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SOURCES



Date: 8 Feb. 2024

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Important News Articles

GS I

1. 390-year-old lamp post in Nalgonda unravels trade links of Telangana - The Hindu

Relevance: Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

News:

- Recently, archaeologists discovered **Deepastambham** (20-foot tall lamp post) on the edge of **River Krishna in Nalgonda district, Telangana**.
- These discoveries offer insights into **trade activities** in the area during the **early mediaeval period**.

Uniqueness of Lamp Post

- While **Dhwajasthambam** (flag poles) are **common in temple architecture**, **lamp posts are rare in the Deccan region**.
 - While they are common in temples in the west coast including Goa.
- The newly-discovered lamp post, dating back to June 1635, bears **inscriptions in a mix of Telugu and Tamil languages**, dedicated to **Kasi Viswanatha**.
- Its towering height suggests it may have served as a **navigational aid along the riverine trade route**.

Historical Context and Trade Routes

- The **village's location**, approximately 180 kilometres from Hyderabad under Qutb Shahi rule, further highlights its **significance as a trade hub**.
- **European travellers**, such as the **French diamond trader Tavernier**, mention land trade routes in the area but also refer to **riverine trade**.

Archaeological Significance

- In addition to the lamp post, archaeologists also unearthed an **eighth-century inscription** detailing a grant during the **Badami Chalukya rule**.
- This discovery enriches our understanding of the **region's historical and economic significance**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Chalukya Dynasty
- Krishna River

GS II

2. Raising judges' retirement age on performance not practical: Govt to panel - Indian Express

Relevance: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

News:

- The government recently opposed the suggestion to **extend the retirement age** of Supreme Court and High Court judges **based on performance appraisal**.

Committee Recommendation

- In August last year, the Standing Committee on Law and Personnel in its report on '**Judicial Processes and their Reforms**' proposed a **performance-based tenure extension system for judges** beyond the current retirement age.
- It suggested assessing judges' performance considering factors like **health, quality, and quantity of judgments** before extending their tenure.
 - According to constitutional provisions, Supreme Court judges retire at the age of 65 years, while judges of the high courts retire at 62.

Government's Response

- The government disagrees with the recommendation, stating it might not be **practical** and may result in "**undue favouritism**".

Prelims Takeaway

- Supreme Court Collegium (SCC)
- Retirement of Judges

- It will further **erode the powers of Parliament** and **empower the Judiciary** through the Supreme Court Collegium (SCC) to take decisions on the enhancement of age.
- Performance-based evaluations may **lead to favouritism and susceptibility to external pressures**, compromising judicial impartiality.
- This would also **strain limited resources** in the judiciary and executive involved in the appointment process.

3. Shri Dharmendra Pradhan launches EdCIL Vidyanjali Scholarship Programme - PIB

Relevance: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States

News:

- Recently, the Union Minister of Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship inaugurated **EdCIL Vidyanjali Scholarship Programme**.

Vidyanjali Scholarship Program

- The Vidyanjali Scholarship Program **aligns with the NEP 2020**, aiming to provide education access and opportunities to economically disadvantaged students.
- **Objective:** To ensure high-quality education access by aiding the smooth transition from secondary to higher education, providing financial aid to meritorious Navodaya Vidyalaya students facing economic constraints.
- Initially, the program targets **students in grades XI and XII** enrolled in Navodaya Vidyalayas nationwide.
- It embodies a comprehensive **societal approach towards education empowerment**, particularly for economically disadvantaged students.
- It seeks **support and funding** from various **non-governmental partners and private sources** such as CSR grants, national and international donors, and impact investors.

Vidyanjali Fintech Platform

- A dedicated fintech platform has been developed for Vidyanjali, through which sponsorships will be transferred to students via **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)**.
- This platform will serve as a **central hub** for student applications, progress tracking, grant disbursement monitoring, fund utilisation tracking, impact reporting for SDG realisation, recognition of notable student achievements, and public acknowledgment of funders' support, among other functionalities.

