

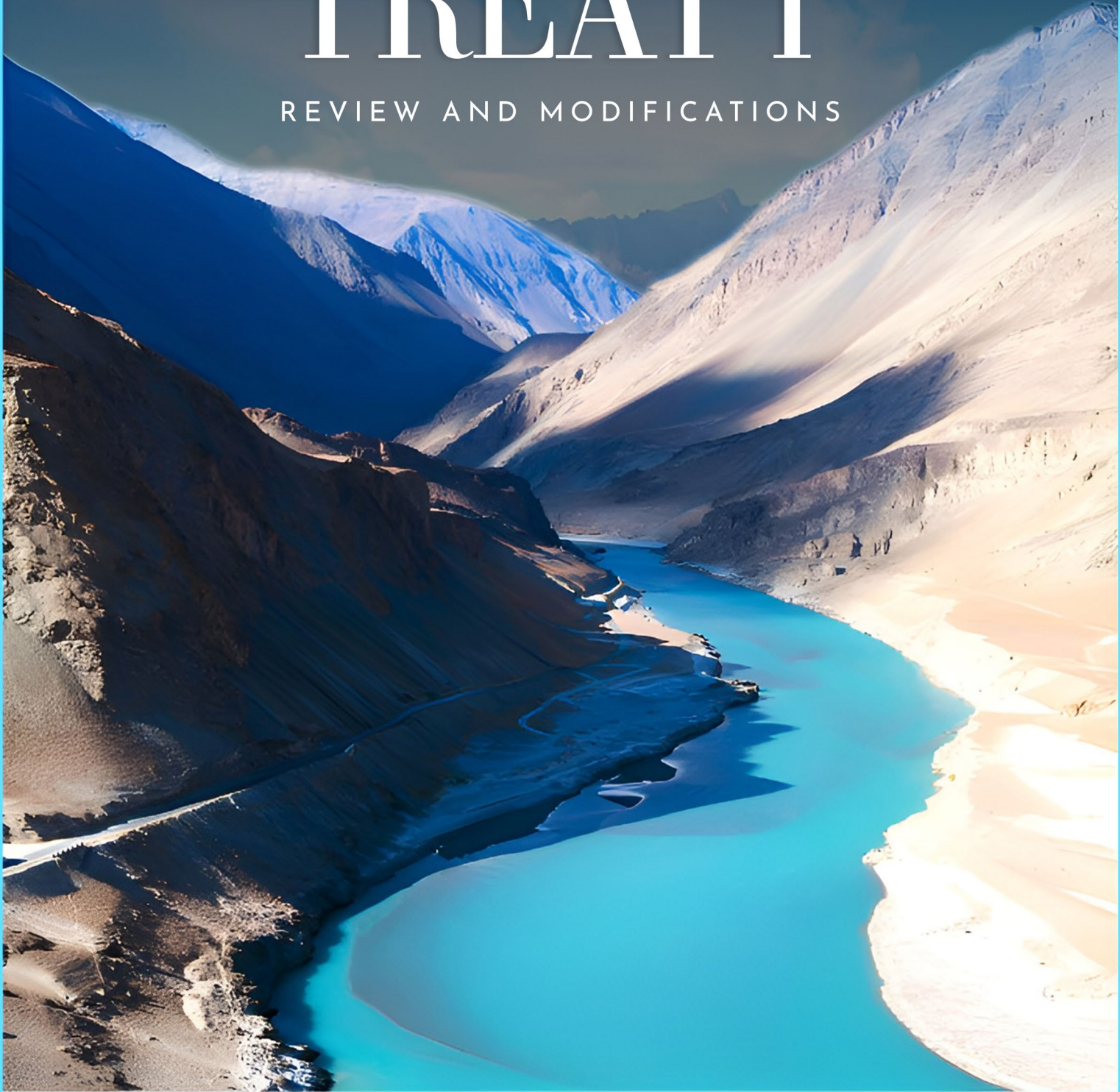
2ND EDITION
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BI-WEEKLY EDITION

INDUS WATER TREATY

REVIEW AND MODIFICATIONS



SOURCES



Dear Students

The Mentorship India Bi-weekly is our half-monthly publication for staying updated on the latest developments shaping India and the World. Crafted with precision by our mentors, it serves as a comprehensive resource for students preparing for competitive exams. Offering insightful analysis, in-depth coverage, and strategic insights aligned with the exam syllabus, it empowers aspirants to navigate through contemporary issues with confidence. From breaking news to nuanced perspectives, our magazine transforms complex topics into easily digestible notes, ensuring every reader gains a holistic understanding of current affairs. Join us on a journey of knowledge enrichment and exam preparation excellence with our Bi-weekly Current Affairs.

FEATURES

- **MIB THEME BI-WEEKLY**
 - A comprehensive coverage of the most important bi-weekly topic.
- **MAINS IN-DETAIL BI-WEEKLY**
 - The in-depth coverage of issue that carry most probability to be asked in the Exam.
- **PRELIMS IN-BRIEF BI-WEEKLY**
 - Subject-wise reading notes of most expectable themes from Prelims point-of-view.
- **SELF EVALUATION BI-WEEKLY**
 - An assignment containing 25 Prelims Questions and 5 Mains Questions for your self-evaluation
- **SOLVED ESSAY BI-WEEKLY**
 - A Previous Year Solved Philosophical Essay to give student an extra edge on others.

FROM THE EDITORS

▮ *Do you Overthink?*

Juggling endless study materials, strategizing for the next test, and constantly evaluating your progress – the UPSC journey is a mental marathon. But amidst this whirlwind, are you a victim of overthinking?

Critical thinking is essential for success in the Civil Services exam. It helps you analyze information, form strong arguments, and craft compelling answers. However, overthinking turns this strength into a weakness. It breeds self-doubt, paralyzes action, and fuels anxiety. Imagine missing deadlines, getting overwhelmed during exams, or losing focus due to constant "what ifs." Not the ideal recipe for cracking UPSC, right?

So, how do you conquer this? Start with mindfulness. Take breaks, meditate, and let your mind relax. Set realistic goals, break your study material into manageable chunks, and tackle them one at a time. Trust in your preparation, and remember, perfection is a myth. Mistakes are just stepping stones to success.

Remember, we, your mentors, are here to guide you every step of the way. Don't let overthinking dim your determination. You have the potential to excel – now go out there and prove it!

Team

UPSC Mentorship



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THE MIB THEME BI-WEEKLY

Indus Water Treaty (IWT) - Review & Modification

India has issued a new formal notice to Pakistan requesting the “review and modification” of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), following a similar request made in January 2023.

The latest notice, issued under Article XII (3) of the IWT (like the one issued last year), is qualitatively different – the word “review” effectively signals New Delhi’s intent to revoke and renegotiate the 64-year-old treaty.

Article XII (3): “The provisions of this Treaty may from time to time be modified by a duly ratified treaty concluded for that purpose between the two Governments”.

Indus Water Treaty (IWT)

The treaty is a **water-sharing agreement** between India and Pakistan, facilitated by the **World Bank**.

Under the treaty, the rivers **Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas** were allocated to **India**, while the rivers **Sindh, Jhelum, and Chenab** were allocated to **Pakistan**.

Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

- The IWT was signed by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistani President Ayub Khan. The treaty, brokered by the World Bank (formerly the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development), was the result of nine years of negotiations.
- Since the partition of India in 1947, the Indus River has been a point of contention among the four countries it flows through—India, Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan. The river originates in Tibet.
- In 1948, India temporarily blocked water supplies to Pakistan but later restored them following a ceasefire. In 1951, Pakistan brought the issue to the United Nations, accusing India of cutting off water to several Pakistani villages.
- Based on UN recommendations, the World Bank developed the agreement in 1954, which was eventually signed on September 19, 1960.

Indus Waters Treaty – Summary of Provisions

Key Provisions

River Water Distribution	Eastern Rivers- Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas with India. Western Rivers- Chenab, Indus and Jhelum with Pakistan India's Share- 20% and Pakistan's Share- 80%
Western River Water utilization permitted for India	Non Consumptive use Of Western River Water like construction of Run of River Hydroelectric Plants Permitted to India.

Dispute Resolution Mechanism	3 stage Dispute Resolution Mechanism
	Stage 1- Permanent Commission
	Stage 2- Neutral Expert (NE)
	Stage 3- Court of Arbitration



A Permanent Indus Commission, established by the United Nations, is responsible for resolving disputes related to water sharing and provides a mechanism for arbitration to settle conflicts amicably.

- Under the treaty, India may use water from the western rivers for domestic and non-consumptive purposes such as storage, irrigation, and electricity generation.
- The treaty allocates 20% of the water from the Indus River System to India, with the remaining 80% going to Pakistan.
- When carrying out flood protection or control projects, both countries are required to minimize material damage to the other country as much as possible.
- The natural channels of the rivers may be used for discharging flood or excess waters without limitation by either country, and neither country can claim damages for such use.

Significance of the Indus Water Treaty

The Indus Waters Treaty has been largely successful in maintaining water cooperation between India and Pakistan for

over 60 years, despite periods of political tensions and conflict between the two countries.

- **Only cross border water sharing treaty in Asia:** The Indus water Treaty is the only cross border water sharing treaty between two nations in Asia.
- **Generous towards lower riparian state:** It is the only water pact that compels an upper riparian state to defer to the interests of a downstream state. Pakistan has been given 80% share in the river water system. This is 90 times greater volume of water than Mexico's share under a 1944 pact with the US.
- **Passed the Crisis test:** The Permanent Commission set up as a part of the Dispute Resolution Mechanism under the treaty has met even during the 1965 and 1971 wars between India and Pakistan.
- **India's Generosity:** India's respect for the values trans-boundary river treaty is also a major factor behind the successful functioning of the treaty. India chose not to invoke the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, to withdraw from the Indus Water Treaty in the face of terror attacks like Indian Parliament in 2001, Mumbai in 2008, Uri in 2016 and Pulwama in 2019.
- **Successful Model:** The Indus Water Treaty serves as a successful model of cooperation between two rival countries.

Rights and Obligations under the Treaty

- India is required to allow the waters of the western rivers to flow freely, with exceptions only for specific consumptive uses.
- The treaty allocates approximately 80% of the total water from the six-river Indus system to Pakistan, leaving India with just 19.48% of the total water.
- India is permitted to build storage facilities on the western rivers up to a capacity of 3.6 million acre-feet, though it has not yet utilized this capacity.
- The IWT allows for run-of-the-river projects on the western rivers, provided they meet certain design and operational criteria.
- India must give Pakistan prior notification, including design details, of any new projects.

Dispute redressal mechanism under the Treaty

Article IX of the Treaty outlines a three-tier dispute resolution mechanism for addressing differences or disputes related to projects on the Indus waters.

First Level:

- Either party must notify the other of any planned projects on the Indus River, providing all necessary information as requested.
- This process is managed by the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC), which is responsible for implementing and overseeing the goals of the IWT.
- If the PIC cannot resolve the issue, it is escalated to the second level.

Second Level:

- At this stage, the World Bank appoints a neutral expert to address the differences.
- If the neutral expert cannot resolve the issue, it escalates to the third level.

Third Level:

- The matter is then taken to a Court of Arbitration (CoA), with the chairperson appointed by the World Bank.

Indus Waters Treaty Issues

There have been various issues related to the treaty, with both sides accusing each other of violating its terms:

- **In 2016**, Pakistan raised concerns with the World Bank about India's Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric power projects in Jammu & Kashmir. India requested neutral experts to review the projects, arguing that Pakistan's concerns were technical and did not warrant arbitration. Following discussions on the treaty's technicalities, the World Bank allowed India to proceed with the projects.
- **The Tulbul Project**, a navigation lock and control structure on the Jhelum River, was suspended in 1987 due to Pakistani objections. Recently, the Indian government decided to review the suspension despite Pakistan's protests.
- **Pakistan's Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD)** project, which passes through the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat, was built without India's consent. India has objected to the project as it violates the IWT and raises concerns about potential flooding in Gujarat.
- **Bilateral Relations:** The relationship between India and Pakistan has deteriorated recently. After the Uri attacks, Prime Minister Modi suggested that India's support for the IWT could be reconsidered in light of Pakistan's support for cross-border terrorism. Some experts believe the treaty is more favorable to Pakistan.
- **Signing Authority:** There is criticism that the IWT was signed by then-Prime Minister Nehru, who was not the head of state at the time. It is argued that the treaty should have been signed by the then-president.
- **Water Utilization:** India does not fully utilize its allocated water share under the IWT.
- **Post-Pulwama Attacks:** In response to the Pulwama attacks in 2019, the Indian government announced plans to divert all water from the three eastern rivers into Haryana, Punjab, and Rajasthan for various uses.

Steps to Maximize Water Use:

- **Shahpurkandi Project:** Aims to generate power for Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir.
- **Ujh Multipurpose Project:** Will store water from the Ujh, a tributary of the River Ravi, for irrigation and power generation.
- **2nd Ravi-Beas Link below Ujh:** A national project involving the construction of a barrage across the Ravi to

divert water through a tunnel to the Beas Basin, aimed at reducing excess water flow into Pakistan.

