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From

27th April to 02nd May 2026

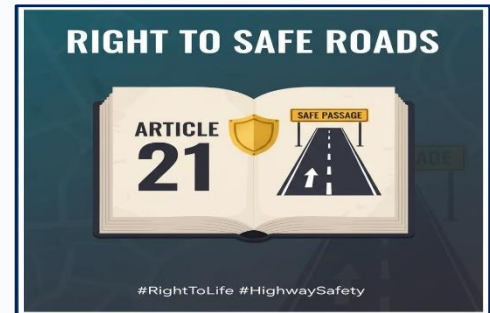
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1.1. RIGHT TO SAFE PASSAGE

Context

- **Recently**, the Supreme Court of India delivered a transformative ruling in a *suo motu* case, declaring that the **right to safe travel on highways** is an integral part of the **Right to Life** under **Article 21** of the Constitution.
- The Bench, while adjudicating tragic road fatalities in Rajasthan and Telangana, observed that a road—particularly a high-speed expressway—must not become a "corridor of peril" due to administrative lethargy or infrastructural gaps. This judgment shifts road safety from a mere policy goal to a constitutionally mandated positive obligation of the State.



1. Constitutional Foundation

- **Article 21 Expansion:** The Court held that the Right to Life is not just a "negative right" (protection against unlawful killing) but a "**positive mandate**" for the State to ensure a safe environment.
- **Doctrine of State Responsibility:** When the State provides infrastructure like National Highways (NH), it is constitutionally bound to ensure that such infrastructure does not pose an avoidable threat to life.

2. The "2% vs. 30%" Paradox

- **Statistical Reality:** National Highways constitute approximately **2%** of India's total road network.
- **Fatality Burden:** Despite their small share in length, they account for nearly **30%** of all road accident fatalities in the country.
- **Economic Impact:** Road accidents cost the Indian economy between **3% to 5% of its GDP** annually, affecting the most productive age group (18–45 years).

3. Key Judicial Directives

The Supreme Court issued several nationwide interim directions to enhance accountability:

- **Removal of Encroachments:** Immediate prohibition and removal of unauthorized dhabas, eateries, or commercial structures within the **Right of Way (ROW)** of any National Highway.
- **Strict Parking Norms:** Heavy or commercial vehicles are prohibited from parking on the carriageway or paved shoulders; they must only use designated **Truck Lay-byes** or **Wayside Amenities (WSAs)**.
- **District-Level Accountability:** Mandated the creation of a **District Highway Safety Task Force** headed by the District Magistrate (DM) and Superintendent of Police (SP) to ensure enforcement.
- **Emergency Response:** Deployment of ambulances and recovery cranes at regular intervals to utilize the "**Golden Hour**" (the first hour after injury when prompt medical care is most effective).

4. Technological Integration

- **Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS):** The Court pushed for NHA to operationalize ATMS, including speed sensors, CCTV surveillance, and emergency call boxes.
- **Automatic Enforcement:** Use of timestamped photographic evidence for generating **integrated e-challans** to eliminate human bias and corruption.

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the legal framework of Road Safety in India:

1. The Supreme Court has recognized the "Right to Safe Passage" on roads as a fundamental right derived from Article 21 of the Constitution.
2. In India, National Highways account for the majority of the total road length but a minority of road accident fatalities.
3. The "Golden Hour" refers to the time period during which a person injured in a road accident can be treated without being penalized for a lack of documentation under the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: A

- **STATEMENT 1 CORRECT:** As per the recent April 2026 ruling, the SC explicitly linked safe passage to the Right to Life under Article 21.
- **STATEMENT 2 INCORRECT:** National Highways constitute only **2%** of the total road length but account for a disproportionately high **30%** of fatalities.
- **STATEMENT 3 INCORRECT:** While the "Golden Hour" is defined in the Motor Vehicles Act, it specifically refers to the **one-hour time period** following a traumatic injury during which there is the highest likelihood that prompt medical care will prevent death. The protection from legal/documentation hurdles for rescuers is part of the **Good Samaritan** guidelines, not the definition of the Golden Hour itself.

1.2. CENTRAL ARMED POLICE FORCES (CAPF)

Context:

- Recently, the Union Government notified the **Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Act, 2026**, which has sparked significant debate and protests by retired personnel and their families at Raj Ghat. These demonstrations, coinciding with CRPF Valour Day on April 9, highlight grievances regarding service conditions and the legal solidification of leadership roles for external cadres.



- The Act serves as a definitive legislative tool to streamline the administration of India’s internal security forces while addressing long-standing operational synergy requirements between central forces and state police departments.

1. Overview and Administrative Control

The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) is the collective term for seven security forces under the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.

- **Administrative Body:** The MHA is the sole defining administrative body for these forces.
- **Dual Control of Assam Rifles:** While all forces are under the MHA, the **Assam Rifles** remains unique as its operational control is vested with the Ministry of Defence (Indian Army).
- **Leadership Change:** The 2026 Act now provides a statutory basis for the recruitment and leadership structure that was previously governed by executive orders.

2. The Seven Forces and Their Primary Mandates

Force	Primary Mandate	Operational Area
BSF	Border Protection	Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Bangladesh Borders.
CRPF	Internal Security	Counter-Naxal operations and Election duties.
CISF	Critical Infrastructure	Airports, Metros, and sensitive Government buildings.
ITBP	High-Altitude Security	Indo-China Border (LAC).
SSB	Border Security	Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan Borders.
NSG	Counter-Terrorism	Federal Contingency Force for anti-terror/hijack.
Assam Rifles	Border & Insurgency	Indo-Myanmar Border and North-East security.

3. Key Provisions of the CAPF (General Administration) Act, 2026

The 2026 Act introduces several critical mandates that define the career landscape for both cadre officers and deputed officers:

- **Leadership Reservation for IPS:** The Act legally cements the reservation of senior posts for Indian Police Service (IPS) officers across five CAPFs (BSF, CRPF, CISF, ITBP, and SSB).
 - **50% of posts** at the Inspector General (IG) rank are reserved for IPS officers.
 - **At least 67% of posts** at the Additional Director General (ADG) rank.
 - **100% of posts** at the Special DG and Director General (DG) ranks are reserved for IPS officers.
- **Legislative Supremacy:** The Act states that any rules made under it regarding recruitment and service conditions will explicitly override any other existing laws, previous executive orders, or court judgments.

- **Operational Synergy:** The government rationale for this structure is that CAPFs must work in close coordination with state police and civil administrations, which are led by IPS and IAS officers; hence, IPS leadership ensures smoother coordination.

4. Major Concerns and Counter-Arguments

- **Career Progression:** Group A officers within the CAPF cadre often wait 15–18 years for promotions due to the limited number of senior-level "slots" available to them under the new Act.
- **Judicial Friction:** Critics argue the Act undermines a 2025 Supreme Court directive that recommended a progressive reduction of IPS deputation at the IG rank to boost internal force morale.
- **Demands:** Personnel are currently demanding the restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and more time-bound promotions to ensure a dignified career path for those in combat roles.

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Act, 2026:

Statement-I: The Act mandates that 100% of the posts at the level of Special Director General (SDG) and Director General (DG) in the CAPFs shall be occupied by officers from the Indian Police Service (IPS).

Statement-II: The Act was introduced to fulfill a 2025 Supreme Court directive which called for the permanent reservation of top leadership posts for deputed IPS officers to ensure operational synergy with state police.

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

- Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.
- Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct.

Answer: (c)

Solution:

- **STATEMENT I IS CORRECT:** The CAPF (General Administration) Act, 2026, explicitly reserves 100% of the top leadership positions (Special DG and DG) for IPS officers.
- **STATEMENT II IS INCORRECT:** While the government justifies the Act using the "operational synergy" argument, the Act actually contradicts the 2025 Supreme Court directive, which had asked the Centre to *reduce* the reliance on IPS deputation at senior levels rather than cement it legally.

1.3. CITIZENSHIP IN INDIA

Context:

- **Recently**, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) notified the **Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2026**, which introduce a comprehensive digital framework for the registration and renunciation of citizenship and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) status. These rules emphasize a "digital-first" approach by mandating online applications and introducing electronic OCI (e-OCI) documents to streamline immigration and oversight processes.



1. Constitutional and Statutory Framework

- **Constitutional Provisions:** Articles 5 to 11 under Part II of the Constitution deal with citizenship, though they only identified who became citizens at the commencement of the Constitution on January 26, 1950.
- **Article 11:** This article empowers the Parliament to make any provision with respect to the acquisition and termination of citizenship and all other matters relating to it.
- **Citizenship Act, 1955:** This is the primary legislation governing citizenship after 1950, providing for acquisition by birth, descent, registration, naturalization, and incorporation of territory.

2. Key Features of the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2026

- **Digital Transformation:** All applications for OCI registration must now be submitted electronically through a centralized portal, moving away from the previous requirement for duplicate physical documents.
- **Introduction of e-OCI:** The government has formally introduced the **electronic OCI (e-OCI)**, allowing the maintenance of digital records that serve as valid proof of registration.
- **Minor Children and Passports:** The rules establish a strict proviso that a minor child cannot hold the passport of any other country if they are also holding an Indian passport.
- **Birth Registration:** For children born outside India, birth registration at an Indian consulate must be accompanied by a formal declaration that the child does not possess a foreign passport.

3. Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Status

- **Nature of OCI:** OCI is not "dual citizenship" (which the Indian Constitution prohibits under Article 9) but a form of permanent residency with specific benefits.
- **Biometric Integration:** Under the 2026 Rules, OCI applicants must provide consent for their biometric data to be used for the **Fast Track Immigration (FTI) Programme** to facilitate seamless travel.
- **Renunciation Procedures:** The process for renouncing OCI status has been moved online, and physical cards must be surrendered to the nearest Indian Mission or FRRO upon cancellation or renunciation.

