



**UPSC
Mentorship**
A Unit of Mentorship India

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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SOURCES



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GS II

1. Religion as sole factor: Why HC quashed OBC quota for Muslims

Source: IE, page 15

Prelims: Indra Sawhney Judgement

Mains: Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

News: The article discusses a significant ruling by the Calcutta High Court that struck down several orders by the West Bengal government, which had granted OBC reservation status to 77 communities, predominantly Muslim. The court ruled that these reservations were based solely on religion, which is unconstitutional.

High Court Ruling on OBC Reservation

- **Orders Struck Down:** Calcutta High Court invalidated West Bengal government's orders from 2010-2012 granting OBC status to 77 communities (75 Muslim).
- **Basis of Judgment:** The court found reservations were based solely on religion, violating constitutional provisions and previous court rulings.
- **Election Context:** The judgement coincides with an election campaign where Muslim reservation is a controversial topic.

Facts of the Case

- **Initial Notifications:** In 2010, 42 classes (41 Muslim) were notified as OBCs; later in 2012, 35 more classes (34 Muslim) were added.
- **Challenges and Petitions:** Notifications and the 2012 Act were challenged on grounds of religious bias and lack of scientific data.
- **Legislation:** The 2013 West Bengal Backward Classes Act included all 77 new OBCs in its schedule.

Court's Findings and Sub-classification of OBCs

- **Supreme Court Precedent:** Relied on Indra Sawhney judgement, which prohibits identifying OBCs solely on religious grounds.
- **Commission's Role:** Found that recommendations were hastily made post a political announcement without objective criteria.
- **Political Exploitation:** Court suspected communities were used as a "vote bank" for political gains.
- **Sub-classification Issue:** Struck down provisions allowing the state to sub-classify OBCs into 'more backward' and 'backward' without consulting the Commission.
- **Consultation Requirement:** Held that fair classification must involve the Commission and be based on collected material.



GS III

2. After The Blaze

Source: IE, Page 10

Prelims: NDMA, Indian Boiler Act, 1950

Mains: Disaster and Disaster Management

News: The article highlights a recent chemical factory blaze in Maharashtra, emphasizing the need for improved industrial safety measures and regulations.

Recent Incident and Government Response

- Incident: Chemical factory blaze in Thane, Maharashtra, killed 11 and injured over 60. The factory used highly reactive chemicals; its boiler was not registered under the Indian Boiler Act, 1950.
- Government Action: Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde promised strict action; suggested shutting down or relocating hazardous units.
- Past Incidents: Thane complex had previous accidents (2016, 2018, 2020, 2023) with fatalities.

Issues in the Chemical Industry

- Global Standing: India is among the top six chemical manufacturing countries.
- Economic Contribution: Chemical sector contributes 11% of India's exports and employs over 2 million people.
- Regulatory Framework: India has 15 Acts and 19 rules governing the chemical industry, but none are exclusive to the sector.
- Regulatory Challenges: Overlapping jurisdictions and weak monitoring/inspection lead to ineffective regulation and corruption.
- NDMA Findings: Identifies 1,861 major accident hazard (MAH) units and many hazardous factories; unorganised sector not included.

Need for Comprehensive Safety Measures

- Accident Statistics: 130 chemical accidents in the past decade, claiming over 250 lives (NDMA data).
- Research Insights: IIT Kanpur study links industrial accidents to poor regulation, lack of awareness, and inadequate investment in worker safety.
- Knowledge Gaps: India lacks a comprehensive database of chemicals and associated risks.
- Lessons from History: Bhopal Gas Tragedy led to some safety reforms, but subsequent accidents (e.g., Jaipur 2009, Visakhapatnam 2020) show ongoing issues.
- Urgency for Action: Need for serious stock-taking and improved safety protocols in a rapidly industrialising country.

3. What jobs data show

Source: IE, Page 15

Prelims: LFPR, UER, ER etc.

