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Important News Articles

GS II

1. Blanket ban keeps out over four lakh undertrials from exercising their franchise - The Hindu

Relevance: Salient Features of the Representation of People's Act.

News:

- Due to a sweeping ban under the law over four lakh undertrials in the country have been barred from exercising their right to vote.

Highlights:

- As per the **National Crime Records Bureau**, in 2022 undertrials comprised 76% of the total jail population in India,
- Legal experts are of the view that if **certain categories of prisoners can contest elections, undertrials** languishing in jails should be given the **right to cast their vote**.
- **Section 62(5) of The Representation of the People Act says no person can vote in any election if confined in prison whether as a convict or an undertrial.**
- Barring undertrials from voting lacks reasonable classification based on the nature of the crime or duration of the sentence, which violates not only **Article 14** of the Constitution but also UN's **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** that advocates universal voting right irrespective of the status of incarceration.
- Experts suggested EC can allow **postal ballots** for certain categories of voters
- However, there is a concern regarding **security** because jails have a mixed population, including **high-risk prisoners** like terrorists, gangsters, and those accused of heinous crimes
 - Even booths in prison are a **security threat** and will **necessitate deployment of police and paramilitary forces**.

Prelims Takeaway

- RPA 1951
- UDHR

2. Sixteenth Finance Commission (XVIFC) invites suggestions/views from general public, related to its terms of reference- PIB

Relevance: Appointment to various Constitutional Posts, Powers, Functions and Responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies

News:

- The Sixteenth Finance Commission invites suggestions from the general public, from interested organisations and individuals on the terms of reference the Commission may adopt.

Key Highlights:.

- The **16th Finance Commission** has been constituted by the provisions of the Constitution of India with Dr. Arvind Panagariya as Chairman.
- The Commission is required to make recommendations covering a period of five years commencing on April 2026 as to the following matters:
- The **distribution** between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes which are to be divided between them under,
 - **Part XII** of the Constitution and the allocation between the States of the respective shares of such proceeds;
 - The principles which should govern the **grants-in-aid** of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India
 - the sums to be paid to the States by way of grants-in-aid under **Article 275** of the Constitution.

Prelims Takeaway

- Finance Commission
- Art 275

- The measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of the Panchayats and Municipalities in the State
- The Commission is also mandated to review the present arrangements on financing Disaster Management initiatives,
 - The funds constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and make appropriate recommendations thereon.

3. In SC, Centre says it sends CBI to States for probes- The Hindu

Relevance: Functions and Responsibilities of the Union and the States, Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure

Prelims Takeaway

- Art 131
- DSPE, 1946

News:

- The Supreme Court refused to accept at face value the Centre's claim that it has no control over the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI),

Key Highlights:

- The court was hearing an original suit filed under **Article 131** of the Constitution
 - The State of West Bengal, accused the Union government of "interfering" in cases originating within the State's jurisdiction by unilaterally authorising the CBI to probe them.
 - West Bengal said the Centre continues to employ the CBI, though the State had withdrawn its general consent to the agency for investigations within its territory
 - Section 6 of the **Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946** covers the consent of States for investigation

4. The socio-ecological effects of LPG price hikes The Hindu

Relevance: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Prelims Takeaway

- LPG
- PAHAL

News:

- Data from the 2014-2015 ACCESS survey, conducted by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water, found **LPG's cost to be the foremost barrier to its adoption and continued use in rural poor households.**
- Thus, 750 million Indians primarily use solid cooking fuels — wood, dung, agricultural residues, coal, and charcoal — every day.

Key highlights

- Solid cooking fuels are associated with innumerable health hazards and socio-economic and environmental impacts.
- The Indian government has often placed a premium on the cooking fuels in rural households transitioning to LPG.
- **Direct benefit transfers for LPG under the 'PAHAL' scheme** were initiated in 2015.
- In 2016, direct home-refill deliveries were implemented
 - And the 'Give it Up' program enrolled around 10 million LPG consumers to voluntarily discontinue subsidies and transfer their accounts to below-poverty-line households.
- The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) followed, to install LPG connections in 80 million below-poverty-line households by 2020.
- On introduction of the PMUY scheme, many households quickly switched to LPG from fuelwood, and reported that their cooking activities became fast and smokeless
 - They could forgo the need to rise early and the time and effort spent in collecting fuelwood.
- But the hike in the price of LPG rendered these advantages short-lived.

5. Why Vietnam wants US to change its 'non-market economy' status - Indian Express

Relevance: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Prelims Takeaway

- Map based question
- Open economy

News:

- **Vietnam has been pushing the President of USA's administration to quickly change its "non-market economy" classification to "market economy",**
- It is to avoid high taxes imposed by the US on the goods imported from the Southeastern country.

