

**05 JULY 2024**

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## After Mizoram and Nagaland, Meghalaya declines 'mandir' tag for Ayushman health centres (05 July)

- Meghalaya has joined Mizoram and Nagaland in refusing to rename health and wellness centres as Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, following an advisory from the Centre in November 2023.
- The decision not to rename was announced by Meghalaya's Health and Family Welfare Minister, Mazel Ampareen Lyngdoh, citing health being a state subject and asserting state autonomy.
- Mazel Ampareen Lyngdoh is a senior leader of the National People's Party, which leads the coalition government in Meghalaya with the BJP as a minor partner.
- The Union Health Ministry had previously renamed Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres to Ayushman Arogya Mandir with the tagline 'Arogyam paramam dhanam'.
- Regional political parties in Meghalaya, including the United Democratic Party and the Voice of the People Party, criticized the renaming as reflecting a 'hidden agenda' of Hindutva by the BJP-led NDA government.

## 'Brain-eating amoeba' claims Kerala boy's life (05 July)

- A 12-year-old boy named E.P. Mridul from Feroke, Kerala, has died from primary amoebic meningoencephalitis, a rare infection caused by *Naegleria fowleri*.
- This marks the third death from the infection in Kerala within the past two months.
- Mridul, a Class 7 student, initially complained of headache and vomiting and had bathed in a local pond before falling ill.
- He was first treated at the government taluk hospital in Feroke and later referred to the Government Medical College Hospital in Kozhikode and then to a private hospital.
- Mridul remained in critical condition since June 24 and passed away recently.
- Earlier deaths include V. Dakshina, 13, from Kannur who died on June 12, and Fadva, 5, from Munnipur who died on May 20, both due to the same infection.
- *Naegleria fowleri*, known as the 'brain-eating amoeba', thrives in warm freshwater and enters the body through the nose, causing severe symptoms like headache, fever, nausea, altered mental status, and seizures.
- The Health Department of Kerala plans to issue special guidelines for treating this infection following these fatalities.

## Amoebic Meningoencephalitis

- Primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM) is a rare but severe brain infection caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, a free-living amoeba found in warm freshwater environments such as lakes, rivers, hot springs, and poorly maintained swimming pools.
- When contaminated water enters the body through the nose, usually during activities like swimming or diving, the amoeba can travel to the brain and cause inflammation and destruction of brain tissue.
- Symptoms of amoebic meningoencephalitis typically begin within a few days to a week after exposure and may include severe headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, stiff neck, confusion, seizures, and hallucinations.

The infection progresses rapidly and can lead to serious complications, including coma and death, within a short period.

## 'Brain-eating amoeba' claims Kerala boy's life

GS Paper III: Basic Science

THE KERALA BOY

A 12-year-old boy from Feroke who had been undergoing treatment for primary amoebic meningoencephalitis at a hospital in Kozhikode city died on Wednesday. This is the third death due to the rare infection in the past two months in Kerala.

According to sources, E.P. Mridul, a Class 7 student, was first taken to government taluk hospital at Feroke after he complained of headache and vomiting last month. Mridul had taken bath in a local pond earlier.

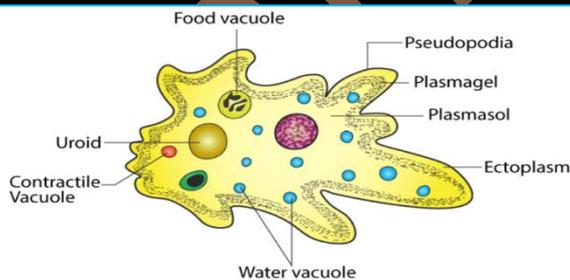
He was later referred to the Government Medical College Hospital, Kozhikode, and then to the private hospital. Mridul had

been in a critical condition since June 24.

V. Dakshina, 13, of Kanur died of a similar infection at a private hospital in Kozhikode on June 12. Fadva, 5, of Munnipur, died at the Government Medical College Hospital, Kozhikode, on May 20.

The infection is caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, also called 'brain-eating amoeba', which lives in fresh warm water. It infects people when it enters their body through the nose. The symptoms include headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, altered mental status, and seizures.

The Health Department is planning to issue special guidelines for the treatment of the infection against the backdrop of these deaths.



- Amoebas are single-celled microorganisms that belong to the phylum Amoebozoa.
- They are characterized by their shape-shifting abilities and their method of movement through the extension and retraction of pseudopods, or "false feet."

# Kerala probes 'sale' of FMGE question paper on Telegram

**GS Paper II: Governance**

The Thiruvananthapuram City Cybercrime Police have initiated a comprehensive probe against unidentified groups involved in the illicit sale of question papers for the Foreign Medical Graduates Examination on Telegram.

The Cyber Crime Police acted on tip-offs regarding offers for question papers for the FMGE, conducted by the National Board of Examinations, that is set to be held on Saturday. The "advertisements" were detected on Telegram groups that have come under the scrutiny of law enforcement officers.

The police registered a case under the newly-enacted Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, on Thursday. This marks the first instance of such a case being filed under this legislation in the State.

Official sources have not ruled out the possibility of an inter-State racket involved in such illegal activities.

In response to the growing challenge of cyber frauds, the Cyber Division of the Kerala Police has announced the implementation of round-the-clock cyber patrolling across various social media platforms, including Telegram channels.

- The Foreign Medical Graduates Examination (FMGE) is a mandatory exam conducted by the National Board of Examinations (NBE) in India.
- It is designed for Indian citizens or Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs) who have obtained their medical degrees from institutions outside India and wish to practice medicine in India.
- FMGE is conducted twice a year, usually in June and December.
- The National Board of Examinations (NBE) is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
- It was established to conduct postgraduate and postdoctoral examinations in the field of modern medicine, ensuring that standards for medical education and practice are maintained and enhanced.

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## Expert panel set up to study pollution level in Cauvery

GS Paper I  
(Geography)

BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has formed an expert committee, headed by Niranjan, Chief Environment Officer of Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, to study the pollution level in the Cauvery.

The panel will review and submit a report within 10 days to ascertain whether the Cauvery water is polluted due to the inflow of sewage water, solid waste, industrial waste, and other types of pollutants.

The committee was formed after MLC Dinesh Gooli Gowda had raised concerns about pollutants.

- The Kaveri rises in Brahmagiri hills (1,341m) of Kodagu district in Karnataka.
- Since the upper catchment area receives rainfall during the southwest monsoon season (summer) and the lower part during the northeast monsoon season (winter), the river carries water throughout the year with comparatively less fluctuation than the other Peninsular rivers.
- About 3 percent of the Kaveri basin falls in Kerala, 41 percent in Karnataka, and 56 percent in Tamil Nadu.
- Its important tributaries are the Kabini, the Bhavani, and the Amravati.

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# Drowsy drivers causing collisions at apron area of airports, warns DGCA

GS Paper III:

Aviation Industry

CHENNAI

An investigation into accidents at airports involving vehicles or equipment operators has revealed that drivers fell asleep while operating in apron area resulting in accidents.

Directing 'Ground Handling Service Providers' to ensure that drivers or equipment operators took adequate rest before joining duty, especially night shifts, the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has said that the drivers should be encouraged to report fatigue, if they felt so.

"Investigations have revealed that drivers/equipment operators have fallen

**All stakeholders were told to sensitise and train their staff to the revised guidelines**

asleep while operating in apron area resulting in hitting a person/airport structure/aircraft/other vehicles," the DGCA said in a safety advisory.

Going by past incidents, the DGCA said all vehicles, except fire and rescue vehicles, ambulances, quick reaction teams of the Central Industrial Security Force and 'Follow Me' jeeps operating in the operational area, should have speed governor with a maximum speed restric-

tion of 30 kmph.

Airport managers were advised to explore the use of technology for speed monitoring or tracking of vehicles.

**'Prohibit use of phones'**

The DGCA said the use of mobile phones while operating vehicle/equipment in the airside should be prohibited. All stakeholders working at airports were told to sensitise and train their staff to the revised guidelines to prevent ground incidents.

Saying that collisions at an airport could have serious consequences, the DGCA said the apron/ramp safety had been identified as one of the National High Risk Categories (N-HRCs)

in the National Aviation Safety Plan (NASP).

Safety measures introduced in an advisory issued in 2007 on vehicular speed control and movement on the apron had proved to be effective in reducing these incidents.

The revised circular took into consideration common causative factors such as non-adherence to SOPs by ground staff, drivers, equipment operators, maintenance personnel, refuelling personnel or aircraft-operating crew, identified based on the analysis of ground incident data.

Fatigue related to increased duty hours or inadequate training were also identified among other issues.

- The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is the regulatory body in India responsible for overseeing civil aviation.
- It operates under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and is tasked with ensuring the safety, security, and efficiency of air transport services.

The DGCA's functions include:

- Regulating air transport services to/from/within India.
- Enforcing civil air regulations, air safety, and airworthiness standards.
- Licensing of pilots, aircraft maintenance engineers, air traffic controllers, and other aviation personnel.
- Investigating aviation accidents and incidents.
- Developing and implementing aviation safety standards.
- Certification of airports and air navigation services.
- Overseeing the maintenance and operation of aircraft.