Mains: Growth, Development and Employment



News: The article analyzes the impact of unemployment and job scarcity on different social groups in India, focusing on data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) between 2016-17 and 2023-24, with insights categorized by religion and caste.

Basic Concepts

1. Working-age Population: Individuals aged 15 and above.
2. Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR): Percentage of the working-age population actively seeking employment.
3. Unemployment Rate (UER): Percentage of the labor force that is actively seeking employment but is unable to find a job.
4. Employment Rate (ER): Ratio of employed individuals to the total working-age population, indicating the health of employment in the economy.

Data by Religion

1. LFPR:
 - Declined across all major religions.
 - Overall LFPR in India dropped from 46.22% in 2016-17 to 40.42% in 2023-24.
2. UER:
 - Increased overall from 7.42% in 2016-17 to 8.03% in 2023-24.
 - Sikhs experienced the highest unemployment rate increase.
3. ER:
 - Decreased across all major religions.
 - Overall ER fell by 5.6 percentage points over the past eight years.
 - Hindus saw the largest decline, dropping to 37.26% in 2023-24.

Data by Caste

1. LFPR:
 - Fallen for all caste groups.
 - Upper-caste Hindus have the lowest LFPR.
 - OBCs and Scheduled Castes (SCs) experienced the sharpest decline.
2. UER:
 - Decreased for OBCs from 7.7% in 2016-17 to 7.4% in 2023-24.
 - Increased for upper castes, nearing double digits in 2023-24.
3. ER:
 - Declined across all caste groups.
 - OBCs and SCs, which had higher ERs in 2016-17, were the worst affected.
 - Upper-caste Hindus had the lowest ER in both 2016-17 and 2023-24, though at a reduced level.



Editorials, Opinions and Ideas

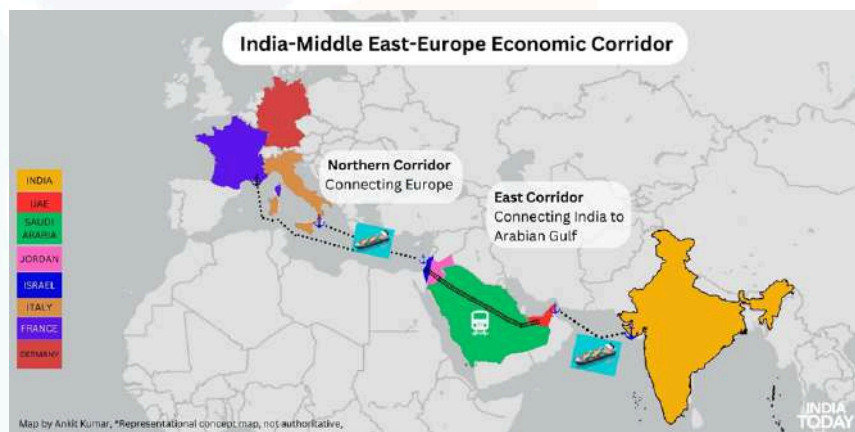
4. The missing links in IMEC, as shown by the Gaza war

Source: The Hindu, Page 6

The article discusses the significance and challenges of the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC). It highlights the geopolitical implications, the current disruptions due to the Gaza war, and potential modifications to make the IMEC more resilient to regional conflicts.

India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)

- **Launch and Participants:** Announced at the G-20 summit in September 2023, involving the EU, France, Germany, India, Italy, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the US.
- **Components:** Two corridors (east and north), integrating maritime, road, and rail transport; includes infrastructure for electricity, digital connectivity, and clean hydrogen export.
- **Goals:** Enhance regional supply chains, increase trade, and counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- **Impact:** Expected to reduce time and cost of transit between India and Europe by 40% and 30%, respectively.
- **Counter to BRI:** Offers a strategic alternative to China's initiatives, aiming to enhance connectivity and economic cooperation.



