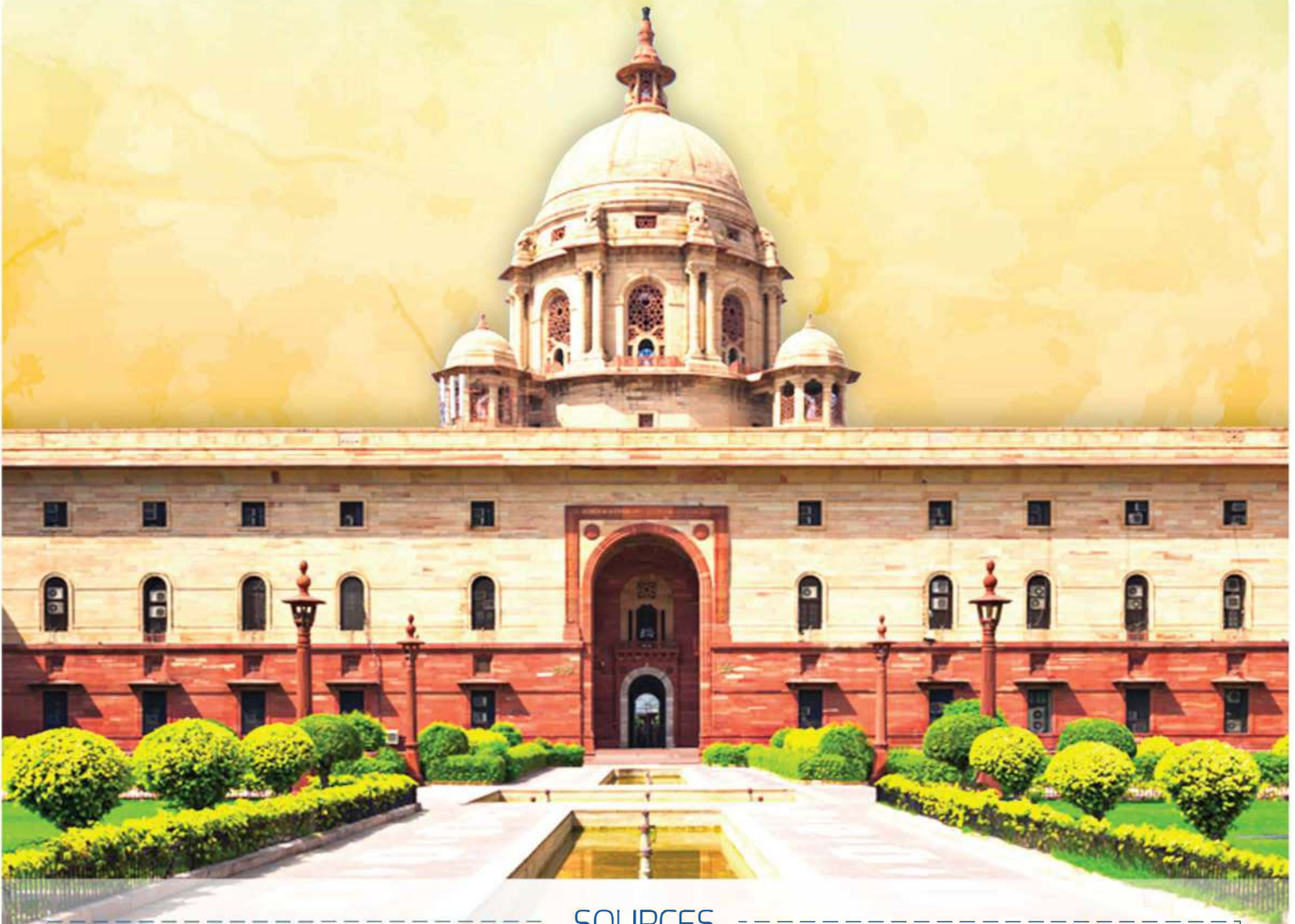




**UPSC  
Mentorship**  
A Unit of Mentorship India

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

21st May 2024



SOURCES



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## GS II

# 1. Antarctic Parliament meets in Kochi: what's on the table?

Source: IE, Page 13

Prelims: Antarctica Treaty, ATCM

Mains: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements

**News:** India is hosting the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM 46), also known as the Antarctic Parliament, from May 20-30 in Kochi.

