streamlining the appeal process**
- Potentially **reduces the need for prolonged litigation**.

**Prelims Takeaway**

- Amnesty Scheme
- Goods and Service Tax (GST)

**5. National dam safety team faults planning, design of Kaleshwaram project's barrage in Telangana - The Hindu**

**Relevance:** Disaster and disaster management.

**News:**

- An expert team from the **National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA)** recently examined the sinking of the **Medigadda Barrage in the Kaleshwaram Project**.
- The team identified **planning, design, quality control and operation and maintenance issues** as the causes of the damage.

**Prelims Takeaway**

- Dam Safety Act, 2021
- Kaleshwaram Project

**Dam Safety Act, 2021**

- Introduced **in response to dam failures** caused by deficient surveillance and maintenance.
- Provides for the **surveillance, inspection, operation, and maintenance of all specified dams** across the country.
  - These are dams with height more than 15 metres, or height between 10 m -15 m with certain design and structural conditions.
- Establishes **key responsibilities** and requires the **formation of national and state-level bodies** for its implementation.

**Institutional Mechanism****Two National Level Bodies**

- **National Committee on Dam Safety:** Responsible for overseeing dam safety policies and regulations.
- **National Dam Safety Authority:** Tasked with implementing and resolving state-level disputes.
- **Chairman of the Central Water Commission (CWC):** Heads dam safety protocols at the national level.

**Two State Level Bodies**

- The **State Dam Safety Organisation (SDSO)** will keep perpetual surveillance, inspect and monitor the dams.
- The **State Committee on Dam Safety (SCDS)** supervises state dam rehabilitation programs, reviews the work of the SDSO, and the progress on measures recommended in relation to dam safety, among others.

**Obligation of Dam Owners**

- Responsible for the **safe construction, operation, maintenance and supervision of a dam.**
- Must provide a **dam safety unit in each dam** which will inspect the dams
  - before and after monsoon season
  - during and after every earthquake, flood, calamity, or any sign of distress.
- **Functions of Dam Owners**
  - preparing an emergency action plan
  - carrying out risk assessment studies at specified regular intervals
  - preparing a comprehensive dam safety evaluation through a panel of experts.
- **Offences and Penalties**
  - Anyone obstructing a person in the discharge of his functions under the Act or refusing to comply with directions may be imprisoned for a year.
  - In case of loss of life, the person may be imprisoned for two years.

**6. DPIIT conducts PM GatiShakti Webinar with States/UTs and Line Ministries/Departments - PIB**

**Relevance:** Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

**News:**

- The DPIIT recently held a **webinar to assess the status of PM GatiShakti adoption** and discuss strategies for its **implementation at the district and local levels.**

**Prelims Takeaway**

- PM Gati Shakti Scheme
- Bharatmala
- Special Economic Zones

**Key Highlights**

- Praised the unique **GIS-based platform of PM GatiShakti** and its potential as a **universal planning tool** across ministries, departments, and states/UTs.
- Stressed the importance of **percolating PM GatiShakti to the district and urban local body levels**, focusing on Area Development principles.
- Discussed the revolutionary **digital infrastructure planning**

**Promoting Wider Usage of PM GatiShakti**

- **Urged states/UTs to**
  - leverage local remote sensing agencies/space agencies for geo-tagged data
  - integrate Area-Development principles with infrastructure planning for holistic development.

- States and UTs highlighted their progress in **mapping infrastructure projects and social welfare schemes** using PM GatiShakti.