India Demands Modification of IWT

- India has issued a formal notice to Pakistan requesting a review of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), citing fundamental and unforeseen changes in circumstances.
- Persistent cross-border terrorism is also highlighted as a reason for the demand to reassess the treaty.
- The notification emphasizes that changes in circumstances necessitate a reassessment of the obligations under various articles of the treaty.
- India had previously sent a notice to Pakistan in January 2023 seeking amendments to the 1960 treaty.

Reasons for India's Demand to Renegotiate the Treaty:

- The latest notice from India to Pakistan regarding the IWT cites “fundamental and unforeseen changes in circumstances” as the basis for the reassessment.
- Key concerns include shifts in population demographics, environmental issues, the need for clean energy development to meet emission targets, and the impact of cross-border terrorism.
- Controversy surrounds two Indian hydropower projects in Jammu & Kashmir—Kishanganga and Ratle—which Pakistan claims violate the IWT. These projects are designed as “run-of-the-river” and generate electricity without obstructing river flow.

Reason Behind the January 2023 Notice:

- The January 2023 notice followed Pakistan's objections to the two Indian hydropower projects.
- Pakistan initially sought a “Neutral Expert” to address its concerns but later proposed the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) for adjudication.
- India objected to the PCA, arguing that it breached the treaty's sequential dispute resolution mechanism, which starts with the Indus Commissioners, progresses to a Neutral Expert, and only reaches the PCA if needed.
- The World Bank had paused both processes in 2016, urging both countries to resolve the issue amicably.
- Despite India's attempts, Pakistan did not engage in discussions between 2017 and 2022.
- In 2022, the World Bank decided to proceed with both the Neutral Expert and PCA processes, prompting India's January 2023 notice, the first such notice in over 60 years.

Concerns associated with the termination or abrogation of the IWT

Renegotiating or abrogating the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) between India and Pakistan could have serious consequences for the region:

- **Escalation of Geopolitical Tensions:** Attempts at renegotiating the treaty or abrogation of the treaty is likely to escalate political tensions between India and Pakistan. This might heighten the risk of water conflicts between the two nuclear-armed neighbors.
- **Threat to Regional Stability:** The Indus river basin is shared by India, Pakistan, China and Afghanistan. Instability in the IWT could have ripple effects on water cooperation in the wider region.
- **Damage to India's International Standing:** Unilaterally suspending or withdrawing from the IWT could damage India's image as a responsible global power. It may be a setback for future negotiations of water treaties, like the Teesta Water Treaty with countries like Bangladesh.

Way Forward

- **Integration of Ecological Perspectives:** The ecological perspectives must incorporate Environmental Flows (EF) to sustain the Indus Valley ecosystems, as suggested by the Brisbane Declaration and the 2013 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling on Kishanganga.
- **Recognition of Climate Change Impacts:** Strategies must be developed to manage climate change effects. India should explore the possibility of using climate change as a ‘change in circumstances’ to initiate conversation on renegotiation of the IWT.
- **Enhanced Water Data-Sharing:** A World Bank-supervised, legally binding data-sharing framework should be established to monitor water quality and flow changes. Such estimates would add to the accuracy of each side's dependence on the other in sharing the waters of these rivers.
- **Incorporation of International Legal Standards:** The treaty provisions must be aligned with the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention and the 2004 Berlin Rules on Water Resources for sustainable water use.
- **Pro activeness on India's Part in utilization of allocated water share:** As suggested by the standing committee of water resources, the canal systems in Punjab and Rajasthan should be repaired to increase their water carrying capacity. Also, India should take steps to completely utilize its entitlement of waters of Western Rivers.
- **Use of pressure tactic in case of escalation:** As suggested by some experts, in case of escalation of hostilities by Pakistan in future, India can suspend the meetings of Permanent Commission. If the first state of dispute redressal is not functional, the subsequent two steps of 3-tier dispute redressal don't kick in.

MAINS IN-DEPTH BI-WEEKLY

Indian Migrant Workers Skill Mismatch- Concerns and Solutions

Reports suggest that the construction labor partnership between India and Israel is facing challenges due to skill mismatch, leading to repatriation or redeployment of workers amidst improving bilateral relations.

The problem of skill mismatch and shortage of skilled Indian migrant workers has been widely acknowledged despite a large labor force. Indian firms have frequently highlighted this issue regarding jobs at all skill levels.

Status and importance of Indian Migrant workers

- **Status and Data on Indian Migrants abroad:** Around 30 million Indians live abroad, with over 90% working in low-skilled roles in the GCC countries.
- **Sector of Employment:** Indian migrant workers are commonly found in construction, domestic work, and service industries, mostly as temporary migrants.
- **Remittances:** In 2023, Indian migrant workers sent \$125 billion in remittances, equivalent to 3.4% of India's GDP, making India the top remittance recipient globally.

Reasons behind the increase in Indian Migrant Workers abroad

1. **Demographic Shifts:** India's expanding working-age population offers a substantial reservoir of potential migrant workers to address labor deficits abroad. For ex-Labour Shortage in Israel on account of Israel Palestine War.
2. **Skill Shortages:** Destination countries seek Indian migrant workers to address skill shortages, especially in construction, benefiting the global labor market.
3. **Cost Advantages:** Employers find hiring Indian migrant workers cost-effective due to wage differentials, especially in software jobs without minimum wage obligation.
4. **Globalization and Mobility:** The rise of globalization and increased mobility facilitate worker migration for economic betterment, exemplified by improved flight connections.
5. **Increased demand in labour sector:** The Global Skill Gap report by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) analyzes labour demand in construction, trade, health, and GCC and EU sectors. Western countries propose temporary contracts.

Significance of Indian Migrant Workers

1. **Economic Contribution:** Remittances from Indians abroad account for around ~3% of India's GDP.
2. **Skill Development:** The process of migrating to other countries allows Indian workers to develop skills and expertise for India's economy.

3. **Enhancement of India's Soft Power:** The significant Indian diaspora overseas enhances India's diplomatic ties, trade relationships, and cultural connections with foreign nations.

Skilling challenges with the Indian Migrant Workers

1. **Education-Occupation Mismatch:** There is a significant disparity between the education levels of migrant workers and the qualifications needed for existing job positions.
 - a. A minor proportion in the 15-59 age group have undergone official vocational/technical training, as per labor force survey data.
2. **Labour Market Dynamics:** During high demand, employers prioritize swift hiring over verifying candidates' skills, leading to underqualified workforce.
3. **Quality of Education:** The educational programs in India often lack alignment with market demands, prioritizing theory over practical skills.
4. **Geographic and Sectoral Mismatch:** Indian migrant workers encounter geographic barriers hindering job access aligned with their skills. Sectoral shifts exacerbate this skill mismatch.
5. **Informal Employment Sector:** A considerable number of migrant workers work in the informal sector, with job mismatch and lack of qualifications.

Skilling initiatives taken up by the Government for Indian Migrant Workers

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)	Under PMKVY, migrant workers can access skill training programs to enhance their employability and earn better wages.
Skill Mapping of Migrant Workers	Several state governments have undertaken skill mapping exercises to assess the skills and competencies of migrant workers. For Ex- Madhya Pradesh
Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY)	It is a joint initiative by the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, that equips workers with cultural skills for international integration.

Way Forward

1. **Holistic skilling:** The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) needs to overhaul the skilling

ecosystem by improving technical institutes, trainers, and the curriculum.

2. **Emulating the Sri Lankan Model:** India should consider implementing Sri Lanka's approach of offering pre-departure training to workers to ensure global work readiness.
3. **Identification of Pre-Skilled Candidates:** It is essential to evaluate emigrants' skills via standardized tests for tailored training programs addressing specific gaps.
4. **Finishing Schools with International Standards:** Establish finishing schools nationwide with global industry standards, modern technology, and expert trainers for optimal effectiveness.

5. **Language Training:** The skilling model should offer advanced language training programs for business communication and industry-specific terminology.
6. **Financial Literacy:** The integration of financial education into skilling programs improves workers' ability to optimize earnings and financial decisions.

The evolving workforce requires ongoing learning for a competitive Indian workforce, enhancing economic growth and global prominence.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

One Nation One Election- Significance and Concerns

The Union Cabinet has approved the High Level Committee's recommendations on One Nation, One Election by Ram Nath Kovind. It proposes simultaneous elections and amendments to laws and the Constitution.

What is the One nation one election?

One nation one election refers to the idea of holding simultaneous polls for State Assemblies and the Lok Sabha instead of separate and continuous elections.

Historical Background

The historical practice of simultaneous elections in India, observed until 1967, was disrupted by premature Legislative Assembly dissolutions in 1968 and 1969, followed by early Lok Sabha dissolution in 1970. Subsequently, the traditional cycle of coordinated elections was broken.

What is the Kovind Panel on One Nation One Election?

A committee led by former President Ram Nath Kovind was formed by the Union government on September 2, 2023 to explore 'one nation one election'.

Members

- **Chairman:** Ramnath Kovind
- **Members:** Home Minister (Sh. Amit Shah)
- **Former Leader of Opposition** in Rajya Sabha (sh. Ghulam Nabi Azad)
- **Former Finance Commission chairperson** (N K Singh)
- **Former Lok Sabha secretary-general** (Subhash C Kashyap)
- **Senior advocate** (Harish Salve)
- **Former Chief Vigilance Commissioner** (Sanjay Kothari).

Recommendations

The committee proposes 15 amendments to the Indian Constitution through two Amendment Bills to implement its recommendation effectively.

FIRST CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BILL

This academic discourse focuses on the shift to a synchronized election system and the process for early Lok Sabha/state Assembly elections.

Passage of the Bill: The Bill can be passed by Parliament without the requirement for consultation with state governments or ratification by state Assemblies.

Provisions of the Bill

1. **Insertion of a new article 82A:** Article 82A will establish the process by which the country will move to a system of simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and state Assemblies.
2. **Provisions of Article 82A (1):** The President will issue a notification bringing Article 82A into effect, on the date of the first sitting of the House of the People after a general election. The date of this notification "shall be called the Appointed date".
3. **Provisions under Article 82A (2):** All the Legislative Assemblies constituted in any general election held after the appointed date shall come to an end on the expiry of the full term of the House of the People.
4. **Provisions under Article 82A (3):** ECI to hold General elections to the House of the People and the Legislative Assemblies simultaneously.
5. **Provisions under Article 82A (4):** If the ECI believes that elections to any legislative assembly cannot be conducted simultaneously, "it may make a recommendation to the President, to declare by an Order, that the election to that Legislative Assembly may be conducted at a later date".
6. **Provisions under Article 82A (5):** Even in cases where the state Assembly election is deferred, "the full term of the Legislative Assembly shall end on the same date as the

end of the full term of the House of the People constituted in the General Election”.

Amendment of Art 327

1. **Art 327:** Parliament to make laws relating to elections to Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and state legislatures, including the preparation of electoral rolls and delimitation of constituencies.
 - a. **Recommendation:** The power of Parliament under Article 327 should be expanded to include “conduct of simultaneous elections” as well.
2. **Amendments to ensure simultaneous elections when Lok Sabha or state Assembly is dissolved before ‘full term’ ends.**
 - a. **Amendment of 83(2) (Duration of Houses of Parliament) and 172 (1) (“Duration of the State Legislatures”)**
 - i. **Recommendation:** The five-year duration of the House of people and state legislatures should be referred to as “the full term”.
 - b. **Amendments to Articles 83(3) and 172(3)**
 - i. **Recommendation:** If Lok Sabha or a state Assembly is dissolved before the expiry of the full term, the remaining period will be referred to as the ‘unexpired term’.
 - c. **Addition of Articles 83(4) and 172(4)**
 - i. **Recommendation:** Lok Sabha or state Assembly that replaces the previously dissolved Lok Sabha or state Assembly will serve only for the remaining ‘unexpired term’.

Amendment of Laws of UT for Simultaneous Election

Kovind Panel on Simultaneous elections has recommended amendment of the following UT laws for simultaneous elections.

1. The Government of Union Territories Act, 1963.
2. The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991.
3. The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019.

SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BILL

This bill deals with municipal and panchayat elections, which fall under Entry 5 of the State List titled ‘Local government’.

Passage of the Bill: This bill needs to be ratified by at least half of the state legislatures in the country before it can be passed by the Parliament.

Provisions of the Bill

1. **Inclusion of a new Article 324A**
 - a. It would empower the Parliament to make laws to ensure that municipality and panchayat elections are held simultaneously with the General Elections (to Lok Sabha and state Assemblies).
2. **Amendment of Article 325**

- a. **Addition of Article 325(2):** This new sub-clause proposed by the committee will create a Single Electoral Roll for every territorial constituency for election to the House of the People, Legislature of a State or to a Municipality or a Panchayat.
- b. **Addition of Article 325(3):** The single electoral roll shall be made by the Election Commission in consultation with the State Election Commissions. It shall substitute any electoral roll prepared earlier by either the Election Commission under Art 325 or the State Election Commissions under Art. 243K and Art. 243ZA.