Prelims Takeaway

- Vidyanjali Scholarship Program
- Educational Consultants India Limited (EdCIL)
- National Education Policy, 2020

4. HAMAS CEASEFIRE PLAN: WHAT ARE THE THREE STAGES IT PROPOSES - Indian Express

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

News:

- Hamas recently proposed a **ceasefire plan** responding to mediation efforts led by Qatar, Egypt, the United States, and Israel.
- The proposal outlines **three phases**, each lasting 45 days aiming **to end the ongoing conflict in Gaza**.

Three Phases of the Plan

- These phases include the **exchange of Israeli hostages** captured by Hamas, the beginning of **Gaza's reconstruction, complete withdrawal of Israeli forces**, and the **exchange of bodies and remains**.
- **Specific categories of hostages would be released** in the first phase in exchange for **Palestinian women and children from Israeli jails**.
 - This includes women hostages, males under 19, the elderly, and the sick.

Prelims Takeaway

- Israel - Hamas Conflict
- Hamas Ceasefire Plan

- The subsequent phases involve the **release of remaining hostages and the exchange of remains**.
- By the end of the third phase, Hamas would expect the sides to have **reached agreement on an end to the war**.

Additional Requests by Hamas

- Hamas also seeks the **release of 1500 prisoners**, with a third selected from Palestinians serving life sentences in Israeli jails.
- The truce would also involve **increased food and aid flow** to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

5. Rs 4,797 cr PRITHVI to boost atmosphere, polar and ocean research, says Rijiju - Indian Express

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

Prelims Takeaway

- PRITHvi Vlgyan (PRITHVI)

News:

- The Union Cabinet recently approved Rs 4,797 cr research scheme aimed at **enhancing research efforts in ocean, atmospheric, and polar sciences**.

PRITHvi Vlgyan (PRITHVI)

- PRITHVI, led by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**, is an **umbrella scheme to support ongoing research projects till 2026**.
- The scheme **encompasses research across various domains** such as atmosphere, hydrosphere, cryosphere, geosphere, and biosphere.
- Ongoing research projects now consolidated under PRITHVI include
 - Atmosphere and Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems and Services (ACROSS)
 - Ocean Services, Modelling Application, Resources and Technology (O-SMART)
 - Polar Science and Cryosphere Research (PACER)
 - Seismology and Geosciences (SAGE)
 - Research, Education, Training, and Outreach (REACHOUT)
- It also introduces opportunities for Indian scientists to **collaborate with international experts**, fostering global partnerships in research endeavours.

Addressing Global Climate Change Challenges

- With the escalating impacts of climate change worldwide, **understanding the interconnected roles of atmosphere, ocean, and poles becomes imperative**.
- The amalgamation of research areas under PRITHVI **streamlines budget allocations and facilitates flexibility in fund utilisation** across different research domains.
 - Earlier, research in all these key areas were being carried out under different sub-heads for which different budget allocations were to be made.

GS III

6. SC pulls up NGT for 'unilateral decisions', asks it to act with 'procedural integrity' - Indian Express

Relevance: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

News:

- The SC recently delivered an uncommon rebuke to the NGT for its **unilateral decision-making**.
- The critique arises from the **NGT's actions against a Delhi-based business**, fining it without a fair hearing for environmental violations.

Prelims Takeaway

- National Green Tribunal (NGT)
- Supreme Court

Observations by the Supreme Court

- The Supreme Court criticised the NGT's trend of unilateral decisions, lack of fair hearings, and imposing hefty fines without due process.

- It notes that the NGT's actions have frequently been challenged and stayed by the Supreme Court, undermining environmental protection efforts.
- The Court stresses the need for **procedural integrity and a balance between justice and due process** for the NGT to regain credibility in environmental protection.

Supreme Court's Decision

- The Supreme Court set aside the NGT's orders and remanded the case back to the NGT.
- It directed the NGT to issue notices, hear all affected parties, and then make appropriate decisions.