Challenges and Solutions

- **Gaza War Impact:** Stalled the project due to regional instability.
- **Security Threats:** Blockades by Houthis in Yemen and threats from Iran in the Strait of Hormuz highlight vulnerabilities.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Include Oman: Ports open to the Arabian Sea, away from Persian Gulf threats, historically a gateway to West Asia for India.
 - Include Egypt: Ports in the Mediterranean Sea offer a safe route to Europe, politically stable with good regional relations.

Incorporating Oman and Egypt can safeguard the IMEC against future conflicts, ensuring continuous and secure trade routes.



InBrief

5. Gauhati HC issues notice on Kamakhya Corridor Project

Source: The Hindu, Page 2

The Gauhati High Court has issued notices to the Centre, the Assam government, the Archaeological Survey of India and others on a petition challenging the Kamakhya Corridor Project.

About Kamakhya Corridor

- The corridor aims to enhance the pilgrimage experience for devotees visiting the Kamakhya Temple and boost tourism in the state.
- It is part of the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North Eastern Region (PM-DevINE) scheme

About Kamakhya temple

- Located in Nilachal Hills, Guwahati. It is one of the 51 shaktipeethas. Kamakhya Maa is considered the goddess of fertility.
- The temple's architectural shape is a combination of the traditional nagara and saracenic styles. This hybrid architecture is sometimes called the Nilachal type, named after the hill where it's located.
- The temple has a distinctive beehive-like shikhara (dome). The dome is adorned with sculptured panels and images of various Hindu deities.
- Kamakhya Temple hosts the famous Ambubachi Mela. This is an annual festival celebrating the menstruation of the goddess.



6. Armenia returns to Azerbaijan four border villages it had seized

Source: The Hindu, Page 12

Armenia has returned to Azerbaijan four border villages it seized decades ago — a key step towards normalising ties between the historic rivals.

About Conflict

- Both Armenia and Azerbaijan were incorporated into the Soviet Union. Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-majority enclave within Azerbaijan, became an autonomous oblast.



- During the Soviet breakdown in 1991, Nagorno-Karabakh declared independence, sparking a brutal war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The conflict resulted in roughly 30,000 casualties and displaced hundreds of thousands. Armenia emerged victorious, controlling Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding Azeri territories.



- A ceasefire agreement in 1994 ended the large-scale war, but tensions remained high. Frequent skirmishes occurred along the line of separation, and negotiations for a permanent peace deal stalled.
- In September 2020, a full-scale war erupted again. Azerbaijan launched a major offensive, utilizing advanced weaponry, and recaptured significant territory previously held by Armenia. A Russian-brokered ceasefire halted the fighting but solidified Azerbaijan's territorial gains.
- Current Situation (2024): The region remains fragile. Armenia faces a humanitarian crisis with displaced citizens and a weakened economy. The status of Nagorno-Karabakh remains unresolved, with continued potential for renewed conflict.

7. U.S., Egypt agree to allow Gaza aid through Kerem Shalom

Source: The Hindu, Page 12

Recently, Egypt allowed the UN to provide humanitarian aid to flow into Gaza on a temporary basis through the Kerem Shalom crossing.

About Kerem Shalom

- Kerem Shalom border crossing is a border crossing at the junction of two border sections: one between the Gaza Strip and Israel, and one between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. It is used by trucks carrying goods from Israel or Egypt to the Gaza Strip.



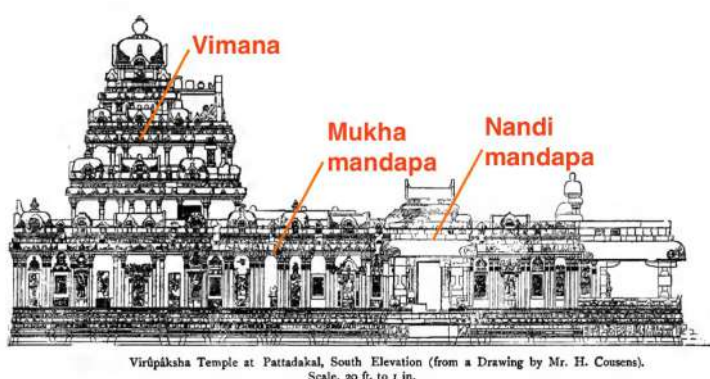
8. ASI: Pavilion restoration at Hampi's Virupaksha temple to begin soon

Source: IE, Page 14

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will soon begin the restoration work of the collapsed mandapa or the pavilion on the Virupaksha temple in Hampi.