Arguments in favor of ‘One Nation One Election’

1. **Reduction of Financial burden on state exchequer:** The recurring elections strain state finances; 'One Nation One Election' seeks cost savings.
2. **Better utilization of financial resources by political parties:** Simultaneous elections reduce campaign costs, aiding regional parties with better financial resource management.
3. **Reduced duration of ‘model code of conduct’:** Frequent enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct hinders progress by preventing election-induced policy changes.
4. **Focus on governance instead of being in ‘election mode’:** The adoption of One Nation One Election can boost policy consistency, reduce interruptions, and enhance governance.
5. **Increase of administrative efficiency:** The presence of state officials and high-ranking officers promotes election accountability and transparency.
6. **Improvement of Internal security:** The frequent deployment of security forces during elections could be better utilized for managing internal security issues.
7. **Reduced use of ‘black money’:** Elections drive candidate spending, often with untraceable funds. 'One nation one election' can deter corruption.
8. **Reduction of populist measures:** The routine of elections pushes politicians to favor short-term gains, impacting governance focus. Synchronized elections could help.
9. **Increase of voter turnout:** The Law Commission proposes that holding concurrent elections could increase voter engagement by allowing multiple votes.
10. **Improvement in social harmony:** Regular elections exacerbate social divisions, but synchronized elections can reduce casteism, communalism, and corruption.

Arguments against ‘one nation one election’

1. **Reduced Accountability:** Routine elections keep government accountable to people's will, preventing autocratic tendencies in fixed terms.
2. **Undermining of Federal Power:** In recent years, regional parties have gained political prominence, impacting state elections significantly.

3. **Disadvantage for regional parties:** Critics suggest that simultaneous elections may marginalize regional parties due to overshadowing national issues.
4. **Against Spirit of Democracy:** Scholars claim that mandating simultaneous elections contradicts democracy by limiting voter choice and manipulating cycles.
5. **Influences choices and electoral behavior:** IDFC Institute study shows higher likelihood of voting for same party in simultaneous elections.
6. **Threat to internal security:** The deployment of extensive security forces for concurrent elections poses logistical risks to internal security.
7. **Tampering with the democratic will:** The current election system safeguards democracy by allowing regular voting, altering it undermines voter power.

Challenges in the conduct of Simultaneous Elections in India

The implementation of One Nation, One Election faces significant logistical, financial, and administrative challenges.

1. **Large requirement of additional electoral equipment:** For the 2029 simultaneous elections, the ECI anticipates needing additional ballot units, control units, and VVPATs.
2. **Large lead time for manufacture:** The production of more electoral equipment by BEL and ECIL would necessitate a considerable amount of time.
3. **High cost to the exchequer:** The extra units' manufacturing by ECI is estimated at Rs. 7,951.37 crores, but public exchequer will bear substantial costs.

4. **Large requirement of security personnel's:** The successful implementation of one nation one election will necessitate more security personnel, as estimated by the ECI.
5. **Practical Challenges of Simultaneous Elections:** The ECI encountered obstacles for synchronized elections, citing security, weather, and festival concerns, such as in Jammu and Kashmir.

Way Ahead

1. **Build All Party Consensus:** The government must build an all-party consensus before introducing the two constitutional amendment bills as recommended by the Kovind Panel Report on Simultaneous Elections.
2. **22nd Law Commission Report on simultaneous polls:** The government must also wait for the recommendations of the 22nd Law Commission Report on simultaneous polls before moving ahead with the idea.
3. **Public awareness:** Public awareness must be created around the issue of simultaneous election through media deliberations.

The concept of simultaneous elections is gaining momentum, but requires thorough political discourse to address federal concerns. India's adoption of 'one nation, one election' would position it as the 4th country worldwide to achieve this feat.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Israel-Hezbollah Conflict

Increased tensions in West Asia arose following explosions targeting pagers and hand-held radios in Lebanon and parts of Syria.

Hezbollah, a Lebanese political party and militant group backed by Iran, has implicated Israel in the attacks, which Israel has neither confirmed nor denied.

On September 17, 2024, a sophisticated pager bomb attack attributed to Israeli intelligence and the Israeli Defense Forces shocked the world by targeting Hezbollah members in Lebanon. This violent act led to over 3,000 injuries and nine fatalities, heightening tensions in the Middle East and sparking global concern over the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict.

Hezbollah Walkie-Talkies and Radios Explode After Pagers

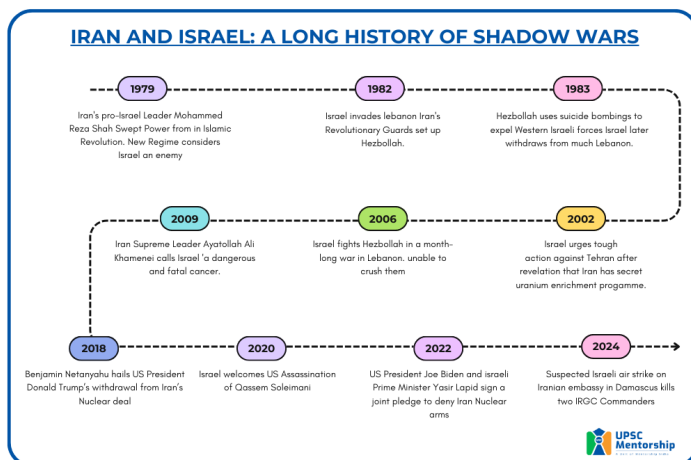
1. **Hezbollah Devices Explode:** Walkie-talkies and radios used by Hezbollah exploded, killing 20 and injuring 450, following pager explosions.
2. **Israel's Alleged Role:** Israel's Mossad is accused of planting explosives in the devices, marking a major security breach for Hezbollah.
3. **Hezbollah's Communication:** The group relied on low-tech devices to evade Israeli surveillance, which are now compromised.

4. **New Phase in Conflict:** Israel declared a "new phase" of war, focusing on the northern front with Lebanon.
5. **International Response:** Iran condemned the blasts, while the UN Security Council is set to meet amid fears of wider conflict.

Gaza War

- Israel initiated a significant military response following an attack by Hamas, resulting in over 41,000 Palestinian casualties in Gaza.
 - After 11 months of airstrikes and ground operations, about 100 hostages remain in Hamas captivity.
- During this timeframe, Hezbollah has used shelling and rocket attacks on Israel's northern border, resulting in Israeli displacement.

Timeline of the Iran-Israel Conflict



Future Course of the War

- The Prime Minister's office hinted at broadening military actions to deter Hezbollah attacks on Israel.
- There are several scenarios possible over the next few weeks.
 - Iran's aerial strikes in Israel may recur, but their impact is expected to be minimal.
 - Iran may collaborate with Axis of Resistance allies to conduct assaults against Israel as planned.
 - Israel has the potential to conduct an aerial strike on both Hezbollah and the Lebanese government.

Concerns for India

- **Indian Diaspora:** The presence of Indians in Israel, Iran, and the Gulf poses a risk if conflicts in the region escalate.
- **Energy Security:** Energy security in India heavily relies on West Asia for oil supply, with a potential conflict posing risks to stability.
- **Investment and Strategic Importance:** India has strategically engaged with key Arab nations, Iran, and Israel, considering the region an extended neighborhood.
 - The India-Middle-East-Europe Economic corridor is a significant focus, offering both strategic and economic advantages.
 - Chabahar in Iran serves as a vital economic link to Afghanistan and Central Asia, especially in light of Pakistan's denial of land access to Indian goods.

- Any regional conflicts or enforcement of US sanctions could potentially disrupt India's plans for the Chabahar port.
- The India-Israel-UAE-US I2U2 initiative may impact plans to link Indian cargo routes with Russia through INSTC.
- India and Israel share strong defense ties, fostering a strategic relationship with deep security cooperation.

India's Stand

- India seeks to maintain balanced approach to prevent escalation in Israel-Iran conflict.
- **Based on the Complex Regional Politics:** India must navigate complex regional politics due to deep conflicts among Middle Eastern states.
- **Non- Ideological Engagement:** India must engage with the Middle East beyond ideology to enhance its expanding interests in the region.
 - India's engagement in the Gulf region has extended beyond oil and labor to economic and political ties.

Way Ahead

- India navigates its strategic ties with Iran and Israel skillfully, but may struggle to remain neutral amid escalating tensions.
- Emphasizing the need for de-escalation and diplomatic resolutions is critical for India's national interests.

Hezbollah:

- Hezbollah, a Shia militia and political party in Lebanon, is considered the dominant force within the Iran-supported Axis of Resistance.
- Established in 1982 by Iran's Revolutionary Guards, Hezbollah played a key role in driving Israeli forces out of south Lebanon in 2000 through years of guerrilla warfare.

Hezbollah Israel conflict:

- Hezbollah and Israel have engaged in multiple conflicts, with Israel invading Lebanon to crush Palestinian guerrillas in 1982.
- Hezbollah's resistance led to Israel's withdrawal in 2000. In the 2006 conflict, Hezbollah retaliated with rocket attacks. Both sides have maintained a fragile ceasefire since then.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Enhancing Logistics Efficiency

India has recently introduced the National Logistics Policy (NLP) in an effort to streamline the movement of goods and boost the overall competitiveness of the industry.

The logistics sector has experienced significant global expansion due to technological advancements, e-commerce growth, and globalization. Valued at over \$8 trillion, it is set to grow further with increased automation and AI. However, challenges persist in regions like India regarding digital technology adoption.

India's Lag in Logistics Technology

The Indian logistics sector, crucial to the country's GDP at 14%, lags in technological adoption. While global logistics embraces AI and automation, India's reliance on manual methods impedes competitiveness.

Key Challenges in India's Logistics Sector

Outdated Systems: Manual logistics operations worsen errors and inefficiencies due to non-digital processes.

Fragmented Infrastructure: Insufficient integration among logistics providers causes delays and increased costs.

Slow Adoption of Automation: Global logistics embrace automation, India falls behind in technology adoption.

High Costs: Indian logistics costly due to lower technological advancements, raising expenses.

Need of Logistic policy

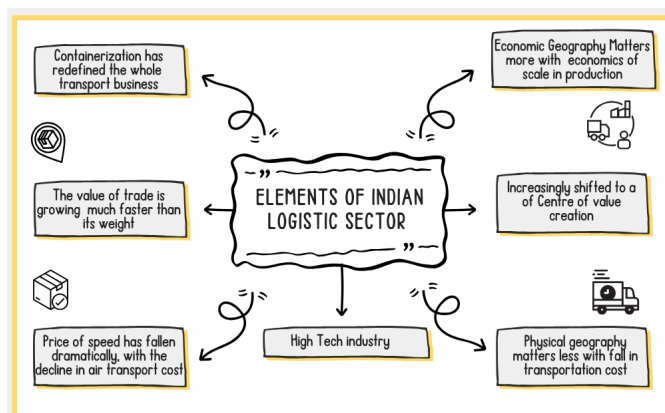
India's logistics costs (13-14%) exceed developed economies (8%), due to sector fragmentation and complexity.

This sector provides employment to more than 22 million people and is expected to grow at the rate of 10.5% over the next 5 years.

Logistics plays pivotal role in enhancing India's global trade diversity.

Aim

- Efforts to decrease logistics costs to 10% in five years.
- Enhance skills in youth, create jobs, and advance industry competitiveness nationwide. Prioritize process re-engineering, digitization, and multi-modal transport.



Benefits of robust logistic system

An effective logistics system is vital for the seamless transportation of products and services locally and globally, providing various advantages:

1. **Cost Efficiency:** An organized logistics system saves costs by optimizing routes and fuel.
2. **Improved Supply Chain Management:** Effective logistics enhances supply chain integration from procurement to delivery.
3. **Enhanced Customer Satisfaction:** Efficient logistics system ensures timely delivery, enhancing customer satisfaction and trust.
4. **Global Competitiveness:** Efficient logistics infrastructure supports global expansion and reduces trade barriers.
5. **Economic Growth:** A robust logistics sector boosts manufacturing, retail, jobs, and economic growth.
6. **Environmental Sustainability:** Efficient logistics reduces fuel consumption and emissions through optimized routing and load management.
7. **Risk Management and Resilience:** A resilient logistics system mitigates disruptions by diversifying transport modes.

Four Major Steps Under National Logistics Policy

1. **Integration of Digital System (IDS):** Seven departmental systems, including transport and trade, will be digitally integrated.
2. **Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP):** It will enhance cargo movement and real-time confidential information exchange.
3. **NICDC's (National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation) Logistics Data Bank Project** has been leveraged to develop ULIP.
4. **Ease of Logistics (ELOG):** It will simplify the rules and ease the logistics business.
5. **System Improvement Group (SIG):** monitoring all logistics-related projects regularly and tackling all obstacles.