National Green Tribunal (NGT)

- It is a **specialised body** set up under the **National Green Tribunal Act (2010)**.
- **Purpose:** For effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- With the establishment of the NGT, India became the **third country** in the world to set up a **specialised environmental tribunal**, only after Australia and New Zealand
- NGT is guided by the **principles of 'natural justice'**.
- It is mandated to make **disposal of applications** or appeals finally **within 6 months of filing** the same.
- An order/decision/award of Tribunal is executable as a **decree of a civil court**.
- An **appeal** against order/decision/ award of the NGT lies to the **Supreme Court**, generally within **ninety days** from the date of communication.
- The NGT deals with **civil cases** under the **seven laws** related to the environment.
 - The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974,
 - The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977,
 - The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980,
 - The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981,
 - The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986,
 - The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991 and
 - The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

Structure of NGT

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

7. Biden govt. sets tighter standards for soot pollution - The Hindu

Relevance: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

News:

- Recently, the USA announced **stricter regulations on soot pollution**, aiming to reduce fine particle matter from various sources **to prevent premature deaths**.
- The new rule sets a **maximum level of 9 micrograms of fine particle pollution per cubic metre of air**, down from 12 micrograms established a decade ago.

Beneficiaries of the Rule

- EPA Administrator said the rule would have **\$46 billion in net health benefits by 2032**, including prevention of up to 800,000 asthma attacks and 4,500 premature deaths.
- The rule will especially **benefit vulnerable populations**, such as children, older adults and those with pre-existing health conditions.
- It is also expected to **benefit the low-income and minority communities** disproportionately affected by industrial pollution.

Prelims Takeaway

- Black Carbon (Soot)
- Pollution

Various Responses

- Environmental and public health organizations view the new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rule as a significant **advancement in safeguarding citizens' health**, particularly future generations.
- However, industry groups express apprehensions, fearing **potential job losses and operational shutdowns** of power plants or refineries.
 - They warn of increased compliance challenges and potential limitations on industrial projects due to the stricter standards.
- The administration dismisses industry concerns, citing **technological advancements and past successes** in meeting pollution standards.

Potential Economic Consequences

- Lowering the soot standard could lead to **challenges in obtaining permits for industrial expansion**, potentially affecting modernization projects.
- It could drive companies to **seek operations in countries with lax environmental regulations**.

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

8. Equity concerns in banning fossil fuel extraction - The Hindu

Relevance: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

Context:

- The response from governments and corporations regarding climate change has been **inadequate**, leading to a surge in climate change litigation worldwide.
- It is also resulting in growing momentum favouring **phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies** and the **banning of the extraction of fossil fuel itself**.
- The momentum is also growing in favour of a **Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**.

- An academic proposal suggests a coal elimination treaty by 2030, aiming to cease coal mining and burning.
- This is motivated by the Production Gap Report (PGR 2023), which highlights a significant disparity between fossil fuel production plans (projecting a 110% increase by 2030) and the Paris Agreement (limit warming to 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels).

<p>Growing Momentum for Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an increased support for phasing out fossil fuels, evidenced by references in UNFCCC conventions and decisions made at COP26 and COP28. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ COP26 made a reference to phasing down unabated coal power and phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. ◦ COP28 also adopted a decision relating to the transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, so as to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. • Aligning these proposals with principles like Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Nationally Determined Contributions is required. <p>Challenges in Transitioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countries heavily reliant on fossil fuel revenues face challenges in transitioning away from fossil fuels due to economic dependence. • Developed countries like Canada, the US and the UK have greater capacity to transition due to diversified economies and higher per capita income. 	<p>International Law and Fossil Fuels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While states have the right to exploit natural resources within their territories, they have a duty not to cause significant harm to other states. • However, the application of this duty in the context of global environmental impact remains unclear. <p>India's Situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India, despite progress in renewable energy, still heavily relies on fossil fuels, particularly in the power sector. • Transitioning away from fossil fuels requires adequate support and creation of alternative economic opportunities, especially in regions reliant on coal mining. • India's subsidies on kerosene oil have also come under scrutiny in the West as it is found to be inconsistent with Article 2(1)(c) of the Paris Agreement and is also considered as inefficient subsidies.
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Conclusion

- A coordinated global effort to **phase out fossil fuels** is crucial, considering economic disparities between nations and the principles of international law.