## The Airports Authority of India (AAI)

- The Airports Authority of India (AAI) is a statutory body working under the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India.

- It is responsible for creating, upgrading, maintaining, and managing civil aviation infrastructure in India.

## Apron Area

- The apron area at an airport, also known as the ramp, is the part of the airport where aircraft are parked, loaded or unloaded, refueled, boarded, or maintained.



# Can't ask for Collegium's reasons for rejecting candidates, says HC

GS Paper II:  
Judiciary (Collegium System)

The Delhi High Court has held that reasons for rejection of recommendations for appointment of High Court judges by the Supreme Court Collegium cannot be made public as it will be "detrimental to the interests of the people concerned" and will stifle the appointment process.

The court made the observation while dismissing an appeal challenging an order that had rejected a petition seeking a direction to the Supreme Court Collegium to provide detailed reasons while refusing to

accept recommendations for such appointments.

The Bench said the appointment of a judge to a High Court or the Supreme Court is an "integrated, consultative and non-adversarial process" which cannot be challenged in a court except on the ground of want of consultation with the named constitutional functionaries or lack of any condition of eligibility in case of an appointment or a transfer being made without the recommendation of the Chief Justice of India.

"Further, publication of reasons for rejection will be detrimental to the inter-

ests and standing of people whose names have been recommended by the High Courts, as the Collegium deliberates and decides on the basis of information which is private to the individual being considered. Such information, if made public, will have the effect of stifling the appointment process," a Bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gdela said.

The court said the single judge Bench has correctly noted that this court cannot sit in appeal over the subjective satisfaction of the Supreme Court Collegium.

### Collegium System:

- The system empowers a group of the senior-most judges of the Supreme Court, including the Chief Justice of India (CJI), to make recommendations regarding the appointment and transfer of judges to the higher judiciary.
- The Collegium System was established through three landmark judgments, known as the Three Judges Cases.

### Evolution through the Three Judges Cases:

1. First Judges Case (1981):

- The Supreme Court ruled that the word "**consultation**" in **Articles 124 and 217** of the Constitution does not mean "concurrence."
  - The President of India was not bound to follow the recommendations of the CJI.
  - This judgment gave the Executive the final say in the appointment of judges.
- 2. Second Judges Case (1993):**
- This judgment overruled the decision in the First Judges Case.
  - It established that the CJI must consult the two senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.
  - It gave primacy to the opinion of the CJI in the appointment and transfer of judges.
- 3. Third Judges Case (1998):**
- This case further clarified the Collegium System.
  - The CJI must consult a Collegium of four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.
  - If two judges give an adverse opinion, the CJI should not send the recommendation to the government.

**Composition of the Collegium:**

- **Supreme Court:** The Collegium for the Supreme Court appointments consists of the CJI and four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.
- **High Court:** The Collegium for High Court appointments consists of the CJI, the two senior-most judges of the Supreme Court, and the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court along with two senior-most judges of that High Court.

**Functions of the Collegium:**

1. **Appointment of Judges:** The Collegium recommends names of judges to be appointed to the Supreme Court and High Courts.
2. **Transfer of Judges:** It also recommends the transfer of High Court judges from one High Court to another.
3. **Elevation of Judges:** The Collegium recommends elevation of High Court judges to the Supreme Court.

**Criticisms of the Collegium System:**

- **Lack of Transparency:** The system has been criticized for its opaque functioning and lack of transparency in decision-making.
- **Accountability:** There is little accountability, as the decisions of the Collegium are not open to scrutiny.
- **Subjectivity:** Critics argue that the Collegium System can be subjective and may lead to favoritism and nepotism.
- **No Formal Guidelines:** There are no formal guidelines to assess the suitability of a candidate, leading to arbitrary decisions.

**Attempts to Reform:**

- **National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC):** The 99th Constitutional Amendment Act and the NJAC Act, 2014, aimed to replace the Collegium System with the NJAC, which included members from the judiciary, executive, and civil society. However, the Supreme Court struck down the NJAC in 2015, reinstating the Collegium System.

# Brahmaputra's lone female gharial's long wait for a mate could end soon

**Rahul Karmakar**  
GUWAHATI

A lone female gharial has temporarily overshadowed the one-horned rhino in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve in eastern Assam.

Wildlife officials and specialists are not sure how this gharial came to inhabit a stretch of the Brahmaputra within the national park. But they are certain that the reptile, presumed to be an adult by its size, is the key to repopulating the river with gharials.

Distinguished from other crocodilians by its elongated snout, the gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) was believed to have been wiped out from the Brahmaputra river system during the 1950s, though there were claims of sightings in



**A comeback:** Gharials were believed to have been wiped out from the Brahmaputra river system during 1950s. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the 1990s. The female gharial was first spotted in 2021 within the Biswanath Wildlife Division of the 1,307.49-sq. km Kaziranga.

The gharial, now 2.55 metres in length, was recorded twice, 500 metres apart, in one of the three priority habits chosen during a 10-day survey of aquatic reptiles along the Brahmaputra in January.

Teams of the Turtle Survival Alliance Foundation

India (TSAFI), an NGO specialising in reptiles, and the Assam Forest Department surveyed the Brahmaputra on a 160-km stretch from the Kaliabhomora bridge in the west to the Kamalabari Ghat in Majuli beyond the eastern edge of the Biswanath division.

The female gharial was found to be the only one of its kind moving between a "sandy shoreline" and a

"sandbar with a shoreline water depth of 4.5 metres".

"We do not know much about gharials in the Brahmaputra but we do know that this female has been lonely for more than three years and is close to the size of an adult ready to breed," Sushmita Kar, TSAFI's project director in the northeast, told *The Hindu*.

One of the 10 recommendations in the report was the "high-priority" reintroduction of gharials in the Brahmaputra.

Kaziranga's Director Sonali Ghosh said the tiger reserve had the right conditions for a gharial breeding programme.

If the reintroduction proposal is approved, the reptiles are likely to be brought from the Kukrail gharial breeding centre near Lucknow.

## Brahmaputra's lone female gharial's long wait for a mate could end soon (05 July)

- A lone female gharial, identified as an adult by its size, has been spotted in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve in Assam.
- The presence of this gharial in the Brahmaputra River within Kaziranga has surprised wildlife officials and specialists.
- The gharial, known for its distinctive long snout, was thought to have disappeared from the Brahmaputra river system since the 1950s, with sporadic sightings reported in the 1990s.
- First observed in 2021 in the Biswanath Wildlife Division of Kaziranga, the female gharial measures 2.55 meters in length.

- Recent surveys along a 160-km stretch of the Brahmaputra by the Turtle Survival Alliance Foundation India (TSAFI) and Assam Forest Department recorded sightings of the gharial.
- The female gharial moves between a sandy shoreline and a sandbar with a water depth of 4.5 meters, indicating its habitat preferences.
- Conservationists are hopeful that this female gharial, which has been solitary for over three years, is ready to breed.
- The survey recommended reintroducing gharials as a high-priority measure in the Brahmaputra to boost their population.
- Kaziranga's Director expressed confidence in the reserve's ability to support a breeding program for gharials.
- Plans for reintroduction may involve transporting gharials from the Kukrail gharial breeding center near Lucknow, pending approval.

Some of the key locations where gharials are found in India include:

- Chambal River (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh)
- National Chambal Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh)
- Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh)
- Son River (Madhya Pradesh)
- Gandak River (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh)

### **Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve**

- It was established as a National Park in 1974 and was declared a Tiger Reserve in 2006.

#### **Significance:**

- **UNESCO World Heritage Site:** Kaziranga was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985 for its unique natural environment and biodiversity.
- **Biodiversity Hotspot:** It is renowned for its rich biodiversity, particularly its population of the Indian one-horned rhinoceros.

#### **Flora and Fauna:**

- **Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros:** Kaziranga is home to the largest population of the Indian one-horned rhinoceros in the world.
- **Tigers:** It has a significant population of Bengal tigers, and its designation as a Tiger Reserve highlights its importance for tiger conservation.
- **Elephants:** The park has a large number of elephants.
- **Other Mammals:** Other notable mammals include the Indian wild buffalo, swamp deer, and various species of deer and primates.
- **Birds:** Kaziranga is a birdwatcher's paradise, with a large number of resident and migratory birds, including the great Indian hornbill and various species of eagles, storks, and herons.

#### **Distribution of Indian one-horned rhinoceros**

1. **Assam:**

- **Kaziranga National Park:** This park is home to the largest population of Indian one-horned rhinos in the world. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a key area for rhino conservation.
  - **Manas National Park:** Another significant habitat for rhinos, also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
  - **Orang National Park:** Known as the mini Kaziranga, this park also hosts a good number of rhinos.
  - **Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary:** It has one of the highest densities of rhinos in the world.
2. **West Bengal:**
- **Jaldapara National Park:** This park, located in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas, is home to a significant population of rhinos.
  - **Gorumara National Park:** Known for its population of Indian one-horned rhinos as well as elephants and other wildlife.
3. **Uttar Pradesh:**
- **Dudhwa National Park:** Located in the Terai region, this park has been a site for rhino reintroduction and conservation efforts.
4. **Bihar:**
- **Valmiki Tiger Reserve:** The rhino population here has been reintroduced as part of conservation efforts and it is an important habitat for them in the state.