### Antarctic Treaty

The Antarctic Treaty was signed by 12 countries in 1959 and came into force in 1961. It now has 56 member countries, including India, which joined in 1983. The treaty designates Antarctica as a peaceful, non-militarized zone with freedom for scientific research and prohibits nuclear testing and radioactive waste disposal.

### India's Role in Antarctica

- **Consultative Party:** Since 1983, India has been a consultative party to the Antarctic Treaty, participating in key decision-making processes.
- **Research Stations:**
  - Dakshin Gangotri: India's first research station, operational from 1983 to 1990.
  - Maitri: Established in 1989, located in Schirmacher Oasis, it is still operational and accommodates 65 people in summer and 25 in winter.
  - Bharati: Opened in 2012 on the Prydz Bay coast, focuses on oceanographic and geological studies, and supports up to 72 people in summer and 47 in winter.
- **Future Plans:** India plans to construct Maitri II, to replace the ageing Maitri station, by 2029.
- **Legislation:** India reaffirmed its commitment to the Antarctic Treaty by enacting the Antarctic Act in 2022.

### Agenda for ATCM 46

- **Global Dialogue:** The ATCM facilitates discussions on law, logistics, governance, science, tourism, and other aspects of Antarctica.
- **Peaceful Governance:** India aims to promote peaceful governance and prevent geopolitical tensions from affecting Antarctica.



- **Tourism Regulation:** India will introduce a working group to regulate tourism in Antarctica, addressing concerns about its impact on the fragile ecosystem. The group includes countries like the Netherlands and Norway.
- **New Construction Plans:** India will table its plan for Maitri II, requiring ATCM approval.
- **Sustainable Management:** Discussions will cover sustainable management of resources, biodiversity prospecting, inspections, research collaboration, and climate change impacts on Antarctica.

## GS III

### 2. India-China consumption comparison

Source: The Hindu, Page 10

Prelims: Data and related Facts

Mains: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning

**News:** The article compares the consumption nature of both India and China amidst their growing consumer base.

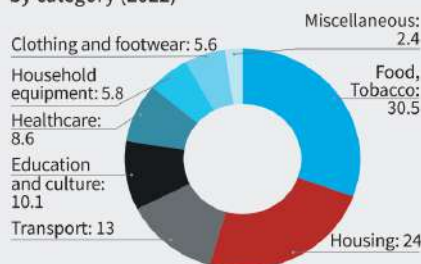
#### Comparative Population Dynamics

- **China:**
  - Recorded a negative population growth rate for the first time in six decades.
  - Rising dependency ratio, projected to increase over time.
- **India:**
  - Population expected to grow and peak around 2060.
  - Reached replacement levels (total fertility rate of 2.1).

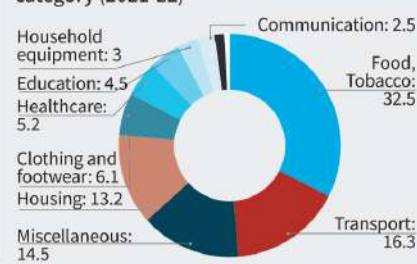
#### Consumption Patterns and Economic Contribution

- **Consumer Base:**
  - Both countries have large consumer bases defined by spending more than \$12 a day (PPP, 2017).
- **Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE):**
  - Measures total household and non-profit institution spending on goods and services.
  - India: PFCE contributes over 58% to GDP.
  - China: PFCE contributes only 38% to GDP.
  - Final consumption, including government expenditure:
    - India: Constitutes 68% of GDP.
    - China: Constitutes 53% of GDP, indicating higher government consumption.
- **GDP and Consumption:**
  - Despite China's economy being five times larger, its PFCE is only about 3.5 times that of India's.