9. Why Budget plans for deep tech and research funding matter - Indian Express

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

Context:

- The Finance Minister recently announced significant measures in the Interim Budget speech to **bolster research and development (R&D) efforts** in India.

<p>Deep Tech Fund and Defence Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> She announced a Rs 1 lakh crore fund to provide long-term, low-cost or zero-interest loans for R&D. A new scheme to strengthen deep-tech capabilities in the defence sector was also promised. This announcement hints at a broader policy to promote deep tech startups across various sectors, beyond defence. <p>Importance of Deep Tech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deep tech refers to advanced and disruptive technologies with the potential to trigger transformative change, and provide solutions for the future. The term is used to describe cutting-edge research in nanotechnology, biotechnology, quantum technologies, semiconductors, AI, data sciences, robotics, 3D printing, etc. These technologies address complex global challenges like climate change, hunger, energy access, mobility, cybersecurity etc. They are expected to enhance productivity, economic growth and job creation. <p>Building an Ecosystem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With its large base of relatively high-quality science and engineering manpower and a fairly well-established technology culture, India feels it is well placed to be one of the frontrunners in these areas. The government has initiated efforts to incentivize research in deep tech areas by setting up a National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage and the recent National Quantum Mission. Policies like the National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP) aim to foster a conducive environment for tech startups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NDTSP focuses on long-term funding, intellectual property rights, tax incentives, and talent nurturing. 	<p>Funding Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term funding for research projects is crucial but lacking in India. India spends just about 0.65% of its national GDP on research and development activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> India's expenditure on research is far below the global average of about 1.8%. It is also significantly lower than the scientifically advanced countries with which India competes. Government expenditure on R&D is below global averages, prompting partnerships with the private sector. The National Research Foundation (NRF) seeks to foster collaboration between industry and research institutions to broad-base both research activity and the funds to support it. <p>Rs 1 Lakh Crore Corpus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Rs 1 lakh crore fund aims to kickstart investment in research projects, particularly benefiting startups. However, scepticism exists within the scientific community due to past experiences of inadequate funding and bureaucratic delays.
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10. Picking Election Commissioners - Indian Express

Relevance: Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Context:

- The present Election Commissioner of India **is set to retire soon**.
- His successor will be **chosen through a consultative process** for the first time.

<p>Committee Composition and Selection Process for Election Commissioner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection will be made by a committee including the Prime Minister, Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition, and a Union minister. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar committee previously appointed the Lokpal and Central Vigilance Commissioner. The two other members of the Commission are Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and Arun Goel. Selection will be from five names shortlisted by a screening panel. Past appointments were made solely at the government's discretion. <p>Supreme Court's Intervention in the Selection Process for Election Commissioners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four petitions were filed before the Supreme Court urging fair and transparent selection process. The Supreme Court referred the matter to the Constitution bench for interpretation of Article 324. The Centre opposed Supreme Court intervention in appointments. Government argued the President has constitutional power to appoint Election Commissioners without a law from Parliament. Government maintained existing procedure had been consistently relied upon. 	<p>Supreme Court's Ruling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Supreme Court ruling on March 2, 2023, laid down a process for appointment. Appointments were to be made by the President on advice of a Committee comprising the PM, Leader of Opposition, and Chief Justice of India. Norms in ruling were subject to any future law by Parliament. <p>Historical Context and Prior Proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The past committees and Law Commission reports also made recommendations in this regard. Previous recommendations emphasized the need for a consultative process involving key stakeholders. <p>Parliamentary Response and Passing of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Centre Government introduced a Bill in August outlining appointment procedure. Bill passed in December, 2023 establishes a committee with the PM, Leader of Opposition, and nominated Cabinet Minister. Composition in the bill was criticised for potentially undermining the Election Commission's independence.
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Quick Look

1. ABHYAS

- Recently, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted four flight trials of the high-speed expendable aerial target 'ABHYAS'.
- ABHYAS is a high-speed expendable aerial target (HEAT).
- It is designed by the DRDO's Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE).
- It offers a realistic threat scenario for the practice of weapon systems.
- It is the ideal platform for the validation of Armed Forces equipment slated for induction (only those that require aerial engagement).
- It is designed for autonomous flying with the help of an autopilot indigenously made by the ADE.
- It has a radar cross-section and a visual and infrared augmentation system required for weapon practice.
- The target drone has a laptop-based Ground Control System with which the aircraft can be integrated and pre-flight checks, data recording during the flight, replays after the flight and post-flight analysis can be carried out.

