



CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

MCQs on important
news of the day
from Hindu &
Indian Express.

DECEMBER 2020

December 2020, Current Affairs MCQ Compilation

1. With reference to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), consider the following statements:

1. It is the world's second largest inter-governmental organisation after the UN, with a membership of 57 states.
2. Russia, Thailand, and a couple of other small countries have Observer status.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: India hit out at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for making factually incorrect and unwarranted references to Jammu and Kashmir.

- The 47th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers on November 27-29 at Niamey, Niger, had made a reference to India over its policies on J&K.
- The OIC — formerly Organisation of the Islamic Conference — is the world's second largest inter-governmental organisation after the UN, with a membership of 57 states.
- The OIC's stated objective is "to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world".
- OIC has reserved membership for Muslim-majority countries. Russia, Thailand, and a couple of other small countries have Observer status.
- At the 45th session of the Foreign Ministers' Summit in 2018, Bangladesh, the host, suggested that India, where more than 10% of the world's Muslims live, should be given Observer status, but Pakistan opposed the proposal.

- In 1969, India was dis-invited from the Conference of Islamic Countries in Rabat, Morocco at Pakistan's behest.
- **Hence both statements are correct.**

2. Roshni Act of 2001, now scrapped, which gave ownership rights to the unauthorized occupants of state land against payment of a premium was passed by which of the following state/UT governments?

- A. Arunachal Pradesh
- B. West Bengal
- C. Chhattisgarh
- D. Jammu & Kashmir

Correct Answer: D

Explanation: The Jammu & Kashmir administration has recently released a series of lists of alleged beneficiaries of the Roshni Act of 2001, now scrapped, which gave ownership rights to the unauthorized occupants of state land against payment of a premium.

Hence option (d) is correct.

Following a recent order by the Jammu & Kashmir High Court, the administration has annulled the Act (it was earlier repealed prospectively) and decided to retrieve land transferred under the Roshni scheme. Formally the Jammu and Kashmir State Land (Vesting of Ownership to the Occupants) Act, 2001, Roshni Act was passed by the then National Conference government to give ownership to people in possession of state land, with a cut-off of 1990, and against a payment as determined by the government. Since the aim was to generate resources for hydroelectric power projects, it was called Roshni (Light) Act. In its 2014 report, the CAG termed the scheme a Rs-25,000-crore scam. In October 2018, then Governor Satya Pal Malik repealed the Roshni Act prospectively.

3. With reference to the Gupkar Declaration, consider the following statements:

1. It is a political alliance between the multiple mainstream regional political parties of Jammu and Kashmir.
2. It aimed at safeguarding and restoring special status along with Article 35A of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: Ever since the Congress party initiated talks with the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) for the November-December District Development Council (DDC) elections, the BJP has been on a tirade against the leaders of what it calls the "Gupkar Gang".

- People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) was formerly known as Gupkar Declaration.
- It is a political alliance between the multiple mainstream regional political parties of Jammu and Kashmir aimed at safeguarding and restoring special status along with Article 35A of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- **First Declaration:** The Declaration signed on 4 August 2019 stated that modification or abrogation of Article 35A or Article 370 would be aggression against the people of J&K. The venue was the Gupkar Residence in Srinagar and thus it became known as the Gupkar Declaration.
- **Gupkar Declaration II:** Gupkar Declaration II, signed on 22 August 2020 by the six political parties asserted that the signatories were bound by August 4, 2019 Gupkar declaration and parties would strive for restoration of Article 370 and Article 35a.
- **Hence both statements are correct.**

4. With reference to the Provision of Submarine Optical Fibre Cable Connectivity, consider the following statements:

1. The Union Cabinet has given its approval for Provision of Submarine Optical Fibre Cable Connectivity between Mainland (Kochi) and Lakshadweep Islands (KLI Project).
2. The Project would be funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: The Union Cabinet has given its approval for Provision of Submarine Optical Fibre Cable Connectivity between Mainland (Kochi) and Lakshadweep Islands (KLI Project).

The Project envisages provision of a direct communication link through a dedicated submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) between Kochi and 11 Islands of Lakshadweep viz. Kavaratti, Kalpeni, Agati, Amini, Androth, Minicoy, Bangaram, Bitra, Chetlat, Kiltan & Kadmat.

Financial implications: The estimated cost of implementation is about Rs. 1072 crore including operational expenses for 5 years. The Project would be funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund.

Impact: The project will vastly improve telecommunication facility in the Lakshadweep Islands by providing large bandwidth.

Target: The project is targeted to be completed by May 2023.

Implementation Strategy:

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL) has been nominated as Project Execution Agency and Telecommunications Consultant India Ltd. (TCIL) as the Technical Consultant of the Project to assist Universal Service Obligation Fund, Department of Telecommunications.

The ownership of the asset under the project will rest with USOF, the funding agency, under DoT.

Hence both statements are correct.

5. With reference to the Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY), consider the following statements:

1. It aims to boost employment in formal sector and incentivize creation of new employment opportunities during the Covid recovery phase under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0.

2. Government of India will pay both 20% employees' contribution and 20% employers' contribution towards Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) in respect of new employees in establishments employing upto 1000 employees for two years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: The Union Cabinet has given its approval for Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) to boost employment in formal sector and incentivize creation of new employment opportunities during the Covid recovery phase under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0.

- Government of India will provide subsidy for two years in respect of new employees engaged on or after 1st October, 2020 and upto 30th June, 2021.
- Government of India will pay both 12% employees' contribution and 12% employers' contribution i.e. 24% of wages towards Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) in respect of new employees in establishments employing upto 1000 employees for two years.
- Government of India will pay only employees' share of EPF contribution i.e. 12% of wages in respect of new employees in establishments employing more than 1000 employee for two years.
- An employee drawing monthly wage of less than Rs. 15000/- who was not working in any establishment registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) before 1st October, 2020 and did not have a Universal Account Number or EPF Member account number prior to 1st October 2020 will be eligible for the benefit.
- Any EPF member possessing Universal Account Number (UAN) drawing monthly wage of less than Rs. 15000/- who made exit from employment during Covid pandemic from 01.03.2020 to 30.09.2020 and did not join employment in any EPF covered establishment up to 30.09.2020 will also be eligible to avail benefit.

Hence only statement 1 is correct.

6. With reference to the PM-WANI, consider the following statements:

1. The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the proposal of DoT for setting up of Public Wi-Fi Networks by Public Data Office Aggregators (PDOAs) to provide public Wi-Fi service through Public Data Offices (PDOs) spread across the country.
2. Public Data Office (PDO) will establish, maintain, and operate only WANI compliant Wi-Fi Access Points and deliver broadband services to subscribers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the proposal of DoT for setting up of Public Wi-Fi Networks by Public Data Office Aggregators (PDOAs) to provide public Wi-Fi service through Public Data Offices (PDOs) spread across the country to accelerate proliferation of Broadband Internet services through Public Wi-Fi network.

- This Public Wi-Fi Access Network Interface will be known as PM-WANI.
- PM-WANI eco-system will be operated by different players as described herein under:
 - **Public Data Office (PDO):** It will establish, maintain, and operate only WANI compliant Wi-Fi Access Points and deliver broadband services to subscribers.
 - **Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA):** It will be an aggregator of PDOs and perform the functions relating to Authorization and Accounting.
 - **App Provider:** It will develop an App to register users and discover WANI compliant Wi-Fi hotspots in the nearby area and display the same within the App for accessing the internet service.
 - **Central Registry:** It will maintain the details of App Providers, PDOAs, and PDOs. To begin with, the Central Registry will be maintained by C-DoT.