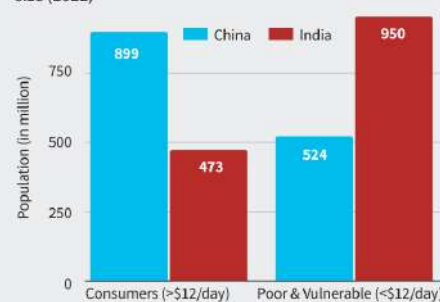
**Chart 13:** China's expenditure in % by category (2022)



**Chart 14:** India's expenditure in % by category (2021-22)



**Chart 1:** Comparing India and China's consumer size (2022)



- India will reach China's consumption level at a lower GDP (~\$10 trillion) compared to China's ~\$17 trillion.
- PPP terms: China's PFCE is approximately 1.5 times India's, with China's GDP (PPP) being 2.5 times India's.

#### Spending Characteristics and Market Development

- **India's Consumption:**
  - Higher spending on food, clothing, footwear, and transport.
  - Lower spending on education, culture, recreation, and healthcare.
  - Reflects characteristics of an underdeveloped or developing market.
- **China's Consumption:**
  - Represents a developed market with more diversified spending.

#### Implications for Foreign Business

- As India's consumer class grows and spending increases, it may enhance its appeal to foreign businesses.





## Editorials, Opinions and Ideas

### 3. A better do-good metric

Source: IE, Page 11

#### Importance and Evolution of ESG

- **ESG:** ESG stands for Environmental, Social, and Governance, focusing on how organisations manage their environmental and social impact and governance issues.
- **Significance:** ESG metrics, rated by agencies, are crucial for companies to manage risks, comply with regulations, and attract investment.
- **Origins:** ESG emerged from the 2005 UN-led report "Who Cares Wins," promoting sustainable practices among financial institutions and companies.
- **Current Status:** ESG has become integral to the global corporate landscape, with sustainable investments constituting over a third of all assets worldwide as of 2022.



#### Challenges and Criticisms of ESG

- **Measurement Issues:** Diverse metrics and lack of uniformity in ESG evaluations undermine their credibility, with different agencies often providing inconsistent ratings.
- **Inherent Hypocrisy:** ESG ratings often focus on risks to the company from external factors rather than the company's impact on the environment and society, termed as "single materiality."
- **Bundling Concerns:** Combining E, S, and G factors can lead to misleading rankings, as seen with Tesla's exclusion from the S&P Sustainability Index despite its environmental efforts.
- **Fundamental Critique:** The holistic ESG approach may distract from addressing crucial issues like climate change and inequality by lumping unrelated aspects together.

#### Future Directions and Considerations

- **Double Materiality:** European regulators are moving towards standards that measure both the impact on the organisation and the organisation's impact on the environment and society, though this approach is complex.
- **Focusing on Emissions:** There is a growing consensus to prioritise emissions reduction and environmental impact separately from social and governance issues to enhance focus and comparability.
- **Re-evaluation Needed:** Influential voices argue for a rethinking of the ESG framework to reduce its complexity and sanctimony, focusing on critical aspects like emissions reductions essential for survival.



## 4. Recasting the battle within

Source: IE, Page 11

The article reports the death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash and discusses the subsequent appointment of an interim president, the potential implications of the crash, and the political dynamics within Iran.

### Immediate Impact

- **Death of President Raisi:** Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi died in a helicopter crash on May 19, near the Azerbaijan border.
- **Interim President:** Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei appointed First Vice-President Mohammad Mokhber as interim president.
- **Political Stability:** Khamenei's swift action aimed to reassure the nation and the international community of Iran's stability.

### Political Dynamics

- **Role of the Supreme Leader:** The Supreme Leader holds ultimate authority in Iran, with the president's powers being limited.
- **Hardliner vs. Pragmatist:** The balance of power has shifted towards hardliners since former US President Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear deal.
- **Future Elections:** A new president must be elected within 50 days. It is unlikely that a pragmatist will be allowed to contest or win.