#### PM Gati Shakti Scheme

- Launched in **2021**, it is also known as the **National Master Plan for multi-modal connectivity**.
- **Subsumes the Rs 110 lakh crore National Infrastructure Pipeline** launched in 2019.
- **Aim:** To provide a competitive advantage for manufacturing in India.
- A **digital platform to bring 16 Ministries together** for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of **infrastructure connectivity projects**.
- Targets to **cut logistic costs, increase cargo handling capacity and reduce the turnaround time**.
- It also facilitates the **last mile connectivity of infrastructure**.
- Incorporates the **infrastructure schemes of various Ministries and State Governments**.
  - Like Bharatmala, Sagarmala, inland waterways, dry/land ports, UDAN etc.
- **Economic Zones** will be covered to **improve connectivity and make Indian businesses more competitive**.
  - Like textile clusters, pharmaceutical clusters, defence corridors, electronic parks, industrial corridors, fishing clusters, agri zones

#### Gati Shakti Digital Platform

- It involves the **creation of a common umbrella platform**.
- Through it, **infrastructure projects can be planned and implemented in an efficacious manner** by way of coordination between various ministries/departments on a real-time basis.

## 7. India's forex reserves rise by \$2.57 bn - Indian Express

**Relevance:** Economy

#### News:

- According to the **Reserve Bank of India**, despite withdrawal by foreign investors, India's foreign exchange reserves **increased by \$2.579 billion** to \$586.111 billion.
- A **\$5 billion dollar-rupee swap** conducted by the RBI last year, matured recently, leading to a reversal of the trade.
- The **banks delivered the entire amount** to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in one go.

#### Dollar–Rupee Swap

- It's a forex tool whereby the **central bank uses its currency to buy another currency** or vice versa.
- In a Dollar–Rupee buy/sell swap, the **central bank buys dollars** (US dollars or USD) from banks in **exchange for Indian Rupees** (INR).
- It immediately gets into an opposite deal with banks **promising to sell dollars at a later date**.

#### Foreign Exchange Reserves

- Also called Forex Reserves, these are **reserve assets held by a central bank in foreign currencies**.
- These may include **foreign currencies, bonds, treasury bills and other government securities**.
- Reserves are **denominated and expressed in the US dollar**, which is the international numeraire for the purpose.
- **Custodian of Forex Reserves:** Reserve Bank of India
- India's foreign exchange reserves **comprise of**
  - **Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs):** Maintained in currencies like the US dollar, euro, pound sterling, Australian dollar and Japanese yen.
  - **Gold**
  - **Special Drawing Rights (SDRs):** Reserve currency with IMF
  - **Reserve Tranche Position (RTP):** Reserve capital with IMF
- The **biggest contributor** to India's Forex reserves is **foreign currency assets, followed by gold**.

#### Prelims Takeaway

- Dollar–Rupee Swap
- Foreign Exchange Reserves
- Reserve Bank of India



## Editorials, Gists and Explainers

### 1. A Matter Of Greying - Indian Express

**Relevance:** Population and associated issues

**Context:**

- According to the 2019 report of the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**, India is projected to have the **highest population increase by 2027**, surpassing China as the **world's most populous country**.
- **By 2050, India**, along with several other countries, will contribute to **more than half of the world's population growth**.
- However, the rest of the world, particularly **developed countries**, highlight a different demographic trend, **characterised by an ageing population**.

#### Ageing Population

- Over the next three decades, the number of older persons worldwide is expected to double to 2.1 billion by 2050, with the share rising to 22 percent of the total population.
- India is also experiencing an increase in its elderly population.
- The UNFPA's India Aging Report, 2023, predicts that the share of older persons (aged 60 years and above) will double from 10.5% in 2022 to 20.8% by 2050.
- This rapid rise in the ageing population will have significant implications for India's healthcare, economy and society.

#### Fertility Rates

- Developing countries are witnessing a significant drop in fertility levels earlier in their development journey than developed countries did.
- India is experiencing declining fertility rates, particularly in urban areas, leading to an older population and reduced workforce.

#### Economic Impact

- Ageing populations lead to a decrease in the working-age population, resulting in fewer workers and taxpayers, which can reduce a country's ability to generate wealth.
- Healthcare systems face increased burdens as elderly populations require more medical care.

#### Global Population Trends

- Global trends indicate that by the end of the century, the world will become multipolar, with countries like India, Nigeria, China, and the United States as dominant powers.
- Geopolitical power will shift as countries with larger working-age populations gain influence.
- Immigration and reproductive rights for women will play a crucial role in shaping the world's population and power dynamics.