- While no registration would be required for PDOs, PDOAs and App Providers will get themselves registered with DoT through online registration portal (SARALSANCHAR;) of DoT, without paying any registration fee.
- There shall be no license fee for providing Broadband Internet through these public Wi-Fi networks.
- The proposal will promote the growth of Public Wi-Fi Networks in the country and, in turn, will help in proliferation of Broadband Internet, enhancement of income and employment and empowerment of people.
- **Hence both statements are correct.**

7. With respect to “Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill (2020)”, consider the following statements:

1. Terming cow slaughter as a cognizable offence, violators can attract three to seven years of imprisonment.
2. Police officers ranked sub-inspector and above or a competent authority will have the power to search premises.

Which of the above given statements is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: The BJP-led government in Karnataka passed the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill (2020) in the Assembly on December 9 amid strong opposition from the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular).

The Bill envisages a ban on all forms of cattle slaughter and stringent punishment for offenders. While ‘beef’ is defined as the flesh of cattle in any form, the word ‘cattle’ is defined as “cow, calf of a cow and bull, bullock, and he or she buffalo below the age of thirteen years”. The Bill also terms shelters established for the protection and preservation of cattle registered with the Department of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries as ‘gau shalas’.

Hence Statement 2 is correct: Police officers ranked sub-inspector and above or a competent authority will have the power to search premises and seize cattle and materials used or intended to use to commit the offence.

Hence Statement 1 is correct: Terming cow slaughter as a cognizable offence, violators can attract three to seven years of imprisonment. While a penalty between Rs 50,000 and Rs 5 lakh can be levied for the first offence, second and subsequent offences can attract penalties ranging between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 10 lakh.

8. With respect to “New Parliament Building”, which of the following pairs is/are correctly matched?

	Parliament Chambers	Themes
1.	Lok Sabha	the national bird (peacock)
2.	Rajya Sabha	the national flower (lotus)
3.	Central lounge	the national tree (banyan)

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Correct Answer: D

Explanation: Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the New Parliament Building. It will be the highlight of the ambitious ₹ 20,000 crore Central Vista project that PM Modi said will become “a symbol of a new and self-reliant India”.

The four-story building will be triangular and its interiors will have three national symbols – the lotus, the peacock and the banyan tree - as its themes. The triangular shape of the new parliament was a reference to “sacred geometries in various religions and cultures of India”.

In the Lok Sabha chamber, the national bird (peacock) will be the theme. In the Rajya Sabha the national flower (lotus) and in the central lounge the national tree (banyan) will be the theme. Hence option (d) is correct.

The parliament building alone will cost an estimated ₹ 971 crore and will, the government hopes, be ready before India's 75th Independence Day (in 2022). However, construction cannot yet begin as a legal challenge is pending in the Supreme Court. To be constructed by Tata Projects Ltd, the new parliament building will overlook the old – which was built nearly 100 years ago at a cost of ₹ 83 lakh and will be turned into a museum. The new Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha halls will have increased seating capacities (888 and 384 seats, respectively) in anticipation of an expanded Parliament; a 25-year-old freeze on increasing state-wise distribution of seats ends in 2026. In addition, seating in the Lok Sabha hall can be expanded to 1,272 to host joint sessions. Dholpur stone will be the primary construction material (as it was with the current building) and red granite may replace red sandstone in some interior sections. The building will be equipped with modern audio-visual communication systems. The new parliament will also be fully wheelchair- and disabled-access friendly.

9. With reference to the 'Himgiri', consider the following statements:

1. It is the first of the three Project 17A ships being built at M/s Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata.
2. Under the Project 17A program, a total of seven ships, four at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and three ships at GRSE are being built.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: 'Himgiri', the first of the three Project 17A ships being built at M/s Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata was launched on 14 December 2020.

- The ship has taken its name and crest of the second Frigate of the Leander Class of ships, which incidentally was launched 50 years ago in 1970.

- Under the Project 17A program, a total of seven ships, four at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and three ships at GRSE are being built with enhanced stealth features, advanced indigenous weapon and sensor fit along with several other improvements.
- P17A ships are the first gas turbine propulsion and largest combat platforms ever built at GRSE.
- P17A ships have been indigenously designed by Directorate of Naval Design (Surface Ship Design Group) - DND(SSG), and are being built at indigenous yards namely MDL and GRSE.

Hence both statements are correct.

10. With reference to the Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India, consider the following statements:

1. It was released by World Economic Forum.
2. It lays out India's vision 2035 for public health surveillance through the integration of the three-tiered public health system into Ayushman Bharat.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: NITI Aayog today released a white paper: Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India.

It's vision is:

- To make India's public health surveillance system more responsive and predictive to enhance preparedness for action at all levels.

- Citizen-friendly public health surveillance system will ensure individual privacy and confidentiality, enabled with a client feedback mechanism.
- Improved data-sharing mechanism between Centre and states for better disease detection, prevention, and control.
- India aims to provide regional and global leadership in managing events that constitute a public health emergency of international concern.

Features:

- The white paper lays out India's vision 2035 for public health surveillance through the integration of the three-tiered public health system into Ayushman Bharat.
- The building blocks for this vision are an interdependent governance between the Centre and states, a new data-sharing mechanism that involves the use of new analytics, health informatics, and data science including innovative ways of disseminating 'information for action'.

Hence only statement 2 is correct.

11. Hybrid Renewable Energy Park, world's biggest Renewable Energy Park, being set up in:

- A. Kutch district
- B. Bikaner district
- C. Mysuru district
- D. Palghar district

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Gujarat on December 15, 2020 to lay foundation stones for several development projects in the state.

Hybrid Renewable Energy Park

- Hybrid Renewable Energy Park is world's biggest Renewable Energy Park, being set up close to Indo Pak border, near Khavda village in Kutch district.

- It will produce 30 Giga watt solar and wind energy on a vast expanse of waste land situated beyond India bridge from Khavda village to Vighakot, where civilian access is not permitted and area is controlled by BSF and Indian Army.

Desalination plant:

- The PM will also lay foundation stone virtually for a desalination plant coming up at Gundiya village near Mandvi in Kutch district. This plant aims to convert sea water for potable purposes for a population 8 lakh of 300 villages.
- The desalination plant assumes great importance for Kutch peninsula which is perennial rain-deficit area with no other source of water.

Fully automated milk processing of Sarhad dairy:

- Prime Minister Modi will also lay foundation stone, virtually, for 130 crore rupees milk processing plant of Sarhad dairy, an apex dairy cooperative entity.
- This massive 2 lakh litre per day milk processing and packaging facility will come up under Rashtriya Kisan Vikas Yojna.
- **Hence, option (a) is the correct answer.**

12. With reference to Himalayan serow, consider the following statements:

1. They are known to be found in eastern, central, and western Himalayas, but not in the Trans Himalayan region.
2. Himalayan serows are carnivores.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: A Himalayan serow has been sighted for the first time in the Himalayan cold desert region. The animal was spotted near Hurling village in Spiti, Himachal Pradesh.