### Foreign Policy and Regional Implications

- **Continuity in Policy:** Despite Raisi's death, Iran's foreign policy, including support for India on the Chabahar port and balancing relations with Pakistan, is expected to remain unchanged.
- **Regional Tensions:** The relationship between Iran and Israel remains tense, but both sides are likely to avoid escalating to full-scale war. Iran's relations with Arab states will continue to be complex, despite recent rapprochements.



## InBrief

### 5. Arrest warrant sought against Israel, Hamas leaders at ICC

Source: The Hindu, Page 1

News: The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court said that he is seeking arrest warrants for leaders of Israel and Hamas.

#### About International Criminal Court

- Its foundation and governing text, the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, established it. The Statute went into effect on July 1, 2002, and it started operating on that day.
- It looks into and, where necessary, prosecutes those accused of the most serious crimes that the world community is concerned about: crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide, and aggression.
- Hague, Netherlands is its headquarters.
- The Court is composed of eighteen judges, each chosen for nonrenewable nine-year mandates and hailing from a different member nation.
- The Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) is responsible for receiving referrals and any substantiated information on crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court. OTP reviews these referrals and related material, looks into the matter, and brings legal action against the accused.

### 6. Philippines blames China for loss of giant clams in disputed shoal

Source: The Hindu, Page 14

News: Philippines blamed Chinese fishermen on Monday for a massive loss of giant clams in the disputed Scarborough Shoal controlled by China's coast guard.

#### About Giant Clams

- The clam is also known as the noble pen shell or pinna nobilis. Giant clams are the largest living bivalve mollusks.
- One of a number of large clam species native to the shallow coral reefs of the South Pacific and Indian oceans, they can weigh more than 200 kilograms.
- They are also found off the shores of the Philippines and in the South China Sea in the coral reefs of Malaysia.
- The creature's mantle tissues act as a habitat for the symbiotic single-celled dinoflagellate algae (zooxanthellae) from which the adult clams get most of their nutrition. By day, the clam opens its shell and extends its mantle tissue so that the algae receive the sunlight they need to photosynthesise.
- IUCN Status: Vulnerable





## 7. FSSAI Alerts Fruit Traders to Ensure Prohibition of Calcium Carbide

Source: PIB

News: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has alerted Food Business Operators (FBOs) operating ripening chambers to strictly ensure compliance with the prohibition on calcium carbide for artificial ripening of fruits.

### About Calcium Carbide

- It is a substance having the formula  $\text{CaC}_2$ .
- It is also referred to as "masala," and it is a ripening agent for fruit.
- In an electric arc furnace, a mixture of lime and carbon is heated to 2000 to 2100°C (3632 to 3812°F) in order to make it.
- According to the clause in the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restriction on Sales) Regulation, 2011 sub-regulation, it has been forbidden.
- It is employed in the acetylene gas generation process as well as in the mining and metals industries.
- Producing acetylene gas, this highly reactive chemical is used to artificially ripen crops.

## 8. How Venezuela lost its Last Glacier, and Why This Matters

Source: IE, Page 13

News: Venezuela has likely become the first country in modern history to lose all its glaciers.

### About Humboldt Glacier

- **Dramatic Reduction:** Venezuela's last glacier, the Humboldt Glacier, has shrunk to less than 2 hectares and is now reclassified as an ice field.
- **Nationwide Glacier Loss:** Venezuela is the first modern nation to have completely lost all its glaciers.
- **Historical Context:** The Sierra Nevada de Mérida range once had six glaciers; the Humboldt Glacier, also known as La Corona, was the last remaining.
- **Unexpected Melting:** Initially expected to last another decade, the glacier has melted much faster than anticipated.
- **Causes of Melting:**
  - Climate Change: Rising global temperatures have severely affected tropical glaciers like Humboldt.
  - El Niño: This phenomenon, with warmer ocean temperatures, has accelerated the melting process.
  - Lack of Monitoring: Political instability in Venezuela has hampered scientific monitoring and conservation efforts.