4. Termination of Citizenship

- **Renunciation:** A voluntary act where a person gives up Indian citizenship; however, if this occurs during a war, the registration may be withheld.
- **Termination:** If an Indian citizen voluntarily acquires the citizenship of another country, their Indian citizenship automatically terminates.
- **Deprivation:** A compulsory termination by the Central Government based on grounds like fraud, disloyalty to the Constitution, or residence outside India for seven continuous years.

Q. With reference to the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The registration of the birth of a minor child born outside India now requires a declaration that the child does not hold a passport from any other country.
2. The rules allow for the issuance of an electronic OCI (e-OCI) as a substitute for or supplement to physical cards.
3. Consent for the use of biometric data for the Fast Track Immigration (FTI) Programme is now a mandatory part of the OCI application process.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

Solution: C) All three

- **STATEMENT 1 IS CORRECT:** The 2026 Rules include a specific proviso that minor children holding Indian passports cannot hold a passport from any other country.
- **STATEMENT 2 IS CORRECT:** The amendment officially introduces e-OCI and mandates a digital shift in how the government maintains citizenship records.
- **STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT:** Applicants must sign a consent form for biometrics to be integrated into the FTI Programme for automatic registration and easier immigration clearance.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1. CHABAHAR PORT & INSTC

Context:

- **Recently**, India's strategic autonomy is facing a crucial test as the **U.S. sanctions waiver** for the **Chabahar Port** project expired on Sunday. The Ministry of External Affairs is currently in high-level discussions with both Iran and the United States to navigate the fallout. With Washington unlikely to grant another extension amidst ongoing regional conflicts, New Delhi is exploring alternative options, including the potential transfer of its stake in the **Shahid Beheshti Terminal** to an Iranian entity to shield Indian operations from secondary sanctions while maintaining long-term project viability.



1. Chabahar Port: Strategic Dimensions

- **Location:** Situated in the **Sistan-Balochistan** province on Iran's southern coast, it lies on the **Gulf of Oman**.
- **Key Terminals:** It consists of two main terminals: **Shahid Beheshti** (developed by India) and **Shahid Kalantari**.
- **India's Role:** India operates the Shahid Beheshti terminal through **India Ports Global Limited (IPGL)** under a long-term **10-year agreement** signed in May 2024.
- **The Pakistan Bypass:** It provides India with a direct maritime route to **Afghanistan** and **Central Asia**, effectively bypassing the land-access restrictions imposed by Pakistan.
- **Proximity to Gwadar:** It is located approximately **170 km** west of Pakistan's **Gwadar Port**, which is being developed by China, making it a crucial geopolitical counterweight.

2. International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

- **Concept:** A **7,200-km-long multi-modal network** of ship, rail, and road routes for moving freight between India, Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe.
- **Founding Members:** Established in **September 2000** by **India, Russia, and Iran**.
- **Expanded Membership:** Now includes 13 countries, such as **Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, Oman, and Syria** (Bulgaria is an observer).
- **The Main Route:**
 - **Sea Link:** From **Mumbai** (India) to **Bandar Abbas** or **Chabahar** (Iran).
 - **Land Link:** Via road/rail across Iran to **Bandar-e-Anzali** (Caspian Sea port).
 - **Sea Link:** Across the Caspian Sea to **Astrakhan** (Russia).
 - **Rail Link:** To **Moscow** and Northern Europe.

3. Comparative Advantage: INSTC vs. Suez Canal

Feature	Suez Canal Route	INSTC Route
Distance	Approximately 16,000 km	Approximately 7,200 km
Transit Time	40–45 Days	20–25 Days
Freight Cost	Standard	30% reduction
Time Saved	Baseline	40% faster

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):

1. It is a multimodal transport network that aims to connect the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea and Northern Europe.
2. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were the original founding members along with India and Russia.
3. The corridor aims to reduce the transit time between Mumbai and Moscow by nearly half compared to the Suez Canal route.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (b) Only two

Solution:

- **STATEMENT 1 IS CORRECT:** The INSTC is a 7,200-km multi-modal corridor linking the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea and onwards to Russia and Europe.
- **STATEMENT 2 IS INCORRECT:** The original founding members (2000) were **India, Russia, and Iran**. While other Central Asian nations joined later, they were not the initial signatories.
- **STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT:** Transit time via INSTC is estimated at 20–25 days, compared to the 40–45 days taken via the Suez Canal, representing a significant reduction (nearly 40-50%).

1.2. OPEC AND OPEC+

Context:

- Recently, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) officially announced its departure from both the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** and the broader **OPEC+** alliance, effective May 1, 2026. This sovereign decision stems from the UAE's strategic vision to accelerate domestic energy production and exercise independent control over its output capacity, which has grown significantly in recent years.



- This move follows a period of internal friction over production quotas and occurs amidst heightened geopolitical volatility in West Asia, which has already disrupted traditional maritime oil routes like the Strait of Hormuz.

1. Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

- **Establishment:** OPEC was founded in **September 1960** during the Baghdad Conference.
- **Founding Members:** The five founding nations were **Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela**.
- **Headquarters:** While initially based in Geneva, the headquarters moved to **Vienna, Austria**, in 1965.
- **Primary Objective:** To coordinate and unify the petroleum policies of its Member Countries and ensure the stabilization of oil markets to secure an efficient, economic, and regular supply of petroleum to consumers.
- **Membership Status:** Membership is open to any country that is a substantial net exporter of crude petroleum and which has fundamentally similar interests to those of Member Countries.

2. The Advent of OPEC+

- **Formation:** Created in **2016** (via the Declaration of Cooperation) to include non-OPEC oil-producing nations.
- **Purpose:** The alliance was formed to counter the rise of US shale oil production and to exert greater control over global oil prices by managing a larger share of world supply.
- **Key Non-OPEC Members:** Includes **Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, South Sudan, and Sudan**.
- **Significance:** Together, OPEC+ members control nearly **50% of global oil production** and over **80% of the world's proven oil reserves**, making their collective decisions the primary driver of global energy inflation.

3. Membership Dynamics and Recent Exits

The membership of the cartel is dynamic, reflecting the shifting economic priorities of oil-producing states:

- **Angola (Exited 2024):** Left due to disagreements over production targets.
- **Qatar (Exited 2019):** Left to focus on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) production.
- **UAE (Exited 2026):** The most recent departure, citing the need for production autonomy.
- **Current Status (Post-UAE Exit):** The group now faces a challenge in maintaining price floors as one of its most capable producers (UAE) are no longer bound by collective output cuts.

4. Mechanism of Influence

- **Production Quotas:** The group meets regularly (Ministerial Meetings) to set production ceilings. By reducing supply, they aim to push prices up; by increasing it, they prevent market overheating.
- **JMMC (Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee):** A key body within OPEC+ that reviews market conditions and ensures member compliance with agreed-upon production adjustments.

Q. With reference to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and OPEC+, consider the following statements:

Statement-I: The UAE's exit from OPEC in 2026 makes it the first Middle Eastern nation to leave the organization since its inception in 1960.

Statement-II: OPEC+ was established in 2016 primarily to include major non-member producers like Russia and Mexico to stabilize global oil prices against the volatility caused by US shale oil.

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

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- (c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.
- (d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct.

Answer: (d)

Solution:

- **STATEMENT I IS INCORRECT:** While the UAE is a major Middle Eastern producer to leave, it is not the first. **Qatar**, another Middle Eastern nation, exited OPEC in January 2019.
- **STATEMENT II IS CORRECT:** OPEC+ was indeed a strategic response to the changing energy landscape of 2016, specifically the "Shale Revolution" in the United States, which threatened the market dominance of the original OPEC members.

1.3. WORLD GOLD COUNCIL (WGC)

Context:

- Recently, the World Gold Council (WGC) released data for the January to March quarter (Q1 2026), revealing that while total gold demand in India rose 10% year-on-year to 150.6 tonnes, there is a significant divergence in consumer behavior. High prices have led to a 19% dip in jewelry volume, yet investment demand has emerged as a powerhouse, with gold ETF demand skyrocketing by 197% and bar and coin demand rising by 34%.
- This shift underscores gold's growing reputation as a strategic "safe-haven" asset and an effective portfolio diversifier amid heightened global uncertainties and record-high prices.



1. Overview and Genesis

- **Nature:** The WGC is the **market development organization** for the gold industry. It acts as a non-profit association representing the world's leading gold mining companies.
- **Establishment:** It was founded in **1987** and is headquartered in **London**, United Kingdom.
- **Offices:** It maintains a global presence with offices in India (Mumbai), China, Singapore, the UAE, and the USA.

2. Core Mandate and Functions

- **Market Stimulation:** Its primary goal is to stimulate and sustain the demand for gold through research, marketing, and lobbying.
- **Standard Setting:** The WGC works with regulators and industry stakeholders to create standards for a responsible and sustainable gold supply chain.
- **Research & Data:** It is the authoritative source for global gold data, publishing the quarterly *Gold Demand Trends* report, which is widely used by central banks and institutional investors.
- **Financial Innovation:** The council was instrumental in the creation of the first **Gold Exchange-Traded Fund (ETF)**, which revolutionized how investors access the gold market.

3. Membership and Leadership

- **Members:** Its members comprise the world's leading and most forward-thinking gold mining companies (e.g., Barrick Gold, Newmont).
- **Leadership:** As of early 2026, the organization is led by CEO **David Tait**, who has focused on "financializing" gold and integrating it more deeply into global capital markets.

