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- caecilian (Ichthyophis spp)
- What is the alcohol in liquor?
- Changes in china's fiscal revenue system.
- Strategic Alliance Agreement (SAA)
- Russia and north korea
- Mains



By saurabh Pandey



THE HINDU



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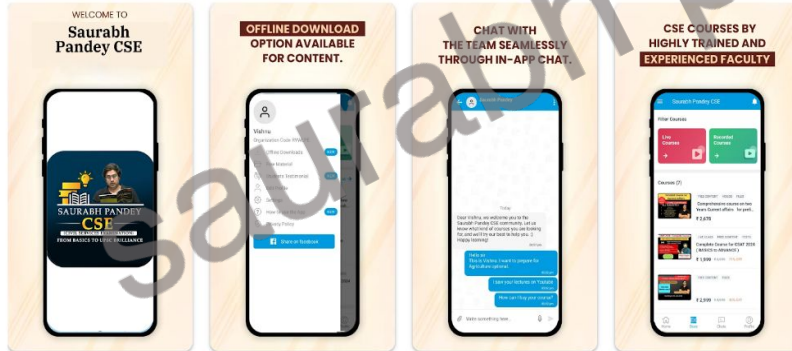
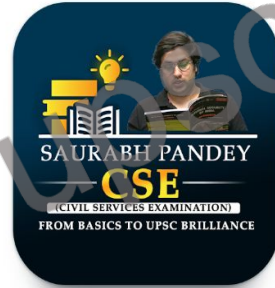
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Limbless amphibian found in Kaziranga for first time

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

A limbless amphibian has been added to the fauna in the 1,307.49 sq. km Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve.

Assam's wildlife officials said a team of herpetologists recorded the striped caecilian (*Ichthyophis spp*) in the tiger reserve for the first time during a rapid herpetofauna survey conducted from June 14-17.

The survey was conducted with support from Saibal Sengupta of Assam Don Bosco University; Abhijit Das of the Wildlife Institute of India; Rajeev Basumatary and Samrat Sengupta of D.R. College in eastern Assam's Golaghat; Jaydev Mandal of Madhab Choudhury College in western Assam's Barpeta; Jayaditya Purkayastha of Guwahati-based Help Earth; Jayanta Kumar Roy of Aaranyak; and Sushmita Kar of the Turtle Survival Alliance.

Reptiles and amphibians, collectively called



The striped caecilian. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

herpetofauna, are the least studied but most vulnerable to climate change. "Caecilians are limbless amphibians that spend most of their lives burrowed under soil. They are, therefore, the least studied of the amphibian species. As they are an ancient species, their presence holds critical linkages to evolution and intercontinental speciation," a statement issued by the Kaziranga authorities said.

The diverse ecosystem of Kaziranga, comprising flood plains, wetlands,

grasslands, and hill tracts on the periphery, provides an ideal habitat for herpetofauna. The tiger reserve houses 24 species of amphibians and 74 species of reptiles. It is also home to 21 of the 29 species of tortoises and freshwater turtles found in India.

Kaziranga's Director, Sonali Ghosh, said, "a training and sensitisation programme was held to enhance the skills of forest personnel in herpetofauna identification and conservation for ensuring better management and protection of these vital species."

caecilian (*Ichthyophis spp*)

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saurabh pandey upsc

Why dangerous is methanol poisoning?

What happened in the Kallakurichi district of Tamil Nadu? How is spurious liquor made and why does it have deadly effects? Why is methanol added to liquor and how is it processed by the body if ingested? Is treatment effective?

EXPLAINER

Yasdevan Mukundh

The story so far:

At least 38 people had died after consuming spurious liquor in the Kallakurichi district of Tamil Nadu while as many as 82 others were receiving treatment in hospitals. Immediately after news of the deaths broke, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin had the Collector transferred and the district superintendent of police suspended. The State has also deployed 2,000 police personnel around the district. The tragedy echoes a similar incident a year ago in the State's Chengalpattu and Villupuram districts, in which more than 20 people died after consuming spurious liquor. Liquor sales in Tamil Nadu are controlled by the State, through around 5,000 outlets.

What is the alcohol in liquor?

Liquor is differentiated by its alcohol content – from the 5% or so of beer to the 25% or so of wine to the 40% or so of distilled spirits (all by volume). In the beverages consumed for recreational purposes, the alcohol in question is almost always ethanol. In this context, ethanol is technically a psychoactive drug that, in low doses, reduces the level of neurotransmission in the body, leading to its typical intoxicating effects.

Contrary to popular belief, the World Health Organisation has found "no level of [its] consumption is safe for our health". Long-term use leads to dependence, heightens the risk of some cancers and heart disease, and may eventually cause death.

Ethanol (C₂H₅OH) is one carbon atom bonded to three hydrogen atoms and one more carbon atom; the second carbon atom is also bonded to two hydrogen atoms and the hydroxyl group, also known as the ion OH⁻. Inside the body, ethanol is metabolised in the liver and the stomach by alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH) enzymes to acetaldehyde, then, acetaldehyde is transferred into acetate by aldehyde dehydrogenase (ALDH) enzymes. The adverse effects of alcohol consumption from the liver over to a cancer, are due to acetaldehyde.

What is spurious liquor?

Spurious liquor is distinguished by the liquid mixture containing methanol as well. The police were able to determine last year that the spurious liquor in both the Chengalpattu and Villupuram incidents arose from the same source, and that attack centres had purchased methanol from factories and sold it to the victims (Arrack is distilled from the fermented sap of the palm tree). Following the Kallakurichi incident, Mr. Stalin constituted a one-man commission headed by former High Court judge B. Gokuldas to inquire into the tragedy.

In many older cases, spurious liquor has typically been a homemade liquor to which methanol was added to strengthen the intoxicating effects in colloquial parlance, its 'kick' and/or to increase its bulk volume. The Food Safety and Standards (Alcoholic Beverages) Regulations 2018 stipulate the maximum permissible quantity of methanol in different liquors. These values span a wide range, including 'absent' in coconut ferment, 50 grams per 100 litres of country liquor, and 300 grams per 100 litres of pot-distilled spirits.

What is methanol?