## 9. Spices Board inspecting MDH, Everest plants; efforts on to improve compliance

**Source:** IE, Page 15

**News:** The Spices Board of India is carrying out inspections in several MDH and Everest processing plants in the country to ensure that spice exports meet the requirement in the respective export destination.

**About Spice Board of India**

- Spices Board is a statutory body constituted with effect from 26.02.1987 under the Spices Board Act, 1986 (10 of 1986) by merging the erstwhile Cardamom Board and the Spices Export Promotion Council.
- It comes under the administrative control of the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The primary function of the Board includes development of small and large cardamom, promotion, development, regulation of export of spices and control on quality of spices for export.

## 10. Incubation Centre inaugurated at DPIIT's National Council for Cement and Building Materials

**Source:** PIB

**News:** The National Council for Cement and Building Materials-Incubation Centre (NCB-IC) was inaugurated recently.

**About National Council for Cement and Building Materials (NCB)**

- National Council for Cement and Building Materials (NCB), then Cement Research Institute of India (CRI) was founded on 24th December 1962 with the objective to promote research and scientific work connected with cement and building materials trade and industry.
- It is an apex Research and Development organisation under the administrative control of DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- NCB is dedicated to research, technology development & transfer, education & industrial services for cement, allied building materials & construction industries.



## Daily Quiz

1. Recently, India is hosting the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting. In this regards, Consider the following statements regarding Antarctica Treaty:

1. It prohibits all military activity in Antarctica.
2. It allows for the exploitation of mineral resources present on the continent.
3. It designates Antarctica as a scientific preserve.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

2. "It refers to the total spending by individuals and households within a country, along with non-profit organisations that serve households, on goods and services used for their final consumption." Which of the following terms correctly describes the above statement?

- A. Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE)
- B. Gross Private Domestic Consumption (GPDC)
- C. National Consumer Income (NCI)
- D. Private Net Aggregate Demand (PNAD)

3. Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors are increasingly being considered by investors. Which of the following is NOT a dimension of ESG criteria?

- A. Labor practices and working conditions
- B. Carbon footprint and pollution management
- C. Executive compensation and board structure
- D. Stock market performance over the past year

4. Recently, Iran was in the news due to its domestic issues. Consider the following statements about the location of Iran:

1. Iran is situated entirely within the Northern Hemisphere.
2. The Caspian Sea borders Iran to the north.
3. The Persian Gulf borders Iran to the south.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

5. The International Criminal Court (ICC) can exercise jurisdiction over crimes against humanity only when:

- A. The crime is committed by a national of a member state of the ICC.
- B. The crime is committed within the territory of a member state of the ICC.
- C. The United Nations Security Council refers the case to the ICC.
- D. National courts are unwilling or unable to investigate or prosecute the crime effectively.

6. Giant clams, the largest living bivalves, are known for their symbiotic relationship with zooxanthellae. To which phylum do giant clams belong?

- A. Chordata
- B. Cnidaria
- C. Mollusca
- D. Echinodermata





7. Recently, FSSAI has alerted Food Business Operators (FBOs) to prohibit calcium carbide for artificial ripening of fruits. What property of calcium carbide allows it to function as a ripening agent?

- A. It directly promotes fruit development.
- B. It releases heat during a reaction, accelerating ripening.
- C. It breaks down the fruit's cell walls, softening the texture.
- D. When it reacts with water, it produces a gas that mimics a natural ripening hormone.

8. Which of the following countries become the first country in modern history to lose all its glaciers, after its last glacier “Humboldt Glacier” is classified as an ice shield?

- A. Chile
- B. Argentina
- C. Venezuela
- D. Bolivia

9. Spice Board was recently in the news due to its nationwide inspection on related industries. In this regard, consider the following statements:

- 1. Spice Board of India is a statutory body.
- 2. It comes under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- 3. Cardamom Board is a separate body from Spice Board, looking after promotion of Cardamom.