**Conservation Status:**

- The Indian one-horned rhinoceros is classified as "Vulnerable" on the IUCN Red List, primarily due to habitat loss, poaching for their horns, and human-wildlife conflict.

## Education 'remains the most effective contraceptive'

Zubeda Hamid

Last year, India overtook China as the world's most populous country.

According to United Nations estimates, India's population which is currently 1.4 billion, will peak at 1.7 billion or so in 2064 before settling at 1.53 billion in 2100. But even though these numbers are staggering, data indicates that population growth is slowing – the total fertility rate has dipped below the replacement level of 2.1 and is projected to dip further.

With World Population Day (July 11) around the corner, experts say India's thrust should be on ensuring the sexual and reproductive health of its young people.

A study that referenced the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) concluded that there is a significant association between years of schooling and total unmet needs for family planning and unmet needs for spacing. The results of the study are contained in the paper 'Changes in discourse on unmet need for family planning among married women in India: evidence from NFHS-5.' It was published in the *Scientific Reports* journal last year. According to the study: "The demand for unmet needs for spacing and limiting was the highest among the women in the age categories 15-19 (17.8%) and 20-24 (17.3%)."

This, says Poonam Muttreja, executive director, Population Foundation of India, is primarily due to two factors: women who get married very young are usually from backward regions and not very educated, and therefore, their agency to negotiate or even talk about family

**Experts insist that India's thrust should be on ensuring the sexual and reproductive health of its young people**

planning is limited. "This is a social norm: even if the young woman does talk to a healthcare worker, the thinking is that once they are married, they must prove their fertility with children before family planning, and therefore there is no room for access to contraception," she says.

The other issue, Ms. Muttreja says, is that the country is increasingly seeing teenage pregnancies both among married and unmarried women, and yet, families are unwilling to accept that their unmarried children may be sexually active. "This is compounded by the lack of sex education. Globally, evidence has shown that where sex education is given, the sexual debut of a young person is postponed. It also helps eradicate misconceptions. In India, for a young person to even access condoms or any other form of contraception is culturally and socially against norms," she adds.

There is an urgent need to focus on young people, both men and women, and on their sexual and reproductive health through culturally sensitive behaviour change communication, and by offering them a basket of contraceptive options to meet their needs. She reiterated that women's education continues to be the most effective contraception.

Sumana Manohar, senior consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, also highlights the need for education among older students – those in classes 11 and 12.

Even abortion, points out Dipika Jain, director, Centre for Justice Law and Society, Jindal Global Law School, is a qualified right. "Abortion is largely criminal in India except under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, the person must qualify for the service as per the conditions of the act. Any abortion outside of the Act is criminalised. This makes access to safe and legal abortions difficult for a large section of pregnant people in India," Ms. Jain says.

(zubeda.h@thehindu.co.in)

## Education 'remains the most effective contraceptive' (05 July)

- India surpassed China as the world's most populous country last year.
- Current population of India is around 1.4 billion, projected to peak at 1.7 billion in 2064 and stabilize at 1.53 billion by 2100.
- Despite high numbers, India's population growth rate is slowing, with total fertility rate falling below replacement level of 2.1.
- Experts emphasize the importance of focusing on sexual and reproductive health on World Population Day (July 11).
- A study based on National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) links education levels with unmet needs for family planning among women.
- Young women aged 15-19 and 20-24 show the highest demand for family planning services.
- Factors contributing to high unmet needs include early marriage in less educated regions, limited agency for family planning discussions, and societal norms favoring proving fertility before contraception.
- Teenage pregnancies are increasing, both among married and unmarried women, complicated by societal reluctance to acknowledge sexual activity among unmarried youth.
- Lack of comprehensive sex education in India contributes to misconceptions and inhibits access to contraceptives.
- Urgent need for culturally sensitive sexual education and comprehensive contraceptive options to address youth sexual and reproductive health.
- Women's education remains crucial in empowering choices related to contraception.
- Access to safe and legal abortions is restricted in India under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, posing challenges for pregnant individuals seeking abortion services outside its provisions.

### The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971

1. **Purpose:** The MTP Act aims to provide safe and legal access to abortion services to protect the health of women and prevent unsafe abortions.
2. **Legal Framework:** It permits abortions under certain circumstances up to a specified gestational limit, which was amended in 2021 to extend the upper limit to 24 weeks under certain conditions, such as when there is a risk to the life or physical or mental health of the pregnant woman, or there is a substantial risk that the child, if born, would suffer from physical or mental abnormalities.
3. **Conditions for MTP:** The Act specifies that abortions can be performed by registered medical practitioners (doctors) in registered hospitals or clinics. It requires the opinion of one doctor for

pregnancies up to 20 weeks and the opinion of two doctors for pregnancies between 20 to 24 weeks.

4. **Protection and Regulation:** The MTP Act provides legal protection to doctors performing abortions in accordance with its provisions and aims to prevent the exploitation of women seeking abortions.
5. **Amendments and Updates:** Over the years, the MTP Act has been amended to address changing medical practices and societal needs, such as increasing the gestational limit for legal abortions and improving access to safe abortion services.

## **Computer literacy in India needs a reboot (05 July)**

- Computer literacy is essential due to the digital nature of critical services like banking, healthcare, and government services.
- Computer literacy involves knowledge and ability to use computers and technology efficiently.
- It enhances individuals' ability to access and use digital services, improving their quality of life.
- The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the importance of computer and internet access for services like online education, grocery ordering, and managing banking and healthcare.
- The Indian government launched the Digital India campaign in 2015 to promote digital empowerment.
- Computer education is being integrated into schools and various skill development and vocational training programs.
- These programs aim to enhance computer literacy, especially among underprivileged and marginalized communities, to bridge the digital divide.
- The NSS 78th round of the Multiple Indicator Survey (2020-21) shows that computer literacy among individuals aged 15 and above is 24.7%.
- Computer literacy increased from 18.4% in 2017-18 to 24.7% in 2020-21.
- In rural areas, computer literacy increased from 11.1% to 18.1%, while in urban areas, it rose from 34.7% to 39.6%.
- The low levels of computer literacy are concerning and hinder the nation's digital aspirations.
- Without serious measures to universalize digital literacy, rural India's population, nearly 70%, will face significant disadvantages.
- A significant portion of the population risks exclusion from public services provided through digital technology.

### **Unequal literacy across age groups**

- Computer literacy varies across age groups in India, decreasing with age.
- Younger individuals show higher computer literacy rates due to better access to computer education.

- The overall computer literacy rate is 24.7%, with significant disparities across age cohorts.
- Computer literacy peaks at 45.9% among 20-24-year-olds and is lowest at 4.4% among 65-69-year-olds.
- Even the youngest age groups have not reached 50% computer literacy.
- Individuals aged 20-39, who are typically in their career phase, have a computer literacy rate of 34.8%.
- There is significant variation in computer literacy among 20-39-year-olds across Indian states.
- Kerala has the highest rate at 72.7%, while Assam has the lowest at 17.6%.
- Economically disadvantaged states like Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan have less than 30% computer literacy.
- Low computer literacy in economically backward states exacerbates their development disadvantages.
- Bridging the digital divide requires sustained efforts from the government, private sector, and civil society.

#### **Understanding India's modest progress**

- Many schools and colleges in India lack the infrastructure and qualified teachers for adequate computer training.
- This deficiency affects computer literacy among young students and new graduates, limiting their employment opportunities.
- Computer education is part of the school curriculum, but gaps in access and instructional standards exist.
- Older age groups may lack computer literacy due to a lack of motivation or limited access to learning resources.
- Computer illiteracy restricts job prospects, social inclusion, financial access, and information resources.
- Employers seek individuals with computer skills to perform complex tasks as AI advances.
- The OECD's PIAAC survey found that adults without computer experience have a lower employment rate (52.5%) compared to those with basic computer skills (72.7%).
- Gang Peng's 2017 study found that computer skills enhance employability and productivity.
- Preston-Lee Govindasamy's research in South Africa showed a positive correlation between computer literacy, employment probability, and earnings.
- Computer literacy disparities exacerbate socio-economic inequalities by creating a digital divide and skill gap.

- Those with computer skills can leverage technology for development, while those without face barriers in accessing services and participating in the digital economy, perpetuating economic disparities.

#### **Schools, older population as focus areas**

- India has made some progress in computer literacy, but outreach and outcomes remain limited.
- Significant disparity exists in computer literacy levels and distribution across states.
- The digital divide between prosperous and disadvantaged states hinders inclusive growth and development.
- Schools should equip students with computer skills to fully participate in the economy.
- All graduating students should possess computer literacy to bridge the digital divide.
- The government should allocate resources for training computer personnel and ensuring sufficient staffing.
- Targeted programs are needed for the older population outside the formal education system.
- Local governing bodies and NGOs should be involved in empowering older individuals with computer literacy skills.
- The government should review computer literacy programs and develop strategies to achieve higher literacy and reduce disparities.