The methanol molecule (CH₃OH) consists



Tragic event: The bodies of victims who died after consuming spurious liquor being cremated at Karunapuram in Kallakurichi on June 20, 2022. ANI/PTI

of one carbon atom bonded with three hydrogen atoms and one hydroxyl group. It is sold by the Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemical Rules, 1989 inside methanol. The Indian standard IS 51 applies to how the quality of methanol is to be ascertained and, together with the Tamil Nadu Denatured Spirit, Methyl alcohol, and Vernish (French, Polish) Rules 1959, what signage methanol packaging should carry.

The most common way to produce methanol is to combine carbon monoxide and hydrogen in the presence of copper and zinc oxides as catalysts at 50-100 atm of pressure and 250 °C. In the pre-industrial era, going back to ancient Egypt, people made methanol together with several other byproducts) by heating wood to a very high temperature.

Methanol has several industrial applications, including as a precursor to acetic acid, formaldehyde, and aromatic hydrocarbons. It is also used as a solvent and as antifreeze. In Tamil Nadu, the manufacture, trade, storage, and sale of methanol requires licences under the 1959 Rules.

How does spurious liquor kill?

The deadliness of spurious liquor arises from methanol. James Manor, emeritus professor of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London, wrote in December 2022, "In every hoosh tragedy in the history of India – and of the world since 1945 – the poison has been methanol." The human body contains infinitesimal quantities of methanol (4.5 ppm in the breath of healthy individuals, per a 2006 study) as a result of eating some fruits. But even for an adult, more than 0.1 ml of pure methanol per kilogram of body weight can be

defeating. Once ingested, ADH enzymes metabolise methanol in the liver to form formaldehyde (H-CHO). Then ALDH enzymes convert formaldehyde to formic acid (HCOOH). The accumulation of formic acid over time leads to a condition called metabolic acidosis, which can lead to acidemia: when the blood's pH drops below its normal value of 7.35, becoming increasingly acidic. The blood's pH is normally maintained by a balance

between acid, like carbon dioxide (CO₂), and a base, like the bicarbonate ion (HCO₃⁻). The "metabolic" in "metabolic acidosis" means the concentration of the bicarbonate ion is dropping, leading to the acid gaining the upper hand. Formic acid also interferes with an enzyme called cytochrome oxidase, disrupting cells' ability to use oxygen and leading to the buildup of lactic acid and contributing to acidosis.

According to a paper published by the journal *Archives of Toxicology* in January 2022, consuming methanol also leads to "methanol-induced optic neuropathy ... a serious condition that may result in long-term or irreversible visual impairment or even blindness (due to damage and loss of function of the optic nerve and retina)". This consequence "shows a tendency to occur as mass poisonings around the world with a clear predilection for poor societies in developing countries". It added, "Methanol poisoning can also cause cerebral edema, haemorrhage, and death."

How can methanol-poisoning be treated?

Once methanol is ingested, the body takes some time to completely eliminate it. One estimate suggests as much as 33% is still left behind after 48 hours. It is completely absorbed via the gastrointestinal tract.

And blood methanol level can reach its maximum value within 90 minutes.

There are two immediate ways to treat methanol poisoning. One is to administer pharmaceutical-grade ethanol. This may sound counter-intuitive but ethanol competes very well with methanol for the ADH enzymes, which metabolise ethanol around 10x faster. As a result, the methanol is kept from being metabolised to formaldehyde.

The other option is to administer an antidote called fomepizole, which has a similar mechanism: it slows the action of the ADH enzymes, causing the body to produce formaldehyde at a rate the body can quickly excrete, preventing the deadlier effects from kicking in.

Both courses of action are limited by availability: fomepizole is expensive whereas pharmaceutical-grade ethanol needs to be administered under expert supervision. Healthcare workers may also have the individual undergo a dialysis to remove methanol and formic acid salts from the blood, and mitigate damage to the kidneys and the retina.

They may also administer folic acid, which encourages the formic acid to break up into carbon dioxide and water. Both fomepizole and folic acid are in the WHO's list of essential medicines.

The formic acid would have begun accumulating in dangerous amounts around 18-24 hours after ingestion, affecting the optic nerve, kidneys, the heart, and the brain. Ophthalmic effects have been observed in 50% of those who have consumed methanol, and they become apparent within 24 hours.

If the individual consumed ethanol along with the methanol, the damage may not be evident until after a few days, further delaying treatment and increasing mortality.

THE GIST

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saurabh pandey upsc

China's key plenum aims to fix decades-old tax revenue imbalance

The plenum is set to discuss the biggest changes to China's fiscal system in three decades, hoping to ease concerns over a \$13 trn. local government debt pile; in 2023, local governments' own fiscal revenues accounted for 54% of the nation's total, but their expenditures accounted for 86%

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters
BEIJING

Long-touted changes to China's tax system will focus on allowing local governments to retain more fiscal revenues, say policy advisers, widely seen by markets as an important step towards removing an immediate threat to financial stability.

Measures that redistribute income from central authorities to municipalities, curbing an addiction to land sales laid bare by China's property crisis, will top the agenda of a leadership gathering in July, known as the third plenum, they said.

"Pressure is high to push reforms to bolster local government revenue after the end of the land finance phase," said one of four policy advisers who spoke to Reuters.

Big changes

The plenum is set to discuss the biggest changes to China's fiscal system in three decades, with policymakers hoping to ease concerns over a \$13 trillion-and-growing local government debt pile that poses risks to financial institutions and growth.

In 2023, local governments' own fiscal revenues accounted for 54% of the nation's total, but their ex-



Tough choice: Taxing household income is difficult as top earners are already taxed at 45%

penditures accounted for 86%, data from the finance ministry showed.

This imbalance stems from the fiscal reforms of 1994, when China aimed to limit localities' capacity to independently raise money, following a surge in local spending and inflation in the late 1980s.

But local governments got around those limitations by creating off-budget financing vehicles and by auctioning land for residential development, fuelling a giant housing bubble.

Land sales' contribution to local budgets rose from a fifth to almost a third in the decade leading up to 2021, when China entered a severe property market downturn. It is no longer a reliable cash cow: such in-



Local governments' spending should be based on their fiscal capacity. A mature society no longer needs to find special ways to build more infrastructure

- A Chinese policy adviser

comes shrank to 5.8 trillion yuan in 2023 from a 2021 peak of 8.7 trillion.

Chinese leaders flagged plans for fiscal reforms at an annual meeting in December, without offering details. Policy advisers said the main changes are likely to revolve around how much revenue local governments retain, rather

than adding or hiking taxes. Municipalities currently get half of value-added tax revenue and 40% of personal income tax, while the central government gets most corporate income tax and all of what China calls a consumption tax, currently levied on producers and importers.