- **Scientific name:** The Himalayan serow, or *Capricornis sumatraensis* thar, is a subspecies of the mainland serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis*).
- **Appearance:** Himalayan serow resembles a cross between a goat, a donkey, a cow, and a pig. It's a medium-sized mammal with a large head, thick neck, short limbs, long, mule-like ears, and a coat of dark hair.
- **Distribution:** There are several species of serows, and all of them are found in Asia. Himalayan serows are typically found at altitudes between 2,000 metres and 4,000 metres (6,500 to 13,000 feet). They are known to be found in eastern, central, and western Himalayas, but not in the Trans Himalayan region.
- **Diet:** Himalayan serows are herbivores.

Conservation status:

- Previously assessed as 'near threatened', the Himalayan serow is now been categorised as 'vulnerable' in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
- It is listed under Schedule I of The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, which provides absolute protection.
- Serows are generally not found at this altitude, and never before has a serow been seen in the Himalayan cold desert.
- Wildlife officials believe this particular animal may have strayed into the Spiti valley from the Rupi Bhaba Wildlife Sanctuary in adjoining Kinnaur.

Hence only statement 1 is correct.

13. With reference to the Indian Gaur, consider the following statements:

1. They are found only in India.
2. It is listed as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only

C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: The images of an Indian Bison, or Gaur, in Pune's urban landscape, the frenzy among people, the capture of the injured animal that ran around in panic, and the sad news of its death has put the spotlight on human-Gaur conflict in the country.

- It is one of the largest extant bovines. It is one of the largest species among the wild cattle, reaching a shoulder height of up to 220 cm.
- **Habitat:** Gaurs are found on the forested hills and grassy areas of south to south east Asia.
- **Distribution:**
 - They are found in India, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal.
 - The Western Ghats in southern India constitute one of the most extensive extant strongholds of gaur, in particular in the Wayanad – Nagarhole – Mudumalai – Bandipur complex.
 - The gaur is the State Animal of Goa and Bihar.

Status:

- It is listed as Vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature(IUCN) Red List.
- The Indian Government has included it in the Schedule I of the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972.
- It is listed in CITES Appendix I.

Hence only statement 2 is correct.

14. S-400 air defence systems, often mentioned in news, was developed in which of the following country?

A. Russia

B. U.S.A

C. Turkey

D. France

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: The United States has imposed sanctions on Turkey on Monday over its acquisition of Russian S-400 air defence systems.

- The S-400 Triumpf, (NATO calls it SA-21 Growler), is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM) designed by Russia.
- It is the most dangerous operationally deployed modern long-range SAM (MLR SAM) in the world, considered much ahead of the US-developed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD).
- The system can engage all types of aerial targets including aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and ballistic and cruise missiles within the range of 400km, at an altitude of up to 30km. The system can track 100 airborne targets and engage six of them simultaneously.
- The S-400 Triumpf air defence system integrates a multifunction radar, autonomous detection and targeting systems, anti-aircraft missile systems, launchers, and command and control centre. It is capable of firing three types of missiles to create a layered defence.
- Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) was passed unanimously by the US Congress and signed reluctantly by US President Donald Trump. Enacted on August 2, 2017, its core objective is to counter Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures.
- Title II of the Act primarily deals with sanctions on Russian interests such as its oil and gas industry, defence and security sector, and financial institutions, in the backdrop of its military intervention in Ukraine and its alleged meddling in the 2016 US Presidential elections.
- With India set to get the consignment of the S-400 air defence system early next year, India is watching Washington's moves closely.
- While it has got a waiver from the outgoing Trump administration, India hopes that the incoming Biden administration would not work towards reversing the decision.

Hence, option (a) is the correct answer.

15. With reference to the Green Building, consider the following statements:

1. According to World Green Building Council data buildings and construction account for 39% of energy-related CO₂ emissions in the world
2. GRIHA Council has developed the Building Fitness Indicator (BFI) tool - a free-to-use self-assessment tool that allows organizations to measure the preparedness of workplaces to prevent exposure to COVID-19.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, virtually inaugurating the 12th GRIHA (Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment) Summit, organised by the GRIHA Council from Hyderabad.

- Quoting the World Green Building Council data, the Vice President said that buildings and construction account for 39% of energy-related CO₂ emissions in the world and called for accelerating the process of total de-carbonization of the built environment.
- Opining that the roof cooling should be an area of priority for all, he mentioned that in India, over 60 percent of roofs are made from metal, asbestos, and concrete - thus trapping heat inside buildings and contributing to heat island effect in urban areas. cool roofs can lower indoor temperatures by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius as compared to traditional roofs.
- Observing that the implementation of Bureau of Energy Efficiency's Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) has not been uniform across the nation, Shri Naidu appreciated the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for taking a lead in this regard.

- GRIHA Council has developed the Building Fitness Indicator (BFI) tool - a free-to-use self-assessment tool that allows organizations to measure the preparedness of workplaces to prevent exposure to COVID-19.
- **Hence both statements are correct.**

16. “Vijay Diwas” is celebrated to mark the victory of India in which of the following wars?

- A. 1971 Bangladesh liberation war
- B. Annexation of Portuguese India 1961
- C. Kargil war 1999
- D. Indo- Pak war 1965

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: India is celebrating Vijay Diwas on December 16 to mark victory of 1971 Bangladesh liberation war. Hence option (a) is correct.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will light up ‘Swarnim Vijay Mashaal and begin 50th anniversary celebrations of Indo-Pak War. In December 1971, the Indian Armed Forces secured a decisive and historic Victory over Pakistan Army, which led to creation of a Nation- Bangladesh and also resulted in the largest Military Surrender after the World War-II.

Four Victory Mashaals will be lit from the Eternal Flame of National War Memorial. These Mashaals will be carried to various parts of the country including to villages of Param Vir Chakra and MahaVir Chakra Awardees of 1971 War. Soil from the villages of these Awardees and from areas where major battles were fought in 1971 are being brought to the memorial in New Delhi.

17. Consider the following statements about the Himalayan Serow:

1. Himalayan Serows are found in the Eastern, Western and Trans- Himalayan region.
2. It is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List.

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: A **Himalayan serow** is a medium-sized mammal with a large head, thick neck, short limbs, long, mule-like ears, and a coat of dark hair.

- Recently, It has been sighted for the first time in the Himalayan cold desert region (Spiti, Himachal Pradesh).
 - The Himalayan serow resembles a cross between a goat, a donkey, a cow, and a pig.
- They are typically found at altitudes between 2,000 metres and 4,000 metres. They are known to be found in **eastern**, central, and **western** Himalayas, **but not in the Trans Himalayan region. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Conservation Status:
 - **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
 - **CITES:** Appendix I
 - **The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I

18. With reference to the India and USA relations, consider the following statements:

1. Union Cabinet has approved MoU between India and USA for exchange of information in areas of mutual interest in the electricity sector.
2. Under the MoU, the two sides will identify energy-related issues and develop topics and possible agendas for the exchange of information and regulatory practices in areas of mutual interest.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: Union Cabinet has approved MoU between India and USA for exchange of information in areas of mutual interest in the electricity sector.

Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC), India and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), United States of America (USA) will enter into a MoU for exchange of information and experiences in areas of mutual interest to both in the electricity sectors.

The MoU will help in improving regulatory and policy framework for developing efficient whole sale power market and enhancing grid reliability.

Under the MoU, the two sides will identify energy-related issues and develop topics and possible agendas for the exchange of information and regulatory practices in areas of mutual interest.

Hence both statements are correct.