About Virupaksha Temple

- Location: Hampi, Vijayanagara Empire (present-day Ballari district, Karnataka, India). UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Dedication: Lord Shiva, worshipped as Virupaksha (meaning "with a form as vast as the universe").
- Construction: Lakkan Dandesha, a Nayaka under King Deva Raya II (Prauda Deva Raya) of the Vijayanagara Empire (15th century).
- Style: Dravidian architecture, known for its intricate carvings, towering gopurams (gateway towers), and pillared halls.
- Significance: Largest functional temple complex in Hampi. Important pilgrimage site for Hindus, especially Shaivites. Showcases the grandeur and architectural prowess of the Vijayanagara Empire.
- Unique Features: Vittala Bazaar (religious street market with chariot complex), Vijayanagara style chariot hall, and the large Kalyana Mantapa (marriage hall).
- Historical Importance: Reflects the cultural and religious influence of the Vijayanagara Empire during its peak.



9. NCMC meets to review preparedness for impending cyclone in Bay of Bengal

Source: PIB

The National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) met under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary Shri Rajiv Gauba to review preparedness for the impending cyclone in Bay of Bengal.

About National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)

- It is a committee set up by the Government of India in the wake of a natural calamity for effective coordination and implementation of relief measures and operations.
- It is headed by the Cabinet Secretary.
- The NCMC reviewed the preparedness of central ministries, agencies, and state and Union Territory governments for the possible cyclonic storm over the Bay of Bengal.

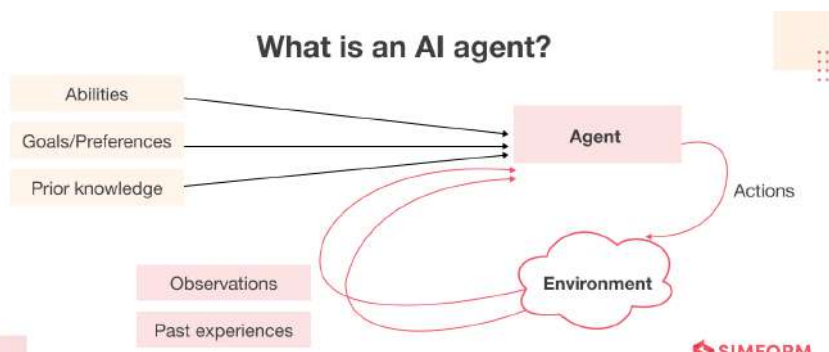


10. What Are AI Agents And How Are They Different From LLMs

Source: IE, Page 15

What are AI Agents?

- AI agents are sophisticated AI systems that can engage in real-time, multi-modal (text, image, or voice) interactions with humans. Unlike conventional language models, which solely work on text-based inputs and outputs, AI agents can process and respond to a wide variety of inputs including voice, images, and even input from their surroundings.



How are they different from LLMs?

- While large language models (LLMs) like GPT-3 and GPT-4 can only generate human-like text, AI agents make interactions more natural and immersive with the help of voice, vision, and environmental sensors. Unlike LLMs, AI agents are designed for instantaneous, real-time conversations with responses that are similar to humans.



Daily Quiz

1. The Indra Sawhney judgement, delivered by the Supreme Court of India, is significant for which of the following reasons?

- A. It upheld the constitutional validity of the death penalty.
- B. It introduced the concept of public interest litigation (PIL) in India.
- C. It ruled on the implementation and extent of reservations in public employment.
- D. It established the Right to Education as a fundamental right.