The advisers did not give figures on the future division of tax income between central and local governments.

But they said local governments may be allowed to keep most of the consumption tax - which accounts for almost a tenth of China's total tax revenues - and more of the value-added tax - which accounts for more than a third.

Proposals also include

Beijing taking over growing commitments on pensions and healthcare as the population ages. The aim is to stop municipal debt accumulation by balancing revenues with expenditure, the advisers said.

"Local governments' spending should be based on their fiscal capacity," said a second adviser. "A mature society no longer needs to find special ways to build more infrastructure."

Still imbalanced

The fiscal overhaul will likely stop short of addressing other structural imbalances, such as an over-reliance on investment and exports and weak household consumption, analysts say.

China taxes capital gains at 20%. While subject to many exemptions, it is also lower than the 30% in India and 37% in the U.S.

But investment yields dwindling returns, as evidenced by debt significantly outgrowing China's GDP for the past 15 years.

Therefore, tax revenue is also low. The IMF calculates China's tax-to-GDP ratio at 14%, versus a 23% average for G7 economies.

This makes social spending difficult to fund without raising taxes on capital or businesses. Taxing households more is a difficult proposition as China's upper personal income tax band is among

the world's steepest, at 45%. The difference between how capital and labour are taxed encourages low wages and high investment.

But reversing that runs counter to Beijing's strategic goals of global industrial and technological leadership, which channel resources to factories and science laboratories, rather than consumers.

"Tax reforms should support industrial development," said policy adviser Jia Kang, founding president of the China Academy of New Supply-Side Economics. China still needed to "grow the pie," he added.

Still, one seed for a longer-term tilt towards consumption may yet be planted at the plenum.

Chinese media said policymakers may shift the point of charging the consumption tax to wholesalers and retailers.

This tax currently only applies to 15 types of goods. Domestic demand for these items has limited impact on China's productivity.

Goldman Sachs analysts say charging consumers shifts incentives for local officials from growing their manufacturing base to growing their consumer base. But that would require a broader application of the tax at a time when consumption remains weak.



Changes in china's fiscal revenue system.

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saurabh pandey upsc

The U.S.-Saudi agreement, from fist-bump to embrace



Over eight decades of eventful ties between the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have had their ups and downs – from the oil embargo of 1973 to the Jamal Khashoggi assassination in 2018. However, two images of this relationship remain iconic: the first is of the meeting between the U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the King of Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz Al-Saud on Valentine's Day 1945 aboard a U.S. cruiser beginning seven decades of an unbroken bilateral bromance. It was underpinned by an understated but seminal “oil-for-security” symbiosis. The second iconic frame is the fist-bump of July 15, 2022 in Riyadh between U.S. President Joe Biden and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), symbolising a more equal and largely transactional partnership.

If the buzz around is to be believed, Riyadh and Washington are on the verge of a new and enhanced relationship, tentatively titled Strategic Alliance Agreement (SAA). This “Grand Bargain” between them being negotiated for the past year is designed to match the domestic and regional ambitions of Al-Saud under MBS with the keenness of the White House to score a diplomatic success big enough to ensure Mr. Biden's re-election.

The layers to the agreement

Reading between the lines of the U.S. media's episodic coverage, the SAA could have three interlinked components: bilateral, regional and global. At a bilateral level, it would codify the current implicit bilateral alliance into a strategic defence pact modelled on the U.S.-Japan treaty committing the Pentagon to come to the Kingdom's rescue in case of an attack. The U.S. would also equip Riyadh with means to defend itself which would include the state-of-art F-35 stealth fighters. More surprisingly, Washington, a non-proliferation hawk, seems to be agreeable to providing Saudi Arabia with nuclear technology for peaceful use. At a regional level, Riyadh wants a ceasefire in Gaza and some movement towards a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine problem. As a *quid pro quo* for Riyadh's maximalist demands, Washington reportedly has put forth a daunting wish list of its own. It wants Riyadh to recognise Israel and have full normal diplomatic relations. It also wants the Kingdom to ring-fence its foreign policy to avoid getting too close to Washington's rivals, specifically, Beijing and Moscow.

While the precise economic underpinnings of the incipient SAA are not known, they are likely to be quite substantive. Although the U.S. is no longer dependent on Saudi oil supplies, the two sides are unlikely to abandon their long-standing coordination to balance the global market between the U.S. need for cheaper energy with a Saudi quest for higher oil revenue. The SAA is



Mahesh Sachdev

a former Indian
Ambassador

likely to ensure that the lion's share of the projects under MBS's Vision 2030 goes to American companies.

It was apparently China's President Xi Jinping's epochal State visit to Riyadh in December 2022, with triple summits, which forced Washington to revamp its ties with Saudi Arabia. Slowly, a U.S. diplomatic counter-offensive to forestall “losing Saudi Arabia” began to take shape. To U.S. strategists, a decline in the oil-for-security paradigm notwithstanding, Saudi Arabia retains much of its importance. As the custodian of Islam's two holy shrines, the Kingdom has been the most important determinant of the Ummah, the 1.4 billion Muslims all over the world. So, if Saudi Arabia agrees to become the fifth Abraham Accord Arab state to recognise Israel's right to exist, this could geopolitically reconfigure not only West Asia but also push much of the Islamic world to follow Riyadh's lead. Second, Saudi Arabia remains the largest economy in both the Arab and Islamic world and an ambitious Vision 2030 offered very lucrative pickings. Last but not least, during his decade at the helm, MBS has not only consolidated power but also taken bold and often controversial reforms. If any Grand Bargain is to be implemented, young and dynamic MBS would be the right person to carry it through.

The hurdles

The SAA project faces two formidable odds on its way to realisation. First, the past decade has seen a rise in the bilateral trust deficit. In 1990-91, the U.S. deployed troops to evict Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait poised to threaten Saudi Arabia. However, when Saudi Arabia's largest oil processing facility at Abqaiq and Khurais was attacked in 2019, the U.S. did practically nothing. Moreover, the U.S. banned the supply of some weapons during the Yemeni war, citing their possible misuse. The U.S. perceived ambivalence towards Iran in general and the signing of the nuclear agreement (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) in particular, was also seen as a sign of U.S. unreliability. On the other hand, the decline of the bilateral oil underpinning emboldened many U.S. politicians and opinion makers to criticise Saudi Arabia, which in turn, drifted closer to China and Russia over the last decade and even reconciled with Iran. Beijing became Riyadh's top trading partner and Mr. Xi visited Riyadh. Saudi Arabia has been collaborating with Russia under the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Plus (OPEC+) rubric to steer the global crude market.