19. With reference to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), consider the following statements:

1. The Government of India and New Development Bank signed a loan agreement for \$1,000 million to provide support to Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).
2. The programme will support Government to enable economic recovery in the rural areas through Natural Resource Management (NRM) works.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: The Government of India and New Development Bank signed a loan agreement for \$1,000 million to provide support to Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

- The programme will support Government to enable economic recovery in the rural areas through Natural Resource Management (NRM) works.

- The programme proposes creation of durable rural infrastructure assets relating to NRM and generation of employment opportunities for rural poor, especially migrant workers who have returned from urban areas and have lost their livelihoods due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The \$1 billion loan from the NDB has a tenor of 30 years, including a 5-year grace period.
- The NDB was established based on the Inter-Governmental agreement among the BRICS countries (Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa) signed in 2014.
- The purpose of the Bank is to mobilise resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging market economies and developing countries.

Hence both statements are correct.

20. 'Project Rupee Raftar' report published by:

- A. NITI Aayog
- B. World Bank
- C. World Economic Forum
- D. Union Ministry of Civil Aviation

Correct Answer: D

Explanation: International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) has issued consultation paper on proposed Aircraft Leasing Regulations.

- India is poised to become the 3rd largest aviation market in the world by 2022.
- In January 2019, India's Ministry of Civil Aviation published a report, 'Project Rupee Raftar', that provided roadmap to developing an aircraft financing and leasing industry in India.
- The report identified International Financial Services Centre (GIFT city) for developing aircraft leasing and financing eco-system in the country.

Recent developments:

- In October, 2020, Government of India , on the recommendation of IFSCA, had notified ‘Aircraft lease which shall include operating and financial lease of aircraft or helicopter and their engines’ as a financial product under International Financial Services Centres Authority Act, 2019.
- Considering, Aircraft leasing is a relatively new industry in India and Aircraft Leasing related regulations are different across various financial centres, IFSCA has prepared draft regulations for Aircraft Leasing and in order to get inputs from stakeholders as well as public comments.
- **Hence, option (d) is the correct answer.**

21. With reference to the Human Development Index (HDI), consider the following statements:

1. India ranked 131 among 189 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) for 2019.
2. It is released by the UNESCO.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: India ranked 131 among 189 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) for 2019, slipping two places from the previous year, according to the Human Development Report (HDR) 2020 released by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

- However, if the Index were adjusted to assess the planetary pressures caused by each nation’s development, India would move up eight places in the ranking, according to the report.

- Norway topped the index, followed by Ireland and Switzerland. Hong Kong and Iceland complete the top five.
- India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Cambodia, Kenya, and Pakistan were ranked under countries with medium human development with a rank in between 120 and 156 among the 189-countries.
- In the BRICS grouping, Russia was 52 in the human development index, Brazil 84, and China 85.
- India's gross national income (GNI) per capita on the basis of purchasing power parity (PPP), too, fell from \$6,829 in 2018 to \$6,681 in 2019, it said.
- India's HDI value for 2019 is 0.645, which put the country in the medium human development category, positioning it at 131 out of 189 countries and territories.
- Between 1990 and 2019, India's HDI value increased from 0.429 to 0.645, an increase of 50.3%.
- Between 1990 and 2019, India's life expectancy at birth increased by 11.8 years, mean years of schooling increased by 3.5 years, and expected years of schooling increased by 4.5 years. India's GNI per capita increased by about 273.9% between 1990 and 2019.

Do you know?

- HDI measures average achievement on three basic aspects of human development, life expectancy, education, and per capita income.
- For the first time, the United Nations Development Programme introduced a new metric to reflect the impact caused by each country's per-capita carbon emissions and its material footprint, which measures the amount of fossil fuels, metals and other resources used to make the goods and services it consumes.

Hence, option (a) is the correct answer.

22. With respect to “Currency Manipulation”, consider the following statements:

1. It is a label given by the China government to countries it feels are engaging in “unfair currency practices”.
2. It means artificially lowering the value of its currency which reduces the cost of exports.

Which of the above given statements is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Hence Statement 1 is incorrect: The United States has once again included India in its monitoring list of countries with potentially “questionable foreign exchange policies” and “currency manipulation”.

The term ‘currency manipulator’ is a label given by the US government to countries it feels are engaging in “unfair currency practices” by deliberately devaluing their currency against the dollar.

Hence Statement 2 is correct: The practice would mean that the country in question is artificially lowering the value of its currency to gain an unfair advantage over others. This is because the devaluation would reduce the cost of exports from that country and artificially show a reduction in trade deficits as a result.

Parameteres

- An economy meeting two of the three criteria in the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015 is placed on the Monitoring List. This includes:
 - o A “significant” bilateral trade surplus with the US — one that is at least \$20 billion over a 12-month period.
 - o A material current account surplus equivalent to at least 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) over a 12-month period.
 - o “Persistent”, one-sided intervention — when net purchases of foreign currency totaling at least 2 percent of the country’s GDP over a 12 month period are conducted repeatedly, in at least six out of 12 months.

Once on the Monitoring List, an economy will remain there for at least two consecutive reports “to help ensure that any improvement in performance versus the criteria is durable and is not due to temporary factors.

23. With reference to the India – Bangladesh virtual summit, consider the following statements:

1. The two sides jointly inaugurated a railway link between Haldibari in India and Chilahati in Bangladesh during the summit.
2. MoU for protocol on Transboundary Elephant Conservation was signed.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India and Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh held a Summit in virtual format on 17 December 2020.

- The two sides jointly inaugurated the Bangabandhu-Bapu Digital Exhibition.
- The two sides jointly inaugurated a railway link between Haldibari in India and Chilahati in Bangladesh during the summit. **Haldibari - Chilahati route** will be beneficial for transit into Bangladesh from Assam and West Bengal.
- Both sides also agreed to hold an early meeting of the Joint Boundary Conference to prepare a new set of strip maps along the stretch of Icchamati, Kalindi, Raimongol and the Hariabhanga Rivers.
- Bangladesh requested India to name the historic road from Mujib Nagar to Nodia on Bangladesh-India border as "Shadhinota Shorok" commemorating the historic significance of the road during Bangladesh's Liberation War.
- The following bilateral development partnership projects were also inaugurated:
 - Beautification and city development project in Rajshahi City;
 - Construction of Khalishpur Collegiate Girl's School in Khulna;

List of MoUs/Agreements signed during the Summit:

1. Framework of Understanding on Cooperation in the Hydrocarbon Sector
2. MoU regarding Indian Grant Assistance for Implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects through Local Bodies and other Public Sector Institutions
3. Protocol on Transboundary Elephant Conservation
4. MoU for Supply of Equipment & Improvement of Garbage/Solid Waste Disposal Ground at Lamchori Area for Barishal City Corporation
5. MoU on Cooperation in the field of Agriculture
6. MoU between Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Museum, Dhaka, Bangladesh and the National Museum, New Delhi, India
7. Terms of Reference of India-Bangladesh CEO's Forum

Hence both statements are correct.

24. Consider the following statements with respect to Global hunger index:

1. It is jointly released by the International Food Policy Research Institute, Concern Worldwide, and Welthungerhilfe.
2. India slipped to serious category in 2020 from moderate compared to last year.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Global Hunger Index report was recently released.

Published by: Jointly by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Concern Worldwide, and Welthungerhilfe (WHH)

India: 94th rank among 107 countries

It continues to be in the “serious” hunger category.

However, it has made some progress, particularly since the enactment of National Food Security Act.