#### Preparations for Demographic Changes

- India needs to prepare for the changing demographics, including a significant senior citizen population.
- Policies related to reproductive choice, healthcare, work-life balance, and gender equality will be essential to address population challenges.

### 2. How air pollution impacts economic growth: The evidence in research - Indian Express

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

**Context:**

- Conventional wisdom suggests a **trade-off between GDP growth and emissions levels**, overlooking the detrimental impact of air pollution on economic growth.
- Recent research indicates that **air pollution directly hampers GDP growth and per-capita income**.



### Impacts of Air Pollution

- Economic Impacts
  - Reduces worker productivity
  - Decreases consumer engagement
  - Hinders asset productivity
  - Increases healthcare expenses, particularly in the productive age groups
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Estimation: Up to 4.5% of India's GDP could be at risk by 2030 due to lost labour hours caused by climate change factors, including extreme heat and humidity.
- Recurrent annual cycles of pollution in key economic hubs add to this economic drain.
- A World Bank paper suggests that micro-level impacts of air pollution on health, productivity, labour supply and other factors lead to macro-level effects observed in GDP fluctuations.

### Interstate Variations in Economic Loss

- A 2021 study in The Lancet Planetary Health revealed significant interstate variations in economic loss due to air pollution as a proportion of state GDP.
- The most substantial losses in low per-capita GDP were in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh.
- RBI data suggest that 50% of India's GDP comes from sectors that are exposed to heat.
  - A rough approximation for the share of GDP generated by outdoor work

### Challenges and Costs

- Challenges related to valuations by global investors and commercial benefits remain to be addressed.
- Poor air quality affects various aspects, including labour productivity, consumer footfall, asset productivity, healthcare expenses, welfare losses, and premature mortality.
- A report estimated that air pollution costs Indian businesses about \$95 billion annually, equivalent to about 3% of India's GDP.

### The Urgency for India

- More than 20 of the world's 30 cities with the worst air pollution are in India.
- Delhi, with severely poor air quality, incurs the highest per-capita economic loss due to pollution among major Indian cities.
- Air pollution's economic cost is substantial, resulting in multiple deaths compared to road traffic accidents.
- India's reliance on outdoor employment in sectors like agriculture and construction makes this trend concerning.

### Impact on the Services Sector

- Even indoor jobs like those in call centres are affected by air pollution, leading to decreased worker productivity.
- Research shows that for each 10-unit increase in the air pollution index, worker productivity in call centres declines by 0.35%.
- While the average duration of individual calls was not impacted by pollution levels, the time workers spent on break went up.
- The findings are of particular relevance to India, where the services sector accounts for more than 50% of the GDP.

### Conclusion

- Air pollution has a **severe and far-reaching impact on India's economy**.
- It affects India's **GDP growth, per-capita income and labour productivity** across various sectors.
- **Urgent measures are required** to combat air pollution, safeguard public health, and sustain economic growth.

## 3. Direct listing on foreign exchanges: What does it mean for Indian cos? - Indian Express

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

### Context:

- The government recently permitted certain Indian companies to **directly list on select foreign stock exchanges**.
- The amendment **empowers the government** to allow certain classes of public companies to **list prescribed classes of securities in foreign stock exchanges**, including GIFT IFSC, Ahmedabad.

### The Current Procedure

- Till now, domestic listed companies used depository receipts, such as American Depository Receipts (ADRs) or Global Depository Receipts (GDRs), to list on foreign exchanges.
- These receipts were issued to foreign investors after giving their shares to an Indian custodian.

### Adhere to Governance Standards

- Companies looking to pursue a direct listing must adhere to governance standards in the designated jurisdictions.
- The Indian Accounting Standards (IndAS) are now aligned largely to globally accepted accounting norms.
- This will help Indian companies to avoid the time-consuming and costly preparations of accounts in the US Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) or International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

### Benefits of Direct Foreign Listing

- This will allow these companies to access global capital and boost capital outflows.
- It will offer them better valuation and exposure to trade in foreign currency such as the US dollar
- It provides a new avenue for startups and unicorns to raise funds and increase their global profile.
- The move is also expected to add to India's foreign exchange reserves.