Government Initiatives in Boosting Logistics Sector

National Logistics Policy (NLP) 2022

Objective: The National Logistics Policy (NLP) was introduced to improve logistics efficiency, reduce costs, and promote seamless movement of goods across the country.

Key Features:

- **Digital Integration:** NLP aims to integrate digital technology in logistics operations, including the use of

real-time monitoring systems and block chain for secure data handling.

- **Reducing Logistics Costs:** Target to reduce logistics costs from 13-14% of GDP to 8-9% by improving efficiency.
- **Multi-modal Transport:** Promotes the integration of road, rail, and waterway transport to improve connectivity and reduce reliance on a single transport mode.

Gati Shakti – National Master Plan (NMP) for Multimodal Connectivity

Objective: Launched in 2021, the Gati Shakti initiative aims to improve infrastructure, reduce logistics costs, and enhance the ease of doing business by providing a unified plan for the development of roads, railways, ports, and airports.

Key Features:

- **Holistic Infrastructure Development:** The initiative integrates over 16 ministries, including Railways and Roads & Highways, to create a seamless transportation network.
- **Digital Platforms:** Utilizes Geographic Information Systems (GIS)-based platforms for real-time tracking of projects.
- **Multi-modal Logistics Parks:** The creation of logistics parks at strategic locations to reduce transit time and improve cargo handling.

Bharatmala Pariyojana

Objective: The Bharatmala project aims to improve road connectivity across the country, especially for areas that are vital for freight movement.

Key Features:

- **Development of National Highways:** Focus on constructing highways and expressways to improve logistics corridors.
- **Economic Corridors:** Development of 50 economic corridors that will directly link production centers to markets, reducing freight costs.
- **Port Connectivity:** Better connectivity to ports and border areas to promote exports and reduce logistics time for import/export cargo.

Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC)

Objective: The Indian government, through the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCIL), is constructing dedicated rail corridors to enhance freight movement across the country.

Key Features:

- **Eastern and Western Corridors:** The two major freight corridors – Eastern (1,839 km) and Western (1,506 km) – aim to improve the movement of goods between key industrial zones.

- **Reduction in Travel Time:** Faster freight trains will reduce transit times, benefiting industries by lowering logistics costs.
- **Green Corridors:** Promotes the use of more efficient rail transport over roadways, reducing carbon emissions.

Sagarmala Programme

Objective: This initiative focuses on modernizing India's port infrastructure and improving inland waterways to boost the country's maritime logistics.

Key Features:

- **Port-led Development:** Enhances port capacity and improves connectivity between ports and the hinterland to facilitate the seamless movement of goods.
- **Coastal Shipping:** Encourages the use of coastal shipping and inland waterways for cargo movement to reduce road and rail congestion.
- **Logistics Parks near Ports:** Setting up logistics parks near ports to enhance cargo handling and reduce turnaround times.

Logistics Efficiency Enhancement Programme (LEEP)

Objective: Part of the Bharatmala Pariyojana, LEEP focuses on improving India's logistics efficiency by addressing bottlenecks in supply chains and integrating multi-modal transport.

Key Features:

- **Integration of Transport Modes:** Encourages the use of different modes of transport (road, rail, air, and waterways) to reduce dependency on any one mode and improve logistics efficiency.
- **Improving Last-mile Connectivity:** Focuses on developing last-mile infrastructure to reduce delays in goods transportation.

Indian Customs EDI Gateway (ICEGATE)

Objective: ICEGATE is the e-commerce portal of the Indian Customs Department, aimed at providing a seamless and digitalized process for the clearance of goods and improving the efficiency of international trade.

Key Features:

- **Faster Customs Clearance:** Digital systems for paperless processing of export and import documents, reducing turnaround time at ports.
- **Facilitating Trade:** ICEGATE links 15,000+ importers/exporters and handles 98% of India's international trade.
- **Real-time Tracking:** Provides real-time information on the movement of cargo, making the system transparent and efficient.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) – Logistics Skill Development

Objective: To address the skill gap in the logistics sector, this scheme provides vocational training and skills development in logistics and supply chain management.

Way Ahead

- **Collaborative Efforts:** Companies need to align with government initiatives by investing in skill development and technology integration.
- By reducing the skill gap and fostering innovation, the logistics sector can become digitally robust and competitive on a global scale.
- **Overcoming the technological lag:** It is essential for India to compete globally.

- Collective efforts between industry players and the government will drive future growth by leveraging digital tools, automation, and AI, ultimately leading to sustained economic development.

Conclusion

India's logistics industry is at a crossroads. While it significantly contributes to the nation's economy, it faces challenges in fully integrating digital technology. With strong government support, skill development programs, and private sector investments, India can bridge its technology gap and emerge as a major player in the global logistics market.

PRELIMS IN-BRIEF BI-WEEKLY

Indian Heritage and Culture

MANKIDIA TRIBE

The Mankidia community is an Austro-Asiatic community that ekes out a living mainly from the forests.

- They constitute a semi-nomadic section of the Birhor tribe.
- They have been identified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in Odisha.
- **Occupation:** They are primarily a food gathering and hunting. They are one of the most little-known forest dwelling and wandering communities of the state as well as the country.
- They wander inside forests in small bands and stay at different tandas – the temporary makeshift settlements comprising of temporary dome-shaped leaf huts known as Kumbhas.
- **Language:** They speak a form of Munda language and some of them are also conversant in Odia.
- They believe in both malevolent and benevolent spirits and Gods. Logobir and Budhimai are their supreme deities.
- The worship their ancestors for the purpose of enjoying health and achieving success in hunting and collecting forest produce.
- **Location:** Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal.

PASHMINA SHAWL

Hailing from Kashmir, Pashmina shawls boast superior craftsmanship and Ladakhi Cashmere wool. The term "Pashmina" originates from Persian "Pashm," denoting "soft gold" or "wool." This prized material is sourced from the undercoat of the Pashmina goat, native to the Himalayan highlands. Kashmir's Pashmina holds a **G.I TAG** for its traditional artisanal methods.

Process

- Cashmere wool, esteemed for its superior softness and insulating properties, is transformed into yarn by utilizing age-old spinning techniques.
- Skilled craftsmen then meticulously weave the yarn into exquisite shawls, incorporating intricate patterns inspired by Kashmiri cultural traditions.
- The use of natural dyes further enhances the beauty of these masterpieces.

TIRUPATI BALAJI TEMPLE

The Tirumala Venkateswara Temple is a Hindu temple located in Tirumala, Andhra Pradesh.

The temple stands at 853 m above sea level on Venkata Hill, one of Tirumala's saptagiri.

It is dedicated to Lord Sri Venkateswara, an incarnation of Vishnu. It has been mentioned in holy scriptures such as the Garuda Purana, Brahma Purana and many others.

History:

1. The temple is located on Venkata Hill at 853m elevation.
2. The Chola dynasty significantly contributed to temple development and patronage.
3. The temple's importance in South India was established by Vijayanagara.
4. Ramanuja's 12th-century contribution revitalized the temple's significance and rituals.
5. It is one of the richest temples in the world in terms of donations received and wealth.
6. A popular practice in the temple is the donation of hair and various riches in order to please the god.
7. **Tirupati Laddu:** The renowned sweet, Tirupati Laddu, given as a prasad at the temple, has the Geographical indication (GI) tag.

Architecture:

1. The Temple is constructed in Dravidian architecture and is believed to be constructed over a period of time starting from 300 AD.
2. Three entrances lead to the sanctum sanctorum - the first is called Mahadwaram.
3. A gopuram (gateway), measuring 50 ft. is placed in front of the entrance.
4. There are two circumambulation (parikrama) paths.
5. The main shrine houses a gold-plated tower that is called Ananda Nilayam, and a temple inside the tower houses the main deity.
6. The temple's vast courtyards, pillars, and halls are adorned with exquisite sculptures and designs that capture the essence of Hindu spirituality.

KARAM FESTIVAL

The Karma festival is a vital tribal harvest celebration emphasizing the Karam tree as a symbol of deity worship.

- Observed by Munda, Oraon, Ho, and Santhal tribes in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha, this festival signifies agriculture. The Karam festival involves planting a tree branch, dancing, singing, and offerings to ensure a prosperous harvest. Myths emphasize agricultural ties.

- The Karam tree, scientifically named *Adina cordifolia*, is a deciduous tree indigenous to the Indian subcontinent.
- It plays a significant role in both ecology and culture, particularly among tribal communities.

IRULA COMMUNITY

The Irula tribe of Tamil Nadu is crucial in healthcare. The community still faces poverty even with snake venom sales. Irula tribal cooperative near Chennai faces economic uncertainties despite healthcare work. The Irula tribe, a PVTG in Tamil Nadu, primarily lives in the Nilgiris region, with communities also in Karnataka and Kerala, emphasizing ancestor worship. Anthropological research indicates that the Irulas, an ancient tribal group in India, are part of the Negrito race thought to originate from Africa. They speak the Irula language, written in the Tamil script.

Indian History

BATTLE OF SARAGARHI

Saragarhi Day, observed on September 12, commemorates the 1897 Battle of Saragarhi, one of the most remarkable last stands in military history.

Saragarhi was a key communication post between Fort Lockhart and Fort Gulistan in the North-West Frontier Province (now in Pakistan).

Battle of Saragarhi - 12 September 1897

- On this day, 21 soldiers of the 36th Sikhs regiment, led by Havildar Ishar Singh, defended the fort against over 8,000 Afridi and Orakzai tribal militants for seven hours.
- The bravery of the soldiers was recognized with posthumous honors, including the Indian Order of Merit, awarded by Queen Victoria.
- In 2017, the Punjab government declared Saragarhi Day a holiday.
- The battle has since been immortalized in various ways, including memorials, a film (*Kesari*), and remembrance events in both India and Pakistan.

Society & Social Justice

PRADHAN MANTRI JANJATIYA UNNAT GRAM ABHIYAN

The Union Cabinet sanctioned the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan to develop tribal areas. The mission aims to reach 5 crore tribal people by improving social, education, health, and livelihood systems.

- **Priority objectives:** Upgrade housing, infrastructure, education, healthcare, and empower tribes through skill development and marketing.

- Moreover, it incorporates tribal home stays and assistance for Forest Right Act, offering innovation.
- The mission builds on the success of PM Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (2023), aiming for holistic tribal development through a federal cooperative approach.

Geography

AMAZON RIVER

It is the world's largest river by water volume and width and the second-longest river in the world after the Nile.

Course: Its journey begins high in the Andes Mountains and empties into the Atlantic Ocean on the northeastern coast of Brazil.

River basin

- It has the largest drainage area of any river system.
- Its watershed spans the countries of Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and Bolivia.
- Roughly two-thirds of the Amazon's main stream and by far the largest portion of its basin are within Brazil.
- The river's size changes with the seasons. In the dry season, it spans 4 to 5 km in width, but during the wet season, this can swell to 50 km.

Tributaries

- Notable tributaries include the Rio Negro, the Madeira River, and the Xingu River, among many others.

The Amazon Rainforest, which represents about half of the Earth's remaining rainforest, also constitutes its single largest reserve of biological resources. It is sometimes referred to as the "lungs of the Earth" due to its role in regulating the planet's oxygen and carbon cycles.

MINI-MOON

Mini-moons are asteroids that fail to escape Earth's gravity and end up orbiting the planet for some time.

They are usually very small and hard to detect – only four mini-moons of Earth have ever been discovered, and none are still orbiting Earth.

These events are relatively frequent, with similar occurrences happening every few decades.

How does Earth capture Mini Moons?

- Mini moons are captured from the Near-Earth Object (NEO) population, which consists of asteroids and other celestial bodies that pass close to Earth.
- NASA classifies any space object that comes within 120 million miles (190 million kilometers) of our planet as a near-Earth object, while objects within 4.7 million miles (7.5 million kilometers) are considered potentially hazardous.

Key facts about 2024 PT5

- It is an Apollo-class NEO, which follows an orbit similar to that of previous mini moons like 2022 NX1.
- The asteroid was discovered with the help of the NASA-funded Asteroid Terrestrial-impact Last Alert System (ATLAS).
- It is estimated to be just 33 feet long and is too small to be visible to the naked eye or through typical amateur telescopes.
- It is within the brightness range of telescopes used by professional astronomers.
- **Significance:** The observations of 2024 PT5 will help scientists expand the knowledge of asteroids that pass close to the Earth and those that sometimes collide with it.

Polity

ICGA CANCER MULTI-OMICS DATA PORTAL

It is India's first comprehensive cancer multi-omics data portal launched by the India Cancer Genome Atlas (ICGA) foundation. It is India's first platform providing open access to data from Indian cancer patients.

It provides open access to clinically correlated data from Indian cancer patients, aimed at transforming cancer research and treatment for Indian populations.

The portal will be the first in India to offer data that includes DNA, RNA, and protein profiles of breast cancer patients, integrated with clinical outcomes.