4. WGC and India

India is one of the world's largest consumers of gold, and the WGC plays a pivotal role in the Indian ecosystem:

- **Policy Advocacy:** The WGC has worked closely with the Government of India on initiatives like the **Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) Scheme** and the **Gold Monetization Scheme**.
- **India International Bullion Exchange (IIBX):** The council provided technical expertise during the setup of India's first bullion exchange at GIFT City, aiming to make India a "price setter" rather than just a "price taker."
- **Recycling Focus:** A 2026 WGC report highlighted that India has become the **4th largest gold recycler** globally, reflecting a growing push toward an organized circular economy in the bullion sector.

Q. With reference to the World Gold Council (WGC), consider the following statements:

Statement-I: The World Gold Council is an intergovernmental organization under the aegis of the World Trade Organization (WTO) that regulates global gold prices.

Statement-II: According to the WGC's 2026 reports, central banks have broadened their gold demand base as a hedge against de-dollarization and geopolitical risks.

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

- Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.
- Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct.

Answer: (d)

Solution:

- **STATEMENT I IS INCORRECT:** The World Gold Council is an **international trade association** (industry body) of gold producers, not an intergovernmental organization or a part of the WTO. It does not "regulate" prices but influences demand and market standards.
- **STATEMENT II IS CORRECT:** Recent WGC data confirms that central banks (including new buyers like Indonesia and Malaysia) are increasingly utilizing gold to diversify away from the US Dollar due to geopolitical volatility.

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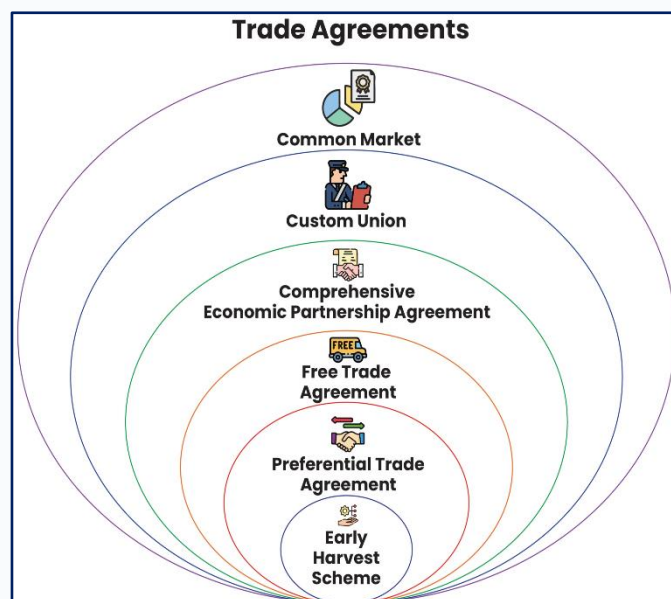


Prelims Test Series

3.1. TYPES OF TRADE AGREEMENTS

Context

- **Recently**, India and New Zealand officially signed a landmark **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** in New Delhi, which aims to provide Indian exporters with **100% duty-free access** to the New Zealand market.
- This development follows a series of high-speed negotiations and joins a string of recent economic pacts, including the **India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)** and the **India-Oman CEPA**, reflecting India's aggressive "position of strength" in global trade as noted by the Prime Minister.



1. Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA)

- **Nature:** The most basic form of trade agreement.
- **Mechanism:** Two or more partners agree to reduce (not necessarily eliminate) customs duties on a **limited number of products** (Positive List).
- **Key Detail:** Only those goods listed in the agreement receive preferential treatment.

2. Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

- **Nature:** A more comprehensive arrangement than a PTA.
- **Mechanism:** Member countries eliminate or significantly reduce tariffs on a **majority of goods** traded between them.
- **Key Detail:** Unlike a Customs Union, member countries in an FTA maintain their own individual tariff rates for non-member countries.
- **Recent Example:** The **India-New Zealand FTA (2026)** and the **India-EFTA TEPA**.

3. Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)

- **Nature:** Covers a broader scope beyond just trade in goods.
- **Mechanism:** Includes trade in services, investment, and often economic cooperation.
- **Focus:** It primarily focuses on tariff negotiations and liberalizing trade in services.
- **Example:** India-Singapore CECA.

4. Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)

- **Nature:** The most advanced form of bilateral/regional pact that India signs.
- **Mechanism:** It is more exhaustive than CECA. It covers trade in goods, services, investment, **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)**, competition, and even government procurement.
- **Example:** India-UAE CEPA and the recently signed **India-Oman CEPA**.

5. Customs Union

- **Nature:** A higher stage of integration.
- **Mechanism:** Member countries eliminate internal barriers to trade AND adopt a **Common External Tariff (CET)** for non-members.
- **Example:** Southern African Customs Union (SACU).

6. Common Market

- **Nature:** Deep integration of factors of production.
- **Mechanism:** A Customs Union that also allows the **free movement of labor and capital** among member nations.
- **Example:** The European Union (EU) in its earlier stages.

7. Economic Union

- **Nature:** Near-total integration.
- **Mechanism:** A Common Market with **harmonized economic policies**, common fiscal and monetary policies, and often a common currency.
- **Example:** The European Union.

The "New-Age" Pacts (Signed/Concluded 2022–2026)

These agreements are comprehensive, covering not just goods, but also services, digital trade, and investment commitments.

Agreement	Partner Country/Bloc	Status (as of April 2026)
India-EU FTA	European Union (27 nations)	Concluded Jan 2026 ; Internal ratification ongoing.
India-UK FTA	United Kingdom	Signed ; Operational by May 1, 2026.
India-EFTA TEPA	Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein	In Force (Effective Oct 1, 2025).
India-Oman CEPA	Oman	Signed Dec 2025 ; Implementation underway.
India-New Zealand FTA	New Zealand	Announced Dec 2025 ; Focused on services & dairy safeguards.
India-Australia ECTA	Australia	In Force (Since Dec 2022; Currently upgrading to CEPA).
India-UAE CEPA	United Arab Emirates	In Force (Since May 2022).
India-Mauritius CECPA	Mauritius	In Force (Since April 2021).

Major Established Agreements (Early Phase)

These primarily focus on the "Act East" policy and regional integration.

- **ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA):** Currently undergoing review (2025-26) to address trade imbalances.
- **India-South Korea CEPA (2010):** Focuses on electronics and automotive sectors.
- **India-Japan CEPA (2011):** Covers a wide range of goods and provides "National Treatment" for investments.
- **South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA):** Signed in 2004, covering SAARC nations (though trade with Pakistan is currently suspended).

Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs)

Limited scope agreements focusing on specific "Positive Lists."

- **India-MERCOSUR PTA:** With Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay.
- **India-Chile PTA:** Expanded in 2017 to cover over 1,000 tariff lines.
- **India-Afghanistan PTA:** Signed in 2003.

Q. With reference to International Trade, consider the following statements:

1. In a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), member countries are required to maintain a common external tariff against non-member nations.
2. A Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) generally has a wider scope than a Free Trade Agreement, often including provisions for Intellectual Property Rights and investment.
3. Under the "Positive List" approach of a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), only the items specifically mentioned in the list enjoy lower tariffs.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Solution: B

- **STATEMENT 1 INCORRECT:** In an FTA, members maintain their **individual** tariff regimes for non-members. It is in a **Customs Union** where a common external tariff is maintained.
- **STATEMENT 2 CORRECT:** CEPA is indeed more exhaustive than FTA/CECA, covering services, IPR, and regulatory issues.
- **STATEMENT 3 CORRECT:** A PTA works on a **Positive List** (only listed goods get concessions), whereas an FTA often works on a **Negative List** (everything is duty-free except what is listed).

3.2. PM E-DRIVE SCHEME

Context:

Recently, the Central Government is considering the launch of a fresh electric bus scheme for States following the successful tendering and allocation of all 14,028 e-buses under the **PM E-DRIVE** programme.



1. Overview of PM E-DRIVE Scheme

The **PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE)** is a flagship Central Sector Scheme designed to accelerate the transition to electric mobility in India.

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI).
- **Total Outlay:** ₹10,900 crore.
- **Duration:** Initially launched for two years (October 2024 to March 2026), but recently extended for specific segments (e.g., e-2Ws until July 2026 and e-3Ws until March 2028).
- **Subsumed Schemes:** It subsumes the **Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme (EMPS) 2024**.

2. Key Components and Financial Allocation

The scheme focuses on both demand-side incentives and supply-side infrastructure development.

Component	Allocation (Approx.)	Target/Details
Demand Incentives	₹3,679 crore	Supports e-2Ws, e-3Ws, e-ambulances, and e-trucks.
Electric Buses	₹4,391 crore	Procurement of 14,028 e-buses for 9 major cities (population >4 million).
Charging Infrastructure	₹2,000 crore	Installation of ~72,300 public fast chargers.
Testing Agencies	₹780 crore	Upgrading MHI testing agencies for emerging EV technologies.

3. Salient Features

- **E-Voucher Mechanism:** To simplify the subsidy process, the government introduced Aadhaar-authenticated **e-Vouchers**. At the time of purchase, a digital voucher is generated for the buyer, which is signed and uploaded to the portal to claim the incentive.
- **Focus on Public Transport:** A major portion of the fund is dedicated to e-buses and e-ambulances (₹500 crore) to decarbonize public health and transport services.
- **Advanced Batteries:** Only vehicles fitted with **advanced batteries** (as per notified technical standards) are eligible for incentives to ensure safety and efficiency.

- **Scrapping Linkage for Trucks:** Incentives for e-trucks are specifically linked to the possession of a **scrapping certificate** from a MoRTH-approved Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility (RVSF).