### Challenges

- The valuation offered by global investors compared to Indian markets is a potential challenge.
- Companies and boards need to address questions about commercial benefits, investor interest and valuations.
- More details about which public companies, types of securities, foreign jurisdictions, and permitted stock exchanges are needed for clarity.



# Mentorship

India

## Quick Look

### 1. Purchasing Managers Index

- It is a survey-based measure that asks the respondents about changes in their perception about key business variables as compared with the previous month.
- Purpose: To provide information about current and future business conditions to company decision makers, analysts, and investors.
- It is calculated separately for the manufacturing and services sectors and then a composite index is also constructed.
- The PMI is a number from 0 to 100.
  - A print above 50 means expansion, while a score below that denotes contraction.
  - A reading at 50 indicates no change.
- It is considered a good leading indicator of economic activity.
  - It is usually released at the start of every month.
- PMI is compiled by IHS Markit for more than 40 economies worldwide.
  - IHS Markit is part of S&P Global.
  - It is a global leader in information, analytics and solutions for the major industries and markets that drive economies worldwide.

### 2. Zika Virus

- It is a mosquito-borne virus that was first identified in the Zika Forest of Uganda in 1947.
- Transmission
  - It is primarily transmitted to humans through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes, particularly Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus.
  - It can also spread through sexual contact, blood transfusion, and from an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy or childbirth.
- Symptoms
  - Many people infected with this virus do not experience any symptoms (asymptomatic).
  - When symptoms do occur, they are often mild and include fever, rash, joint pain, muscle pain, headache, and red eyes (conjunctivitis).
  - Symptoms typically appear two to seven days after being bitten by an infected mosquito and can last for several days to a week.
- This virus infection is usually mild, but it can have serious consequences for pregnant women and their babies.
- Infection during pregnancy can lead to birth defects such as microcephaly, as well as other neurological disorders in the baby.
- It has also been linked to Guillain-Barre syndrome, a rare autoimmune disorder that can lead to muscle weakness and paralysis.
- Treatment: There is no specific treatment available for Zika virus infection or disease.

### 3. Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation System

- The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme of Telangana is a multi-purpose irrigation project on the Godavari River in Kaleshwaram, Bhupalpally in Telangana.
- It is aimed to make Telangana drought proof by harnessing the flood waters of the Godavari.
- The project starts at the confluence point of Pranahita River and Godavari River.
- It would reverse pump the water into the main Godavari River and divert it through lifts and pumps into a huge and complex system of reservoirs, water tunnels, pipelines and canals.
- The project will also support Mission Kakatiya and Mission Bhagiratha schemes of telangana designed to provide drinking water to many villages and improve the capacities of tanks.



#### 4. Non-Performing Asset

- NPA refers to a classification for loans or advances that are in default or are in arrears on scheduled payments of principal or interest.
- In most cases, debt is classified as non-performing, when the loan payments have not been made for a minimum period of 90 days.
- Based upon the period to which a loan has remained as NPA, it is classified into three types viz.
  - Substandard Assets: An asset which remains as NPAs for less than or equal to 12 months.
  - Doubtful Assets: An asset which remained in the above category for 12 months.
  - Loss Assets: Asset where loss has been identified by the bank or the RBI, however, there may be some value remaining in it.

#### 5. Trojan Asteroids

- Asteroids that share an orbit with a planet but are located at the leading (L4) and trailing (L5) Lagrangian points.
- These asteroids occupy a stable Lagrangian point in a planet's orbit around the Sun.
- They are some of the oldest remnants from the formation of our solar system 5 billion years ago.
- There are currently over 4,800 known Trojan asteroids associated with Jupiter.
- They orbit the Sun in two loose groups
  - One group leading ahead of Jupiter in its orbit
  - The other trailing behind at the same distance from the Sun as Jupiter.