Currently, the platform consists of data from 50 breast cancer patients, with plans to expand to over 500 patients in the coming year.

This data is freely accessible to the global research community under India's PRIDE (Promotion of Research and Innovation through Data Exchange) guidelines, which promote ethical sharing and collaboration in cancer research.

INDIAN CANCER GENOME ATLAS (ICGA)

It is a national initiative focused on mapping cancers across India, supported by a foundation. The ICGA Foundation, a not-for-profit organization, operates through a public-private-philanthropic partnership.

It receives support from more than 50 clinicians, researchers, and data analysts. Its mission is to enhance cancer diagnosis and treatment for Indian patients and contribute to the global understanding of cancer biology.

The foundation's first project focuses on the multi-omics profiling of breast cancer, with plans to extend this effort to other types of cancer in the future.

NATIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR ANIMATION

The Union Cabinet approved the establishment of a National Centre of Excellence (NCoE) for Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and Extended Reality (AVGC-XR), named the Indian Institute for Immersive Creators (IIIC).

This institution, modeled after IITs and IIMs, will be located in Mumbai and aims to position India as a global content hub.

It will offer specialized training, foster research and development, and support startups in the AVGC-XR sector, enhancing India's soft power and attracting foreign investments.

The NCoE will focus on India's IP creation, cultural content, and employment opportunities, contributing to the Atmanirbhar Bharat.

International Relations &

Internal Security

PACT FOR THE FUTURE

It is a landmark declaration reaffirming the commitment of UN Member States to sustainable development, peace, and stronger global governance.

The Pact's five broad focus areas include

- **Sustainable development:** It includes a pledge to move faster towards achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement commitments on climate change.
- **International peace and security:** Redouble efforts to build and sustain peaceful, inclusive and just societies and address the root causes of conflicts and protect all civilians in armed conflict.
- **Science and technology and digital revolution:** Science, technology and innovation have the potential to accelerate the realization of the aspirations of the United Nations across all three pillars of its work.
- **Youth and future generations:** Listen to young people and include them in decision-making, at the national and global levels.
- **Transforming global governance:** Build stronger partnerships with civil society, the private sector, local and regional authorities.

QUAD CANCER MOONSHOT INITIATIVE

It was launched by the QUAD countries (India, United States, Australia and Japan).

It is aimed at implementing innovative strategies to prevent, detect, treat and alleviate the impact of cancer on patients and their families.

It will focus on expanding cervical cancer screening; increasing vaccinations against the human papillomavirus, or HPV, a common sexually transmitted infection that is the primary cause of cervical cancer; and treating patients.

India's contribution

- India will, additionally, offer technical assistance to interested countries in the Indo-Pacific region on DPI for cancer screening, care and continuum through its US \$10 million contribution to WHO's-Global Initiative on Digital Health.
- India commits to providing HPV sampling kits, detection tools and cervical cancer vaccines worth \$7.5 million to the Indo-Pacific region.
- India is working on an AI based treatment protocol for the disease.
- India will provide support for radiotherapy treatment and capacity building for cancer prevention in the Indo-Pacific.

This significant contribution aims to strengthen local efforts to prevent and detect cervical cancer and empower communities with affordable, accessible tools for early detection and prevention, while supporting vaccination programs to reduce the disease burden across the region.

Economics

THE FOOD IMPORT REJECTION ALERT PORTAL

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched the Food Import Rejection Alert (FIRA) portal, which will notify authorities about food consignments rejected at Indian borders due to safety concerns.

The portal, unveiled at the Global Food Regulators Summit 2024, will facilitate quick information sharing to prevent health risks from rejected food.

In the past year, over 1,500 imported food items were rejected by FSSAI for failing to meet Indian standards.

Other government healthcare achievements include expanding the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) to cover all senior citizens aged 70 and above, benefiting 60 million people.

The U-WIN portal has digitized vaccination services, registering 64 million beneficiaries so far.

Additionally, a new TB treatment regimen and diagnostics have been introduced to shorten treatment time, with plans for nationwide rollout.

DEBT RECOVERY TRIBUNALS (DRTS):

They are specialized judicial bodies established under the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 (DRT Act).

RTs play a crucial role in enforcing creditor rights and expediting debt recovery processes under Indian law.

Types of Cases Handled:

- Their primary mandate is to adjudicate and resolve disputes concerning debt recovery from banks, financial institutions, and other specified entities.
- DRTs can take cases from banks for disputed loans above Rs 20 Lakh.
- The Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act) provides access to banks and financial institutions covered under the Act for recovery of secured debts from the borrowers without the intervention of the Courts at the first stage.
- Securitization Appeals (SAs) can be filed with the DRTs by those aggrieved against action taken by secured creditors under the SARFAESI Act.

The DRT has the following structure:

- **President:** A judicial officer appointed by the central government who is qualified to be a District Judge.
- **Members:** Administrative and technical members appointed by the central government.

Under section 22(2) of the Recovery of Debts Due To Banks And Financial Institutions Act, 1993, DRT has the following powers:

- Summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him on oath;
- Requiring the discovery and production of documents;
- Receiving evidence on affidavits;
- Issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses or documents; reviewing its decisions;
- Dismissing an application for default or deciding it ex parte;
- Setting aside any order of dismissal of any application for default or any order passed by it ex parte;
- Any other matter which may be prescribed.
- **Jurisdiction:** Each DRT is established for a specified territorial jurisdiction, and its jurisdiction extends to cases involving the recovery of debts due to banks and financial institutions within that jurisdiction.
- **Appeals and Enforcement:** Parties aggrieved by DRT orders have the right to appeal against the decision before the Debts Recovery Appellate Tribunal (DRAT).

At present, 39 DRTs and 5 DRATs are functioning across the country. Each DRT and DRAT are headed by a Presiding Officer and a Chairperson, respectively.

CREDIT DEFAULT SWAPS

It is a financial derivative that allows an investor to swap or offset their credit risk with that of another investor.

In a credit default swap contract, the buyer pays an ongoing premium similar to the payments on an insurance policy. In exchange, the seller agrees to pay the security's value and interest payments if a default occurs.

It can be used for speculation, hedging, or as a form of arbitrage. Credit default swaps played a role in both the 2008 Great Recession and the 2010 European Sovereign Debt Crisis.

What are Mutual Funds?

- A mutual fund is a pool of money managed by a professional Fund Manager.
- It is a trust that collects money from a number of investors who share a common investment objective and invests the same in equities, bonds, money market instruments and/or other securities.
- The income / gains generated from this collective investment is distributed proportionately amongst the investors after deducting applicable expenses and levies.

ANTITRUST INVESTIGATIONS

Indian antitrust investigations have uncovered that Amazon and Flipkart violated competition laws by engaging in practices that unfairly favored certain sellers and harmed competition.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) detailed these findings in two reports, which include:

- **Preferred Sellers:** Amazon and Flipkart provided preferential treatment to selected sellers. These sellers received significant benefits such as marketing and warehousing services at minimal costs, which created an unfair advantage over other sellers.
- **Preferential Listings:** The majority of top listings on Amazon and Flipkart were dominated by these preferred sellers, creating barriers for other sellers to compete effectively.
- **Exclusive Product Launches:** Both companies had exclusive partnerships for launching technology products, such as smartphones. This practice disadvantaged smaller retailers and delayed product availability for traditional stores.
- **Deep Discounting:** Amazon and Flipkart allowed their affiliated sellers to offer deep discounts, often below cost, to drive out competition.

BHASKAR

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is set to launch BHASKAR (Bharat Startup Knowledge Access Registry), a digital platform designed to support and enhance India's startup ecosystem.

Under the Startup India program, BHASKAR will centralize resources and streamline collaboration among startups, investors, mentors, service providers, and government bodies.

Key features: Personalized IDs for stakeholders, networking and collaboration opportunities, centralized access to resources, and improved discoverability of opportunities.

The platform aims to position India as a global hub for innovation by promoting cross-border collaborations and supporting the growth of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

BHASKAR is expected to drive innovation, job creation, and economic growth, solidifying India's reputation as a leader in global entrepreneurship

Science & Technology

NANOZYMES

A recent study by the CSIR-Central Leather Research Institute (CSIR-CLRI) has shown that nanozymes, which are nanomaterials functioning like enzymes, can improve collagen's integrity and resistance to enzymatic degradation.

Traditional collagen crosslinking methods often involve harsh chemicals that risk damaging the protein, but nanozymes achieve this under mild conditions, preserving collagen's structure.

This breakthrough has significant implications for creating durable collagen-based biomaterials used in wound healing and tissue engineering.

The study highlights a manganese-based nanozyme that enhances collagen's stability through a tannic acid-tyrosine linkage, making it resistant to collagenase, an enzyme that typically degrades collagen.

Another related study explores how biomolecules interact with enzyme-like catalytic sites in metal-organic frameworks, offering new avenues for more precise artificial enzymes in medical applications.

SUSTAINABLE AVIATION FUELS

India and Brazil have reaffirmed their commitment to collaborate in the energy sector, particularly focusing on sustainable fuels like biofuels. As founding members of the Global Biofuels Alliance, they emphasized biofuels' role in the global energy transition and socioeconomic growth.

India and Brazil are well-positioned to work together on sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) using their existing biofuel infrastructure and agricultural resources.

They also plan to co-host the India-Brazil Clean Cooking Ministerial Meeting during India Energy Week 2025, aiming to explore ways to improve global clean cooking access.

Additionally, both nations discussed collaboration in deep and ultra-deep offshore energy explorations.

Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAFs) are a type of renewable fuel designed to reduce the carbon footprint of aviation.

Made from sustainable resources like waste oils, agricultural residues, and even algae, SAFs can replace or blend with conventional jet fuels, offering a eco-friendlier alternative for powering aircraft.

EPIGENETICS

Epigenetics is the study of how cells control gene activity without changing the DNA sequence. "Epi-" means on or above in Greek, and "epigenetic" describes factors beyond the genetic code.

Epigenetic changes are modifications to DNA that regulate whether genes are turned on or off.

These Epigenetic modifications are attached to DNA and do not change the sequence of DNA building blocks.

Within the complete set of DNA in a cell (the genome), all of the modifications that regulate the activity (expression) of the genes is known as the epigenome. Because epigenetic changes help determine whether genes are turned on or off, they influence the production of proteins in cells.

This regulation helps ensure that each cell produces only proteins that are necessary for its function. For example, proteins that promote bone growth are not produced in muscle cells.

Patterns of epigenetic modification vary among individuals, in different tissues within an individual, and even in different cells within a tissue.

Environmental influences, such as a person's diet and exposure to pollutants, can impact the epigenome.

Epigenetic modifications can be maintained from cell to cell as cells divide and, in some cases, can be inherited through the generations.

Errors in the epigenetic process, such as modification of the wrong gene or failure to add a chemical group to a particular gene or histone, can lead to abnormal gene activity or inactivity.

Altered gene activity, including that caused by epigenetic errors, is a common cause of genetic disorders.

Conditions such as cancers, metabolic disorders, and degenerative disorders have been found to be related to epigenetic errors.

PROJECT 200

It is an innovative satellite designed to operate at an Ultra-Low Earth Orbit (180 km-250 km), developed by Bellatrix Aerospace, a Bengaluru-based space startup.

Traditionally, satellites have been deployed in orbits at altitudes well above 450 km. This altitude choice has been influenced by various considerations, such as the desire to minimize the impact of atmospheric interference on satellite operations.

Though it is known that a satellite's capabilities improve significantly at 200 km, limitations on propulsion technology have prevented satellites from operating at this orbit.

Project 200 is a technology demonstration mission to qualify a new unconventional satellite powered by an innovative propulsion system (developed in-house) at around 200 km.

Bellatrix Aerospace stated that their cutting-edge propulsion technology enables satellites to maintain 200 km orbits for years, rather than deorbiting in a few days.

According to Bellatrix, at 200 km, a satellite's capability would improve significantly since the communication latency is reduced by half and image resolution is improved by three times.

The cost of the satellite is also less when compared to spacecraft placed in 450 km orbits.

STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (S. AUREUS)

It is a type of gram-positive, sphere-shaped (Coccal) bacteria.

aureus may occur commonly in the environment. It is commonly found on the skin and in the nose of about 30% of individuals.

Most of the time, *aureus* does not cause any harm, but it can sometimes cause infections.

Skin infections are common, but the bacteria can spread through the bloodstream and infect distant organs, particularly heart valves (endocarditis) and bones (osteomyelitis).

Skin infections may cause blisters, abscesses, and redness and swelling in the infected area.

Transmission:

- These bacteria are spread by having direct contact with an infected person, by using a contaminated object, or by inhaling infected droplets dispersed by sneezing or coughing.
- Further, due to its ability to affect a wide range of species, *S. aureus* can be readily transmitted from one species to another. This includes transmission between humans and animals.

Treatment:

- Treatment usually involves antibiotics and cleaning of the infected area.