Key takeaways

- Last year, India's rank was 102 out of 117 countries.
- The neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan too were in the "serious" category.
- They ranked higher than India in 2020's index.
- Nepal and Sri Lanka are in "moderate" hunger category.

Do you know?

- Undernourished: 14% of India's population
- Stunting: 37.4% among children under five
- Wasting: 17.3%
- Under-five mortality rate: 3.7%

25. With reference to the PSLV-C50 /CMS-01, consider the following statements:

1. CMS-01 is envisaged to provide services in the extended-C Band of the frequency spectrum that will cover the Indian mainland, the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands.
2. It was India's 10th communication satellite with a mission life of over seven years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: India's communication satellite CMS-01 was successfully launched by PSLV-C50 on December 17, 2020 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota.

- CMS-01 is envisaged to provide services in the extended-C Band of the frequency spectrum that will cover the Indian mainland, the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands.
- It was India's 42nd communication satellite with a mission life of over seven years.

- The satellite will be placed in the specified slot in the geosynchronous orbit. Subsequently, it will function as the continuation of GSAT11 launched 11 years back.”
- PSLV-C50 is the 52nd flight of PSLV and 22nd flight of PSLV in 'XL' configuration (with 6 strap-on motors).

Hence only statement 1 is correct.

26. Asokenagar-1 well, often mentioned in news, is located in:

- A. Maharashtra
- B. West Bengal
- C. Kerala
- D. Odisha

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Union Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas dedicated the Bengal Basin, the 8th producing basin of India, to the nation.

- ONGC took a major step by commencing oil production from the well Asokenagar-1, Bengal Basin in 24 Paragana district.
- The well Asoknagar-1 was completed as an oil producer under Early-Monetization Plan issued by Government of India.
- This makes ONGC having discovered and put to production seven out of the eight producing basins of India covering 83 percent of established oil & gas reserves.
- ONGC is India’s largest oil and gas producer contributing 72 percent of the country’s hydrocarbon production.
- The well Asokenagar-1 has heralded the end of painstaking search for hydrocarbons in the region by ONGC by sending its first hydrocarbon consignment produced during well testing to IOCL’s Haldia Oil Refinery done earlier on 5 November 2020.
- **Hence, option (b) is the correct answer.**

27. Consider the following statements:

1. The first rescue and rehabilitation centre for monkeys in Telangana was inaugurated at Gandhi Ramanna Haritavanam near Chincholi village in Nirmal district.
2. The other facility in the country was in Himachal Pradesh.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: The first rescue and rehabilitation centre for monkeys in Telangana was inaugurated at Gandhi Ramanna Haritavanam near Chincholi village in Nirmal district.

- Monkeys that venture into human habitations would be caught in a phased manner, brought to the centre where they would be operated on for birth control and would be released into the forests again after the rehabilitation period.
- To make the rehabilitation centre a sustainable habitat for the primates, several fruit and flowering plants, a variety of trees that provide shade, and medicinal plants would be grown.
- It is the second such facility for the primates in the country. The rehabilitation centre for the monkeys was also the first such facility in south India.
- The other facility in the country was in Himachal Pradesh.
- **Hence both statements are correct.**

28. With reference to the coastal radar chain network, consider the following statements:

1. Mauritius, Seychelles and Sri Lanka have already been integrated into the country's coastal radar chain network.
2. Under Phase-I of the coastal radar chain network, 46 coastal radar stations have been set up across the country's coastline.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: As part of India's efforts to further expand the coastal radar chain network meant to enable real-time monitoring of the high seas for threats, efforts are in advanced stages to set up coastal radar stations in the Indian Ocean littoral states of Maldives, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

- Mauritius, Seychelles and Sri Lanka have already been integrated into the country's coastal radar chain network. Similar plans are in the pipeline with Maldives and Myanmar and discussions are ongoing with Bangladesh and Thailand.
- Under Phase-I of the coastal radar chain network, 46 coastal radar stations have been set up across the country's coastline.
- Under Phase-II of the project, which is currently under way, 38 static radar stations and four mobile radar stations are being set up by the Coast Guard and is in advanced stage of completion.

Other developments:

1. **The Indian Navy's Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC)** located in Gurugram, which was set up after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, is the nodal agency for maritime data fusion.
2. As part of information exchange regarding traffic on the high seas, the Navy has been authorised by the government to conclude **white shipping agreements** with 36 countries and three multilateral constructs. So far agreements have been concluded with 22 countries and one multilateral construct.
3. **At the Navy's Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)** which is meant to promote Maritime Domain Awareness, three more International Liaison Officers (ILO) are expected to join soon. The ILOs from France, Japan and the U.S. have joined the centre.

Hence both statements are correct.

29. What is Gastrodia agnicellus?

- A. The ugliest orchid in the world.
- B. Exoplanet
- C. Minisatellite
- D. None of the above

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Gastrodia agnicellus, a newly discovered orchid has been named “the ugliest orchid in the world.”

- Found in a forest in Madagascar, it feeds on fungi and has no leaves.
- Although assessed as a threatened species, the plants have some protection because they are located in a national park.
- Madagascar is an island country in the Indian Ocean, approximately 400 kilometres off the coast of East Africa. Madagascar is the world's second-largest island country.

Hence, option (a) is the correct answer.

30. What is B.1.1.7 lineage, recently seen in news?

- A. New SARS-CoV-2 variant
- B. Near earth object
- C. New gene editing technology
- D. None of the above

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: India suspended all flights from and to the UK until December 31, amid concerns about a new variant of SARS-CoV-2 that is “spreading & growing rapidly” there.

- Last week, the new SARS-CoV-2 variant was revealed to be the reason behind the rapid surge in Covid-19 cases in South and East England.
- It is being referred to as VUI (Variant Under Investigation) 202012/01, or the B.1.1.7 lineage.
- The variant is the result of multiple mutations in the spike protein of the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, as well as mutations in other genomic regions of the RNA virus.
- Preliminary analysis suggests that it is more transmissible than previously circulating variants.
- **Hence, option (a) is the correct answer.**

31. With reference to the “JSA II: Catch the Rain” Awareness Generation Campaign, consider the following statements:

1. It was launched by NITI Aayog.
2. It covers 623 districts across the nation from December 2020 to March 2021.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: National Water Mission (NWM), Ministry of Jal Shakti in collaboration with Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports launched the “JSA II: Catch the Rain” Awareness Generation Campaign.

- Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan will undertake the campaign covering 623 districts across the nation from December 2020 to March 2021.

- NWM has launched a campaign “Catch the rain” with tag line “catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls” in order to nudge all stake-holders to create Rain Water Harvesting Structures (RWHS) to store rain water as rains falling in the four/five months of monsoon are the only source of water for most parts of the country.

Hence only statement 2 is correct.

32. With reference to the Shigellosis, or shigella infection, consider the following statements:

1. It is a contagious intestinal infection caused by a genus of bacteria known as shigella.
2. The infection is known to spread person-to-person when the bacteria is swallowed accidentally

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: Health officials in Kozhikode district of Kerala kicked in preventive measures last week after six cases of shigella infection and nearly two dozen suspected cases were detected.

- Shigellosis, or shigella infection, is a contagious intestinal infection caused by a genus of bacteria known as shigella.
- The bacteria is one of the prime pathogens responsible for causing diarrhoea, fluctuating between moderate and severe symptoms, especially in children in African and South Asian regions.
- The bacteria, after entering the body through ingestion, attacks the epithelial lining of the colon resulting in inflammation of the cells and subsequently the destruction of the cells in severe cases.