4. Comparison: PM E-DRIVE vs. FAME-II

Aspect	PM E-DRIVE	FAME-II
Scope	Greater emphasis on public transport (buses, ambulances) and trucks	Focused more broadly on electric mobility, including smaller vehicles
Hybrid Vehicles	Supports only pure Electric Vehicles (EVs)	Supported Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs) along with EVs
Efficiency	Targets higher volumes with lower per-unit subsidy	Higher per-unit subsidy with relatively lower volume focus

Q. With reference to the 'PM E-DRIVE' scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It is a Central Sector Scheme implemented by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
2. The scheme provides demand incentives for electric two-wheelers, three-wheelers, and hybrid cars.
3. The incentives for electric trucks under this scheme are mandatory to be linked with a vehicle scrapping certificate.
4. It introduces a physical paper-based voucher system to provide upfront discounts to buyers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: B

- **STATEMENT 1 IS INCORRECT:** The scheme is implemented by the **Ministry of Heavy Industries**, not the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- **STATEMENT 2 IS INCORRECT:** While it supports e-2Ws and e-3Ws, it **does not** provide incentives for hybrid cars; it focuses on pure electric vehicles and includes new segments like e-ambulances and e-trucks.
- **STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT:** To promote the circular economy, demand incentives for e-trucks are only available to those who provide a scrapping certificate from an approved RVSF.
- **STATEMENT 4 IS INCORRECT:** The scheme uses an **e-Voucher** (digital), which is Aadhaar-authenticated and generated via a portal, not a physical paper-based system.

4.1. LIGHT POLLUTION

Context:

- **Recently**, the global scientific community has raised alarms over the rapid degradation of the world's clearest skies due to urban sprawl and industrial development. Even remote locations like the Atacama Desert in Chile—the future site of the **\$1.5 billion Extremely Large Telescope (ELT)**—are facing unprecedented light trespass.
- This issue is particularly relevant as India recently inaugurated its first **Dark Sky Reserve in Hanle, Ladakh**, marking a shift toward recognizing "darkness" as a natural resource that requires urgent legislative protection.



1. Defining Light Pollution (ALAN)

Light pollution, or **Artificial Light at Night (ALAN)**, is the alteration of outdoor light levels through man-made sources. It is not merely an aesthetic issue but a significant environmental pollutant.

• **Components of Light Pollution:**

- **Skyglow:** The brightening of the night sky over inhabited areas (the most common form).
- **Glare:** Excessive brightness that decreases visibility and causes visual discomfort.
- **Light Trespass:** Light falling where it is not intended or needed.
- **Clutter:** Bright, confusing, and excessive groupings of light sources.

2. The Scientific Metric: The Bortle Scale

To quantify the impact of light pollution, astronomers use the **Bortle Scale**, which ranks the darkness of a location from 1 to 9.

- **Class 1:** Pristine dark-sky site (ideal for professional observatories).
- **Class 9:** Inner-city sky (only the brightest celestial objects are visible).

3. The Atacama Desert and the ELT Project

The Atacama Desert is uniquely suited for astronomy due to its "Photon Valley"—a corridor of high-altitude observatories.

- **The ELT (Extremely Large Telescope):** Managed by the **European Southern Observatory (ESO)**, it features a **39-meter main mirror**.
- **Comparative Advantage:** Once completed in 2030, it will be **20 times more powerful** than current leading telescopes and **15 times sharper** than the Hubble Space Telescope.
- **Geographic Factors:** High altitude (>3,000m), low humidity, and historically minimal light interference.

4. Impact on Biodiversity and Human Health

- **Ecological Disruption:** Many species, including sea turtles and migratory birds, rely on natural light cues. Artificial light disorients them, leading to increased mortality.
- **Melatonin Suppression:** In humans, blue-rich LED light suppresses melatonin, the hormone responsible for the **Circadian Rhythm**, potentially leading to sleep disorders and metabolic issues.
- **The Rebound Effect:** Ironically, the adoption of energy-efficient **LEDs** has led to cheaper lighting, causing people to install *more* lights, which has increased global light pollution by roughly **2% per year**.

5. Important Indian Sites and Initiatives

- **Hanle Dark Sky Reserve (HDSR):** Located in Ladakh, it is India's first dark sky reserve. It is protected by strict regulations on light usage to facilitate research at the **Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO)**.
- **Pench Tiger Reserve:** Located in Maharashtra, it recently became India's first **Dark Sky Park**, emphasizing the link between darkness and wildlife conservation.

Q. With reference to the impact of Light Pollution, consider the following statements:

1. The Bortle Scale is used to measure the transparency of the atmosphere for radio telescopes.
2. The "Rebound Effect" describes a situation where increased lighting efficiency leads to higher overall light consumption.
3. The Hanle Dark Sky Reserve in India is situated within the Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Solution:

- **STATEMENT 1 IS INCORRECT:** The Bortle Scale measures the brightness (light pollution) of the night sky for **optical** observations, not radio telescope transparency.
- **STATEMENT 2 IS CORRECT:** The "Rebound Effect" occurs when the cost-savings from energy-efficient LEDs encourage the installation of more light fixtures, worsening light pollution.
- **STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT:** The **Hanle Dark Sky Reserve** is indeed located in the high-altitude region of Ladakh within the **Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary**.

4.2. KANHA TIGER RESERVE

Context:

Recently, the Kanha Tiger Reserve (KTR) has been in the news following the tragic death of a tigress and her four cubs in the **Sarhi range**, which has prompted state wildlife officials to investigate a suspected outbreak of the **Canine Distemper Virus (CDV)**. This incident is particularly significant as it adds to the rising tiger mortality in Madhya Pradesh in 2026 and has raised concerns regarding the presence of stray dogs within the reserve's core areas, which act as primary carriers for the virus.



Key Features of Kanha Tiger Reserve

1. Location and Geography

- The reserve is situated in the **Maikal range** of the **Satpura hills** in the Mandla and Balaghat districts of **Madhya Pradesh**.
- It covers a core area of approximately **940 square kilometers**, making it the largest national park in Central India.
- The landscape is characterized by a horseshoe shape and is divided into two major protected areas: **Hallon** and **Banjar**.
- The reserve serves as a critical link in the **Kanha-Pench Corridor**, which facilitates the movement of tigers between various protected areas in the central Indian landscape.

2. Flora and Vegetation

- The vegetation is a diverse mix of **Sal (*Shorea robusta*)** and other mixed deciduous forests.
- Large open grasslands, known as **maidans** (meadows), are scattered throughout the park and are essential for the survival of large herbivore populations.
- The highland areas feature tropical moist and dry deciduous forests, often interspersed with **bamboo** on the slopes.

3. Fauna and Conservation Success

- **The Hard-ground Barasingha (Swamp Deer):** Kanha is internationally famous for saving the endemic *Cervus duvauceli branderi* from the brink of extinction. It is the only place in the world where this specific subspecies exists in the wild.
- **Mascot:** In 2017, Kanha became the first tiger reserve in India to introduce an official mascot, named "**Bhoorsingh the Barasingha**".
- **Major Species:** Apart from the Bengal Tiger, the reserve hosts the Indian Leopard, Sloth Bear, Wild Dog (Dhole), Gaur (Indian Bison), and Sambar.
- **Conservation Initiatives:** The park is credited with the first successful reintroduction of orphaned tiger cubs into the wild and the translocation of Gaur to Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve.



Canine Distemper Virus (CDV)

- **Viral Nature:** It is a highly contagious disease caused by a **paramyxovirus**, which is closely related to the human measles virus.
- **Multi-System Attack:** The virus simultaneously targets the **respiratory, gastrointestinal, and central nervous systems**, making it exceptionally deadly.
- **Transmission:** It spreads primarily through **aerosol droplets** (coughing or sneezing) and direct contact with infected fluids like saliva or urine.
- **The "Hard Pad" Symptom:** A classic clinical sign is the **thickening and hardening** of an animal's nose and footpads, often referred to as "Hard Pad Disease."
- **Wildlife Threat:** While common in dogs, it is a major conservation threat to **Apex predators** like Tigers and Lions, as it can cause them to lose their natural fear of humans and succumb to seizures.

Q. With reference to the Kanha Tiger Reserve, consider the following statements:

1. It is the only natural habitat in the world for the Hard-ground Barasingha (*Cervus duvauceli branderi*).
2. The reserve is geographically situated within the Vindhya Mountain Range.
3. Kanha was the first tiger reserve in India to officially introduce a mascot to promote conservation.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Solution:

Answer: B. Only two

- **STATEMENT 1 IS CORRECT:** Kanha Tiger Reserve is indeed the last world population and the only natural habitat for the specific subspecies of hard-ground Barasingha.
- **STATEMENT 2 IS INCORRECT:** The reserve is located in the **Maikal range of the Satpuras**, not the Vindhya Range.
- **STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT:** It made history in India by being the first to introduce an official mascot, "Bhoorsingh the Barasingha," to create awareness.

4.3. INDIA'S FIRST GREEN METHANOL PLANT

Context

- **Recently**, India is set to operationalize its first green methanol plant at the **Deendayal Port Authority (DPA) in Kandla, Gujarat**. This project is particularly significant as it aims to utilize **Prosopis juliflora**, a highly invasive weed that has threatened the biodiversity of the Banni grasslands in Kutch, as the primary feedstock.



- This initiative aligns with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) rules requiring the global shipping industry to transition toward green fuels like methanol to replace conventional bunker oil.

Project Overview

- **Location:** Deendayal Port Authority (DPA), Kandla, Gujarat.
- **Production Capacity:** The pilot plant is designed to produce **five tonnes of methanol per day**.
- **Developers:** The facility is being constructed by **Thermax Energy** (Pune-based) using gasification technology from **Ankur Scientific** (Vadodara-based).
- **Feedstock:** The plant primarily uses **Prosopis juliflora** (Kutch weed) and can also process other agricultural residues like bagasse and cotton stalks.