## **COMPLETE COURSE FOR IAS/PCS GENERAL STUDIES (GS) 2025 & 2026 PRELIMS CUM MAINS CUM INTERVIEW PROGRAMME**

**BEST OF THE DELHI, BETTER THAN DELHI**

# **Patriotic IAS**



**पैडलेगंज, गोस्वपुर**

**THE APPROACH OF THIS COURSE IS TO TEACH STUDENTS VERY BASIC CONCEPTS AND ENABLE THEM TO SOLVE THE IAS/PCS PRELIMS AND MAINS QUESTIONS BY THE END OF THE CLASS LECTURE.**

# The shape of a five-year climate agenda for India

GS Paper III: Environment

As the new government settles in, what it does to scale up climate action will affect every Ministry, new and old, and every sector, big and small. Some of its choices would be pivotal to how India structures its economic path in a sustainable way, positions itself as the voice of the Global South at the right tables, and fights for climate finance and justice over the next five years.

## India's transformation

Over the last decade, India has shown significant climate intent and progress on many fronts. It has moved on from being a hesitant participant reacting to developments in the global climate discourse to being a bold leader shaping narratives and institutions. First, it has laid the foundation for global institutions such as the International Solar Alliance, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, and the Global Biofuels Alliance, as well as shaped the Green Development Pact under its G-20 presidency last year. Second, for the first time, India has started talking about bolder and more ambitious emission mitigation targets. The 2070 net-zero target and ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) are milestones. With the net-zero announcement, India has acknowledged the criticality of absolute emission reductions over the near-term relative emissions-intensity-based targets. The net-zero goal has changed the debate domestically with various actors, policymakers and the private sector. Third, sustainability-linked domestic economic policies are no longer on the margins. The creation of an Indian emissions carbon trading scheme, an institution that should operate for at least 30-40 years, is a case in point.

In the next five years, the government must accelerate and show the world that economic development can be sustainable, too. India should follow the mantra of 'go higher, go wider,



**Vaibhav Chaturvedi**

a Senior Fellow at the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) and leads its low carbon economy and carbon markets research

The new government should aim to take India's global climate leadership to the next level with a 'higher, wider, deeper' plan

go deeper' to align its climate leadership with economic prowess.

## A plan sheet for India

'Go higher' relates to India's global leadership. The country could, sooner or later, host important international climate summits. If it were to host the United Nations Conference of Parties in 2028, it would need to be as successful as the G-20 Presidency. In global negotiations, four years is not that far. Does India want 'the world agrees to no new investment in oil and gas after 2030' as part of the decision text? Does it want a big commitment on adaptation finance so that developing countries can shield themselves against increasing heatwaves, storms, floods and droughts? It takes at least four to five years to achieve consensus on contentious issues. Deciding on what could potentially be the big wins in 2028 and socialising these across countries to stitch alliances and allay concerns must start right away. Alongside, India should continue doubling down on the narrative of equity in international forums, and create leadership space for itself in global institutions that can deliver climate finance.

'Go wider' means India has to adopt and strongly communicate sectoral emission reduction targets that go beyond the power sector. India has achieved significant progress in the power sector and will continue to do so to keep pace with its international non-fossil share-related and domestic renewable energy capacity targets.

The next step is to broaden the target to other sectors. For instance, it could be related to the private mobility space, giving a clear target for zero-carbon two- and four-wheelers. This is not just an urban India project. It will help rural India become mobile, drive jobs in clean energy and sustainability, and promote economic growth. As the last decade has shown, credible policy goals

have been powerful signals and forced relevant industries and stakeholders to act. The NDC for 2035, due to be submitted next year, can be an opportunity for going wider with India's energy transition targets.

## State-level plans are important

Finally, going deeper implies that sub-national climate action and resilience must come to the fore in this term of the government. Some shoots of this are already visible. The Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) is working across many States in India to support their net-zero plans through long-term climate and energy modelling. For instance, we collaborated with Tamil Nadu and Bihar for their recently-released plans for a transition towards a net-zero future. The government should think about creating a Centre-State coordination group, incentivising State-level climate actions through the Sixteenth Finance Commission, promoting a deeper integration of scientific modelling capabilities in policymaking, and facilitating a unified data measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) architecture at the State level. Given India's federal structure, this recommendation does not mean centralising climate actions, but ensuring that State-level actions are better coordinated without compromising their autonomy. This is possible only if the process goes beyond States individually trying to understand and respond to the climate crisis, and the Centre comes in as an active facilitator.

The new government should aim to take India's global climate leadership to the next level in its new term. It should look ahead for at least the next four to five years, and not just a year at a time. On most international tables now, India has a seat. It must now demonstrate prowess.

The views expressed are personal

05<sup>th</sup> July 2024

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

GS Paper III: Environment

**Question:** Discuss India's evolving role in global climate governance and its strategic initiatives to enhance climate action. (250 words/15 Marks)

**प्रश्न:** वैश्विक जलवायु शासन में भारत की उभरती भूमिका और जलवायु कार्रवाई को बढ़ाने के लिए इसकी रणनीतिक पहल पर चर्चा करें। (250 शब्द/15 अंक)

ANSWER STRUCTURE

- Introduce with India's evolving role in global climate governance, shifting from a focus on equity to a more proactive stance.
- Then briefly discuss India's historical position, emphasizing the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR).
- Further discuss India's **Strategic Initiatives for Climate Action**
- Then conclude the potential future trajectory of India's climate action efforts.

ANSWER

India's climate action journey is marked by several key milestones. First, it has laid the groundwork for global institutions such as the International Solar Alliance, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, and the Global Biofuels Alliance. Additionally, under its G-20 presidency, India played a pivotal role in shaping the Green Development Pact. These initiatives reflect India's commitment to fostering international cooperation on climate resilience and sustainable energy.

- India has set ambitious emission mitigation targets, including the 2070 net-zero goal and enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
- The net-zero announcement marks a significant shift towards absolute emission reductions rather than relative intensity-based targets.
- This commitment has catalyzed domestic discourse among policymakers and the private sector, emphasizing the importance of near-term action for long-term sustainability.
- Sustainability-linked domestic economic policies have gained prominence. The creation of an Indian emissions carbon trading scheme exemplifies this shift.
- This institution is expected to operate for several decades, driving long-term investment in carbon reduction technologies and sustainable practices.

### **Strategic Initiatives for Climate Action**

To enhance its climate action, India should adopt the strategy of 'go higher, go wider, go deeper.'

- **Go Higher:** India should amplify its global leadership by hosting significant international climate summits, such as the United Nations Conference of Parties in 2028.
- To succeed, India must advocate for critical decisions like halting new investments in oil and gas after 2030 and securing substantial commitments for adaptation finance.
- This requires building consensus and alliances well in advance, emphasizing equity in climate action, and leading global institutions that can deliver climate finance.
- **Go Wider:** Beyond the power sector, India must set and communicate clear emission reduction targets for other sectors.
- For instance, establishing targets for zero-carbon two- and four-wheelers can drive clean energy jobs and economic growth, particularly in rural areas.
- The upcoming NDC for 2035 offers an opportunity to broaden India's energy transition targets and send powerful signals to relevant industries and stakeholders.
- **Go Deeper:** Sub-national climate action is essential. India should encourage state-level climate actions through a Centre-State coordination group, incentivize these actions via the Sixteenth Finance Commission, and integrate scientific modeling in policymaking.
- Creating a unified data measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) architecture at the state level will ensure coordinated and effective climate responses.

India's evolving role in global climate governance reflects its commitment to sustainable development and climate resilience. By leveraging its strategic initiatives and aligning them with economic growth, India can demonstrate its prowess on international platforms. The new government must focus on long-term climate goals, fostering domestic and global partnerships to enhance climate action and leadership.

## The shape of a five-year climate agenda for India (05 July)

- The new government's climate action will impact every ministry and sector.
- Decisions made will influence India's sustainable economic path and position in global climate discussions.
- Over the last decade, India has shown significant climate progress and leadership.
- India has established global institutions like the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.
- India set ambitious targets like the 2070 net-zero goal and enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).
- The net-zero goal emphasizes the importance of absolute emission reductions.
- Domestic economic policies are increasingly focused on sustainability.
- The Indian emissions carbon trading scheme is an example of long-term climate action.
- The government needs to accelerate sustainable development and align climate leadership with economic growth.
- India's approach should be 'go higher, go wider, go deeper' in its climate initiatives.

### A plan sheet for India

- 'Go higher' relates to India's global climate leadership.
- India could host important international climate summits, like the UN Conference of Parties in 2028.
- Preparation for hosting such events requires early planning and consensus building on key issues.
- India should aim for major commitments on reducing oil and gas investments and securing adaptation finance for developing countries.
- Promoting equity in international forums and securing climate finance leadership is crucial.
- 'Go wider' means adopting and communicating sectoral emission reduction targets beyond the power sector.
- Significant progress in the power sector should continue, but targets should extend to sectors like private mobility.
- Setting clear targets for zero-carbon vehicles can boost mobility in rural areas, create jobs in clean energy, and promote economic growth.
- Credible policy goals drive action in relevant industries and stakeholders.
- The NDC for 2035, due next year, can expand India's energy transition targets.

### State-level plans are important

- 'Going deeper' emphasizes sub-national climate action and resilience.