The second major obstacle that the SAA faces is the ongoing Gaza conflict which has made it politically inopportune for Riyadh to agree to any reconciliation with Israel. This is also important from the Biden administration's perspective as the SAA would require the U.S. Senate approval by two-thirds which can only follow a Riyadh-Tel Aviv détente. But if any progress is to be made in

this direction, the wanton bloodletting of Palestinian Arabs and destruction in Gaza need to be stopped, and a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine problem put back on the table. However, persistent U.S. efforts to end this conflict and move towards a semblance of normalcy in the region have been hitherto unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the clock ticks away towards the U.S. Presidential elections in November when ascendant Donald Trump faces Mr. Biden.

Incidentally, many of the recent regional events can be explained by looking through the SAA prism: Some analysts even believe that the October 7 surprise attack on Israel by Hamas was to forestall the SAA. Other signs include Saudi demurral in joining BRICS, MBS not going to the China-Arab Forum last month despite a prior commitment, the Saudi Foreign Minister participating in Ukraine Peace Conference, Mr. Biden personally unveiling a Gaza Peace Plan and his administration's piloting the UN Security Council resolution, increasingly strident American disapproval of Israeli attack on Rafah, fissures in Israeli war cabinet, a Republican-inspired invitation to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a hardliner, to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress, looming Israel-Hezbollah conflict and Israeli national security adviser's statement that the Gaza war could last till the end of 2024.

The quest for the SAA has become a time-bound contest between an irresistible force and an immovable object. We can only speculate on the likely impact of the likely scenarios. In case a fully formatted SAA is signed, it would reimpose unipolarity (Pax Americana) onto the Gulf and much of West Asia. Pro-West regimes will gain more confidence and the Palestinian cause would be given a facile burial. If the quest for the SAA fails, the region will stay in turmoil and the non-state actors promoted by Iran will keep disrupting the regional equilibrium. The region would remain a chessboard for outside powers. There is also a possibility that if Gaza peace remains elusive, having come this far, Riyadh and Washington may reluctantly agree to a truncated piecemeal agreement, bringing in other friendly countries to fill it up.

India's stakes

India, a large neighbour of the region with well-known stakes in the region, needs to watch the emerging Grand Bargain carefully. An SAA would be in India's overall interest as it would hopefully enhance regional stability, create economic opportunities, promote the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and free the U.S. to follow its Indo-Pacific Strategy more vigorously. At the same time, India needs to pursue its own “Act West” policy without waiting for a third iconic image of Israeli and Saudi leaders shaking hands at Camp David.

The proposed Strategic Alliance Agreement may have been forced by Washington's fear of losing Riyadh



Strategic Alliance Agreement (SAA)

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- **components: bilateral, regional and global.**
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- **The U.S. would also equip Riyadh with means to defend itself which would include the state-of-art F-35 stealth fighters.**



- **More surprisingly, Washington, a non-proliferation hawk, seems to be agreeable to providing Saudi Arabia with nuclear technology for peaceful use.**
- **At a regional level, Riyadh wants a ceasefire in Gaza and some movement towards a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine problem.**
- **As a quid pro quo for Riyadh's maximalist demands, Washington reportedly has put forth a daunting wish list of its own.**
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Hurdles

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In security pact, Russia, N. Korea seek to expand partnership, challenge West

The agreement requires both countries to use all means to provide immediate military assistance in the event of war, according to North Korean state media; Kim claimed that deal elevated bilateral ties to the level of an alliance, while Putin was more understated and did not call it an alliance

Associated Press
SEOUL

Both Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un say a new strategic partnership is a “breakthrough”, but what it means for their relationship is still uncertain.

The pact requires both countries to use all available means to provide immediate military assistance in the event of war, according to North Korean state media. While the agreement, inked on Wednesday at a summit in Pyongyang, could represent the countries’ strongest deal signed after the Cold War, there are differing opinions on how strong the security commitment is.

Mr. Kim claimed that the deal elevated bilateral relations to the level of an alliance, while Mr. Putin was more understated and did not call it an alliance.

North Korean state media released the text of the agreement, which also includes broader cooperation in military, foreign policy and trade. Russia has not published its version of the text.

Relations between sprawling Russia and small, isolated North Korea – both of them nuclear powers – have warmed significantly in recent years amid Russia’s growing acrimony with the West over



Strengthening ties: North Korea’s leader Kim Jong-un (right) with Russian President Vladimir Putin after a signing ceremony at the Kumsusan State guest house in Pyongyang. AFP

the invasion of Ukraine and suppression of all domestic opposition.

One of the first knock-on effects of the agreement came on Thursday, when South Korea’s government said it would reconsider its policy of limiting its support to Ukraine to non-lethal supplies. South Korea, a growing arms exporter, has provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine, but it has not directly provided weapons to Kyiv.

Mutual aid

Most of the debate over the partnership agreement revolves around the article that pledges mutual aid. According to North Korean

state media, the section states that if one of the countries gets invaded and is pushed into a state of war, the other must deploy “all means at its disposal without delay” to provide “military and other assistance.”

But it also says that such actions must be in accordance with the laws of both countries and Article 51 of the UN Charter, which recognises a UN member state’s right to self-defence.

Cheong Seong Chang, an analyst at South Korea’s Sejong Institute, said the agreement echoes the language of the 1961 treaty, as well as provisions of the U.S.-South Korea mutual defence treaty about activ-

ating channels to coordinate if either of faces the threat of invasion.

Other experts were more cautious, saying the section is carefully worded to avoid implying automatic interventions and strictly limits the circumstances in which either country would be obligated to step in.

And the language of the agreement is much less important than what each nation is actually capable of and willing to do, Du Hyeogn Cha, an analyst at Seoul’s Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said.

While it’s rare for any defence treaty to spell out specifically that a country is required to automatical-

ly intervene to defend a partner under attack, the strength of the commitment can be signalled in other ways, such as how the U.S. stations thousands of troops in South Korea and closely coordinates with its ally over training and weapons systems, Cha said. But Russia, for instance, doesn’t have a troop presence in North Korea and the countries have no established track record in joint military activities and coordination, aside from the North’s alleged munitions transfers to Russia.