#### 6. Comprehensive National Security Strategy

- The National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) is putting in place a Comprehensive National Security Strategy
- A final Cabinet approval will then be sought for it.
- This is the first time that India will come out with a national security strategy.
- Countries such as the US and UK have published national security strategies.
- The step has been taken due to the complex nature of the various traditional and non-traditional threats.
- This needs a whole-of-government approach.

**Prelims Track Question**

**Q1. With reference to India and Sri Lanka Relations, consider the following statements**

1. The Economic Technology and Cooperation Agreement is a matter of concern between them.
2. Both countries are members of SAARC and BIMSTEC.

**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

**Q2. Consider the following pairs**

1. 74th Constitutional Amendment Act : One third reservation to women in local government
2. 77th Constitution Amendment Act : Reservations for promotions in jobs for the SC's and ST's.
3. 101st Constitution Amendment Act : 10% EWS reservation in educational institutions and public employment

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

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

**Q3. With reference the European Free Trade Association, consider the following statements**

1. It is an intergovernmental organisation established by the Stockholm Convention.
2. The European Free Trade Association is a kind of Customs Union.

**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

**Q4. With reference to the Amnesty Scheme against the GST demand orders, consider the following statements**

1. The scheme will be open till January 31, 2024.

2. The entities willing to avail of the scheme will have to pre-deposit 10 percent of the tax demand.
3. It can promote enhanced compliance among taxpayers.

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

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

**Q5. With reference to Dam safety Act, 2021, consider the following statements**

1. The Union government has made Dam safety law as water comes under the union list.
2. It provides for the surveillance, inspection, operation, and maintenance of all specified dams across the country.
3. The National Dam Safety Authority addresses inter-state concerns related to dams.

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

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

**Q6. With reference to PM GATI SHAKTI Project, consider the following statements**

1. It is also known as the National Master Plan for multi-modal connectivity.
2. It has subsumed the National Infrastructure Pipeline.

**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. With reference to Foreign Exchange Reserves, consider the following statements**

1. These are reserve assets held by a central bank in foreign currencies.
2. The Indian Prime Minister is the custodian of Forex Reserves of India.

3. India's foreign exchange reserves consist of Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs), Gold and Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) only.
4. The biggest contributor to India's Forex reserves is gold.

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

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

**Q8. Consider the following schemes of the Government of India**

1. Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana
2. Integrated Program for Older Persons
3. Rashtriya Vayoshree Yojana
4. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana

**How many of the above given schemes are for the senior citizens in India ?**

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

**Q9. Consider the following statements regarding National Clean Air Programme**

1. It aims to reduce particulate matter levels in 132 cities by 20-30% in 2024.
2. Cities are declared non-attainment if they consistently fail to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) over a five-year period.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Q10. Consider the following statements on Global Depository Receipts (GDRs)**

1. It is a foreign currency-denominated negotiable financial instrument issued by a depository bank.
2. The depository bank can convert GDRs into shares and trade them on the domestic stock exchanges.
3. Only companies with a ten-year sound financial record can get access to GDRs.

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

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



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

- Recently India and Sri Lanka conducted the 12th round of negotiations on the stalled Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA). **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- The BIMSTEC is a regional organisation comprising seven Member States: five deriving from South Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand.
- The Seven founding countries of SAARC are Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan was later added as a member. **Hence, Statement 2 is correct.**

**Ans.2 Option B is correct****Explanation**

- 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments granted women one-third representation in local body elections. **Hence, Pair 1 is correct.**
- 77th constitutional amendment extending reservations for promotions in jobs for the SC's and ST's. **Hence, Pair 2 is correct.**
- The 103rd Constitutional Amendment granted 10% EWS reservation in educational institutions and public employment. **Hence, Statement 3 is incorrect.**
- The 101st Constitutional Amendment deals with introduction of GST.

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

- European Free Trade Association is an intergovernmental organisation established in 1960 by the Stockholm Convention. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- EFTA currently has 4 member countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.
- These FTAs span over 60 countries and territories, including the European Union (EU).
- In contrast to the EU, EFTA is not a customs union. **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- This means that the individual EFTA States are free to set their own customs tariffs and arrange other foreign trade measures vis-à-vis the non-EFTA States.