2. International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

- Recently, experts from the ICIMOD declared the Hindu Kush Himalaya region a biosphere on the brink of collapse and called for bold action and urgent finance to prevent nature loss.
- The ICIMOD, established in 1983, is an intergovernmental knowledge and learning centre working on behalf of the people of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH).
- Mission: To build and share knowledge that drives regional policy and action and attracts investment that enables the diverse countries and communities of the HKH to transition to greener, more inclusive, and climate-resilient development.
- Member countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.
- Headquarters: Kathmandu, Nepal
- Functions
 - It serves the region through information and knowledge generation and sharing to find innovative solutions to critical mountain problems.
 - It bridges science with policies and on-the-ground practices.
 - It provides a regional platform where experts, planners, policymakers, and practitioners can exchange ideas and perspectives towards the achievement of sustainable mountain development.

3. India's first Hypervelocity Expansion Tunnel Test Facility

- Recently, the IIT- Kanpur successfully established and tested India's first Hypervelocity Expansion Tunnel Test Facility.
- India's first Hypervelocity Expansion Tunnel Test Facility, S2, nicknamed 'Jigarthanda', is a 24-metre-long facility located at IIT Kanpur's Hypersonic Experimental Aerodynamics Laboratory (HEAL) within the Department of Aerospace Engineering.

- It was indigenously designed and developed over three years with funding and support from the Aeronautical Research and Development Board (ARDB), the Department of Science and Technology (DST), and IIT Kanpur.
- It is capable of generating flight speeds between 3-10 km/s, simulating the hypersonic conditions encountered during the atmospheric entry of vehicles, asteroid entry, scramjet flights, and ballistic missiles.
- It will be a critical asset for the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- It will serve as a testing ground for ongoing missions of ISRO and DRDO like Gaganyaan, Reusable Launch Vehicles (RLV), and hypersonic cruise missiles, enabling the development of more advanced and reliable aerospace technologies.

4. Vaccine Safety Net

- The Healthy Indian Project (THIP), a health information platform in India, is included as a member of the World Health Organization's Vaccine Safety Net (VSN).
- Vaccine Safety Net is a global network of websites, established by the World Health Organization that provides reliable information on vaccine safety.
- It is a network of a diverse group of digital information resources, VSN members providing scientifically based information on vaccine safety in various languages.
- A key player in the Project is the Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS).
 - It was established by WHO in 1999, to respond promptly, efficiently, and with scientific rigour to vaccine safety issues of potential global importance.
- GACVS developed three categories of criteria for good information practices regarding credibility, content, accessibility and design to which digital resources providing information on vaccine safety should adhere.
- WHO evaluates those electronic resources for their adherence to these criteria.
- It is continuously expanding and to date, 110 websites from 45 countries provide vaccine safety information in 43 languages.

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the recently discovered Deepastambham (lamp post) in Nalgonda district, Telangana

1. The Deepastambham bears inscriptions solely in the Telugu language.
2. Its towering height suggests it may have served as a navigational aid along the riverine trade route.
3. Deepastambhams are commonly found in temple architecture across the Deccan region.

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

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

Q2. With reference to the retirement age of the judges of the various courts in India consider the following statements

1. The retirement age of the judges of the Supreme Court of India is 65 years.
2. The retirement age of the judges of the High Court of India is 62 years.
3. The retirement age of the judges of the district or lower courts in India is 60 years.
4. The 15th Constitutional Amendment Act enhanced the retirement age of the judges of the High Court only.