Some types of *S. aureus* are resistant to common antibiotic treatments.

EUROPA CLIPPER MISSION

It is a NASA mission to study Jupiter's icy moon Europa.

The mission will place a spacecraft in orbit around Jupiter in order to perform a detailed investigation of Europa.

The first NASA spacecraft dedicated to studying an ocean world beyond Earth, Europa Clipper aims to find out if the ice-encased moon Europa could be habitable.

Europa shows strong evidence for an ocean of liquid water beneath its icy crust.

The spacecraft extends 100 feet (30.5 meters) from one end to the other and about 58 feet (17.6 meters) across.

It is the largest spacecraft NASA has ever developed for a planetary mission.

Europa Clipper will orbit Jupiter and conduct 49 close flybys of the moon to gather data needed to determine whether there are places below its thick frozen crust that could support life.

The spacecraft carries nine science instruments and a gravity experiment that uses the telecommunications system.

In order to obtain the best science during each flyby, all the science instruments will operate simultaneously on every pass. Scientists will then layer the data together to paint a full picture of the moon.

The spacecraft has large solar arrays to collect enough light for its power needs as it operates in the Jupiter system.

PHEROMONE

Pheromones are chemical substances which are secreted on the outside by an individual, and received by another individual of the same species.

These are present in all bodily secretions, and especially in the axillary sweat – can be detected by the olfactory system.

Pheromones are ecto-hormones, meaning they are secreted outside the body.

Types of Pheromones

- **Releaser pheromones:** They work right away and elicit a specific response from the other person.
- **Signaler pheromones:** They give information about the person who releases them. For example, they help a mother tell her own baby apart from other babies.
- **Modulator pheromones:** They affect mood and emotions.
- **Primer pheromones** affect hormones, for example during pregnancy or menstrual cycles.

Animals, with their heightened senses and vomeronasal organ are known to secrete pheromones to trigger many kinds of behaviors like raising an alarm, signaling a food trail, warning another animal to back off, and bonding with an offspring.

Pheromones are also used by some fungi, slime molds, and algae as attractants in reproduction; organisms of complementary reproductive cell types grow or move toward each other.

TRISHNA MISSION

The Thermal Infrared Imaging Satellite for High-resolution Natural Resource Assessment (TRISHNA) mission a collaborative endeavor between the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) the French Space Agency CNES.

Objectives

- It is engineered to deliver high spatial and temporal resolution observations of Earth's surface temperature, vegetation health, and water cycle dynamics.

- It will also help in a comprehensive assessment of urban heat islands, detection of thermal anomalies linked to volcanic activity and geothermal resources, and precise monitoring of snow-melt runoff and glacier dynamics.

The mission will also provide valuable data on aerosol optical depth, atmospheric water vapor, and cloud cover.

- **Payloads:** TRISHNA satellite is equipped with two primary payloads.
- **The Thermal Infra-Red (TIR) Payload:** It is provided by CNES, features a four-channel long-wave infrared imaging sensor capable of high-resolution surface temperature and emissivity mapping.
- **The Visible - Near Infra-Red - Short Wave Infra-Red (VNIR-SWIR) payload:** It is developed by ISRO, includes seven spectral bands designed for detailed mapping of surface reflectance of VSWIR bands for generating important biophysical and radiation budget variables.

The variables retrieved from the combination of payload data would help in solving surface energy balance to estimate surface heat fluxes.

The satellite will operate in a sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 761 km, with a local time of 12:30 PM at the equator.

This orbit will provide a spatial resolution of 57 meters for land and coastal areas and 1 km for oceanic and polar regions. The mission is designed for a 5-year operational life.

VENUS ORBITER MISSION

It is envisaged to orbit a scientific spacecraft in the orbit of planet Venus.

Objectives

- It is for better understanding of the Venusian surface and subsurface, atmospheric processes and influence of Sun on Venusian atmosphere.
- The study of the underlying causes of transformation of Venus, which is whispered to be once habitable and quite similar to Earth would be an invaluable aid in understanding the evolution of the sister planets, both Venus and Earth.
- The Indian Venus mission is expected to answer some of the outstanding scientific questions resulting in various scientific outcomes.
- India Space Research Organization (ISRO) will be responsible for the development of spacecraft and its launch.
- The mission is expected to be accomplished on the opportunity available during March 2028. The realization of the spacecraft and launch vehicle is through various industries.

Funding: The total fund approved for the VOM is Rs.1236 Cr out of which Rs 824.00 Crore will be spent on the spacecraft.

The cost includes development and realization of the spacecraft including its specific payloads and technology elements, global ground station support cost for navigation and network as well as the cost of launch vehicle.

Significance: Venus, the closest planet to Earth and believed to have formed in conditions similar to Earth, offers a unique opportunity to understand how planetary environments can evolve very differently.

Bio-RIDE scheme



Bio-RIDE Scheme

Budget:
Rs 9197 crore
(2021-22 to 2025-26)

Purpose: Support advanced biotech R&D

COMPONENTS

- Biotechnology Research and Development (R&D)
- Industrial & Entrepreneurship Development (I&ED)
- Biomanufacturing and Biofoundry

Objectives: Promote bio-entrepreneurship, innovation, industry-academia collaboration, sustainable biomanufacturing, research funding, and human resource development

Source: Gov

BHARATIYA ANTARIKSH STATION

The Union Cabinet has approved the development of the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS-1) as part of an expanded Gaganyaan programme, marking a significant leap in India's space ambitions.

The plan involves completing eight missions, including uncrewed ones, by December 2028, with BAS-1 expected to be operational by 2035.

Additionally, the decision sets the groundwork for a crewed lunar mission by 2040.

Key highlights:

- Gaganyaan programme now includes eight missions.
- BAS-1 will focus on microgravity-based scientific research and technology development, generating opportunities in high-tech sectors.
- ISRO will lead the efforts, collaborating with industry and academia, to develop critical technologies for long-duration human space missions.

- The Cabinet also approved the Chandrayaan-4 mission and a Venus Orbiter mission.

NEURALINK'S BLINDSIGHT

Elon Musk's brain-chip company, Neuralink, received the FDA's "breakthrough device" designation for its Blindsight implant, designed to restore vision, even for individuals who have lost both eyes and their optic nerve.

This designation accelerates the development and review process for medical devices that address life-threatening conditions.

The Blindsight implant is part of Neuralink's broader mission to restore neural functions.

Neuralink has already implanted the device in a second patient, enabling them to play video games and design 3D objects.

COELACANTHS

A new, well-preserved coelacanth fossil has prompted a re-evaluation of how Earth's geology drives evolution.

What are Coelacanths?

- They are ancient deep-sea fish, believed to be extinct until rediscovered in 1938. They have been around for over 410 million years and are closely related to tetrapods.
- A newly discovered, well-preserved coelacanth fossil has led scientists to re-evaluate evolution, revealing that tectonic plate activity, rather than ocean conditions, played a key role in driving the creation of new species. This challenges previous assumptions about how Earth's geology influences evolutionary patterns.

This discovery came from a fossil in Australia's Gogo Formation. The living coelacanth species, although similar to their ancient relatives, show slight changes in DNA and body proportions, challenging the idea that they are "living fossils."

MVA-BN VACCINE

The World Health Organization (WHO) has prequalified the Danish MVA-BN vaccine, making it the first approved vaccine to combat mpox.

This prequalification facilitates broader and faster access to the vaccine, particularly for high-risk populations, aiming to reduce transmission and contain outbreaks.

The MVA-BN vaccine, developed by Bavarian Nordic A/S, shows 76% effectiveness with a single dose and 82% with two doses.

The vaccine can be stored at 2-8°C for up to eight weeks and is recommended for adults over 18.

Environment

WILDLIFE HABITATS DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Union Cabinet has approved the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats scheme for the 15th Finance Commission cycle. The scheme supports key initiatives like Project Tiger, Project Elephant, and Development of Wildlife Habitat.

The initiative focuses on boosting technological interventions, including the use of AI, camera traps, and conservation genetics for wildlife monitoring.

Additionally, it supports projects like Project Dolphin and Project Lion, leveraging advanced tools for species conservation.

The scheme benefits 55 tiger reserves, 33 elephant reserves, and 718 protected areas, contributing to both wildlife conservation and climate resilience.

COMMISSION FOR AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT (CAQM)

The CAQM is a statutory body established under the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region (NCR) and Adjoining Areas, Act 2021.

Mandate: Better coordination, research, identification, and resolution of problems surrounding the air quality index and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

It undertakes action for the prevention and control of Air pollution in Delhi-NCR & Adjoining Areas which impacts the air quality of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi.

The Commission is required to coordinate its actions on monitoring of air quality with the government of Delhi and the adjoining states, which includes Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

Powers:

- Restricting activities influencing air quality.
- Investigating and conducting research related to environmental pollution impacting air quality, preparing codes and guidelines to prevent and control air pollution,
- Issuing directions on matters including inspections, or regulations, which will be binding on the concerned person or authority.
- All the directions and orders by the Commission are of binding nature, and any person, officer, or authority shall be bound to comply with the same.
- The commission is directly accountable to the parliament.

Composition:

- **Chairperson:** To be chaired by a government official of the rank of Secretary or Chief Secretary. He will hold the post for three years or until s/he attains the age of 70 years.
- It will also have five ex officio members who are either Chief Secretaries or Secretaries in charge of the department dealing with environment protection in the States of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.
- Three full time technical members.

- Three members from non-government organisations.
- Technical members from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Indian Space Research Organization, and NITI Aayog

GHOST SHARKS

Ghost sharks, also known as chimaeras and spookfish, are a group of cartilaginous fish closely related to sharks and rays.

They genetically diverged from their shark relatives nearly 400 million years ago.

Features:

- They have long, tapering bodies and incredibly large heads.
- The ghost shark's maximum observed length is about 49 inches, but scientists believe they can grow to be more than six feet in some cases.
- Their skin ranges in color from black to pale blue to brownish grey.
- They have haunting black eyes and smooth, light brown, scale-free skin.
- Their eyes are backed with a reflective tissue layer that makes them seem to glow in the dark, contributing to an eerie—even ghostlike—appearance.
- They live at depths ranging from 200 meters to 2,600 meters and generally stay close to the seafloor.
- Their diet primarily consists of shellfish, mollusks, and worms that live on or under the seafloor.
- They are sometimes referred to as the ocean's butterflies for the way they glide through the water with their large pectoral fins.

Ghost sharks are thought to be solitary animals, as they are generally observed alone.

NAVEGAON-NAGZIRA TIGER RESERVE (NNTR)

Location: It spans 653.67 sq.km. across the Gondia and Bhandara districts of Maharashtra.

It is located in the heart of the central Indian Tiger Landscape, which contributes almost 1/6 of the total tiger population of the country.

Declared a tiger reserve in 2013, it is the fifth tiger reserve in Maharashtra.

NNTR is comprised of the notified areas of Nawegaon National Park, Nawegaon Wildlife Sanctuary, Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary, New Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary, and Koka Wildlife Sanctuary.

It has linkages with Kanha, Pench, and Tadoba Tiger Reserves.

Topography: The topography is undulating, and the highest point, viz. 'Zenda Pahad', is around 702 m above Mean Sea Level.

Vegetation: Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous

Flora: There are 364 species of plants, and the major trees are: Terminalia tomentosa, Lagerstroemia parviflora, Anogeisus

lotifolia, Pterocarpus marsupium, Diospyros melanoxylon, Ougeinia oogenesis, etc.

Fauna: The major wild animals are: Tiger, Panther, Small Indian Civet, Palm Civet, Wolf, Jackal, Wild Dog, Sloth Bear, Ratel, Common Giant Flying Squirrel, Gaur, Sambar, Chital, Four Horned Antelope, Mouse Deer, and Pangolin.

BARAK BHUBAN WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Location: It is located in Assam's Barak Valley. (The Barak Valley also houses the Borail Wildlife Sanctuary).

- It is nestled between the Barak and Sonai rivers.
- It is named after the second-largest river in the northeast and is spread across three districts - Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj.

Fauna:

- It serves as a critical habitat for a diverse range of wildlife.
- Eight primate species, including the slow loris, rhesus macaque, and hoolock gibbon, find refuge here. The sanctuary is also known to be a vital habitat for the king cobra.

KLEPTOPARASITISM

The term kleptoparasites was introduced to describe the theft of food previously collected or processed by some other individual.

It is a form of feeding where one animal takes prey from another that has caught, killed, or otherwise prepared, including stored food (as in the case of cuckoo bees, which lay their eggs on the pollen masses made by other bees).

Kleptoparasites is also the 'stealing' nest material or other inanimate objects from one animal by another.

Kleptoparasites occurs in several groups of animals, such as birds, insects, and mammals, and is considered a form of social parasitism.

The kleptoparasite benefits from the efforts of other animals to obtain food, without expending energy in searching for and capturing these resources for itself.