- **The common symptoms** are diarrhoea (often bloody and painful), stomach pain, fever, nausea and vomiting.
- **The infection is known to spread** person-to-person when the bacteria is swallowed accidentally. Spread through contaminated food and water is the most common form of transmission across the world.
- **Prevention:** It's important to wash hands with soap especially after dealing with a child's diaper and before preparing/eating food.
- **Hence both statements are correct.**

33. With reference to the India- Vietnam Virtual Summit, consider the following statements:

1. A 'Joint Vision for Peace, Prosperity and People' document was adopted during the Summit, to guide the future development of the India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
2. Implementation of the High Speed Guard Boat (HSGB) Manufacturing Project for Vietnam Border Guard Command under the US\$ 100 million Defence Line of Credit extended by Government of India to Vietnam was also announced.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a Virtual Summit with H.E. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of Vietnam.

- A 'Joint Vision for Peace, Prosperity and People' document was adopted during the Summit, to guide the future development of the India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

- Both leaders also welcomed the signing of a Plan of Action for period 2021-2023 for further implementation of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership to implement the Joint Vision.

Announcements made:

1. Implementation of the High Speed Guard Boat (HSGB) Manufacturing Project for Vietnam Border Guard Command under the US\$ 100 million Defence Line of Credit extended by Government of India to Vietnam;
2. Completion and handing over of seven Development Projects with Indian 'Grant-in-Aid' Assistance of US\$ 1.5 million for the benefit of local community in Vietnam's Ninh Thuan province.
3. Enhancing the number of annual Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) from currently five to ten commencing FY 2021-2022.
4. Three new Development Partnership projects in heritage conservation in Vietnam (F-block of Temple at My Son; Dong Duong Buddhist Monastery in Quang Nam province; and Nhan Cham Tower in Phu Yen province).
5. Launch of bilateral project for preparing an Encyclopaedia on India - Vietnam Civilizational and Cultural Relations.

Hence both statements are correct.

34. With reference to the 'India Workplace Equality Index', consider the following statements:

1. The 'India Workplace Equality Index', touted as the country's first comprehensive benchmarking tool for employers to measure their progress on LGBT+ inclusion at the workplace, was launched.
2. It's first report announced winners from among 65 companies which shared data on their diversity and inclusion practices.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only

C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: The 'India Workplace Equality Index', touted as the country's first comprehensive benchmarking tool for employers to measure their progress on LGBT+ inclusion at the workplace, was launched.

- Hotelier-activist Keshav Suri through his non-profit Keshav Suri Foundation, partnered with Pride Circle, Stonewall UK and FICCI, to bring the IWEI to India Inc.
- It's first report announced winners from among 65 companies which shared data on their diversity and inclusion practices. 21 firms won under the gold category, while 18 were placed under silver and 13 got bronze.
- The index measures nine areas: policies and benefits, employee lifecycle, employee network group, allies and role models, senior leadership, monitoring, procurement, community engagement and additional work.
- The IWEI comes two years after the Supreme Court's landmark reading down of Section 377.

Hence both statements are correct.

35. With reference to the WHO's 2019 Global Health Estimates, consider the following statements:

1. According to the report non-communicable diseases now make up 7 of the world's top 10 causes of death, an increase from 4 of the 10 leading causes in 2000.
2. Diabetes and dementia are not among the world's top 10 causes of death.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 only

B. 2 only

C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: The WHO's 2019 Global Health Estimates, released recently, said non-communicable diseases now make up 7 of the world's top 10 causes of death, an increase from 4 of the 10 leading causes in 2000. The new data cover the period from 2000 to 2019.

- Heart disease has remained the leading cause of death at the global level for the last 20 years.
- Heart disease now represents 16 per cent of total deaths from all causes and the number of deaths from heart disease increased by more than two million since 2000 to nearly 9 million in 2019.
- Diabetes and dementia are also among the world's top 10 causes of death.
- While more non-communicable diseases are now causing deaths worldwide, there has been a global decline in deaths from communicable diseases, which however still remain a major challenge in low- and middle-income countries.
- In 2019, pneumonia and other lower respiratory infections were the deadliest group of communicable diseases and together ranked as the fourth leading cause of death.
- HIV/AIDS dropped from the 8th leading cause of death in 2000 to the 19th in 2019.
- Tuberculosis is also no longer in the global top 10, falling from 7th place in 2000 to 13th in 2019, with a 30% reduction in global deaths.
- The estimates further confirm the growing trend for longevity: in 2019, people were living more than 6 years longer than in 2000, with a global average of more than 73 years in 2019 compared to nearly 67 in 2000.

Hence, option (a) is the correct answer.

36. With reference to the Great Indian Bustard (GIB), consider the following statements:

1. The Ministry of Environment along with the Wildlife Conservation Society, India, has come up with a unique initiative a "firefly bird diverter" for overhead power lines in areas where Great Indian Bustard (GIB) populations are found in the wild.
2. It is listed as vulnerable in IUCN Red List.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: The Ministry of Environment along with the Wildlife Conservation Society, India, has come up with a unique initiative — a “firefly bird diverter” for overhead power lines in areas where Great Indian Bustard (GIB) populations are found in the wild.

- The GIB is one of the most critically threatened species in India, with fewer than 150 birds left in the wild. It is listed as Critically Endangered in IUCN Red List.
- A 2019 report by the Ministry pointed out that power lines, especially high-voltage transmission lines with multiple overhead wires, are the most important current threat for GIBs in the Thar region, and are causing unsustainably high mortality in about 15% of their population.
- Firefly bird diverters are flaps installed on power lines. They work as reflectors for bird species like the GIB. Birds can spot them from a distance of about 50 metres and change their path of flight to avoid collision with power lines.
- The firefly detectors have been installed along two stretches of approximately 6.5 km, selected between Chacha to Dholiya villages in the Pokhran tehsil, Rajasthan.
- The diverters are called fireflies because they look like fireflies from a distance, shining on power lines in the night.

Hence only statement 1 is correct.

37. Consider the following statements:

1. Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga Project envisages laying gas pipelines all across River Ganga.
2. The North East Region (NER) Gas Grid will pass through all North Eastern States.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 and 2

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Since a National Gas Grid (NGG) was conceptualized in 2000, India has built more than 16,000 km of gas network. Recent initiatives include:

- The **Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga Project** seeks to cater to the energy requirements of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.
 - The project doesn't involve Uttrakhand. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- North East Region (NER) Gas Grid: It will pass through Assam, Sikkim, Mizoram, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya in a phased manner.
- **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

38. With reference to the Governor of a state, consider the following statements:

1. According to Article 174 of the Constitution "The Governor shall from time to time summon the House or each House of the Legislature of the State to meet at such time and place as he thinks fit".
2. Governor has the responsibility of ensuring that the House is summoned at least once in every year.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Kerala Governor has turned down a request by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to summon a special sitting of the Assembly to debate the new three central farm laws. This raises questions on the role of a Governor and the contours of the powers he or she has under the Constitution.