- The Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) supports states in net-zero plans.
- CEEW collaborated with Tamil Nadu and Bihar for their net-zero transition plans.
- The government should create a Centre-State coordination group for climate actions.
- Incentivize state-level climate actions through the Sixteenth Finance Commission.
- Promote the integration of scientific modelling in policymaking.
- Facilitate unified data measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) at the state level.
- Coordination should enhance, not centralize, state-level actions.
- The Centre should act as an active facilitator for state-level climate responses.
- The new government should aim to elevate India's global climate leadership.
- Plan for the next four to five years, not just annually.
- India has a seat at international tables and must now demonstrate climate leadership.

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is a coalition of solar-rich countries situated between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.

- **Formation and Purpose:**
  1. The ISA was launched on November 30, 2015, by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former French President François Hollande during the 21st session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-21) in Paris.
  2. Its primary objective is to address key challenges related to global energy access, climate change, and sustainable development by promoting solar energy deployment.
- **Membership and Structure:**
  1. Membership in the ISA is open to countries located fully or partially between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn (the "Sunshine Countries").
  2. As of [2024], the ISA has 121 member countries and 85 signatories to the ISA Framework Agreement.
- **Goals and Objectives:**
  1. Facilitate cooperation among solar-rich countries to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and promote sustainable development.
  2. Mobilize more than USD 1 trillion in investment by 2030 for the deployment of solar energy technologies.
  3. Provide technical and financial support to promote solar projects, capacity building, and research and development in solar energy technologies.

Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) is an international partnership that focuses on enhancing the resilience of infrastructure systems to climate change and disaster risks.

**Formation and Purpose:**

- The CDRI was launched by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the UN Climate Action Summit in September 2019 (United Nations Headquarters in New York City, USA).
- Its primary goal is to support countries in making their infrastructure more resilient to climate change and disaster risks through knowledge sharing, capacity building, and collaborative initiatives.

**Membership and Structure:**

- The CDRI is a voluntary international coalition open to all countries and stakeholders interested in promoting disaster-resilient infrastructure.
- It operates as a platform for governments, UN agencies, multilateral development banks, private sector entities, and academia to collaborate on resilience-building efforts.

The Green Development Pact was a key initiative championed by India during its G20 presidency in 2023. It aimed to bridge the gap between developed and developing nations on the path towards sustainable development.

- **Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Consumption:** The pact emphasizes promoting lifestyles that minimize resource use and advocating for the "High-level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development."
- **Clean Energy Transition:** A core aspect is achieving a clean, affordable, and inclusive shift towards renewable energy sources. This transition should prioritize people's needs and ensure infrastructure development aligns with sustainability goals.
- **Disaster Resilience:** The pact acknowledges the importance of building infrastructure that can withstand natural disasters. This focus area aligns with India's efforts to establish a Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group within the G20.

Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA). Launched by India in 2023 during its G20 presidency, this alliance is a collaborative effort to accelerate biofuel adoption worldwide.

- **Expediting Biofuel Uptake:** The GBA's primary aim is to boost the global acceptance and use of biofuels, with a strong emphasis on sustainable biofuels. This aligns with reducing reliance on fossil fuels and mitigating climate change.
- **Supporting National Biofuel Programs:** The alliance recognizes that different countries have varying levels of biofuel development. The GBA offers technical support to member nations, aiding them in establishing or strengthening their biofuel programs.
- **Knowledge Sharing Platform:** The alliance serves as a central hub for information exchange on biofuels. It facilitates the sharing of best practices, policy frameworks, and advancements in biofuel technology among member countries.
- **Standardization and Regulations:** The GBA recognizes the importance of clear and consistent standards for biofuels. This includes working towards internationally recognized regulations for biofuel production, trade, and sustainability practices. This promotes responsible biofuel development and fosters global trade.
- **Collaboration, not Duplication:** The alliance strives to collaborate with existing initiatives in the clean energy and bioenergy sectors. This ensures efforts are streamlined and avoids duplication of work.

**Dangerous precedent (05 July)**

### **Shielding Presidents from answering for crimes subverts rule of law**

- The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the President has either absolute or presumptive immunity from criminal prosecution.
- The ruling was based on the separation of powers doctrine, not the U.S. Constitution text.
- Conservative justices, by a 6:3 majority, ruled in favor of presidential immunity.
- The ruling does not decide if former President Trump will have immunity for actions related to the 2020 election.
- It establishes a test to determine if the act involved a core constitutional duty, an official act, or an unofficial/private act.
- Core constitutional duties have absolute immunity.
- Official acts have presumptive immunity unless rebutted by facts.
- Unofficial or private acts have no immunity.
- Prosecution for official acts is permissible only if it does not intrude on executive power and authority.
- The majority ruling sends the issues related to Trump's attempts to influence the 2020 election outcome and the January 6 attack to the trial court.
- Dissenting views argue that immunity from criminal prosecution is not necessary for a President to function effectively.
- Critics believe presidential immunity poses a risk to democracy by allowing potential criminal acts without accountability.
- The dissent questions if a President can commit serious crimes like taking a bribe or authorizing an assassination without consequence.
- The majority aims to protect the Presidency from criminal prosecution, but Trump's actions may have harmed his successor's Presidency.
- The verdict surprisingly allows the use of presidential immunity in matters solely concerning the election process.

### **Grave concern (05 July)**

#### **The risk of international spread of wild type-1 polio cases from Pakistan is great**

- The goal to eradicate wild-type poliovirus type-1 (WPV1) by 2026 is becoming tougher.
- WPV1 is endemic in Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- WPV1 cases are showing a resurgence since 2023.
- In 2023, Afghanistan and Pakistan each reported six WPV1 cases; in 2022, there were two cases in Afghanistan and 20 in Pakistan.
- There is an uptick in cases in 2024, with six cases in Afghanistan and five in Pakistan already.
- Total cases in 2024 might match or surpass 2022 numbers.

- Concerns extend beyond cases in children to increased virus circulation in the environment.
- Positive environmental samples have been rising, especially in Pakistan.
- In 2023, 125 positive samples were collected from 28 districts in Pakistan; 119 samples from the YB3A genetic cluster suggest Afghan origin.
- By June 1, 2024, 153 positive samples were collected from 39 districts in Pakistan.
- As of April 8, 2024, 34 positive environmental samples were collected from Afghanistan.
- Positive environmental samples in critical areas like Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar-Khyber in Pakistan, and Kandahar in Afghanistan pose significant risks.
- The presence of these samples indicates shortcomings in polio vaccination campaigns, including issues with fake finger marking without actual vaccination.
- While urban children in Pakistan are largely immunized, unvaccinated or under-immunized children remain at risk, as seen in Karachi where two of six cases in 2023 occurred.
- WPV1 spread, previously predominant in Afghanistan in 2022, has now extended to Pakistan in 2023 and 2024.
- There is a heightened risk of international spread from Pakistan to Afghanistan due to large numbers of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, with potential cross-border transmission upon their return to southern Afghanistan.
- The situation in Pakistan appears worse compared to Afghanistan in terms of WPV1 spread and vaccination coverage challenges.

## Should India review its Myanmar policy in view of the humanitarian crisis?

GS Paper II: India-Myanmar Relations



**Rajiv Bhatia**  
is a Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House and a former Ambassador



**Nandita Haksar**  
is a human rights lawyer

PARLEY

The conflict between ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) and the military junta in Myanmar has created a serious humanitarian crisis, which the United Nations Security Council took up for discussion on July 3. Some experts on Myanmar have called for India to review its policy and establish channels with the EAOs to help the affected civilians. Should India review its Myanmar policy in view of the humanitarian crisis? Rajiv Bhatia and Nandita Haksar discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Kallol Bhattacharjee. Edited excerpts:

**Why does India's policy towards Myanmar require course correction?**

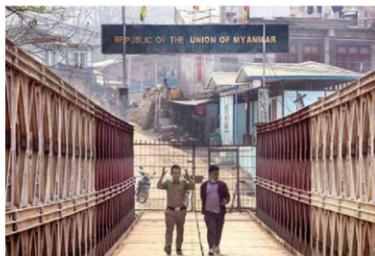
**Nandita Haksar:** Since October 2023, the ethnic armed groups and the PDF (People's Defence Force) in Myanmar have been coordinated in their effort to resist the military junta. These groups have been fighting the junta for many years, but this is the first time that they have been coordinated and have been able to hold at least 45% of the territory in Myanmar.

In this context, many people have called for a rethink (of India's policy) and said that we must have some dialogue with these EAOs because of two reasons. First, the conflict is directly affecting India – there is an influx of refugees here. Second, the EAOs are being supported by China. At the same time, China has good relations with the military junta. Apart from this, many of these resistance groups have actually taken control of all the trading routes that fall on the India-Myanmar, Myanmar-China, and Thailand-Myanmar border.

**Are the EAOs so powerful that they deserve to be recognised by state actors such as India?**

**Rajiv Bhatia:** Essentially, India's traditional policy towards Myanmar has had two main facets: one, to develop good cordial relations with the military junta and second, to keep supporting democratic forces and ensure the strengthening of democracy.