Prosopis juliflora: The Invasive Feedstock

- **Origin and Introduction:** *Prosopis juliflora* is a Mexican-origin shrub that was introduced to India by the British in the 1920s to green Delhi and later by the Gujarat Forest Department in 1961 to halt the encroachment of the salt desert in the Rann of Kutch.
- **Invasive Nature:** It is ranked among the "top 100 invasive species in the world" and has crowded out native grasses over thousands of kilometers, significantly threatening the biodiversity of the Banni grasslands.
- **Common Names:** In India, it is locally known as *Gando Baval* in Gujarat, *Vilayati Keekar* in North India, and *Seemai Karuvelam* in Tamil Nadu.
- **Feedstock Potential:** It is considered an ideal feedstock for green methanol because it is a dense hardwood with a high energy profile and low acid content.

Green Methanol Production Process

- **Comparison with Conventional Methanol:** While conventional methanol is produced from fossil fuels like natural gas or coal, green methanol is derived from renewable feedstocks such as biomass or agricultural residues.
- **The Two-Step Gasification Process:**
 - **Gasification:** The biomass is heated in the absence of oxygen (a process sitting between combustion and pyrolysis) to break it down into **syngas** (a mixture of hydrogen, carbon monoxide, and carbon dioxide).
 - **Conversion:** The syngas is then chemically converted into liquid methanol, which can be used as a direct replacement for traditional "bunker oil" in ships.
- **Environmental Benefits:** According to the Methanol Institute, using green methanol can reduce a vessel's CO₂ emissions by up to 95%, Nitrogen Oxides by up to 80%, and virtually eliminate Sulphur Oxides and particulate matter.

Strategic Significance

- **Maritime Green Ports:** This initiative aligns with the Government of India's policy to convert western coast ports into "green ports" to meet global shipping decarbonization standards.

- **Economic Impact:** The utilization of agricultural residues and invasive species as fuel could potentially displace a significant portion of India's oil imports.
- **Biodiversity Restoration:** By creating a commercial demand for *Prosopis juliflora*, the project provides a functional method to clear invasive species and allow native ecosystems to recover.

The Concept of Methanol Economy

The **NITI Aayog** is driving the "Methanol Economy" program to reduce India's oil import bill and carbon footprint.

- **Blending:** Blending 15% methanol in gasoline (M-15) can reduce crude oil imports by 15%.
- **Shipping & Rail:** Methanol is a high-density energy carrier, making it ideal for marine fuel and locomotives.
- **Waste-to-Wealth:** It allows for the conversion of high-ash coal, municipal solid waste, and agricultural residue into valuable fuel.

Q. With reference to Green Methanol production in India, consider the following statements:

Statement-I: India's first green methanol plant is being established at Kandla to convert invasive weed species into marine fuel.

Statement-II: According to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), green methanol must have a total carbon emission threshold of not more than 0.38 kg CO₂ equivalent per kg of methanol.

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

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- (c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.
- (d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct.

Answer: (c)

Solution:

- **STATEMENT I CORRECT:** The first green methanol plant is indeed located at Deendayal Port (Kandla) and uses *Prosopis juliflora* (an invasive weed) as feedstock for shipping fuel.
- **STATEMENT II INCORRECT:** According to the MNRE notification (February 2026), the threshold for **Green Methanol** is **0.44 kg CO₂ eq/kg**. The 0.38 kg limit mentioned in the statement actually refers to the standard for **Green Ammonia**.

4.4. KERALA'S SACRED GROVE RESTORATION PROJECT

Context

- Recently, the **Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB)** has launched a pilot project to restore declining sacred groves across five districts (Ernakulam, Palakkad, Kozhikode, Kannur, and Kasaragod) to counter developmental pressures and invasive species.



I. Key Features of the Restoration Project

- Implementing Agencies:** KSBB in collaboration with local **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)**.
- 'Kavu Nurseries':** Establishment of specialized nurseries to propagate specific plant species native to these groves.
- Core Activities:**
 - Biodiversity assessment and identification of endangered/invasive species.
 - Bio-fencing** using native plants instead of artificial barriers.
 - Rejuvenation of associated water bodies (ponds) and removal of plastic waste.
- Scope:** Identification of over 100 native/threatened species and planting of nearly 3,000 saplings.

Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) are local bodies mandated by India's **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**, to promote conservation, sustainable use, and documentation of local biological resources. Operating under local self-governments (rural Panchayats or urban Municipalities), they prepare People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs) to document local flora, fauna, and traditional knowledge.

II. What are Sacred Groves?

- Definition:** These are patches of primeval forest that are communally protected, usually dedicated to a local deity or ancestral spirits.
- Ecological Significance:**
 - In-situ Conservation:** They serve as repositories for rare, endemic, and medicinal plants.
 - Ecosystem Services:** They act as micro-watersheds, helping in soil conservation and groundwater recharge.
 - Biogeographical Islands:** They often represent the only remaining "climax vegetation" of a region amidst a modified landscape.
- Legal Status:** Many sacred groves in India are now protected under the **Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2002**, categorized as '**Community Reserves**'.

- A Community Reserve** is a legal category of protected area in India, introduced by the 2002 amendment to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (Section 36C).

- It serves as a buffer or corridor between established national parks, sanctuaries, and forests, allowing local communities to voluntarily conserve biodiversity on private or communal land while maintaining ownership.
- **Management:** Managed by a Community Reserve Management Committee (CRMC) constituted by the State Government, allowing for sustainable resource use.
- **Restrictions:** Once declared, land use cannot be changed without a resolution from the Management Committee and approval by the State Government.
- **Prevalence:** There are over 219 community reserves in India.

III. Regional Names of Sacred Groves

State	Local Name
Kerala	Kavu / Sarpakavu
Meghalaya	Law Kyntang
Rajasthan	Orans / Kenri
Maharashtra	Deorais
Karnataka	Devarakadu
Tamil Nadu	Kovil Kadu
Himachal Pradesh	Deo Bhumi
Madhya Pradesh	Jahera / Sargi

Consider the following statements

1. Community reserves are established under the Forest Conservation Act of 1980.
2. The Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 is governed by the Ministry of environment, forest and climate change (MoEFCC).

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

Answer: D

Explanation:

Statement 1 is incorrect: Community Reserves (as well as Conservation Reserves) were introduced through the **Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act of 2002**, which amended the **Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972**. They are not established under the Forest Conservation Act of 1980. These reserves act as buffer zones or connectors between established national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

Statement 2 is incorrect: The **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006** (commonly known as the **FRA**) is governed and administered by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)**, not the MoEFCC. While the Act deals with forest land, the nodal agency was specifically chosen to ensure the protection of the rights of tribal and forest-dwelling communities.

4.5. BARGI DAM

Context

- **Recently**, the Bargi Dam in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, has drawn significant national attention following a tragic cruise boat accident that resulted in nine fatalities. Reports indicate that a sudden storm caused the "Narmada Queen" cruise to capsize, leading the Madhya Pradesh government to order a high-level inquiry into safety protocol lapses. This incident has reignited discussions regarding disaster management, the implementation of the **Dam Safety Act 2021**, and the regulation of eco-tourism activities in large reservoirs.



1. Geographical Location and Structure

- **River:** The dam is constructed across the **Narmada River**, which is the fifth-largest river in India and the largest west-flowing river.
- **Location:** It is situated in the **Jabalpur district** of Madhya Pradesh.
- **Type:** It is a massive **gravity dam** made of earth and masonry.
- **Gates:** The structure features **21 spillway gates** designed to regulate the massive water flow of the Narmada during the monsoon season.

2. Historical and Administrative Significance

- **Narmada Valley Project:** The Bargi Dam is one of the first major dams completed (in 1988) among the planned chain of 30 large dams under the **Narmada Valley Development Project**.
- **Alternate Name:** The project is officially named the **Rani Avanti Bai Lodhi Sagar Project**, honoring the 19th-century warrior queen of the Ramgarh kingdom.
- **Management:** It is managed by the **Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA)** and the Water Resources Department of Madhya Pradesh.

3. Key Multipurpose Features

The dam serves several critical functions for the regional economy:

- **Irrigation:** It supports two massive irrigation schemes—the **Rani Avantibai Lodhi Sagar Project** and the **Bargi Diversion Project**, which provide water to several districts, including Jabalpur, Katni, Rewa, and Satna.
- **Hydropower:** The dam has an installed capacity of **105 MW**, generated through two 45 MW Francis turbines at the main dam and two 7.5 MW turbines on the canal side.
- **Drinking Water:** It is the primary source of drinking water for the city of Jabalpur and surrounding rural areas.
- **Tourism:** The reservoir, known as **Bargi Lake**, is a major eco-tourism hub offering cruises, water sports, and birdwatching opportunities.

4. Associated Ecological Pointers

- The backwaters of the dam have created a vast reservoir that attracts migratory birds such as the **Sarus Crane**.
- The surrounding region is part of the **Narmada Rift Valley**, situated between the **Vindhya** and **Satpura** mountain ranges.

Major Dams on the Narmada River

1. Sardar Sarovar Dam (Gujarat)

- **Significance:** It is the **largest and terminal dam** on the Narmada River. It is a concrete gravity dam and is considered the second-largest concrete dam in the world (by volume) after the Grand Coulee Dam (USA).
- **Beneficiary States:** It is a multi-state project involving **Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan**.
- **Key Highlights:**
 - Supplies water to the arid regions of Saurashtra and Kutch through the Narmada Canal.
 - Site of the **Statue of Unity**, located downstream at Kevadia.
 - Associated with the historic **Narmada Bachao Andolan** led by Medha Patkar.