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

- The scheme will be open till January 31, 2024. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- Available for entities that were unable to submit their appeals against orders issued by the tax officer on or before March 31, 2023.
- So far, the GST law allowed an assessee to file an appeal against an assessment order seeking taxes within three months of the tax officer passing such a demand order.
- This can be extended by one more month.
- The entities willing to avail of the scheme will have to pre-deposit 12.5 percent of the tax demand, against 10 per cent currently. **Hence, Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- This initiative can promote enhanced compliance among taxpayers. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**

**Option B is correct****Explanation**

- Water is under the state list, but the Union government has made Dam safety law under Article 246 of the Constitution. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- Introduced in response to dam failures caused by deficient surveillance and maintenance.
- Provides for the surveillance, inspection, operation, and maintenance of all specified dams across the country. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Establishes key responsibilities and requires the formation of national and state-level bodies for its implementation.
- National Committee on Dam Safety: Responsible for overseeing dam safety policies and regulations.
- National Dam Safety Authority: Tasked with implementing and resolving state-level disputes. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- The State Dam Safety Organisation (SDSO) and The State Committee on Dam Safety (SCDS) are established at the state level.

**Option D is correct****Explanation**

- PM Gati Shakti Project was launched in 2021.
- It is also known as the National Master Plan for multi-modal connectivity. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**

- It has subsumed the Rs 110 lakh crore National Infrastructure Pipeline launched in 2019. **Hence, Statement 2 is correct.**
- It aims to provide a competitive advantage for manufacturing in India.
- A digital platform to bring 16 Ministries together for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects.

**Option A is correct****Explanation**

- Foreign Exchange Reserves, also called Forex Reserves, are reserve assets held by a central bank in foreign currencies. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- These may include foreign currencies, bonds, treasury bills and other government securities.
- Custodian of Forex Reserves: Reserve Bank of India. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- India's foreign exchange reserves comprise of
  - Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs): Maintained in currencies like the US dollar, euro, pound sterling, Australian dollar and Japanese yen.
  - Gold
  - Special Drawing Rights (SDRs): Reserve currency with IMF
  - Reserve Tranche Position (RTP): Reserve capital with IMF. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- The biggest contributor to India's Forex reserves is foreign currency assets, followed by gold. **Hence, statement 4 is incorrect.**

**Option C is correct****Explanation**

- Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY) is a Pension Scheme announced by the Government of India exclusively for the senior citizens aged 60 years and above. **Hence, Statement 1 is correct.**
- Integrated Program for Older Persons (IPOP) is to improve the quality of life of senior citizens. **Hence, Statement 2 is correct.**
- Rashtriya Vayoshree Yojana is a central sector scheme funded from the Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund. **Hence, Statement 3 is correct.**

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana is primarily aimed at youth. **Hence, Statement 4 is incorrect.**

**Option C is correct****Explanation**

- The National Clean Air Programme was launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in January 2019.
- It is the first-ever effort in the country to frame a national framework for air quality management with a time-bound reduction target.
- It was implemented across India in 2019 to reduce particulate matter levels in 132 cities by 20-30% in 2024. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It covers 132 non-attainment cities which were identified by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).
- Non-attainment cities are those that have fallen short of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for over five years. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

**Option B is correct****Explanation**

- Global Depository Receipts (GDRs) is a foreign currency-denominated negotiable financial instrument issued by a depository bank. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- GDRs are certificates issued by a depository bank, which purchases foreign company shares and deposits them in the account.
- GDRs are commonly used to raise capital from international investors through public stock offerings or private placement.
- The depository bank is the intermediary that acts as the custodian of the shares issued by the Indian company.
- The depository bank can convert GDRs into shares and trade them on the domestic stock exchanges. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The value of a GDR depends on the value of the underlying share.
- GDRs are issued to investors throughout the country since they can be denominated as multiple forms of freely convertible currency.
- Only companies with a three-year sound financial record can get access to GDRs. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**



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