But in the last three years, Myanmar has changed beyond recognition. The military has not been able to impose its will. The people have rebelled against the military, but they have also not been able to prevail. In short, there is a strong military, political, diplomatic stalemate in Myanmar. That, I think, is the most forceful argument for some kind of a policy review and course correction. The second is that India's fundamental objective in Myanmar is to develop bilateral relations in all domains and make sure



An Indian police officer and an Indian man walk on a bridge across the Tiau river along the India-Myanmar border in Champgai village in Mizoram. AP

that Myanmar plays a useful role in its own 'Act East' policy. And the third is to have some kind of a balance between Indian and Chinese influences in Myanmar because that is essential for our national interest.

The situation in Myanmar has become difficult. About half of country it is still under military rule and control, but the other half is considerably fragmented. I think the (Indian) government should consult national-level experts and scholars – people who have a clear view on the history and complexity of Myanmar; and neighbours such as Thailand, Bangladesh, Laos, and eventually even China, to ensure some kind of stability. To have stability in Myanmar is in the collective interest of the neighbourhood.

**How compelling is the humanitarian situation in Myanmar to merit a review of the traditional policy?**

**NH:** What Ambassador Bhatia said is that the situation is in a flux, so we cannot change course overnight. One way to test the waters is to start providing humanitarian assistance, at least in the border areas between India and Myanmar. India is directly affected, so we have a right to express our concern. The people in Myanmar don't have access to water, sanitary napkins, and anesthesia. Many young people are injured and require surgery to get their legs or arms amputated, but they have no access to medical facilities. Some of them have been able to cross over to Mizoram and go to Delhi from there but they are few in number. So, it would be well worth our while to explore ways in which we could offer real humanitarian assistance to the people and obtain Myanmar's goodwill that way.

In the past, we have not done that. It is true that India has been supporting the democracy movement. It is true that in the past, the National League for Democracy was allowed to



One way to test the waters is to start providing humanitarian assistance, at least in the border areas between India and Myanmar.

Nandita Haksar  
open an office in Delhi. It is also true that the National Unity Government was allowed to open an office in Delhi, but it was not allowed to operate openly. Providing humanitarian assistance is the most non-controversial way of intervening in this situation. And then we can negotiate with the military rulers about rebuilding villages which have been bombed and which people cannot return to.

**RB:** It is, of course, a complicated situation. In my view, there is still a legitimate government there, even though it does not control all the territory. So, if you are going to interfere in Myanmar's internal affairs, in areas which are not under the government's control, they are not going to like it. Therefore, to address that problem, it is very important for our authorities to talk to the government in Naypyidaw and explain that it is in our traditional mutual interest for the people of Myanmar to be assisted if their own government cannot help them. It makes sense for India's humanitarian image.

**Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had recently said that there is an international plan by some countries to create a Christian state in a part of Myanmar. Do such comments also highlight a requirement for India to closely engage with all sections of the Myanmar chess board?**

**RB:** When a major neighbour begins to [become] fragmented, dangers of this kind could assume a clearer shape. She may have her own reasons to say what she said, although here in India we do not particularly see the creation of a Christian state within Myanmar. But what we do see is a kind of a Balkanisation. This is not in the interest of the people of Myanmar or in the interest of neighbours. That is why India has been closely associated with the Track 1.5 dialogue, which was initiated by Thailand, and in the Track 2 dialogue among scholars of the region, which is called the Bangkok process.

**NH:** I have been reading various blog posts and Facebook posts from the Northeast of the idea of a Kuki state which would include parts of Myanmar. That is why Ms. Hasina talked about it, because it was directly linked to her country and parts of India. This idea of a larger Kuki state has a direct impact on the Northeast. There

are already some Kuki underground groups that are trying to control all the routes that border Manipur with this intention.

**Ambassador Bhatia was referring to dialogue between India and Myanmar. But there is also the requirement of starting dialogue between the NUG and the military rulers.**

**NH:** As of now, from the little I know about the NUG, they are thinking not so much about reconciliation with the army or the military junta – I don't think that is possible – but about the kind of federal union they want. Conversations are going on within the NUG about a charter on the kind of alliances they could have, so that they can have a federal structure which keeps the whole of Myanmar as it is today. I think we have an interest in that because if there is Balkanisation, it will have a direct impact on India. That is one area of dialogue. As far as dialogue with the military junta [is concerned], I don't think they are thinking about that. But there are some moves which I have been told have been made by certain Western powers of trying to achieve some reconciliation. That is something which I think the armed groups and the PDF and civil society would resist. But yes, there should at least be dialogue on the kind of federal structure they could have. In that dialogue, India can play a role because that dialogue is also taking place within India's borders.

**What would be that the one piece of advice that you would like to give the newly elected Indian government? What should it do to avoid greater calamity in the bordering areas with Myanmar?**

**RB:** The advice is fairly self-evident. On the one hand, our people are trying to be in close touch with the military government. We have invested in this relationship over two decades, so that has to be. At the same time, we have sufficient leverage with the military to convey to them that their own people are suffering and the instability in Myanmar is having a negative impact across the board and on a major neighbour such as India and therefore the two countries should keep exchanging views on how we can address the humanitarian situation. At the level of people, at the level of communities, and at the level of the governments, we have to convey our deep interest in the good health, stability, and prosperity of Myanmar.



To listen to the full interview Scan the code or go to the link [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)

## Should India review its Myanmar policy in view of the humanitarian crisis? (05 July) (GS Paper II: India-Myanmar Relations)

- Conflict between ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and Myanmar's military junta has led to a severe humanitarian crisis.
- The UN Security Council discussed this crisis on July 3, highlighting its international significance.
- Experts suggest India should reevaluate its Myanmar policy due to:
  - Direct impact on India, including an influx of refugees.

- EAOs receiving support from China, contrasting with China's relations with the military junta.
- Control of major trade routes linking India, Myanmar, China, and Thailand by resistance groups.
- Nandita Haksar emphasizes that since October 2023, EAOs and the People's Defence Force have coordinated efforts, holding 45% of Myanmar's territory.
- Rajiv Bhatia argues for a policy review, noting Myanmar's evolving situation where the military struggles to maintain control despite widespread opposition.
- He stresses India's goals: fostering bilateral relations, incorporating Myanmar in its 'Act East' policy, and balancing Indian and Chinese influences.
- Bhatia suggests consulting national and regional experts to ensure stability in Myanmar, crucial for the collective interests of neighboring countries like Thailand, Bangladesh, Laos, and potentially China.
- Nandita Haksar suggests that while Myanmar's situation is in flux, India should start providing humanitarian assistance, especially in border areas.
- She emphasizes that Myanmar's people lack basic necessities like water, sanitary napkins, and medical facilities for surgeries.
- Haksar believes offering humanitarian aid could improve India's relations with Myanmar and help those affected by the conflict.
- She acknowledges India's past support for Myanmar's democracy movements but notes limitations in operational freedom for groups like the National Unity Government in Delhi.
- Providing humanitarian aid is seen as a less controversial intervention to assist Myanmar's people and potentially negotiate for rebuilding bombed villages.
- Rajiv Bhatia points out the complexity, acknowledging Myanmar's divided governance where some areas are controlled by non-central authorities.
- He advises India to engage with Naypyidaw, Myanmar's administrative capital, to explain humanitarian efforts are in mutual interest despite governance complexities.
- Bhatia suggests this approach could enhance India's humanitarian reputation while navigating Myanmar's internal governance sensitivities.
- Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina suggested an international plan to create a Christian state in Myanmar, reflecting concerns about potential fragmentation.

- Rajiv Bhatia acknowledges these concerns as indicative of a Balkanization risk, detrimental to Myanmar's people and regional stability.
- India engages in Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues with Myanmar through initiatives like the Bangkok process, aiming for regional stability.
- Nandita Haksar notes discussions in Northeast India about a proposed Kuki state spanning into Myanmar, influencing Hasina's comments.
- She highlights the need for dialogue between Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) and the military junta to discuss federal structures, amid resistance from armed groups.
- Haksar stresses India's interest in Myanmar's federal dialogue to prevent Balkanization, which could impact India directly.
- Rajiv Bhatia advises the Indian government to maintain communication with Myanmar's military while leveraging influence to address humanitarian crises.
- He emphasizes the importance of stability and prosperity in Myanmar for the well-being of its people and neighboring countries like India.

- **Track 1 Diplomacy:** Government to Government diplomacy. The recent visit of Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina to India.
- **Track 1.5 Diplomacy:** It is the combination of Track I and Track II diplomacy. Government Officials and non-officials both interact in dialogue. For example the Raisina Dialogue.
- **Track 2:** Non-officials to non-official level. These are experts in certain sectors, NGOs to NGOs, Academicians, Think tanks, research organizations, retired bureaucrats, etc. For example Neemrana Dialogue between India and Pakistan.
- **Track 3:** People to people level. It is applied through tourism, cultural/education exchange scheme, visas for employment, etc.

# What went wrong with the Hajj pilgrimage this year?

How do unauthorised pilgrims enter Saudi Arabia at the time of Hajj? Have such tragedies happened before?

## Ziva Us Salam

### The story so far:

Hajj, a gathering of nearly two million Muslim pilgrims, which falls in the last month of the Islamic calendar, has been in news again. More than 1,300 casualties were reported due to extreme heat in Saudi Arabia at this time of the year. Most casualties were reported from Arafat, where the pilgrims pause on their way to Muzdalfa. Arafat is the place where the Prophet Muhammad delivered his farewell sermon to 1,44,000 pilgrims in 632 A.D. This vigil at Arafat is an essential part of the pilgrimage without which the Hajj is considered invalid. Many casualties took place as the pilgrims moved from Arafat to Mina in the scorching heat.