The fact that the article invokes the countries’ domestic laws and the U.N. Charter could reflect that Russia tried to limit its defence obligation to very narrow conditions: when it’s clear North Korea did not instigate the aggression, the attack on the North is legally recognised in Russia as war, and Russia’s defence of the North is justified by the U.N., Cha said.

Biggest concern

“The agreement is a symbolic statement vowing the expansion of cooperation, but it leaves a lot of room for interpretation when we get into practice,” Cha said. “The biggest concern about the summit isn’t whether [Russia] committed to an automatic military intervention or not, but the possible expansion

of North Korean weapons transfers to Russia and the transfers of Russian military technologies to the North.”

Mr. Putin said he would not “exclude the development of military-technical cooperation with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in accordance with the document signed today.”

That statement in effect formalises something Western countries claim is already happening.

The U.S. and other allies allege that Russia has received ballistic missiles and ammunition from North Korea as the Ukraine war depletes Moscow’s inventory, and that Russia has made technology transfers to Pyongyang that could enhance the threat posed by Kim’s nuclear weapons and missile program.

The agreement also calls for the countries to actively cooperate in efforts to establish a “just and multipolar new world order,” the North’s Korean Central News Agency said, underscoring how the countries are aligning as they face separate, escalating confrontations with the United States and its allies.

The partnership also calls for developing economic ties, an especially important issue for North Korea as it suffers under an array of international sanctions.

Russia and north korea

- **Both Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un say a new strategic partnership is a “breakthrough”, but what it means for their relationship is still uncertain.**
- **The pact requires both countries to use all available means to provide immediate military assistance in the event of war, according to North Korean state media.**
- **North Korean state media released the text of the agreement, which also includes broader cooperation in military, foreign policy and trade**

- **The U.S. and other allies allege that Russia has received ballistic missiles and ammunition from North Korea as the Ukraine war depletes Moscow’s inventory, and that Russia has made technology transfers to Pyongyang that could enhance the threat posed by Kim’s nuclear weapons and missile program.**
- **The agreement also calls for the countries to actively cooperate in efforts to establish a “just and multipolar new world order,”**

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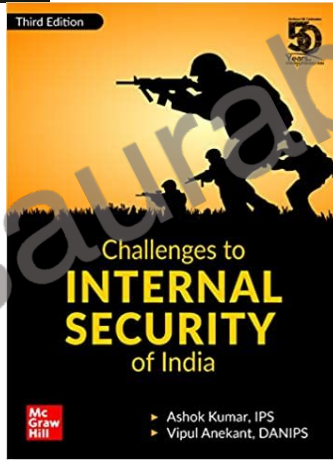
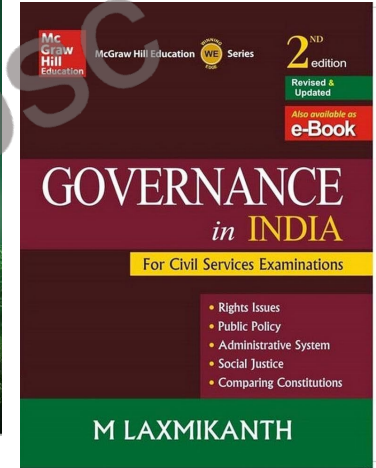
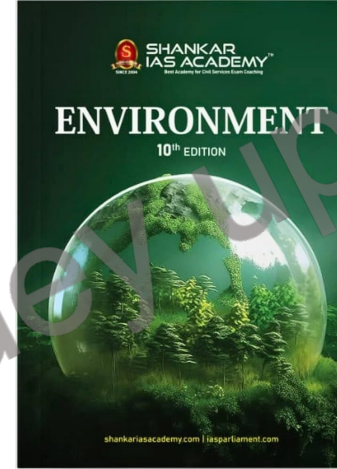
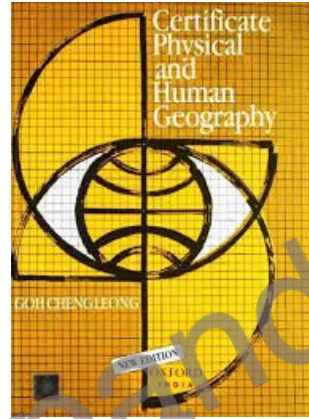
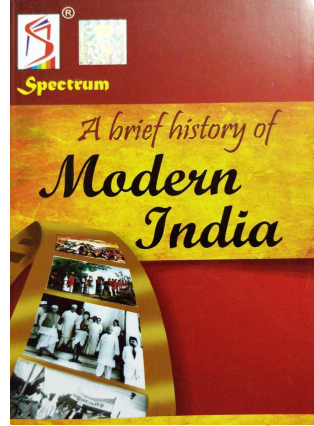
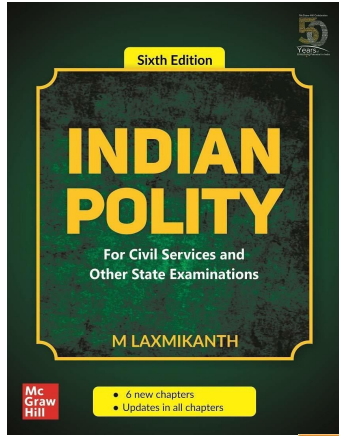
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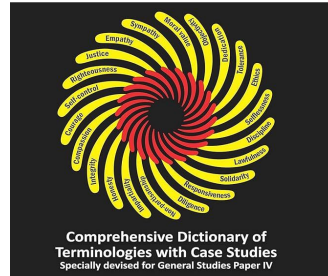


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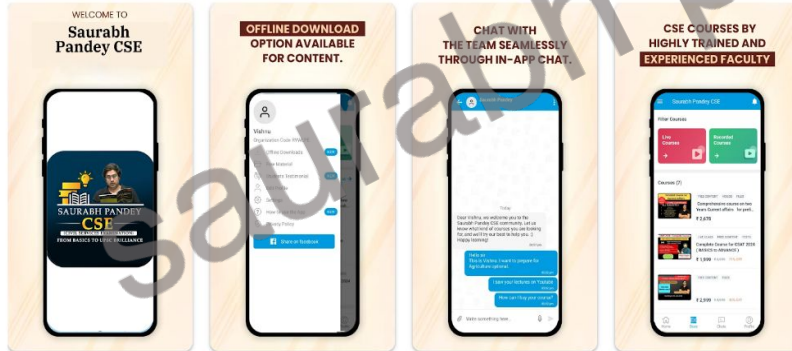
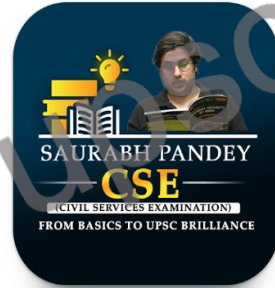
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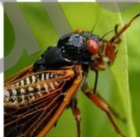