Kleptoparasitism may be intraspecific, where the parasite is the same species as the victim, or interspecific, where the parasite is a different species.

In the latter case, the parasites are commonly close relatives of the organisms they parasitize ("Emery's Rule").

Miscellaneous

INTERNATIONAL CHESS FEDERATION (FIDE) CHESS OLYMPIAD

The Indian chess team celebrated a historic victory at the 2024 FIDE Chess Olympiad by winning double gold in both the men's and women's categories.

The International Chess Federation (FIDE) Chess Olympiad:

- The International Chess Federation (FIDE) Chess Olympiad is a biennial chess tournament in which teams from countries worldwide compete against each other.
- Organized by FIDE, the governing body of chess, the Chess Olympiad is one of the most prestigious team events in the chess world.
- It includes both an open section and a women's section, and teams compete over several rounds in a Swiss-system format, where each player faces an opponent of comparable skill from another team.
- The event promotes international camaraderie and high-level competition, and it has become a major platform for showcasing top chess talent from across the globe.

Location in News

LEBANON

It is a country located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea in Western Asia.

Capital: Beirut

Borders: It borders the Mediterranean Sea in the west, Syria in the north and east, and Israel in the south.

History:

- It is part of an area known as the Fertile Crescent, also known as the "Cradle of Civilization".
- Byblos, the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world, is around 30 km north of modern Beirut.
- Lebanon was ruled by a number of ancient empires, including the Phoenician, Egyptian, Hittite, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman.
- For over 400 years (1516-1918), Lebanon was part of the Ottoman Empire.
- In 1920, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon was ruled by France, which created the State of Greater Lebanon.
- It wasn't until 1943 that Lebanon achieved independence after French authority dissolved, leading to the withdrawal of French troops.



Geography:

- It consists of a narrow strip of territory and is one of the world's smaller sovereign states. The Lebanon Mountains, which rise to 9,800 feet (3,000 meters), run down the middle of the country.
- The Anti-Lebanon Mountains form Lebanon's border with Syria. Between the two mountain ranges lies the high, fertile Bekaa Valley.
- The valley receives water from the Litani, the only river in Lebanon that flows throughout the year.
- **Climate:** Its Mediterranean climate brings mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers.

Political Structure:

- Lebanon is a unitary, multiparty republic with a parliamentary system of government.
- Parliamentary seats are apportioned equally between Christian and Muslim. This sectarian distribution is also to be observed in appointments to public office.
- **Languages:** Arabic (official), French, English, Armenian
- **People:** Most Lebanese are Arabs. There are small groups of Armenians and Kurds.
- **Economy:** Services, including banking and tourism, are Lebanon's most important economic activities.

FALKLAND ISLANDS

Also known as the Malvinas Islands, the Falkland Islands is an internally self-governing overseas territory of the United Kingdom. It is an archipelago located in the South Atlantic Ocean, some 500 km from mainland South America.

It comprises of two large islands (East Falkland and West Falkland) and several hundred smaller ones. The two large islands are separated by Falkland Sound (strait). The islands are positioned both in the southern and western hemispheres of the Earth.

Climate: A cool temperate oceanic climate that is characterised by its lack of extremes.

Capital: Located on the island of East Falkland, is Stanley (also, Port Stanley) is the capital of the Falkland Islands.

Demographics: The population of the Falkland Islands is English-speaking and consists primarily of Falklanders of African-Irish descent (88% of population).

Economy: Almost the whole area of the two main islands, outside of Stanley, is devoted to sheep farming.

Currency: The official currency is the Falkland pound, which is on par with the British pound.

Government:

- Executive authority is vested in the British crown, and the islands' government is headed by a governor appointed by the crown.
- The islands are self-governing, although foreign affairs and defence matters are handled by the British government.

PALLIKARANAI MARSHLAND

It is a freshwater marshland partly saline wetland situated about 20 kilometers south of the city of Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

It serves as an aquatic buffer of the flood-prone Chennai and Chengalpattu districts. It encompasses 65 wetlands, through two outlets, viz., Okkiyam Madavu and the Kovalam Creek, and falls into the Bay of Bengal.

On its eastern periphery, the Marsh is flanked by the Buckingham Canal. Parts of the Marsh are well below the mean sea level and qualify as low-lying basins. It is one of the Ramsar sites in India.

GARBAGE TO GO-GREEN

City generates around **5,500** tonnes of garbage every day

2,400 tonnes to **2,600** tonnes of garbage sent to Perungudi dumpyard

Perungudi landfill extends to **200** acres and is in use for 30 years

The marshland has shrunk to **3.17 sqkm** now from **50 sqkm** in 30 years



Fauna:

- The diverse ecosystem of the marshland supports notable species such as Russell's viper (*Daboia siamensis*) and birds such as the glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), grey-headed lapwings (*Vanellus cinereus*), and Pheasant-tailed jacana (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*).
- Although tropical in bio-climate, the influence of the Bay of Bengal has been significant on the Marsh.

Threats: It continues to face significant anthropogenic pressures, including encroachments and sewage discharge.

What is Bathymetric study?

It involves measuring underwater topography, is essential for developing comprehensive maps that can aid in determining the water storage capacity and flood patterns.

It plays a critical role in wetland design, restoration, land use planning, and legal boundary determinations.

JORDAN

Jordan has become the first country in the world to receive World Health Organization (WHO) verification for eliminating leprosy. This achievement highlights the country's strong political commitment and effective public health strategies, with no locally transmitted cases reported for over two decades.

Jordan's success serves as a global model, demonstrating the power of sustained efforts and collaboration in public health.



Jordan

- Jordan is a country in West Asia, located at the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe in the Levant region.
- Bordered by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, and the Palestinian West Bank and Israel, Jordan has a coastline on the Gulf of Aqaba's Red Sea.
- Amman is the capital. Inhabited since the Paleolithic period, Jordan saw the rise of kingdoms like Ammon, Moab, and Edom.
- It is a constitutional monarchy, a founding member of the Arab League, and known for tourism and medical tourism.

GOPALPUR PORT



SELF EVALUATION BI-WEEKLY

PRELIMS

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India's evolving pension system:

1. The Old Pension Scheme (OPS) guaranteed a defined benefit pension based on the last drawn salary of government employees and was fully funded by the government.
2. The New Pension Scheme (NPS) introduced in 2004 is a defined benefit model that ensures stable returns regardless of market performance.
3. The proposed Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) aims to provide universal pensions while requiring 25 years of service for a full pension.
4. The global shift towards welfarism is influencing India's pension reforms, leading to a demand for stronger state-backed welfare provisions.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding how Kerala reduced mortality from Amoebic Meningoencephalitis:

1. Kerala reduced the mortality rate of amoebic meningoencephalitis to 26%, significantly lower than the global mortality rate of 97%.
2. Health authorities conducted cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) tests for amoebae in all cases of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES).
3. The state launched public health initiatives advising against swimming in stagnant water and using nasal plugs while swimming.
4. A key reason for Kerala's success was the development of a new antibiotic, Miltefosine, specifically for amoebic meningoencephalitis.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding India's position on the "Pact of the Future" adopted at the UN summit concerning UNSC reforms:

1. **Statement 1:** The "Pact of the Future" was adopted by consensus, highlighting the necessity for reforms in the UN Security Council (UNSC) to enhance its representativeness, inclusivity, and accountability.

2. **Statement 2:** India's participation in the summit, including meetings with world leaders and its emphasis on UNSC reforms, indicates a strategic shift in India's diplomatic approach towards global governance and multilateral institutions.

Which of the following is correct?

- A. Both statements are correct, and Statement 2 explains Statement 1.
- B. Both statements are correct, but Statement 2 is independent of Statement 1.
- C. Statement 1 is correct, and Statement 2 is incorrect.
- D. Statement 2 is correct, and Statement 1 is incorrect.

Q4. Consider the following Assertion & Reason statement regarding India's first mission to Venus:

1. **Assertion (A):** India is set to launch its first mission to Venus in March 2028 to study the planet's atmosphere and surface.
2. **Reason (R):** The mission aims to employ advanced techniques like aero-braking to effectively reduce the spacecraft's orbit for optimal scientific observations.

Which of the following is correct?

- A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct reason for A.
- B. Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct reason for A.
- C. A is true, but R is false.
- D. A is false, but R is true.

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the current status and challenges of Project Cheetah after two years:

1. **Statement 1:** Launched in September 2022, Project Cheetah successfully reintroduced African cheetahs in India, with a survival rate of 60% among translocated cheetahs as of now.
2. **Statement 2:** The project faces significant challenges, including a high mortality rate among cheetahs, prey deficiency in Kuno National Park, and concerns about cheetahs adapting to the wild after extended periods in enclosures.

Which of the following is correct?

- A. Both statements are correct.
- B. Statement 1 is correct, and Statement 2 is incorrect.
- C. Statement 2 is correct, and Statement 1 is incorrect.
- D. Both statements are incorrect.

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding Neom, the Saudi megacity project:

1. Neom is part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 plan, aimed at diversifying the economy and reducing dependence on oil.
2. The project consists of five distinct regions, including The Line, Oxagon, and Trojena, with plans for a luxury island named Sindalah.
3. Neom has been widely praised for its ambitious goals and sustainable urban living without facing any controversies.
4. Reports indicate that the Huwaitat tribe is facing displacement due to the Neom project, leading to international condemnation of human rights abuses.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q7. Consider the following Assertion & Reason statement regarding India's clean energy sector:

1. **Assertion (A):** India is exploring partnerships with Western nations to combat the challenges posed by China's predatory pricing in the solar manufacturing sector.
2. **Reason (R):** India has completely banned the import of all solar panels from China, which has led to a surge in domestic solar manufacturing.

Which of the following is correct?

- A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct reason for A.
- B. Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct reason for A.
- C. A is true, but R is false.
- D. A is false, but R is true.

Q8. Consider the following statements regarding the "One Nation, One Election" initiative and the upcoming decadal census:

1. The government plans to implement simultaneous elections for both the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies to reduce the frequency and cost of elections, with the initiative having been highlighted in 2014 and endorsed by a committee led by former President Ram Nath Kovind.
2. The decadal census, which has been delayed since 2011, is set to commence soon and is essential for updating demographic data and informing policy decisions.
3. The "One Nation, One Election" initiative and the census exercise are being implemented as part of a new government's agenda, marking a shift in political strategy and administrative priorities.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q9. Consider the following statements regarding the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) findings on water quality in Ashtamudi Lake:

1. The CPCB identified four locations in Ashtamudi Lake as failing to meet the Primary Water Quality Criteria for Bathing, including Thoppilkadavu near Perumon and locations near Kundara ceramics.
2. The detected levels of contaminants such as faecal coliform, pH, and biological oxygen demand (BOD) were within permissible limits according to the Environment (Protection) Rules, 1986.
3. The sources of pollution include accumulated garbage and plastic waste, which contribute to the contamination of the lake's water.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q10. Which of the following statements about the role of post-glacial ecosystems in climate change mitigation is NOT accurate?

- A. Glacier retreat decreases surface reflectivity and releases carbon, which exacerbates climate change, but post-glacial ecosystems have the potential to sequester carbon and aid in biogeochemical cycling.
- B. The decade-long study analyzed soil samples from nearly 50 glaciers, including contributions from Indian research institutions, highlighting the rapid colonization of newly exposed areas by microorganisms and plants.
- C. Proper management of post-glacial ecosystems is crucial for enhancing their role in climate change mitigation, as they can provide temporary habitats for species displaced by climate change and foster more complex ecosystems.
- D. Post-glacial ecosystems, once fully developed, are not expected to contribute significantly to climate change mitigation due to the limited capacity of these ecosystems to sequester carbon.

Q11. Which of the following statements about the discovery of an extra set of legs in trilobite fossils from New York is NOT accurate?

- A. The discovery of additional appendages in *Triarthrus eatoni* fossils reveals that extra head appendages might be more common in trilobites than previously assumed.
- B. Trilobites, related to modern lobsters and spiders, have segmented bodies with a head, thorax, and tail, but the newly discovered appendages were found under the thorax.
- C. The study used groove counting and appendage counting methods to resolve discrepancies in segment

counting and confirmed that the trilobite head had six segments.

- D. Analysis of *Triarthrus eatoni* specimens preserved with pyrite, along with comparisons with *Olenoides serratus*, provided new insights into trilobite anatomy and arthropod evolution.

Q12. Which of the following statements about signal modulation and its types is accurate?

- A. Amplitude Modulation (AM) varies the frequency of the carrier wave, making it suitable for high-quality audio transmission but with limited coverage range.
B. Frequency Modulation (FM) alters the amplitude of the carrier wave, providing superior sound quality but being more prone to interference compared to AM.
C. Phase Modulation (PM) changes the phase of the carrier wave, offering better resistance to noise compared to AM and FM.
D. Digital transmission uses Amplitude Modulation (AM) for discrete signals, which provides clearer communication with reduced interference.