2. Indira Sagar Dam (Madhya Pradesh)

- **Location:** Khandwa district (Narmada Nagar, Punasa).
- **Record:** It holds the **largest reservoir in India** in terms of water storage capacity (\$12.22\$ billion cubic meters).
- **Role:** Acts as the "mother dam" for downstream projects like Omkareshwar and Maheshwar, regulating water flow to the Sardar Sarovar.

3. Omkareshwar Dam (Madhya Pradesh)

- **Type:** A concrete gravity dam.
- **Unique Feature:** Known for the **Omkareshwar Floating Solar Project**, which is one of the world's largest floating solar plants.
- **Cultural Link:** Located near the **Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga**, one of the 12 sacred Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva.

4. Maheshwar Dam (Madhya Pradesh)

- **Location:** Khargone district.
- **Function:** Primarily a **hydroelectric project** (400 MW).
- **Note:** It has faced significant hurdles regarding rehabilitation and environmental clearances.

Q. Arrange the following dams on the Narmada River in the correct order from its source to its mouth:

1. Sardar Sarovar Dam
2. Bargi Dam
3. Indira Sagar Dam
4. Omkareshwar Dam

Select the correct code:

- (a) 2 — 3 — 4 — 1
- (b) 2 — 4 — 3 — 1
- (c) 1 — 4 — 3 — 2
- (c) 3 — 2 — 4 — 1

Solution: (a)

The Narmada flows from East to West.

Bargi (Jabalpur) is furthest East (upstream).

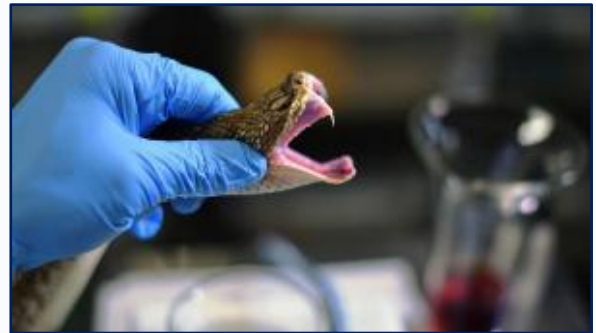
Indira Sagar (Khandwa) and **Omkareshwar** follow in central MP.

Sardar Sarovar (Gujarat) is the terminal dam furthest West (downstream).

4.6. SNAKEBITE MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

Context:

- Rising snakebite deaths in **Kerala (April–May 2025)** due to an unusually hot summer driving venomous snakes into human habitations has exposed critical gaps in India's clinical infrastructure and snakebite management framework, making it a significant **public health and governance** issue.



1. Why Snakebites Are Increasing — Ecological Reasons

- Snakes are **ectothermic (cold-blooded)** — they cannot regulate body temperature internally and are entirely dependent on external environment; hotter summers force them into **cool, damp human spaces** — homes, storerooms, firewood stacks, coconut husk piles
- Kerala's **dense vegetation + high human-wildlife range overlap** increases contact probability

Ectothermic: organism whose body temperature depends on external environmental temperature (opposite = endothermic).

2. Kerala's Snake Profile

- Kerala has **100+ snake species**
- Home to India's "**Big Four**" venomous snakes:

Snake	Key Feature
Common Krait	Highly neurotoxic; nocturnal ; bites often painless
Russell's Viper	Haemotoxic; most snakebite fatalities in India
Saw-scaled Viper	Highly aggressive; rapid venom action
Spectacled Cobra	Both neurotoxic and cytotoxic venom

3. Snakebite — Key Epidemiological Facts

- India accounts for **nearly half of all global snakebite deaths**
- Most affected groups: **agricultural workers and children**
- **70%** of snakebite presentations involve **non-venomous species**
- Of remaining 30%, roughly **half are dry bites** (no venom injected)
- Therefore, a **substantial proportion of patients do not need Anti-Snake Venom (ASV)**

Dry Bite — a snakebite where the snake does not inject venom; no envenomation occurs despite fang penetration

4. Anti-Snake Venom (ASV) — Current Status & Challenges

I. What is ASV?

- **Anti-Snake Venom (ASV)** is a biological product (antibody-based) administered to neutralise snake venom in the bloodstream
- It is the **only proven treatment** for snakebite envenomation

II. Key Problem — The Diagnostic Gap

- **No commercially available rapid venom detection diagnostic kit** exists in India
- Diagnosis is entirely **symptomatic (syndromic approach)** — treatment begins only after symptoms appear
- **ICMR** has flagged the syndromic approach as a **systemic flaw** — by the time symptoms manifest, venom may have **irreversibly damaged tissue**

5. Government Initiatives

Initiative	Details
Snakebite as Notifiable Disease	Kerala declared snakebite a notifiable disease — mandatory reporting to health authorities; enables better data collection and resource planning.
SARPA Programme	Kerala government's programme to professionalise snake rescue operations

- **Notifiable Disease** — a disease that law requires to be reported to government authorities; enables surveillance, resource allocation, and epidemic control
- Power to declare a notifiable disease rests with **State Governments**; the Centre can only recommend.

Q. With reference to “Notifiable Diseases” in India, consider the following statements:

1. The power to declare a disease notifiable lies with the Central Government.
2. States can mandate reporting of such diseases for surveillance.

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

Answer: B

Explanation:

Statement 1 is Incorrect: In India, there is **no single central law** that uniformly empowers the Union Government to declare diseases as “notifiable” for all states. Public health is a **State subject** under the Constitution (State List).

- While the **Central Government** (through bodies like the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare) may issue guidelines or advisories,
- The **actual power to notify diseases** generally lies with **State Governments** under their respective public health acts or epidemic laws.

Statement 2 is Correct: States have the authority to **mandate reporting of certain diseases** (making them “notifiable”) for surveillance and control.

- Once a disease is declared notifiable, **healthcare providers are legally required to report cases** to authorities.
- This helps in disease tracking, outbreak detection, and timely intervention (e.g., under frameworks like the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme).

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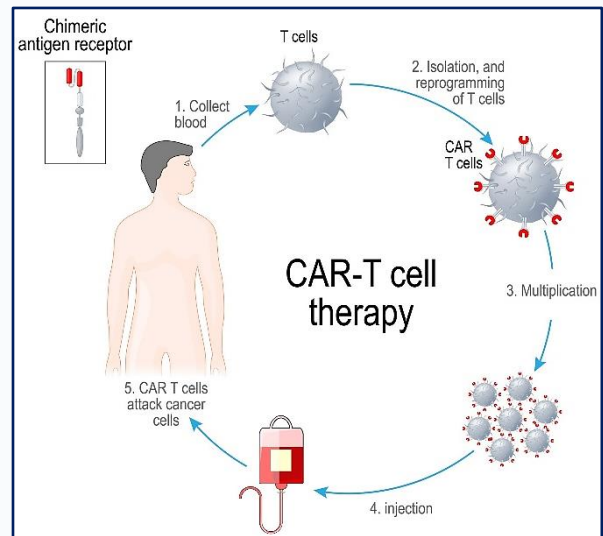


Prelims Test Series

5.1. CAR-T CELL THERAPY

Context:

- Recently a study reported the development of a new generation of immune cells with HIT (HLA-independent T-cell) receptors designed to overcome the “faint signal” problem in solid tumours such as kidney, ovarian, and pancreatic cancers.
- Unlike traditional CAR-T therapy—which has been highly effective in blood cancers but less so in solid tumours due to antigen heterogeneity—these receptors enable engineered T-cells to detect and target cancer cells that express very low levels of tumour markers.



What is CAR-T Cell Therapy?

Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy is a revolutionary form of **immunotherapy** that falls under the category of **gene therapy**. Unlike chemotherapy, which uses chemicals to kill cancer, CAR-T therapy uses the patient's own immune system as a weapon.

1. The Core Components

- **T-Cells:** These are a type of white blood cell (lymphocyte) responsible for identifying and killing foreign pathogens or abnormal cells.
- **CAR (Chimeric Antigen Receptor):** This is an artificial receptor engineered in a lab. It does not occur naturally. The term "chimeric" refers to the fact that it is composed of parts from different sources (an antibody part to see the cancer and a T-cell part to activate the attack).

2. The Process: From Patient to Cure

- **Apheresis:** T-cells are extracted from the patient's blood.
- **Genetic Engineering:** In a laboratory, a viral vector is used to "recode" these T-cells. A new gene is inserted so the cells grow the **CAR** on their surface.
- **Expansion:** These newly engineered cells are multiplied into millions.
- **Infusion:** The "supercharged" T-cells are infused back into the patient.
- **Targeting:** The CAR acts like a **GPS**, allowing the T-cells to lock onto a specific protein (usually **CD19**) on cancer cells and destroy them.

NexCAR19: India's Indigenous Pride

- **Developed by:** **ImmunoACT** (a company incubated at **IIT Bombay**) in collaboration with **Tata Memorial Centre**.
- **Approval:** It was approved by the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO)** in October 2023.

- **Significance:** It is a "humanized" therapy, meaning it uses human-like protein sequences to reduce the risk of the body rejecting the treatment.
- **Cost Factor:** While global treatments cost approximately ₹3–4 crore, NexCAR19 has brought the cost down to ₹30–40 lakh, with targets to reach ₹10 lakh in 2026.