### What is Hajj?

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam. This pilgrimage to Mecca is an essential part of the faith and any person who is economically and physically sound has to

### undertake the trip once in their lifetime.

Prophet Muhammad is said to have undertaken this pilgrimage shortly before breathing his last in 632 AD. The Hajj journey follows the lunar calendar.

Accordingly, it falls about 11 days earlier every year. This year's pilgrimage started at the conclusion of the second week of June. For the upcoming couple of years, the pilgrimage will be undertaken in harsh weather with temperature exceeding 50 degrees Celsius.

### What happened this year?

The Saudi authorities reserve a fixed quota for all major countries, depending on the Muslim population, for issue of Hajj visas. It helps to plan the stay and movement of pilgrims in the desert state. The authorities issued Hajj visas to a little more than 18 lakh people but the Hajj was undertaken by over two million pilgrims. This means that around 2 lakh people were unauthorised entrants.

The Saudi authorities insisted that most pilgrims with valid Hajj visas were able to

complete the Hajj rituals with the best possible facilities, and there were few deaths beyond natural causes of old age or illness. According to Saudi Health Minister Fahad bin Abdurrahman Al-Jalajel, some 83% of the 1,301 fatalities were unauthorised pilgrims who undertook the journey without requisite precautions at this time of extreme summer temperatures.

### Who are 'unauthorised' pilgrims?

The unauthorised, non-documented pilgrims often come over from neighbouring countries of Jordan, Egypt and Iraq on a visit visa a little before the Hajj season begins. Some are also blue collar workers from India and Pakistan who while having a valid work visa, are not entitled to undertake the pilgrimage without proper permission and documentation. The non-documented visitors are usually economically too weak to bear the cost of the pilgrimage through the official route which takes at least 3,000 dollars. Hence, they often take

recourse to agents who offer them the journey for half the cost. The agents take the money in advance and often disappear after these men and women land in Saudi Arabia, leaving them in the lurch. The visit visa holders are not allowed entry into Mecca at the time of Hajj. So, these visitors/pilgrims often undertake arduous routes through the desert to circumvent officials.

While those who take the approved route are provided with all possible facilities by the host country, including transportation on air-conditioned vehicles with constant supply of water and medical facilities, illegal entrants are left under the blazing sun with temperatures often crossing 50 degrees Celsius. Many walk on their own from Arafat to Mina, a distance of around 15 kilometres. Unlike others, they have no healthcare facilities to fall back on. Also, most pilgrims in this category are old, having saved every penny for years for this journey.

Hajj has always been a high-risk journey. Besides the spread of communicable diseases due to the intermingling of millions, there were major tragedies in 1990, 1994, 1998 and 2003. Many of these were avoidable incidents as they resulted from stampede caused by pilgrims taking a non-specified route or going in the opposite direction, in ignorance of Hajj rituals. Since then, Saudi authorities have widened the pathways, adding new floors to the Haram in Mecca to enable the pilgrims to complete the journey peacefully.

## THE GIST

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam. This pilgrimage to Mecca is an essential part of the faith and any person who is economically and physically sound has to undertake the trip once in a lifetime.

The Saudi authorities insisted that most pilgrims with valid Hajj visas were able to complete the Hajj rituals with the best possible facilities, and there were few deaths beyond natural causes of old age or illness.

The unauthorised, non-documented pilgrims often come over from neighbouring countries of Jordan, Egypt and Iraq on a visit visa a little before the Hajj season begins.

# What went wrong with the Hajj pilgrimage this year? (05 July) (GS Paper I: Art and Culture)

How do unauthorised pilgrims enter Saudi Arabia at the time of Hajj? Have such tragedies happened before?

- Hajj is a pilgrimage in Islam, considered one of the five pillars of the faith, requiring physically and financially capable Muslims to undertake a journey to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.
- It follows the lunar calendar and occurs about 11 days earlier each year, with this year's pilgrimage starting in mid-June.
- Arafat is a significant location during Hajj, where pilgrims gather to pray and reflect, a tradition dating back to Prophet Muhammad's farewell sermon in 632 AD.
- The pilgrimage includes rituals at various sacred sites, including Arafat and Muzdalifah, culminating in rituals at the Kaaba in Mecca.
- Harsh conditions, including extreme heat reaching over 50 degrees Celsius, have posed challenges during recent Hajj pilgrimages, leading to casualties among pilgrims moving between Arafat and Mina.

What happened this year?

- Saudi Arabia allocates a fixed quota of Hajj visas to major countries based on their Muslim population to manage pilgrim stay and movement.
- Despite issuing just over 1.8 million Hajj visas, over 2 million pilgrims performed the Hajj, indicating around 200,000 unauthorised entries.

- Saudi authorities assert that pilgrims with valid visas received adequate facilities to complete Hajj rituals, with few deaths attributed to natural causes like old age or illness.
- However, out of 1,301 reported fatalities, the Saudi Health Minister stated that 83% were unauthorized pilgrims who undertook the journey without necessary precautions during extreme summer temperatures.

#### **Who are 'unauthorised' pilgrims?**

- Unauthorized pilgrims for Hajj often come from neighboring countries like Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq on visit visas just before the Hajj season begins.
- Some unauthorized pilgrims are also blue-collar workers from countries like India and Pakistan, who have valid work visas but not permission for Hajj.
- These unauthorized pilgrims cannot afford the official Hajj costs of at least \$3,000 and opt for cheaper options offered by agents, who often vanish after taking their money.
- Visit visa holders are prohibited from entering Mecca during Hajj, so they often take risky routes through the desert to avoid authorities.
- Approved pilgrims traveling through official channels receive extensive facilities, including air-conditioned transportation, water, and medical aid.
- In contrast, unauthorized entrants face harsh conditions with temperatures exceeding 50 degrees Celsius, often walking long distances without healthcare support.
- Many unauthorized pilgrims are elderly who have saved for years to undertake Hajj, making them vulnerable in extreme conditions.
- Hajj historically carries risks such as communicable disease spread and past tragedies due to stampedes caused by pilgrim confusion over routes and rituals.
- Saudi authorities have since improved safety measures by widening pathways and expanding the Haram in Mecca to ensure a safer pilgrimage experience.

#### **Other four pillars:**

1. **Shahada (Declaration of Faith):** This is the core belief and foundation of Islam. It's the testimony of faith, which states: "There is no god but Allah (God), and Muhammad is the Messenger of God."
2. **Salat (Prayer):** Muslims perform five daily prayers at specific times throughout the day. Prayer is a direct connection between a Muslim and God.
3. **Zakat (Almsgiving):** This is the mandatory giving of charity to the poor and needy. It's a way to purify one's wealth and promote social justice.
4. **Sawm (Fasting):** This refers to the annual fasting during the holy month of Ramadan.

**Question 1:** Which of the following statements regarding the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque is/are correct?

1. Bhojshala is a famous historical monument located in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh.
2. It is believed to have been established by Raja Bhoj, a Parmar King.
3. The site is exclusively a Hindu temple with no Islamic significance.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Question 2:** Consider the following statements about the architectural features of Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque:

1. The structure exhibits a blend of Hindu and Islamic architectural styles.
2. The pillars and ceilings of the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque have intricate carvings.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Question 3 :** Which government body is primarily responsible for the maintenance of Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque?

1. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)
2. Ministry of Culture
3. State Government of Madhya Pradesh
4. National Monuments Authority

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Question 4:** Which of the following statements about the social impact of the Satnami movement is/are correct?

1. The Satnami movement aimed at social equality and upliftment of lower castes.
2. The movement strictly adhered to the hierarchical caste system.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Question 5:** Which of the following are components of the Ayushman Bharat Scheme?

1. Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)
2. Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs)
3. National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Question 6:** Which agency is primarily responsible for implementing the Ayushman Bharat Scheme?

1. Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
2. Ministry of Finance
3. National Health Authority (NHA)
4. NITI Aayog

**Which of the above options is/are correct?**

- a) Only 2
- b) Only 3
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 3, and 4

**Question 7:** Which of the following is a well-known variety of chilli produced in India?

- 1. Bhut Jolokia
- 2. Habanero
- 3. Jalapeno
- 4. Serrano

**Which of the above options is/are correct?**

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 4
- d) 4 only

**Question 8:** Consider the following statements about the definition of "unfair means" under the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024:

- 1. Possession of unauthorized written material during an examination is considered unfair means.
- 2. Communicating with another candidate during an examination is considered unfair means.
- 3. Leaving the examination hall without permission is not considered unfair means.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Question 9:** Consider the following statements regarding the enforcement mechanism of the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024:

- 1. The Act mandates the establishment of Examination Vigilance Committees at both central and state levels.
- 2. The Act authorizes invigilators to conduct on-the-spot checks for unfair means during examinations.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Question 10:** Consider the following statements regarding the gestational age limit specified in The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971:

- 1. The Act allows abortion up to 20 weeks of gestation.
- 2. Beyond 20 weeks, abortion is permitted only in cases of severe fetal abnormalities.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Question 11:** Consider the following statements about the Cauvery River:

- 1. The Cauvery River originates in the Western Ghats.
- 2. The Krishna Raja Sagara Dam is located on the Cauvery River.
- 3. The Pamba River is a tributary of the Cauvery River.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

**Question 12:** The Cauvery River is a source of dispute between which Indian states?

- (a) Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh
- (b) Tamil Nadu and Kerala
- (c) Tamil Nadu and Karnataka
- (d) Kerala and Karnataka

**Question 1:** Which of the following statements regarding the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque is/are correct?