Periodical cicada emergence disrupts food webs

The periodical mass emergence of cicadas in eastern North American forests can "rewire" forest food webs and initiate a cascade of impacts that propagates throughout the food chain, as per a study that quantified effects of the 2021 brood X cicada emergence. The study found that when insect-eating birds have prey in the form of cicadas and thus shift their focus away from their usual prey – leaf-eating caterpillars – the caterpillars feast more heavily upon the leaves of oak saplings, doubling insect leaf damage.

- The periodical mass emergence of cicadas in eastern North American forests can "rewire" forest food webs and initiate a cascade of impacts that propagates throughout the food chain, as per a study that quantified effects of the 2021 Brood X cicada emergence.

The cicadas are a superfamily, the Cicadoidea, of insects in the order Hemiptera.



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X 10th october 2...

States as per ARTICLE 244(2).

What are Scheduled Areas?

- Scheduled Areas cover 11.3% of India's land area, and have been notified in 10 States: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh

How are Scheduled Areas governed?

- The President of India notifies India's Scheduled Areas. States with Scheduled Areas need to constitute a Tribal Advisory Council with up to 20 ST members.
- They will advise the Governor on matters referred to them regarding ST welfare.
- The Governor will then submit a report every year to the President regarding the administration of Scheduled Areas.

- The national government can give directions to the State regarding the administration of Scheduled Areas.
- The Governor can repeal or amend any law enacted by Parliament and the State Legislative Assembly in its application to the Scheduled Area of that State.

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X 7TH DECEMBE...

Garba dance of Gujarat makes it to UNESCO list

Sreeparna Chakrabarti
NEW DELHI

Gujarat's traditional dance form 'Garba' was on Wednesday included in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The popular dance form is the 15th cultural item from India to make it to the UNESCO list. Kolkata's Durga Puja was the last one added two years ago.

The inclusion has been made under the provisions of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The international cultural body described the 'Garba' as a ritualistic and devotional dance performed in India.

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- The international cultural body described the 'Garba' as a ritualistic and devotional dance performed in India.



Climate Change is making the world sick

Climate change is making the world sick. The world is becoming warmer, and the weather is becoming more extreme. This is causing a lot of problems for people and the environment. We need to do something to stop climate change before it's too late.

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WION
Russia loads 'Avangard' missile into launch Silo, fears of nuclear warfare on rise | World DNA

Que-3 With reference to exercise 'Mitra Shakti', consider the following statements

- 1- Between India and Nepal.
- 2- The aim of the exercise is to jointly rehearse sub-conventional operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, which authorises the Security Council to take enforcement measures, including the use of military force, to address threats to international peace and security.
- 3- "Exercise MITRA SHAKTI-2023" recently commenced in Goa.

How many of the above statements are correct?

a) Only one b) Only two
c) All three d) None

Ans 3- (a)

- "Exercise MITRA SHAKTI-2023" recently commenced in Aunth (Pune).
- Between India and Sri Lanka.

• The Constituent Assembly debated whether fundamental rights including this one could be suspended or limited during an Emergency. The Article cannot be suspended except during the period of Emergency.

Can High Courts be approached in cases of violation of fundamental rights?

- Both the High Courts and the Supreme Court can be approached for violation or enactment of fundamental rights through five kinds of writs:
- Habeas corpus (related to personal liberty in cases of illegal detentions and wrongful arrests)
- Mandamus — directing public officials, governments, courts to perform a statutory duty;
- Quo warrant — to show by what warrant is a person holding public office;

- Prohibition — directing judicial or quasi-judicial authorities to stop proceedings which it has no jurisdiction for; and
- Certiorari — re-examination of an order given by judicial, quasi-judicial or administrative authorities.
- In civil or criminal matters, the first remedy available to an aggrieved person is that of trial courts, followed by an appeal in the High Court and then the Supreme Court.
- When it comes to violation of fundamental rights, an individual can approach the High Court under Article 226 or the Supreme Court directly under Article 32.
- Article 226, however, is not a fundamental right like Article 32.

IE

- 12th BRICS summit

103rd Nobel Prize In Economic Sciences Awarded To Claudia Goldin
Nobel Prize awarded to women's

Que-3 Consider the following statements

- 1- Article 244, pertaining to the administration of Scheduled and Tribal Areas, is the single most important constitutional provision for STs.
- 2- Articles 244(1) provides for the application of Fifth Schedule provisions to Scheduled Areas notified in any State other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram, the Sixth Schedule applies to these states as per Article 244(2).
- 3- The Prime Minister of India notifies India's Scheduled Areas.

How many of the above statements are correct?

a) Only one b) Only two
c) All three d) None

Ans 3- (b)

The President of India notifies India's Scheduled Areas.

Scheduled Areas cover 11.3% of India's land area, and have been notified in 10 States: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh. In 2015, Kerala proposed to notify 2,133 habitations, five gram panchayats and two wards in five districts. It awaits the Indian government's approval.

- The President of India notifies India's Scheduled Areas. States with Scheduled Areas need to constitute a Tribal Advisory Council with up to 20 ST members. They will advise the Governor on matters referred to them regarding ST welfare. The Governor will then submit a report every year to the President regarding the administration of Scheduled Areas.
- The national government can give directions to the State regarding the administration of Scheduled Areas. The Governor can repeal or amend any law enacted by Parliament and the State Legislative Assembly in its application to the Scheduled Area of that State. The Governor can also make regulations for a Scheduled Area, especially to prohibit or restrict the transfer of land by or among members of the STs, and regulate the allotment of land to STs and money-lending to STs.

Ethics vs privilege committee

- Objective: It oversees the moral and ethical conduct of members and examines cases of misconduct referred to it.
- Appointment of members in Lok Sabha: The members of the Ethics Committee are appointed by the Speaker for a period of one year.