Key Advantages and Risks

Feature	Description
"Living Drug"	Unlike pills that leave the body, these cells can persist for years, providing long-term surveillance against cancer recurrence.
Precision	It specifically targets cancer cells while sparing most healthy cells, unlike the "scorched earth" approach of chemotherapy.
Major Side Effect	Cytokine Release Syndrome (CRS) – a massive immune response that can cause high fever and organ failure if not managed.
Current Limit	Highly effective for blood cancers (Leukemia, Lymphoma) but struggles with solid tumors (like lung or breast cancer) due to their protective microenvironment.

Q. With reference to CAR T-cell therapy, consider the following statements:

1. It involves the genetic modification of a patient's own immune cells to recognize and attack cancer.
2. It is currently the primary standard of care for solid tumors like lung and liver cancers in India.
3. Unlike chemotherapy, CAR T-cells are considered a "living drug" as they can persist in the body for long periods.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: B

Solution:

- **STATEMENT 1 IS CORRECT:** The therapy extracts T-cells and genetically modifies them with a Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) to target cancer antigens.
- **STATEMENT 2 IS INCORRECT:** While research is ongoing for solid tumors, CAR T-cell therapy is currently approved and effective primarily for **blood cancers** (hematological malignancies) like Leukemia and Lymphoma. Solid tumors have a hostile environment that currently limits the therapy's efficacy.
- **STATEMENT 3 IS CORRECT:** They are called "living drugs" because the engineered cells multiply and can remain active in the patient's bloodstream for months or years to prevent relapse.

5.2. ORS — ORAL REHYDRATION SOLUTION

Context:

As Delhi records temperatures exceeding 42°C and peak power demands crossing 7,000 MW, the Delhi Government, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), and the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) have initiated a multi-agency response to mitigate the impact of heatwaves on public health and infrastructure.



1. Key Administrative Measures

- **Labor Welfare:** Mandatory rest breaks for outdoor workers during peak heat hours (**1:00 PM to 4:00 PM**). Employers are legally responsible for providing shade and water.
- **Public Transport:** Provision of cold drinking water in all DTC buses and ORS counters at bus shelters.
- **Education Sector:** MCD schools have scrapped **outdoor assemblies** to prevent heatstroke among children.
- **Institutional Roles:**
 - **District Magistrates (DMs):** Designated as the lead executors for heatwave action plans.
 - **Focus Groups:** Special protection for "Vulnerable Groups" (Women, Children, Elderly, and Laborers).

2. Public Health Focus: Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS)

The article mentions the distribution of ORS at bus stands.

I. What is ORS?

ORS is a specialized mixture of dry salts that is mixed with safe water. It is used to treat **dehydration** caused by extreme heat (perspiration) or diarrhea. It is listed on WHO's Essential Medicines List — one of the most important public health interventions of the 20th century

II. Composition (WHO Formula):

1. **Sodium Chloride (Salt):** Replaces electrolytes lost through sweat.
2. **Glucose (Sugar):** Crucial because it helps the intestines absorb the salt and water more efficiently.
3. **Potassium Chloride:** Replaces potassium lost during dehydration.
4. **Trisodium Citrate:** Corrects the acidity in the blood (acidosis).

III. Mechanism of Action:

- ORS works on the "**Glucose-Sodium Co-transport**" mechanism. The bowel can absorb salt much better if sugar is present.
- It does not "cure" the heat, but it prevents the body from shutting down due to the loss of fluids and essential minerals.

Heatwave Criteria (IMD)

- **Plains:** Heatwave is declared when the maximum temperature is 40°C.
- **Hilly Areas:** Heatwave is declared when the maximum temperature is 30°C.
- **Coastal Stations:** Maximum temperature reaches 37°C or more.

Q. Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS), used in the management of dehydration, typically contains which of the following components?

- (a) Sodium chloride, potassium chloride, glucose, and trisodium citrate
- (b) Calcium carbonate, sodium chloride, glucose, and vitamin C
- (c) Sodium bicarbonate, iron salts, glucose, and zinc
- (d) Potassium nitrate, sodium chloride, sucrose, and calcium phosphate

Answer: A

Explanation:

ORS is a balanced mixture of electrolytes and glucose that enhances water absorption in the intestines, helping to treat dehydration caused by diarrhea.

Sodium Chloride: Essential for replacing the sodium lost through sweat and bodily fluids.

Potassium Chloride: Replaces potassium, which is vital for heart and muscle function during dehydration.

Glucose (Anhydrous): Acts as the "key" to the transport mechanism; it triggers the intestinal wall to pull in sodium and water.

Trisodium Citrate: Helps neutralize excess acid in the blood (metabolic acidosis) that often occurs with severe dehydration.

5.3. PROJECT 17A (NILGIRI-CLASS)**Context**

- **Recently**, the Indian Navy achieved a major milestone in maritime indigenization with the delivery of **Mahendragiri**, the sixth advanced stealth frigate under **Project 17A**, on April 30, 2026. This follow-on delivery, occurring just weeks after the induction of the fifth frigate, **Dunagiri**, highlights the accelerated pace of the Indian Navy's modernization program.
- The delivery by **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL)** underscores India's growing prowess in constructing sophisticated "blue-water" naval assets to counter emerging security challenges in the Indian Ocean Region.

**1. Overview and Design**

- **Successor Project:** Project 17A is a follow-on to the **Project 17 Shivalik-class** frigates. It features improved stealth features, advanced weapons, and sensors.
- **Lead Designer:** The ships are designed in-house by the **Warship Design Bureau (WDB)**, formerly known as the Directorate of Naval Design.

- **Integrated Construction:** This project utilizes the "Integrated Construction" methodology, where blocks are pre-outfitted before being joined, significantly reducing the build period.

2. Stealth and Technology

- **Radar Cross Section (RCS):** The ships are designed with a reduced RCS, achieved through efficient hull shaping and the application of radar-absorbent materials, making them harder to detect by enemy radars.
- **Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS):** This state-of-the-art system centralizes the control and monitoring of the ship's machinery and auxiliaries.

3. Weaponry and Propulsion

- **Propulsion:** The frigates use a **Combined Diesel or Gas (CODOG)** configuration. This includes two gas turbines for high-speed operations and two diesel engines for economical cruising.
- **Potent Suite:** They are equipped with **BrahMos** supersonic cruise missiles, **MRSAM** (Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missiles), and advanced sonar systems for anti-submarine warfare.

4. Indigenous Contribution

- **Local Content:** Approximately **75%** of the project's equipment and systems are sourced from indigenous vendors.
- **MSME Involvement:** Over **200 MSMEs** across the country have contributed to the supply chain, generating thousands of direct and indirect jobs.

5. List of Project 17A Ships

A total of **seven** ships are being constructed under this project by two premier public sector shipyards:

Ship Name	Manufacturer	Current Status (Approx.)
INS Nilgiri	MDL, Mumbai	Delivered/Commissioned
INS Himgiri	GRSE, Kolkata	Under Trials
INS Udaygiri	MDL, Mumbai	Delivered/Commissioned
INS Dunagiri	GRSE, Kolkata	Delivered (March 2026)
INS Taragiri	MDL, Mumbai	Commissioned (April 2026)
INS Vindhyagiri	GRSE, Kolkata	Under Trials
INS Mahendragiri	MDL, Mumbai	Delivered (April 2026)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Project 17A of the Indian Navy:

Statement I: Project 17A frigates are follow-on versions of the Shivalik-class frigates with enhanced stealth features and high levels of automation.

Statement II: These ships are powered by a Combined Diesel and Diesel (CODAD) propulsion system to ensure high fuel efficiency at all speeds.

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

- (a) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement I.
- (b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement I.
- (c) Statement I is correct but Statement II is incorrect.
- (d) Statement I is incorrect but Statement II is correct.

Solution: (c)

- **STATEMENT I CORRECT:** Project 17A (Nilgiri-class) is indeed the successor to the Project 17 (Shivalik-class) and incorporates advanced stealth technology such as reduced Radar Cross Section (RCS).
- **STATEMENT II INCORRECT:** The ships do not use a CODAD system; instead, they use a **Combined Diesel or Gas (CODOG)** propulsion plant, which combines the high power of gas turbines with the efficiency of diesel engines.

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Prelims Test Series

HISTORY & CULTURE

6.1. REPATRIATION OF INDIAN ANTIQUITIES FROM THE U.S.

Context:

U.S. authorities have returned **657 antiquities** to India, valued at nearly **\$14 million**. These items were recovered following investigations into major international trafficking networks, specifically those led by **Subhash Kapoor** and **Nancy Wiener**.



Key Highlights of the Repatriated Artefacts

1. Red Sandstone Buddha Figure

- **Significance:** Valued at approximately **\$7.5 million**.
- **Iconography:** Depicted in **Abhaya Mudra** (gesture of protection/fearlessness).
- **Condition:** Features a broken halo and feet damaged below the knees, typical of looted artefacts.
- **Origin:** Believed to be from **Northern India** (likely Mathura school, given the use of red sandstone).

Buddha Mudras

- **Bhumisparsha Mudra (Earth Witness):** Right hand reaches down to touch the ground, palm inward, symbolizing Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and his triumph over Mara (temptation).
- **Dhyana Mudra (Meditation):** Hands rest in the lap, right hand over left with thumbs touching, representing concentration, inner peace, and balance.
- **Abhaya Mudra (Fearlessness):** Right hand raised to shoulder height, palm facing outward, symbolizing protection, peace, and the dispelling of fear.
- **Varada Mudra (Charity/Compassion):** Right hand extends downward, palm facing outward, symbolizing generosity and the granting of boons.
- **Vitarka Mudra (Teaching/Discussion):** Thumb and index finger touch to form a circle, with other fingers pointing up, representing the transmission of wisdom and the teaching of the Dharma.
- **Dharmachakra Mudra (Turning the Wheel):** Both hands are held at the chest, thumb and index finger of each hand forming a circle, representing the Buddha's first sermon.
- **Anjali Mudra (Greeting/Devotion):** Both palms pressed together at the chest, representing respect, devotion, and a greeting.