Q13. Consider the following statements regarding new research on the dodo and its implications:

1. The dodo's inability to fly, due to its adaptation to a specific environment, was a key factor in its extinction, highlighting the bird's inherent limitations rather than the impact of human activity.
2. Recent studies reveal that the dodo was more agile and better adapted to its forest environment than previously thought, based on advanced soft tissue analysis and historical research from institutions like the University of Southampton and the Oxford University Museum.
3. Early misconceptions about the dodo, including the idea that it was a clumsy and foolish bird, were based on sailors' reports and inaccurate artist's impressions rather than comprehensive evidence.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q14. Consider the following statements regarding the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) and its impact on India's mineral ecosystem:

1. The DMF was established as part of the 2015 amendment to the Mines and Minerals Act and has raised nearly ₹1 lakh crore for decentralised development in mining-affected areas.
2. The Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY) operates independently of the DMF, focusing solely on the development of mining regions.
3. DMFs contribute to local development by supporting self-reliance through technology training, such as drone

technology, and by aligning with state and central schemes for comprehensive resource utilization.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q15. Consider the following statements regarding India's push for a review and modification of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT):

1. The treaty, signed in 1960, did not account for modern challenges such as climate change and increased energy demands, which now necessitate its revision.
2. India's focus on hydropower projects on shared rivers, such as the Kishanganga and Ratle projects, has led to disputes with Pakistan, which claims these projects violate the IWT.
3. Pakistan's legal approach to dispute resolution under the IWT has shifted from seeking a Neutral Expert to requesting intervention from the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), a move that India deems illegal.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q16. Consider the following statements regarding recent genomic research on Rapa Nui (Easter Island):

1. **Statement 1:** Recent genetic studies reveal 8% Native American ancestry in Rapa Nui genomes, indicating pre-18th-century admixture before European influence, and a population bottleneck was identified around 1300 AD.
2. **Statement 2:** The study suggests that the population decline on Rapa Nui was primarily due to overpopulation and ecological mismanagement, aligning with earlier theories popularized by Jared Diamond.

Which of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- A. Both statements are correct, and Statement 1 provides further context on the genetic findings and population bottleneck while Statement 2 aligns with earlier theories.
B. Both statements are correct, but Statement 2 contradicts the new evidence provided in Statement 1.
C. Statement 1 is correct, and Statement 2 is incorrect.
D. Statement 2 is correct, and Statement 1 is incorrect.

Q17. Which of the following constitutional amendments is crucial for implementing simultaneous elections in India?

- A. Amendment of Article 82A to establish the procedure for simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
- B. Insertion of Article 370A to redefine the relationship between the central and state governments.
- C. Amendment of Article 21 to ensure the protection of personal liberty in the context of electoral reforms.
- D. Amendment of Article 368 to address the process for constitutional amendments related to simultaneous elections.

Q18. Consider the following statements regarding India's abstention from the U.N. General Assembly vote on the Palestinian resolution:

- 1. The resolution demanding an end to Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank was supported by 124 nations, with 43 nations, including India, abstaining from the vote.
- 2. India abstained from the vote to emphasize its support for a peaceful two-state solution through direct negotiations, reflecting a balanced foreign policy approach.
- 3. The resolution calls for the end of Israel's "unlawful occupation" within a year, urges withdrawal of Israeli forces, and suggests sanctions and reparations to Palestinians.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q19. What is the targeted completion date for the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), the Indian Space Station?

- A. December 2027
- B. December 2028
- C. December 2029
- D. December 2030

Q20. Consider the following statements regarding the temporary capture of asteroid 2024 PT5 by Earth:

- 1. Asteroid 2024 PT5 belongs to the Arjuna asteroid belt and will be captured by Earth's gravity for approximately two months due to its close approach and low velocity.
- 2. The temporary mini-moon 2024 PT5 will complete a full orbit around Earth before being ejected back to the asteroid belt.
- 3. Short-term mini-moon captures, like 2024 PT5, are rare events with only a few recorded instances in history, including 1991 VG and 2022 NX1.
- 4. The asteroid will be observable with amateur telescopes due to its significant size and brightness during its capture.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q21. Which principle underlines the differing responsibilities of developed and developing nations in climate action, considering their historical contributions to emissions?

- A. Paris Agreement Principle
- B. Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)
- C. Technology Transfer Principle
- D. Global Climate Equity Principle

Q22. Consider the following statements regarding India's blue renewable energy potential as per the Integrated Ocean Energy Atlas developed by INCOIS:

- 1. **Statement 1 :** The atlas identifies India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as having the potential to generate up to 9.2 lakh terawatt hours (TWh) from various blue energy sources, including tidal waves, currents, and salinity gradients.
- 2. **Statement 2 :** The atlas highlights coastal areas in West Bengal and Gujarat for tidal energy, and salinity gradient potential along Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, while factoring in critical considerations like fishing zones, shipping lines, and cyclone-prone areas.

Which of the following is correct?

- A. Both statements are correct, with Statement 1 providing an overview of the energy potential in India's EEZ, and Statement 2 detailing specific locations and considerations for blue energy development.
- B. Both statements are correct, but Statement 2 contradicts some aspects of Statement 1.
- C. Statement 1 is correct, and Statement 2 is incorrect.
- D. Statement 2 is correct, and Statement 1 is incorrect.

Q23. The demand for emerging economies to contribute to climate finance is primarily viewed as:

- 1. A fair approach to global climate responsibility.
- 2. A deflection from the failure of developed countries to meet their obligations.
- 3. A necessary step to ensure balanced contributions from all countries.
- 4. A strategy to increase the total amount of climate finance available.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q24. Consider the following statements regarding India's data centre ambitions:

1. **Statement 1:** India is positioning itself as a leader in the data centre market, with plans to establish significant computing infrastructure supported by government subsidies.
2. **Statement 2:** Malaysia is projected to have a slower growth rate in its data centre sector compared to India, despite having stricter data sovereignty regulations.

Which of the following is correct?

- A. Both statements are correct.
- B. Statement 1 is correct, and Statement 2 is incorrect.
- C. Statement 1 is incorrect, and Statement 2 is correct.
- D. Both statements are incorrect.

Q25. Consider the following Assertion & Reason statement regarding India's signing of clean and fair economy

agreements under the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF):

1. **Assertion (A):** India's participation in the IPEF agreements signifies its commitment to a clean and fair economy, promoting cooperation on clean energy and anti-corruption measures among member nations.
2. **Reason (R):** The IPEF agreements include non-derogation clauses that may restrict India's ability to modify its domestic regulations, which could limit its flexibility in implementing national projects.

Which of the following is correct?

- A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.
- B. Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- C. A is true, but R is false.
- D. A is false, but R is true.

MAINS

Q1. Analyze the recent developments in the implementation of the Indus Water Treaty and discuss how they have influenced the dynamics between India and Pakistan, considering the treaty's significance for national security and regional stability. (250 words).

Q2. Discuss the key obstacles confronting India's labor market and propose strategies to enhance employment generation and increase labor force participation. (250 Words)

Q3. Examine the potential benefits of implementing the One Nation, One Election policy while also addressing the

challenges it may face within the current constitutional framework. (250 words).

Q4. Examine the impact of the intensifying conflict between Israel and Hezbollah on the stability of West Asia. Discuss possible strategies to de-escalate tensions, taking into account diplomatic efforts, military actions, and socio-economic factors. (250 words)

Q5. Examine how the National Logistics Policy (2022) aims to enhance the global competitiveness of Indian products and generate employment opportunities. (250 words).

SOLVED CASE - STUDIES BI-WEEKLY

Case Study

You have just been appointed as Additional Director General of Central Public Works Department. The Chief Architect of your division, who is to retire in six months, is passionately working on a very important project, the successful completion of which would earn him a lasting reputation for the rest of his life.

A new lady architect, Seema, trained at Manchester School of Architecture, UK joined as Senior Architect in your division. During the briefing about the project, Seema made some suggestions which would not only add value to the project, but would also reduce completion time. This has made the Chief Architect insecure and he is constantly worried that all the credit will go to her. Subsequently, he adopted a passive and aggressive behaviour towards her and has become disrespectful to her. Seema felt it embarrassing as the Chief Architect left no chance of humiliating her. He would very often correct her in front of other colleagues and raise his voice while speaking to her. This continuous harassment has resulted in her losing confidence and self-esteem. She felt perpetually tensed, anxious and stressed. She appeared to be in awe of him since he has had a long tenure in the office and has vast experience in the area of her work.

You are aware of her outstanding academic credentials and career record in her previous organizations. However, you fear that this harassment may result in compromising her much needed contribution in this important project and may adversely impact her emotional well-being. You have also come to know from her peers that she is contemplating tendering her resignation.

Questions

- What are the ethical issues involved in the above case?
- What are the options available to you in order to complete the project as well as to retain Seema in the organization?
- What would be your response to Seema's predicament? What measures would you institute to prevent such occurrences from happening in your organization?

Solution

Introduction:

The case study portrays a situation where poor work culture and interpersonal conflicts in a public office are affecting team dynamics and individual well-being. The tension between a retiring Chief Architect and a new Senior Architect, Seema, reflects a toxic environment that could potentially harm both individual contributions and the progress of an important project.

Body:

(a) Ethical issues involved in the case:

- Workplace harassment:** The Chief Architect's behaviour towards Seema constitutes harassment, violating professional ethics, especially in a public organization. His condescending attitude and public humiliation of a junior colleague compromise Seema's emotional well-being and professional dignity.
- Gender discrimination:** The disrespectful treatment of Seema might be influenced by gender bias, especially since Seema is a highly qualified new entrant in the department. The Chief Architect's insecurity is manifesting as gendered discrimination.
- Integrity and fairness:** The Chief Architect's resistance to Seema's valuable inputs indicates a lack of openness to ideas that could benefit the project. By

failing to prioritize the best interests of the project and the organization, he compromises the values of integrity, meritocracy, and professionalism.

- Mental health and well-being:** Seema's mental health is at risk due to persistent harassment and anxiety in the workplace. This could lead to reduced productivity and a potential resignation, depriving the organization of a talented professional.
- Abuse of authority:** The Chief Architect's authoritative position is being used to intimidate and silence Seema, rather than fostering a collaborative environment. This shows a lack of ethical leadership.

(b) Options available:

- Direct intervention and mediation:**
 - Arrange a private meeting with the Chief Architect and Seema to discuss the ongoing issues. Emphasize the importance of collaboration for the success of the project and counsel both individuals to work together.
 - Suggest collaborative approaches to resolve differences, acknowledging the Chief Architect's experience and Seema's fresh perspectives.
- Formal warning to the Chief Architect:**

- Issue a formal reprimand to the Chief Architect for his unprofessional conduct. His behaviour should be strictly monitored to ensure he does not continue harassing Seema.
3. **Empower Seema and prevent her resignation:**
 - Reassure Seema that her contributions are valued and that the organization supports her. Provide her with a mentor or a trusted colleague for guidance, and encourage her to stay with the project.
 4. **Reassign project leadership roles:**
 - Consider splitting responsibilities between the Chief Architect and Seema. This will reduce tensions, allow Seema to contribute more without fear of being overshadowed, and ensure that the project benefits from both their expertise.
 5. **Initiating an internal inquiry:**
 - Conduct an investigation into workplace harassment and create a report on the Chief Architect's conduct. Use the report to implement necessary corrective measures and prevent future incidents.

(c) Response to Seema's predicament and measures to prevent recurrence:

1. **Response to Seema's predicament:**
 - **Apologize** on behalf of the organization for the treatment she has endured. Reinforce that her presence and contributions are critical to the success of the project.
 - **Offer emotional support** by having regular one-on-one conversations to assess her well-being and professional development.
 - **Assure her of a safe work environment** by implementing immediate measures to curb harassment, such as involving HR in a formal inquiry.

2. **Measures to prevent recurrence:**

- **Strengthen anti-harassment policies:** Establish clear, strict guidelines for workplace conduct, particularly with regard to harassment, discrimination, and bullying. Regularly update and reinforce these policies.
- **Introduce an anonymous complaint mechanism (SHE Box):** Provide a platform where employees, especially women, can confidentially report harassment or inappropriate behaviour without fear of retaliation.
- **Ethics and leadership training:** Conduct regular workshops on ethical leadership, team-building, and communication. Such training would promote a culture of mutual respect, professionalism, and accountability among employees.
- **Create a robust feedback mechanism:** Encourage open communication between all levels of staff. Regular feedback sessions will help resolve conflicts early and foster a supportive and respectful work environment.
- **Promote gender sensitivity and diversity in the workplace:** Initiate gender-sensitivity training and create committees to monitor and ensure that women are treated fairly and equally in the workplace.

Conclusion:

The case highlights the necessity of creating an ethical work culture where respect, dignity, and collaboration are key values. By addressing the Chief Architect's unprofessional behaviour, supporting Seema, and implementing long-term measures to prevent such incidents, the organization can ensure both the successful completion of the project and the well-being of its employees.



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