Procedure for complaints

- Any person can complain against a Member through another Lok Sabha MP, along with evidence of the alleged misconduct, and an affidavit stating that the complaint is not "false, frivolous, or vexatious".
- If the Member himself complains, the affidavit is not needed.
- The Speaker can refer to the Committee any complaint against an MP.
- The Committee does not entertain complaints based only on media reports or on matters that are sub-judice.
- The Committee makes a prima facie inquiry before deciding to examine a complaint. It makes its recommendations after evaluating the complaint.

- The Rules (for example, the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha) applicable to the Committee of Privileges also apply to the ethics panel.
- An allegation of corruption against an MP can be sent to either body, but usually more serious accusations go to the Privileges Committee.
- The mandate of the Privileges Committee is to safeguard the "freedom, authority, and dignity of Parliament".
- These privileges are enjoyed by individual Members as well as the

House as a whole.

- An MP can be examined for breach of privilege; a non-MP too can be accused of breach of privilege for actions that attack the authority and

Santiniketan finds its place on UNESCO's World Heritage List

World body makes announcement on Sunday. Manu's son was, nurtured by Tagore, has been reported by Bengal Culture Ministry says exhibiting important heritage in human values



Santiniketan, a town established by Nobel laureate Rabindra nath Tagore, made it to the UNESCO's World Heritage List on Sunday. Located in West Bengal's Birbhum district, Santiniketan, which means "abode of peace", started taking shape in 1901 and is the place where Tagore laid the foundations of VisvaBharati University

EU chief promises a plan of action as migrants flock to island

Ukrainian leader Leves, along with Italian PM Giorgia Meloni, visits Lampedusa where more than 2000 people have arrived this week. EU leaders program have arrived in Italy this year, almost double the figure for the corresponding period in 2022



How many of the above statements are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

Que-2 With reference to Parliaments special sessions, consider the following statements

- There is specific provision in the Constitution that deals with special sessions.
- Article 352, which deals with the proclamation of Emergency, refers to a "special sitting" of the House, this clause was added through the 44th Amendment Act in 1978, which included safeguards against the Emergency.
- The Question Hour was suspended during the session.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None



Que-3 Consider the following statements about Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala

- This includes five temples in Karnataka, has been recently inscribed on the UNESCO's World Heritage List.
- The Hoysala Temples, built in the 12th and 13th centuries by the Hoysala kings, are dedicated to Shiva and Vishnu.
- The temples became targets of plundered and destruction by the Delhi Sultanate army of Ala-ud-din Khaji in the early 14th century and another Delhi Sultanate army of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq in 1326 AD.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None



Que-4 Consider the following statements about SHREYAS scheme

- It comprises 4 central sector sub-schemes.
- The objective of the Scheme is to provide coaching of good quality for economically disadvantaged Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) candidates to enable them appear in competitive and entrance examinations.
- The ceiling of the total family income under the scheme is 2 lakhs per annum and 3500 slots are allotted per annum.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

Que-5 Consider the following statements about Women's Reservation Bill

- The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Eight Amendment) Bill, 2023, seeking to reserve 33% of seats in Lok Sabha and state Assemblies for women



Que-5 With reference to Shumang Leela, consider the following statements

- Shumang Leela is a traditional form of theatre in Tripura.
- In this the roles of women are all played by men, called Nupi Shabis.
- It is performed in an open courtyard surrounded by spectators on all four sides.

Which of the following given above is/are correct

a) 1 and 2 only b) 1 only
c) 1, 2 and 3 d) 2 and 3 only

Ans: (d)

- Shumang Leela is a traditional form of theatre in Manipur.
- In the case of women's theatre groups, the roles of men are played by women.
- Shumang Leela translates to "courtyards performance".
- Today, Shumang Leela is of two types: Nupa Shumang Leela, performed only by men, and Nupi Shumang Leela, performed only by women.

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furniture, handicrafts and musical instruments in China and Japan. The red dye obtained from the wood is used as a colouring agent in the textiles, medicine and food industries.

Que-7 Consider the following statements about Compressed biogas (CBG) and compressed natural gas (CNG)

- Chemically, CBG is the same as CNG — both are compressed methane — and has the same calorific value.
- CNG is a by-product of petroleum, CBG can be produced from any biomass, be it crop residue, cattle dung, sugarcane press mud, municipal wet waste or effluents from a sewage treatment plant.
- CBG cannot be transported through cylinders or pipelines to retail outlets.

Which of the following given above is/are correct

a) 1 and 2 only b) 3 only
c) 1, 2 and 3 d) 2 and 3 only

Que-8 Finance Minister announced 500 new 'waste to wealth' plants under Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan scheme (GOBAR-Dhan) in the Union Budget, 2023. Consider the following statements about this

- The new GOBAR-Dhan scheme is an upgrade and an expansion of the old one of the same name, launched in 2018 by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation.
- This scheme limited itself to cluster or community-level biogas plants, for instance, for Anganwadis or farms.
- Compressed biogas (CBG) was never a part of the initial scheme launched in 2018 because it is very different from biogas in terms of utilisation and constituents.

Which of the following given above is/are correct

a) 2 only b) 1 and 3 only
c) 1, 2 and 3 d) 2 and 3 only

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c) 1, 2 and 3 d) 3 only

Ans: (b)

- In the union budget of FY 2023-24, it is announced to launch a mission to eliminate sickle cell anemia by 2047.

Que-7 Lamu Archipelago, recently in News, belongs to which country

a) Somalia
b) Malaysia
c) Indonesia
d) Kenya

Ans: (d)

- The Lamu Archipelago is located in the Indian Ocean close to the northern coast of Kenya, to which it belongs. The islands lie between the towns of Lamu and Kiunga, near the Coast Province. It is a part of Lamu District.

Que-8 Consider the following statements about "Operation Sadbhavana", recently in News

- Launched by an Indian Army.
- For development of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Some of the objectives achieved through Operation Sadbhavana are national integration, tourism, women's empowerment, employment generation, education, and

development activities geared towards nation-building.