2. Bronze Avalokiteshvara

- **Iconography:** Seated on an inscribed **double-lotus base** over a **lion-flanked throne**.
- **Artisan/Location:** The inscription identifies the craftsman as **Dronaditya of Sirpur** (near modern-day Raipur, Chhattisgarh).

- **Historical Link:** Part of a large hoard of bronzes discovered near the **Lakshmana Temple in 1939**.

Sirpur (ancient Sripura) in Chhattisgarh, India, is a major 6th-8th century archaeological site on the Mahanadi river, renowned for its dense concentration of Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain monuments. It was a major regional capital and intellectual center boasting 100+ monasteries, famously visited by Chinese traveler Xuanzang. Key sites include the 7th-century brick **Lakshmana Temple, Surang Tila, and multiple excavated Viharas (monasteries)**.

3. Legal framework

I. Regulatory Framework in India

- **Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972:** This is the primary legislation. It makes it illegal for any person other than the Government or its authorized agencies to export any antiquity.
- **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI):** The nodal agency responsible for the protection and repatriation of cultural heritage.

II. Global Framework

- **UNESCO Convention 1970:** Prohibits and prevents the illicit import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural property.
- **Cultural Property Agreement (CPA):** India and the U.S. recently signed a Cultural Property Agreement (July 2024) to streamline the return of stolen artefacts and prevent further trafficking.

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the repatriation of Indian antiquities:

1. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is the nodal agency responsible for the protection and repatriation of cultural heritage in India.
2. The UNESCO Convention of 1970 facilitates and promotes unrestricted international trade of cultural property among member countries.

Which of the following is correct?

- a) Only 1 is correct
- b) Only 2 is correct
- c) Both 1 and 2 are correct
- d) Neither 1 nor 2 is correct

Answer: A

Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct:

The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**, an attached office under the Ministry of Culture, is indeed the nodal agency for all matters related to the protection, preservation, and repatriation of cultural heritage.

- **Repatriation Role:** When Indian antiquities are identified in foreign museums or private collections (often having been smuggled out), the ASI works alongside the Ministry of External Affairs and law enforcement agencies like the CBI to establish ownership and facilitate their return to India.

- **Legal Framework:** It operates primarily under the **Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972**, which regulates the export and internal trade of antiquities to prevent illicit trafficking.

Statement 2 is incorrect:

The statement is incorrect because the **UNESCO Convention of 1970** (Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property) is designed to **prohibit and prevent** the illicit movement of cultural property, not to promote unrestricted trade.

- **Purpose:** It was established to ensure that member countries cooperate to protect their cultural heritage from theft and illegal export.
- **Key Mechanism:** It requires member states to take measures such as creating national inventories, establishing export certificates, and providing assistance in the recovery and return of stolen artifacts.

6.2. THE KOMAGATA MARU INCIDENT (1914)

Context:

Recently, the Komagata Maru incident was mentioned by singer Diljit Dosanjh on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, highlighting the historical injustice and racial discrimination faced by Indian immigrants during the colonial era



I. Key Details of the Voyage

- **The Ship:** A Japanese steamship named *Komagata Maru*.
- **The Organizer:** Gurdit Singh, a Punjabi entrepreneur based in Singapore.
- **The Passengers:** 376 passengers in total, including 340 Sikhs, 24 Muslims, and 12 Hindus from Punjab.
- **Timeline:** The ship sailed from Hong Kong in the spring of 1914 and arrived at Vancouver's Burrard Inlet on May 23, 1914.

II. Legal and Administrative Standoff

- **Continuous Journey Regulation (1908):** Barred anyone who had not travelled by a single unbroken journey from their country of birth to Canada. No direct shipping routes existed from India, making it practically impossible for South Asians to qualify.
- **The Standoff:** Canadian Prime Minister Robert Borden refused to let the ship dock, keeping it anchored offshore for two months.
- **Local Support: The Shore Committee** was a group formed in 1914 by Vancouver-based South Asian activists (mainly Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims) to support the 376 passengers of the Japanese steamer Komagata Maru, who were denied entry into Canada due to discriminatory immigration policies. Led by figures like Hussain Rahim, Sohan Lal Pathak, and Balwant Singh, the committee raised \$20,000 for food, water, and legal aid for passengers facing harsh conditions.

- **Departure:** The ship was forced to depart under escort on July 23, 1914, after Canadian officials withheld food and water and attempted to board the ship by force.

III. Return to India: The Budge Budge Riot

- **Arrival at Calcutta:** The ship anchored near Calcutta (Budge Budge) in late September 1914.
- **The Confrontation:** British authorities attempted to force passengers onto trains bound for Punjab.
- **Casualties:** In the ensuing clash, 20 passengers were killed by police fire, and many others were imprisoned.
- **Gurdit Singh:** He evaded capture for several years before surrendering in 1920.

IV. Link with the Ghadar Movement

The Komagata Maru incident was deeply intertwined with the Ghadar Movement, acting as a catalyst for its revolutionary activities.

- **Ideological Infusion:** Ghadar activists boarded the ship at Yokohama to deliver lectures and distribute anti-colonial literature among the passengers.
- **Recruitment Surge:** The brutal treatment of the passengers served as a recruitment tool, causing a surge in support for the Ghadar Party.
- **Ghadar Revolution (1915):** Many Ghadar members returned to Punjab in 1915 to attempt an armed uprising, inspired by the grievances highlighted by the voyage.
- **Exposure of British Promises:** The incident demonstrated to Indian subjects that the British Empire's promise of equal status was a myth, fueling the demand for total independence.

Q. The *Shore Committee* was constituted in 1914 in connection with which of the following incidents?

- (a) Komagata Maru Incident
- (b) Jallianwala Bagh Massacre
- (c) Champaran Satyagraha
- (d) Non-Cooperation Movement

Correct Answer: (a) Komagata Maru Incident

Explanation:

The **Shore Committee (1914)** was formed by the British Government to investigate the **Komagata Maru Incident**, where an Indian ship carrying passengers was denied entry in Canada and later faced conflict at Budge Budge (near Kolkata).

7.1. DENOTIFIED, NOMADIC AND SEMI-NOMADIC TRIBES (DNTS)

Context:

- Recently, during a three-day “Chintan Shivir” (brainstorming session), the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment discussed the inclusion and enumeration of Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) in the ongoing Census 2027 exercise.



Denotified Tribes (DNTs)

DNTs are communities that were “notified” as “born criminals” during the British regime under a series of laws, primarily the **Criminal Tribes Act of 1871**.

1. Historical Background

- **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871:** The British designated several nomadic and semi-nomadic communities as “hereditary criminals.”
- **Reason:** British considered mobile communities “hard to monitor”, linking mobility to “habitual criminality”.
- **Repeal (1952):** Post-independence, the Government of India repealed the Act based on the recommendations of the **Ayyangar Committee**. These tribes were “denotified.”
- **Habitual Offenders Act:** Unfortunately, many states replaced the 1871 Act with Habitual Offenders Acts, which often continued the social stigma against these groups.

2. Key Committees and Commissions

- **Ayyangar Committee (1949): Recommended repeal of the 1871 Act.**
- **Kaka Kalelkar Commission (also called first OBC Commission-1953):** The first commission to recognize the specific hardships of DNTs.
- **Renke Commission (2008):** Estimated the DNT population to be roughly 10-12 crore and recommended a separate census and sub-quota for them.
- **Idate Commission (2014):** Recommended the permanent setup of a dedicated Board for DNT welfare.

3. Government Initiatives

- **DWBDNC:** The Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities was established in 2019 for a period of three years (later extended) under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- **SEED Scheme (Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs):**
 - **Health Insurance:** Through Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY.
 - **Livelihood:** Productivity through clusters/SHGs.
 - **Housing:** Financial assistance via PMAY.
 - **Education:** Coaching for competitive exams (JEE, NEET, Civil Services).

Q. Which of the following best explains the rationale behind the British targeting nomadic communities under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871?

- (a) Their involvement in anti-colonial movements
- (b) Their refusal to adopt settled agriculture
- (c) Their mobility made surveillance and control difficult
- (d) Their dominance in trade and commerce

Answer: C

Explanation:

The Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 was rooted in colonial administrative convenience rather than evidence of criminality.

- **Core rationale:** Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities were **highly mobile**, making them difficult for the British to **track, tax, and police**.
- The colonial state equated **mobility with suspicion**, branding entire communities as “hereditary criminals.”
- This helped the British establish **greater control over populations** by forcing surveillance, registration, and restrictions on movement.

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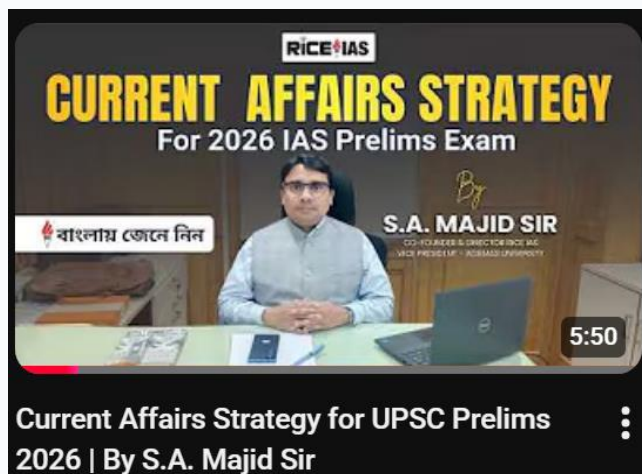
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