- According to Article 174 of the Constitution “The Governor shall from time to time summon the House or each House of the Legislature of the State to meet at such time and place as he thinks fit” .
- The provision also puts on the Governor the responsibility of ensuring that the House is summoned at least once every six months.
- Although it is the Governor’s prerogative to summon the House, according to Article 163, the Governor is required to act on the “aid and advice” of the Cabinet.
- So when the Governor summons the House under Article 174, this is not of his or her own will but on the aid and advice of the Cabinet.
- There are a few instances where the Governor can summon the House despite the refusal of the Chief Minister who heads the Cabinet.
- When the Chief Minister appears to have lost the majority and the legislative members of the House propose a no-confidence motion against the Chief Minister, then the Governor can decide on his or her own on summoning the House.
- But the actions of the Governor, when using his discretionary powers can be challenged in court.
- A number of rulings by the Supreme Court has settled the position that the Governor cannot refuse the request of a Cabinet that enjoys majority in the House unless it is patently unconstitutional.
- **Hence only statement 1 is correct.**

39. Umba village, recently seen in news, is located in:

A. Ladakh

B. Kerala

C. Punjab

D. Sikkim

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Five Mohallas in Umba village in Ladakh received electricity connection recently. Umba village had no electricity till now.

- The village which is 60 KM away from district headquarter Kargil, is situated in toughest terrain at 13,000 thousand feet height and remains cut off for five months during winters.
- Under the guidance of Kargil Renewable Energy Development Authority (KREDA), the Global Himalayan Expedition (GHE) in partnership with the CSR project of Royal Enfield has installed a 17.5kW Solar Electricity system in Umba.
- **Hence, option (a) is the correct answer.**

40. With reference to the Namghars, consider the following statements:

1. They are traditional Vaisnavite monasteries of Assam.
2. Besides forming the primary structure used for worship, they also function as meeting houses for congregations, as well as theatres for dramatic performances.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 only

B. 2 only

C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: The Union Home Minister Amit Shah distributed financial grants to 8,000 Namghars (traditional Vaisnavite monasteries of Assam) under the Assam Darshan programme.

- Namghars (literally meaning Prayer House) are places for congregational worship associated with the entire Assamese community and the Ekasarana sect of Hinduism, in particular, that is native to Assam.
- Besides forming the primary structure used for worship, they also function as meeting houses for congregations, as well as theatres for dramatic performances (bhaona).
- The Namghar, also called the kirtanghar, is also the central structure in the Sattras (monasteries of the Ekasarana religion) where the other buildings are positioned around it.
- Namghars were introduced in Assam by the Vaishnavite saints Damodaradeva, Madhavadeva and Sankaradeva for Assamese people where they can culture and practice naam (devotional songs) and Bhakti of God (devotion).
- **Hence both statements are correct.**

41. Thoubal Multipurpose Project is in:

- A. Manipur
- B. Sikkim
- C. Assam
- D. West Bengal

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched several development projects in Manipur.

- He inaugurated the e-office and Thoubal Multipurpose Project (Thoubal Dam) in Imphal through virtual mode which will irrigate 35,104 hectares.
- He also laid the foundation stone of projects, including the Churachandpur Medical College, IT-SEZ at Mantripukhri, Manipur Bhawan in New Delhi and the Integrated Command and Control Center at Imphal.

- Shri Shah said earlier projects were abandoned after performing ground-breaking ceremonies and work is now being done under the leadership of Modi ji, to inaugurate all projects whose foundation stones were laid by previous governments.
- **Hence, option (a) is the correct answer.**

42. With reference to a report ‘Counting the Cost 2020: A Year of Climate Breakdown’, consider the following statements:

1. It has been prepared by UNFCCC.
2. In its analysis of 15 most destructive climate disasters of 2020 has found that nine of these extreme events, including two in India, caused damage worth at least \$5 billion.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: A new global report in its analysis of 15 most destructive climate disasters of 2020 has found that nine of these extreme events, including two in India, caused damage worth at least \$5 billion.

- The report, ‘Counting the Cost 2020: A Year of Climate Breakdown’ has been prepared by the UK based non-profit organisation Christian Aid.
- Though hurricanes in the US and central American countries turned out to be the most expensive (\$41 billion), floods in India during June-October period caused the loss of highest number of human lives.
- In fact, India’s floods, which killed 2,067, caused loss of more human lives than casualties in all other 14 destructive climate disasters put together.
- Floods in Pakistan which claimed 410 lives figured at second spot followed by the US and central American countries (400 lives lost in hurricanes) at the third position in the list of 15.

- The cyclone ‘Amphan’, which struck the Bay of Bengal in May, had caused financial losses valued at \$13 billion in just a few days in India and Bangladesh and caused loss of 128 human lives.

Hence only statement 2 is correct.

43. What is thermopolium, recently seen in news?

- A. Recently excavated snack food counter at the Pompeii archaeological park’s Regio V.
- B. New type of mineral in lunar meteorite.
- C. Atmospheric boundary of Earth's energy system.
- D. None of the above

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Researchers have unearthed a thermopolium, Latin for hot drinks counter, in the Roman empire town of Pompeii, today one of the world’s largest and most significant archaeological sites.

- The snack food counter called the thermopolium at the Pompeii archaeological park’s Regio V was partially excavated in 2019.
- It was found complete with an image of a Nereid riding a sea-horse, decorative still-life frescoes, food residues, animals bones and victims who died during the volcanic eruption of 79 CE.

Significance:

- The find is significant because it shows the variety of food consumed by the residents of the town — traces of pork, fish, snails and beef have been found in the containers of the stall.
- It is also the first time an entire thermopolium has been excavated, complete with pateras, or bronze drinking bowls, ceramic jars used for cooking stews and soups, wine flasks etc.
- Pompeii was a Roman town in Southern Italy’s Campania region situated along the Bay of Naples. The town was completely buried by volcanic ash after the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE, over 2000 years ago.
- **Hence, option (a) is the correct answer.**

44. With reference to the zero coupon bonds issued by govt to recapitalise Punjab & sindh bank, consider the following statements:

1. Since these bonds are not tradable, the lender has kept them in the Held-To-Maturity (HTM) bucket, not requiring it to book any mark-to-market gains or losses from these bonds.
2. Zero coupon bonds by private companies are normally issued at discount, but since these special bonds are not tradable these can be issued at par.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: The government has used financial innovation to recapitalise Punjab & Sind Bank by issuing the lender Rs 5,500-crore worth of non-interest bearing bonds valued at par.

- Punjab & Sind Bank MD and CEO said these are special types of zero coupon bonds issued by the government after proper due diligence and these are issued at par.
- Since these bonds are not tradable, the lender has kept them in the Held-To-Maturity (HTM) bucket, not requiring it to book any mark-to-market gains or losses from these bonds.
- Though these will earn no interest for the subscriber, market participants term it both a ‘financial illusion’ and ‘great innovation’ by the government where it is using Rs 100 to create an impact of Rs 200 in the economy.
- Unlike the previous tranches of recapitalisation bonds which carried interest and were sold to different banks, these “non-interest bearing, non-transferable special GOI securities” have a maturity of 10-15 years and issued specifically to Punjab & Sind Bank.

- Though zero coupon, these bonds are different from traditional zero coupon bonds on one account — as they are being issued at par, there is no interest; in previous cases, since they were issued at discount, they technically were interest bearing.
- Zero coupon bonds by private companies are normally issued at discount, but since these special bonds are not tradable these can be issued at par.
- **Hence both statements are correct.**

45. R P Tiwari panel, recently seen in news, is related to:

- consider the issue (of) holding common entrance test at undergraduate level only
- A. from the next academic year.
 - B. Non-Banking Financial Companies (NFBCs)
 - C. find the problems faced by the farmers
 - D. None of the above

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: The UGC set up a seven-member committee, headed by Vice-Chancellor of Central University of Punjab R P Tiwari, "to consider the issue (of) holding common entrance test at undergraduate level only from the next academic year".