2. Which of the following statements about the Indian Boiler Act, 1950 is correct?

- A. It regulates the employment conditions of workers in boiler manufacturing industries.
- B. It mandates the inspection and certification of boilers to ensure safety standards.
- C. It governs the import and export of boilers and related machinery.
- D. It sets guidelines for the environmental impact of boiler operations in India.

3. Which of the following correctly describes the relationship between the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), Unemployment Rate (UER), and Employment Rate (ER)?

- A. LFPR includes all working-age individuals, UER is the percentage of unemployed in the working-age population, and ER is the ratio of employed individuals to the labour force.
- B. LFPR includes only employed individuals, UER is the percentage of unemployed in the labour force, and ER is the ratio of employed individuals to the labour force.
- C. LFPR is the percentage of the working-age population actively seeking employment, UER is the percentage of the labour force actively seeking employment but unable to find a job, and ER is the ratio of employed individuals to the working-age population.
- D. LFPR is the percentage of the working-age population that is employed, UER is the percentage of employed individuals actively seeking better jobs, and ER is the ratio of unemployed individuals to the working-age population.



4. Which of the following statements correctly describes the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)?

- It is a maritime route aimed at reducing shipping times between India and Europe via the Suez Canal.
- It is an infrastructure project focused on developing a high-speed rail network between India, the Middle East, and Europe.
- It is an initiative to establish a multimodal transport and digital connectivity corridor linking India, the Middle East, and Europe.
- It is a trade agreement to eliminate tariffs and enhance economic cooperation between India, the Middle East, and Europe.

5. Which of the following statements accurately describes the Kamakhya temple?

- It is dedicated to the goddess Kamakhya, a form of the Hindu goddess Parvati.
- The temple is located in the Indian state of Bihar.
- It is famous for its unique architecture featuring intricate carvings and sculptures.
- The temple is primarily known for its annual Ambubachi Mela, a fertility festival celebrated in June.

Select the correct option using the code given below:

- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 4 only
- 1, 3, and 4 only
- 1, 2, 3, and 4

6. How many of the following statements accurately describe the current situation regarding the border conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan?

- The conflict primarily revolves around territorial disputes in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.
- The border conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has been resolved peacefully through diplomatic negotiations.
- The international community, including organizations like the United Nations, has not been involved in efforts to mediate the conflict.
- The border between Armenia and Azerbaijan is well-defined and undisputed, with no ongoing tensions.

Select the correct option using the code given below:

- 1 only
- 2 only
- 3 only
- All are correct

7. Kerem Shalom, often mentioned in the context of Middle Eastern geopolitics, primarily refers to:

- A significant archaeological site in Israel known for its ancient ruins.
- A major Israeli settlement in the West Bank.
- A key border crossing point between Israel, Gaza Strip, and Egypt.
- A renowned peace treaty signed between Israel and Palestine.



8. Which of the following statements accurately describes the Virupaksha temple in Hampi?

1. It is dedicated to the god Vishnu, a major deity in Hinduism.
2. The temple is located in the Indian state of Rajasthan.
3. The temple complex is renowned for its Dravidian style architecture.
4. Hampi was once the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire.

Select the correct option using the code given below:

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 4 only
- C. 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 3, and 4

9. The National Crisis Management Committee (NCCM) plays a crucial role in coordinating

responses to emergencies in India. Which of the following statements about the NCCM is incorrect?

- A. It is headed by the Cabinet Secretary.
- B. The NCCM serves as the apex body for crisis management, facilitating communication and resource allocation during emergencies.
- C. The NCCM can activate various central ministries and state governments depending on the nature of the crisis.
- D. The NCCM maintains a 24/7 control room to monitor and respond to developing emergencies.

10. Which of the following statements accurately distinguishes between large language models (LLMs) like GPT-3 and GPT-4, and AI agents?