1. Bhojshala is a famous historical monument located in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh.
2. It is believed to have been established by Raja Bhoj, a Parmar King.
3. The site is exclusively a Hindu temple with no Islamic significance.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Answer:** a) 1 and 2 only

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1 is correct.** Bhojshala is indeed located in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh, and is an important historical monument.
- **Statement 2 is correct.** It is believed to have been established by Raja Bhoj, a famous Parmar King.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect.** The site has both Hindu and Islamic significance. It is known as Bhojshala (a Hindu temple) and Kamal Maula Mosque (an Islamic mosque).

**Question 2:** Consider the following statements about the architectural features of Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque:

1. The structure exhibits a blend of Hindu and Islamic architectural styles.
2. The pillars and ceilings of the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque have intricate carvings.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer:** c) Both 1 and 2

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1 is correct.** The structure exhibits a blend of Hindu and Islamic architectural styles, reflecting the historical and cultural amalgamation.
- **Statement 2 is correct.** The pillars and ceilings of the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque are known for their intricate carvings, showcasing exquisite craftsmanship.

**Question 3:** Which government body is primarily responsible for the maintenance of Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque?

1. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)
2. Ministry of Culture
3. State Government of Madhya Pradesh
4. National Monuments Authority

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Answer:** b) Only 1

**Explanation:**

- **Option a is correct.** The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is responsible for the maintenance of Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque.
- **Option b is incorrect.** While the Ministry of Culture oversees cultural heritage, the ASI directly maintains such monuments.
- **Option c is incorrect.** The State Government of Madhya Pradesh is not the primary body responsible for the site's maintenance.
- **Option d is incorrect.** The National Monuments Authority deals with the protection and preservation

	<p>of monuments but the maintenance is typically handled by the ASI.</p>
<p><b>Question 4:</b> Which of the following statements about the social impact of the Satnami movement is/are correct?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Satnami movement aimed at social equality and upliftment of lower castes.</li> <li>2. The movement strictly adhered to the hierarchical caste system.</li> </ol> <p><b>Which of the above statements is/are correct?</b></p> <p>a) 1 only                      b) 2 only c) Both 1 and 2              d) Neither 1 nor 2</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> a) 1 only <b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statement 1 is correct.</b> The Satnami movement aimed at social equality and the upliftment of lower castes, challenging the orthodox caste system.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 2 is incorrect.</b> The movement did not adhere to the hierarchical caste system; instead, it opposed caste discrimination.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 5:</b> Which of the following are components of the Ayushman Bharat Scheme?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)</li> <li>2. Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs)</li> <li>3. National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)</li> </ol> <p><b>Which of the above statements is/are correct?</b></p> <p>a) 2 and 3 only b) 1 and 2 only c) 1 and 3 only d) 1, 2, and 3</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> b) 1 and 2 only <b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statement 1 is correct.</b> Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) is a component of the Ayushman Bharat Scheme.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 2 is correct.</b> Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) are also a component of the scheme.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 3 is incorrect.</b> National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is not part of Ayushman Bharat.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 6:</b> Which agency is primarily responsible for implementing the Ayushman Bharat Scheme?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reserve Bank of India (RBI)</li> <li>2. Ministry of Finance</li> <li>3. National Health Authority (NHA)</li> <li>4. NITI Aayog</li> </ol> <p><b>Which of the above options is/are correct?</b></p> <p>a) Only 2 b) Only 3 c) 1 and 3 only d) 1, 3, and 4</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> b) Only 3 {National Health Authority (NHA)} <b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Option 1 is incorrect.</b> RBI is not involved in implementing health schemes.</li> <li>• <b>Option 2 is incorrect.</b> The Ministry of Finance is not the implementing agency for this scheme.</li> <li>• <b>Option 3 is correct.</b> The National Health Authority (NHA) is responsible for implementing the Ayushman Bharat Scheme.</li> <li>• <b>Option 4 is incorrect.</b> NITI Aayog is not the primary implementing agency for the scheme.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 7:</b> Which of the following is a well-known variety of chilli produced in India?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bhut Jolokia</li> <li>2. Habanero</li> <li>3. Jalapeno</li> <li>4. Serrano</li> </ol> <p><b>Which of the above options is/are correct?</b></p> <p>a) 1 only                      b) 2 only c) 1 and 4 only              d) 4 only</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> a) 1 only <b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Option 1 is correct.</b> Bhut Jolokia, also known as ghost pepper, is a well-known variety produced in India.</li> <li>• <b>Option 2 is incorrect.</b> Habanero is primarily grown in Mexico and the Caribbean.</li> <li>• <b>Option 3 is incorrect.</b> Jalapeno is primarily grown in Mexico.</li> <li>• <b>Option 4 is incorrect.</b> Serrano is also primarily grown in Mexico.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 8:</b> Consider the following statements about the definition of "unfair means" under the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024:</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> d) 1 and 2 only <b>Explanation:</b></p>

<p>1. Possession of unauthorized written material during an examination is considered unfair means.</p> <p>2. Communicating with another candidate during an examination is considered unfair means.</p> <p>3. Leaving the examination hall without permission is not considered unfair means.</p> <p><b>Which of the above statements is/are correct?</b></p> <p>a) 1, 2, and 3                      b) 1 and 3 only</p> <p>c) 2 and 3 only                      d) 1 and 2 only</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statement 1 is correct.</b> Possession of unauthorized written material during an examination is considered unfair means.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 2 is correct.</b> Communicating with another candidate during an examination is considered unfair means.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 3 is incorrect.</b> Leaving the examination hall without permission can be considered a breach of examination protocol, though it may not be strictly categorized as "unfair means."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 9:</b> Consider the following statements regarding the enforcement mechanism of the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024:</p> <p>1. The Act mandates the establishment of Examination Vigilance Committees at both central and state levels.</p> <p>2. The Act authorizes invigilators to conduct on-the-spot checks for unfair means during examinations.</p> <p><b>Which of the above statements is/are correct?</b></p> <p>a) 1 only                              b) 2 only</p> <p>c) Both 1 and 2                      d) Neither 1 nor 2</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> c) Both 1 and 2</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statement 1 is correct.</b> The Act mandates the establishment of Examination Vigilance Committees at both central and state levels to ensure strict enforcement.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 2 is correct.</b> The Act authorizes invigilators to conduct on-the-spot checks for unfair means during examinations, allowing for immediate action.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 10:</b> Consider the following statements regarding the gestational age limit specified in The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971:</p> <p>1. The Act allows abortion up to 20 weeks of gestation.</p> <p>2. Beyond 20 weeks, abortion is permitted only in cases of severe fetal abnormalities.</p> <p><b>Which of the above statements is/are correct?</b></p> <p>a) 1 only</p> <p>b) 2 only</p> <p>c) Both 1 and 2</p> <p>d) Neither 1 nor 2</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> a) 1 only</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statement 1 is correct.</b> The MTP Act allows abortion up to 20 weeks of gestation under certain conditions.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 2 is incorrect.</b> Beyond 20 weeks, abortion is generally not permitted unless there is a risk to the life of the pregnant woman or if there are substantial fetal abnormalities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 11:</b> Consider the following statements about the Cauvery River:</p> <p>1. The Cauvery River originates in the Western Ghats.</p> <p>2. The Krishna Raja Sagara Dam is located on the Cauvery River.</p> <p>3. The Pamba River is a tributary of the Cauvery River.</p> <p>Which of the statements given above is/are correct?</p> <p>(a) 1 and 2 only</p> <p>(b) 2 and 3 only</p> <p>(c) 1 and 3 only</p> <p>(d) 1, 2, and 3</p>	<p><b>Answer: (a)</b> 1 and 2 only</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Statement 1 is correct. The Cauvery River originates in the Brahmagiri hills of the Western Ghats in Karnataka.</p> <p>Statement 2 is correct. The Krishna Raja Sagara (KRS) Dam is a dam built across the Cauvery River near Mysore in Karnataka.</p> <p>Statement 3 is incorrect. The Pamba River is a tributary of the Achankovil River, which in turn flows into the Arabian Sea. It is not part of the Cauvery River system.</p>
<p><b>Question 12:</b> The Cauvery River is a source of dispute between which Indian states?</p> <p>(a) Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh</p>	<p><b>Answer: (c)</b> Tamil Nadu and Karnataka</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p>

- (b) Tamil Nadu and Kerala
- (c) Tamil Nadu and Karnataka
- (d) Kerala and Karnataka

The Cauvery water sharing dispute is a long-standing conflict between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Both states depend on the Cauvery River for irrigation and drinking water. The dispute centers on how much water each state is entitled to.

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