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 with reference to the Vidyanjali Scholarship Programme

1. It extends financial support for meritorious Navodaya Vidyalaya students belonging to economically disadvantaged sections.
2. It generates assistance and funding from non-government partners and private sources as well.
3. Vidyanjali Fintech Platform has also been developed through which sponsorships will be transferred to

students via Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

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

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

Q4. Consider the following

1. Syria
2. Egypt
3. Iraq
4. Lebanon
5. Jordan

How many of the countries mentioned above border Israel?

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

Q5. With reference to PRITHvi Vlgyan (PRITHVI) Scheme, consider the following statements

1. It is a scheme of the Department of Science & Technology for the period from 2021 to 2030.
2. It is an umbrella scheme to support ongoing research projects across various domains such as atmosphere, hydrosphere, cryosphere, geosphere, and biosphere.
3. The scheme streamlines budget allocations and facilitates flexibility in fund utilisation across different research domains.

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 with reference to National Green Tribunal (NGT)

1. The Tribunal has both the Judicial Members and Expert Members.
2. It deals with civil cases under seven laws related to the environment including the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

3. An appeal against order of the NGT lies to the High Court, generally within thirty days from the date of communication.

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

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

Q7. Consider the following pollutants

1. Black Carbon
2. Methane
3. Carbon Monoxide
4. Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)
5. Nitrogen Dioxide

How many of the pollutants mentioned above constitute short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs)?

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

Q8. Consider the following

1. Ankleshwar
2. Mangala Area
3. Aliabet
4. Rawa

How many of the above mentioned oil fields are located in India?

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

Q9. Consider the following statements

1. India spends about 2% of its national GDP on research and development activities.

2. The Finance Minister recently announced a Rs 1 lakh crore fund to provide long-term, low-cost or zero-interest loans for R&D.

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 with respect to the Election Commissioners of India

1. The commissioners hold office for a term of six years or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
2. The commissioners enjoy the same status and receive salary and perks as available to Judges of the Supreme Court (SC) of India.
3. The Constitution has not prescribed the qualifications of the members of the Election Commission.
4. The Commission has advisory jurisdiction in the matter of post-election disqualification of sitting members of Parliament and State Legislatures.

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

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

Prelims Track Answer

Answer 1 Option A is correct

Explanation

- Recently, archaeologists discovered Deepastambham (20-foot tall lamp post) on the edge of River Krishna in Nalgonda district, Telangana.
- While Dhvajasthambam (flag poles) are common in temple architecture, lamp posts are rare in the Deccan region. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- The newly-discovered lamp post, dating back to June 1635, bears inscriptions in a mix of Telugu and Tamil languages, dedicated to Kasi Viswanatha. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- Its towering height suggests it may have served as a navigational aid along the riverine trade route. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- European travellers, such as the French diamond trader Tavernier, mention land trade routes in the area but also refer to riverine trade.

Answer 2 Option D is correct

Explanation

- The retirement age of the judges of the Supreme Court of India is 65 years. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The retirement age of the judges of the High Court of India is 62 years. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The retirement age of the judges of the district or lower courts in India is 60 years. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- The 15th Constitutional Amendment enabled the increase of the retirement age of the High Court Judges from 60 to 62 years. This change was done as per Section 4 of the Constitution (Fifteenth Amendment) Act, 1963. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**

Answer 3 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The Vidyanjali Scholarship Program aligns with the NEP 2020, aiming to provide education access and opportunities to economically disadvantaged students.
- Objective: To ensure high-quality education access by aiding the smooth transition from secondary to higher education, providing financial aid to meritorious Navodaya Vidyalaya students facing economic constraints. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**

- It embodies a comprehensive societal approach towards education empowerment, particularly for economically disadvantaged students.
- It seeks support and funding from various non-governmental partners and private sources such as CSR grants, national and international donors, and impact investors. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- A dedicated fintech platform has been developed for Vidyanjali, through which sponsorships will be transferred to students via Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- This platform will serve as a central hub for student applications, progress tracking, grant disbursement monitoring, fund utilisation tracking, impact reporting for SDG realisation, recognition of notable student achievements, and public acknowledgment of funders' support, among other functionalities.