- The new National Education Policy (NEP), released in July this year, advocates reducing the number of entrance tests to “eliminate the need for taking coaching for these exams”.
- There are 40-odd central universities run by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and, collectively, all of them have about 1 to 1.25 lakh seats across different disciplines at the undergraduate level.
- Of these, currently about 16 central universities, all set up under the UPA-II government, have a common entrance test for Bachelor’s study.
- If the NEP suggestion is implemented, the National Testing Agency will be tasked to conduct a common aptitude test as well as specialised common exams for different disciplines at least twice a year, for admission to bachelor’s in central universities.

- Hence, option (a) is the correct answer.

46. A new species of wild sun rose named *Portulaca laljii* has been recently discovered from:

- A. Western Ghats
- B. Eastern Ghats
- C. Eastern Himalayas
- D. Western Himalayas

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Botanists have discovered a new species of wild sun rose from the Eastern Ghats in India.

- The new species, named *Portulaca laljii*, discovered from Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh has unique features such as a tuberous root, no hair in its leaf axils, a reddish pink flower, prolate-shaped fruits, and copper brown seeds without lustre.
- The flowers are very attractive and bloom for months from June to February.
- The plant bears beautiful, tiny pink flowers for eight months. It is because of the succulent nature of tuberous roots that the plant can survive on rocky crevices.
- *Portulaca laljii* has been named to honour the contribution of Lal Ji Singh, an eminent botanist of the Botanical Survey of India associated with its Andaman and Nicobar Centre.
- Hence, option (b) is the correct answer.

47. Which of the following are the medicinal plant species?

1. Pippali
2. Aonla
3. Guggulu

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Correct Answer: D

Explanation: National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB), Ministry of AYUSH has launched Consortia for Medicinal Plants.

- NMPB envisages the necessity of connectivity between stakeholders in the supply chain and value chain of Medicinal Plants.
- NMPB Consortia will address/deliberate (not limited to) on Quality Planting Material, Research & Development, Cultivation, Trade of medicinal plants/market linkage etc.
- To establish the linkage between the farmers and manufacturers, a ‘Seed to Shelf’ approach is being introduced, wherein, aspects related to Quality Planting Materials (QPM), Good Agriculture Practices (GAP’s), Good Post Harvest Practices (GPHP’s) would be addressed.
- In the first phase NMPB consortia is proposed for medicinal plant species - Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*), Pippali (*Piper longum*), Aonla (*Phyllanthus emblica*), Guggulu (*Commiphora wightii*), Satavari (*Asparagus racemosus*).
- **Hence, option (d) is the correct answer.**

48. With reference to the “Preventing Financing of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction” act (Turkey), consider the following statements:

1. The Bill has come following the 2019 report on Turkey prepared by the intergovernmental body Financial Action Task Force (FATF) meant to fight money laundering and terror financing.
2. The Bill gives the Turkish government the power to appoint trustees to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to suspend their activities, seize their assets and monitor their sources of funding.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: The Turkish parliament passed a bill that would increase the monitoring of civil society groups. The act is called “Preventing Financing of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction”.

- The Bill has come following the 2019 report on Turkey prepared by the intergovernmental body Financial Action Task Force (FATF) meant to fight money laundering and terror financing.
- The bill consists of 43 articles and has made changes to seven laws on Turkey’s Law of Associations and is meant to keep Turkey from being blacklisted by the Paris-based watchdog of terror financing.
- The Bill gives the Turkish government the power to appoint trustees to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to suspend their activities, seize their assets and monitor their sources of funding.
- Critics are seeing certain provisions of the bill as arbitrary and believe that it violates the provisions under the Turkish constitution since it interferes with the right to freedom of association.
- They are seeing this move as a way to crackdown on dissidents in a country where civil society is already not very free.
- **Hence both statements are correct.**

49. Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation the ambitious New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) in:

- A. Uttar Pradesh

- B. Bihar
- C. Punjab
- D. Rajasthan

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation the ambitious New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) in Uttar Pradesh.

- The 351-kilometre New Bhaupur- New Khurja section of EDFC is built at a cost of Rs. 5,750 crore and most of its part passes through Uttar Pradesh.
- The section will decongest the existing Kanpur-Delhi main line and will enable Indian Railways to run faster trains.
- The agro products of Uttar Pradesh will now reach at a faster speed to other parts of the country and it will increase the export capacity of the state which is a landlocked area and doesn't have any port to send the items abroad.
- The Prime Minister also inaugurated Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor's Operation Control Centre at Prayagraj. This will act as the command centre for the entire route length of the EDFC.
- Talking about the Operation Control Centre at Prayagraj Prime Minister said that it is equipped with state of the art facilities which are indigenously designed.
- **Hence, option (a) is the correct answer.**

50. Madhya Pradesh Government is organizing 'Raag-Bhopali' exhibition to promote

- A. Chanderi fabric
- B. Bagh Paints
- C. Maheshwari fabric
- D. Zari-Zardozi crafts

Correct Answer: D

Explanation: Madhya Pradesh Government is organizing 'Raag-Bhopali' exhibition to promote Zari-Zardozi crafts of Bhopal.

- Embroidery done with metallic threads is called kalabattu and forms the zari.
- The main zari production centres are Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh.

Process:

- Here the metal ingots are melted into metal bars called pasa from which lengths are got by beating it after treatment.
- This is then pulled through perforated steel plates to make it into wires, followed by the tarkashi process to make it thin with rubber and diamond dies.
- The last stage is called badla where the wire is flattened and twisted with silk or cotton thread to become kasab or kalabattu.

Listed below are different kinds of zari work:

- **Zardozi:** This is a heavy and more elaborate embroidery work which uses varieties of gold threads, spangles, beads and gota. It is used to embellish wedding outfits, heavy coats, cushions, curtains etc.
- **Kamdani :** This is a lighter needlework which is done on lighter material like scarves, veils, and caps.
- **Mina Work :** This is thus called owing to its resemblance with enamel work. The embroidery is done in gold.
- **Hence, option (d) is the correct answer.**

51. With reference to the Digital Ocean, consider the following statements:

1. Digital Ocean is a first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management.
2. It is an initiative of Union Ministry of Shipping.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only

C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Union Minister of Earth Sciences inaugurated the web-based application “Digital Ocean (www.do.incois.gov.in)” developed by INCOIS of M/o Earth sciences.

- Digital Ocean is a first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management.
- It includes a set of applications developed to organize and present heterogeneous oceanographic data by adopting rapid advancements in geospatial technology.
- It facilitates an online interactive web-based environment for data integration, 3D and 4D data visualization, data analysis to assess the evolution of oceanographic features, data fusion and multi-format download of disparate data from multiple sources
- ‘Digital Ocean’ will help to share knowledge about the ocean with a wide range of users including research institutions, operational agencies, strategic users, academic community, maritime industry and policy makers. Digital Ocean also provides free access to information to the general public and the common man.
- It will play a central role in sustainable management of our oceans and expanding our ‘Blue Economy’ initiatives.
- Further, the Digital Ocean will be promoted as a platform for capacity building on Ocean Data Management for all Indian Ocean Rim countries.

Hence only statement 1 is correct.