How many of the above given statements are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. All are correct.
- D. All are incorrect.

10. The National Council for Cement and Building Materials-Incubation Centre (NCB-IC) was inaugurated recently. NCB is under the administrative control of which of the following ministries?

- A. Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
- B. Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- C. Ministry Of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises
- D. Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers



## Solutions

**Answer 1: C**

**Solution:**

- The Antarctic Treaty, signed in 1959, prohibits military activity in Antarctica (statement 1 is correct).
- The treaty focuses on scientific cooperation and peaceful purposes.
- It does not allow for the exploitation of mineral resources (statement 2 is incorrect).
- Antarctica is designated as a scientific preserve for peaceful research (statement 3 is correct).

Hence, option C is correct.

**Answer 2: A**

**Solution:**

- Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) refers to the total spending by individuals and households within a country, along with non-profit organisations that serve households, on goods and services used for their final consumption.

Hence, Option A is correct.

**Answer 3: D**

**Solution:**

- ESG criteria are a set of standards that companies can follow to demonstrate their environmental and social responsibility, as well as their commitment to good governance practices.
- Labour practices and working conditions fall under the social dimension of ESG.
- Carbon footprint and pollution management are part of the environmental dimension.

- Executive compensation and board structure relate to the governance dimension.
- Stock market performance over the past year is a financial metric and not directly related to ESG principles.

Hence, Option D is correct.

**Answer 4: B**

**Solution:**

- While Iran stretches across vast latitudes, a small portion of its territory lies in the Southern Hemisphere (statement 1 is incorrect).
- The Caspian Sea borders Iran to the north (statement 2 is correct).
- The Persian Gulf borders Iran to the south (statement 3 is correct).

Hence, Option B is correct.

**Answer 5: D**

**Solution:**

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) is a court of last resort. It only prosecutes individuals for the most serious international crimes - genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression - when national courts are unwilling or unable to do so themselves. This principle is known as complementarity.

Hence, Option D is correct.

**Answer 6: C**

**Solution:**

- Giant clams are marine invertebrates belonging to Mollusca. It includes snails, slugs, oysters, mussels, and of course, giant clams. Giant clams belong to the class Bivalvia within the phylum



Mollusca. Bivalves are characterised by having a hinged, two-part shell.

Hence, option C is correct.

**Answer 7: D**

**Solution:**

- Fruits naturally ripen due to the action of ethylene gas, a plant hormone.
- When calcium carbide comes in contact with moisture (water vapor in the air), it undergoes a chemical reaction:  $\text{CaC}_2 + \text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{C}_2\text{H}_2 + \text{Ca(OH)}_2$
- This reaction produces acetylene gas ( $\text{C}_2\text{H}_2$ ) as a byproduct.
- Although not exactly the same as ethylene, acetylene has a similar chemical structure and can trigger some of the same ripening processes in fruits.

Hence, Option D is correct.

**Answer 8: C**

**Solution:**

- Venezuela's last glacier, the Humboldt Glacier, has shrunk to less than 2 hectares and is now reclassified as an ice field.
- Venezuela is the first modern nation to have completely lost all its glaciers.

Hence, option C is correct.

**Answer 9: A**

**Solution:**

- Statement 1 is correct: Spices Board is a statutory body constituted with effect from 26.02.1987 under the Spices Board Act, 1986.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: It comes under the administrative control of the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- Statement 3 is incorrect: It was formed by merging the erstwhile Cardamom Board and the Spices Export Promotion Council.

Hence, Option A is correct.

**Answer 10: B**

**Solution:**

- National Council for Cement and Building Materials (NCB), then Cement Research Institute of India (CRI) was founded on 24th December 1962 with the objective to promote research and scientific work connected with cement and building materials trade and industry.
- It is an apex Research and Development organisation under the administrative control of DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

Hence, Option B is correct.







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