Answer 4 Option C is correct

Explanation

- Israel is a country in West Asia bordered by Lebanon to the north, Syria to the northeast, Jordan to the east, the Red Sea to the south, Egypt to the southwest, the Mediterranean Sea to the west, and the Palestinian territories – the West Bank along the east and the Gaza Strip along the southwest. **Hence, option C is correct.**
- Tel Aviv is the financial, economic, and technological centre of the country, while its seat of government is in its proclaimed capital of Jerusalem.

Answer 5 Option B is correct

Explanation

- PRITHvi Vlgyan (PRITHVI), led by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), is an umbrella scheme to support ongoing research projects till 2026. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- The scheme comprehensively addresses the five components of Earth System Sciences: atmosphere, hydrosphere, geosphere, cryosphere, and biosphere. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The amalgamation of research areas under PRITHVI streamlines budget allocations and facilitates flexibility in fund utilisation

across different research domains. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

- It also introduces opportunities for Indian scientists to collaborate with international experts, fostering global partnerships in research endeavours.
- It encompasses five ongoing sub-schemes, namely
 - ACROSS: Atmosphere and Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services.
 - O-SMART: Ocean Services, Modelling Application, Resources and Technology.
 - PACER: Polar Science and Cryosphere Research.
 - SAGE: Seismology and Geosciences
 - REACHOUT: Research, Education, Training and Outreach.

Answer 6 Option A is correct

Explanation

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) is a specialised body set up under the National Green Tribunal Act (2010).
- Purpose: For effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- NGT is guided by the principles of 'natural justice'.
- It is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing the same.
- An order/decision/award of Tribunal is executable as a decree of a civil court.
- An appeal against order/decision/ award of the NGT lies to the Supreme Court, generally within ninety days from the date of communication. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- The NGT deals with civil cases under the seven laws related to the environment. However, it doesn't deal with the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The Tribunal comprises the Chairperson, the Judicial Members and Expert Members. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- They shall hold office for a term of three years or till the age of sixty-five years, whichever is earlier and are not eligible for reappointment.

Answer 7 Option B is correct

Explanation

- Short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) are a group of greenhouse gases and air pollutants that have a near-term warming impact on climate and can affect air quality.
- SLCPs include black carbon, methane, ground-level ozone, and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). **Hence, option B is correct.**

Answer 8 Option D is correct

Explanation

- Ankleshwar Oil fields are in Gujarat.
- Mangala Oil Fields are located in Rajasthan.
- Aliabet Oil fields are located in Gujarat
- Rawa oil fields are in the Godavari Krishna Offshore basin. **Hence, option D is correct.**

Answer 9 Option B is correct

Explanation

- India spends just about 0.65% of its national GDP on research and development activities. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- India's expenditure on research is far below the global average of about 1.8%.
- It is also significantly lower than the scientifically advanced countries with which India competes.
- The Finance Minister recently announced a Rs 1 lakh crore fund to provide long-term, low-cost or zero-interest loans for R&D. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The Rs 1 lakh crore fund aims to kickstart investment in research projects, particularly benefiting startups.

Answer 10 Option D is correct

Explanation

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.
- The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.
- The President appoints CEC and Election Commissioners.
- They have a fixed tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- They enjoy the same status and receive salary and perks as available to Judges of the Supreme Court (SC) of India. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

- The CEC can be removed from office only through a process of removal similar to that of a SC judge by Parliament.
- The Constitution has not prescribed the qualifications (legal, educational, administrative or judicial) of the members of the Election Commission. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- The Constitution has not debarred the retiring election commissioners from any further appointment by the government.
- Under the Constitution, the Commission has advisory jurisdiction in the matter of post-election disqualification of sitting members of Parliament and State Legislatures. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**



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+91 9999 057869
www.mentorshipindia.com

A-92, Third Floor, Hari Nagar
Delhi - 110064

 @mentorship.india