Which of the following given above is/are correct

a) 1 and 2 only b) 1 and 3 only
c) 1, 2 and 3 d) 2 only

Ans: (b)

- For development of Ladakh.
- The Indian Army is organising multiple welfare activities, such as running schools and infrastructure development projects, as part of "Operation Sadbhavana" in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

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Que-1 Consider the following statements

- A spy balloon is literally a gas-filled balloon that is flying quite high in the sky, more or less where we fly commercial airplanes.
- Disadvantage that low Earth orbit satellites have is that they are continually moving around the Earth.
- Geosynchronous orbit satellite has the disadvantage that it's harder to see things clearly when you're very, very far away.

Which of the following given above is/are correct

a) 1 and 2 only b) 1 and 3 only
c) 1, 2 and 3 d) 3 only

Ans: (c)

- The disadvantage these low Earth orbit satellites have is that they are continually moving around the Earth.
- of what we call persistence, allowing satellites to capture images continuously.

Que-2 With reference to Paris Club, consider the following statements

- The Paris Club is a group of mostly western creditor countries.
- It grew from a 1956 meeting in which Brazil agreed to meet its public creditors in Paris.
- Their objective is to find sustainable debt-relief solutions for countries that are unable to repay their bilateral loans.

Which of the following given above is/are correct

a) 2 only b) 1 and 3 only
c) 1, 2 and 3 d) 2 and 3 only

Ans: (b)

- It grew from a 1956 meeting in which Brazil agreed to meet its public

Exchange traded fund

- An exchange-traded fund (ETF) is a pooled investment security that can be bought and sold like an individual stock.
- ETFs can be structured to track anything from the price of a commodity to a large and diverse collection of securities.
- ETFs can even be designed to track specific investment strategies.

ETF share prices fluctuate all day as the ETF is bought and sold; this is different from mutual funds, which only trade once a day after the market closes.

- ETFs offer low expense ratios and fewer broker commissions than buying the stocks individually.
- An ETF must be registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Pros and Cons of Exchange-Traded Funds

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower costs Diversification and risk management Tax benefits Easy to trade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially higher costs Limited control Tracking error
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DELIMITATION COMMISSION

- Delimitation literally means the act or process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a country or a province having a legislative body. The job of delimitation is assigned to a high power body. Such a body is known as Delimitation Commission or a Boundary Commission
- In India, such Delimitation Commissions have been constituted 4 times - in 1952 under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952, in 1963 under Delimitation Commission Act, 1962, in 1973 under Delimitation Act, 1972 and in 2002 under Delimitation Act, 2002.

- The Delimitation Commission in India is a high power body whose orders have the force of law and cannot be called in question before any court. These orders come into force on a date to be specified by the President of India in this behalf.
- The copies of its orders are laid before the House of the People and the State Legislative Assembly concerned, but no modifications are permissible therein by them.

productivity, uphold good health and prevent poverty.

- The second set consists of policies to reduce inequality and promote economic security at older ages in a fiscally sustainable manner, considering pensions and health care.
- While many older persons are in excellent health or economically active stages, others live with ailments or are in poverty. Public spending in most countries has not been sufficient to cover the growing demand for long-term care, the analysis points out.

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Question 5 With reference to Doppler radar network, consider the following statements

- It is named after Christian Doppler, the physicist who first proposed the concept of the Doppler effect.
- It is a system of multiple radar stations that work together to provide comprehensive coverage of a specific area.
- The entire stretch of India will be covered under the Doppler Weather Radar Network to better predict extreme weather events more accurately.

Which of the following given above is/are correct

- a) 1 and 2 only b) 1 only
c) 1, 2 and 3 d) 2 and 3 only

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5- (c)

- It is named after Christian Doppler, the physicist who first proposed the concept of the Doppler effect. The Doppler effect is the change in frequency or wavelength of a wave (such as sound or light) as it approaches or moves away from an observer.

What is a Doppler radar network?

- A Doppler radar network is a system of multiple radar stations that work together to provide comprehensive coverage of a specific area. The system uses the Doppler effect to detect and track moving objects, such as weather systems, aircraft, and vehicles.

How does a Doppler radar network work?

- Each station in the network includes a radar transmitter, which sends out a microwave signal, and a radar receiver, which detects the reflected signal. The transmitter and receiver are typically located at the same site, but they can also be separated by a significant distance. The radar signal reflects off any moving objects in its path and the change in frequency of the signal due to the Doppler effect is used to determine the speed and direction of the moving object.

What are the uses of a Doppler radar network?

- Doppler radar networks are widely used for weather forecasting and severe weather warning, tracking of aircraft and vehicles, and also used in meteorology and atmospheric sciences. These radar networks provide detailed information about storm systems, including the location, size, and movement of thunderstorms, tornadoes, and other severe weather events.

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Question 6 Consider the following statements about Army Day

- India celebrates Army Day on January 15 every year.
- The Army Day is celebrated every year to honour Cariappa and the defence forces.
- 75th Army Day was held in Hyderabad this year.

Which of the following given above is/are correct

- a) 1 and 2 only b) 1 and 3 only
c) 1, 2 and 3 d) 2 and 3 only

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- In 1997 Bangkok Declaration launched a modest grouping (of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand), with the acronym, BIST-EC.
- Originally formed as BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation) in 1997, it became BIMST-EC after Myanmar joined, and BIMSTEC in 2004, with the inclusion of Nepal and Bhutan. This unique set of five countries from South Asia and two from Southeast Asia are parents to an institution with an unwieldy name but lofty ambitions.

6- (a)

- The portal ensures end-to-end coverage of all the linked schemes.
- Anyone can apply for a loan.

7- (b)

- Any serving or retired three-star officer from either of the three services, below 62 years on the date of projected appointment, would be eligible to be elevated as the CDS and will superannuate at the age of 65. Earlier, the post was only open for four-star generals.

8- (c)

- The Chief of Defence Staff is principally responsible for getting the armed forces better integrated than operating in silos as has been the case for decades.
- The job includes the creation of new military commands which integrate the Army, Air Force, and Navy to fight together.
- According to the government, the CDS acts as the Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister only on tri-services matters. The three service chiefs will continue to advise the Defence Minister exclusively on the matters concerning their respective services.
- The CDS will not hold any military command, including over the three service chiefs.
- As the Permanent Chairman of the Chief of Staff Committee, the CDS brings about jointness in operation, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, repairs and maintenance of the three services.



Target Mains -2024/25 -

Q "India's interest in west asia has moved beyond energy security " Discuss

प्रश्न "पश्चिम एशिया में भारत की रुचि ऊर्जा सुरक्षा से आगे बढ़ गई है" चर्चा करें

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9057921649**

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