- A. LLMs are capable of generating human-like text, while AI agents utilize voice, vision, and environmental sensors to enhance interactions.
- B. LLMs are designed for instantaneous, real-time conversations, while AI agents are limited to text-based interactions.
- C. LLMs focus solely on text and audio generation, while AI agents prioritize understanding and responding to human input through multiple modalities.
- D. LLMs excel in understanding context and generating coherent text, while AI agents primarily rely on predefined responses.

Solutions

Answer 1: C

Solution:

- The Indra Sawhney judgement, also known as the Mandal Commission case, is

a landmark decision by the Supreme Court of India in 1992.

- It dealt with the issue of reservations in public employment and the extent to which they could be applied.



- The judgement upheld the government's decision to implement a 27% reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in government jobs and educational institutions.

Hence, Option C is correct.

Answer 2: B

Solution:

- The Indian Boiler Act, 1950 mandates the inspection and certification of boilers to ensure they meet safety standards, aiming to prevent accidents and ensure safe operation.

Hence, Option B is correct.

Answer 3: C

Solution:

- Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR): Percentage of the working-age population actively seeking employment.
- Unemployment Rate (UER): Percentage of the labor force that is actively seeking employment but is unable to find a job.
- Employment Rate (ER): Ratio of employed individuals to the total working-age population, indicating the health of employment in the economy.

Hence, Option C is correct.

Answer 4: C

Solution:

- The India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) is an initiative aimed at establishing a comprehensive multimodal transport and digital connectivity corridor.
- IMEC seeks to enhance trade and economic integration by linking India with the Middle East and Europe through a combination of rail, road, maritime, and digital networks.

Hence, Option C is correct.

Answer 5: C

Solution:

- Statement 1 is correct: The Kamakhya temple is indeed dedicated to the goddess Kamakhya, a form of the Hindu goddess Parvati.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: The Kamakhya temple is located in the Indian state of Assam, not Bihar.
- Statement 3 is correct: The temple is famous for its unique architecture featuring intricate carvings and sculptures.
- Statement 4 is correct: The Kamakhya temple is primarily known for its annual Ambubachi Mela, a fertility festival celebrated in June.

Hence, Option C is correct.

Answer 6: A

Solution:

- Statement 1 is correct: The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan primarily revolves around territorial disputes in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: While there have been occasional ceasefires and diplomatic efforts, the conflict has not been fully resolved.
- Statement 3 is incorrect: The international community, including organizations like the United Nations, has been involved in efforts to mediate the conflict.
- Statement 4 is incorrect: The border between Armenia and Azerbaijan is not well-defined and has been a source of ongoing tensions and disputes.

Hence, Option A is correct.



Answer 7: C

Solution:

- Kerem Shalom is a critical border crossing located at the meeting point of the Gaza Strip, Israel, and Egypt. It plays a significant role in the transfer of goods and humanitarian aid into Gaza, and is often a focal point in discussions regarding the blockade and restrictions on Gaza.

Hence, Option C is correct.

Answer 8: C

Solution:

- Statement 1 is incorrect: The Virupaksha temple is dedicated to the god Shiva, not Vishnu.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: The Virupaksha temple is located in the Indian state of Karnataka, specifically in Hampi, not Rajasthan.
- Statement 3 is correct: The temple complex is indeed renowned for its Dravidian style architecture, characterised by its grandiose towers and intricate carvings.

- Statement 4 is correct: Hampi, where the Virupaksha temple is situated, was indeed once the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire, a prominent South Indian empire.

Hence, Option C is correct.

Answer 9: C

Solution:

- National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) facilitates a coordinated response across different levels of government.

Hence, Option C is correct.

Answer 10: A

Solution:

- While large language models (LLMs) like GPT-3 and GPT-4 can only generate human-like text, AI agents make interactions more natural and immersive with the help of voice, vision, and environmental sensors. Unlike LLMs, AI agents are designed for instantaneous, real-time conversations with responses that are similar to humans.

Hence, Option A is correct.





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