Key highlights

- Although Vietnam has emerged as one of the top trading partners of the US and helped thwart China's expanding influence in the region
- It has continued to be on Washington's list of non-market economies for more than two decades.
- In total, the list includes 12 non-market economies such as Russia, China, and some countries which used to be a part of the erstwhile Soviet Union.

What are 'non-market economies'?

- The US designates a country as a non-market economy based on several factors like:
 - if the country's currency is convertible
 - if wage rates are determined by free bargaining between labour and management
- The non-market economy label allows the **US to impose "anti-dumping" duties on goods imported from designated countries.**
- In international trade, **dumping is when a country's export prices are considered to be intentionally set below domestic prices**, thereby inflicting harm to industries in the importing country.
- Anti-dumping duties essentially compensate for the difference between the imported good's export price and their normal value.
- The level of anti-dumping duties is determined by relying on a third country
 - for instance, Bangladesh, which is a market economy.
- The US assesses the value of a product to be imported from a non-market economy like Vietnam based on what it is worth in Bangladesh and then assumes that this is the supposed production cost to a Vietnamese company.
- The company's own data about the costs are not considered.

GS III

6. India is now third largest producer of solar power - The Hindu

Relevance: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Prelims Takeaway

- Solar Energy

News:

- A report by international energy analytics agency Ember said, in 2023, India overtook Japan to become the world's third-highest producer of solar power

Highlights:

- **India generated 113 billion units (BU) of solar power in 2023 compared to Japan's 110 BU.**
- In terms of **installed power capacity**, which includes sources of renewable and non-renewable energy:
 - India at 73 gigawatt ranks fifth in the world while Japan is at third place (83 GW)
- While reflective of the rising share of solar power in India's energy mix,
 - The power produced per year **can vary** due to fluctuations in a country's power demand and local circumstances
 - This leads to a **gap between the installed capacity and actual power** produced.

- Data from NITI Ayog suggest that as of May 2024, solar power while making up **18% of India's total installed electricity of 442 GW, made up only 6.66%** of the power actually produced, **reflecting the gap between potential and actuals.**
- The **leading producer** of solar power in the world is **China** which produced 584 BU of solar power in 2024
- Ember forecasts fossil fuel generation to drop in 2024 and the trend to continue in other years, suggesting that 2023 might be the year when the fossil fuel production may have peaked globally.

7. Govt. may mandate use of green steel for making luxury cars - The Hindu

Relevance: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Prelims Takeaway

- Green steel
- Carbon Emission

News:

- The government is considering a proposal to make it mandatory for automobile companies to procure green steel for premium or ultra high-end models.

Highlights:

- The proposal was put forward as a **suggestion to promote the use of green steel.**
- The broad rationale is that the demand for premium or luxury vehicles is **less sensitive** to price fluctuations resulting from technological changes.
- Apart from luxury cars, the government will also look at the possibility of **procurement across its own projects** so that the manufacturing facilities in India become commercially viable and there is an incentive to invest too.

Green Steel

- It refers to the metal produced **using methods that have minimal carbon emission** and include the use of **hydrogen, renewable sources of power and recycled scrap.**
- It is characterised by **low-carbon emission** during production and in government projects.

8. Global trade ties are fast resembling Cold war era; sanctions fueling gold purchase by China bloc: Gita Gopinath- The Indian Express

Relevance: Effects of Liberalisation on the Economy, Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth

Prelims Takeaway

- IMF
- Currency Trade

News:

- As economies reevaluate their trading partners based on economic and national security concerns following disruptions
 - such as COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine,
 - Global economic ties are changing in ways not seen since the end of the Cold War,

Key Highlights:

- There has been a marked increase in **gold purchases** by central banks during 2022-23 driven by concerns about sanctions risk and geopolitical uncertainties
- Recalibration of trade relations, is also reshaping currency composition of trade finance
- The IMF Director compared current trade fragmentation with that of the Cold War period
 - Trade fragmentation is much more costly this time around because unlike the start of the Cold War when goods trade to GDP was 16 percent, now that ratio is 45 percent.
- The Reserve Bank of India had also launched a framework to trade in domestic currency and India has been pushing for trade in domestic currency.
 - In 2023, India made its first-ever payment in rupees for crude oil purchased from the United Arab Emirates (UAE)
- Today Non Aligned Countries like India
 - have greater economic and diplomatic heft
 - are much more integrated into the global economy
 - their role as connectors this time round can help attenuate some of the costs of fragmentation

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

9. The era of the politics of performance - The Hindu

Relevance: Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

News:

- Political discourse needs to be integrated with competencies

Highlights:

- Educational qualifications provide **critical skills, but effective governance requires a spectrum of qualities** in the form of behavioural, functional, and domain-based competencies.

What makes an elected representative competent?

- **Behavioural skills:** These enable politicians to engage effectively with various stakeholders. Representatives must excel in communication, verbal and writing, and public engagement.
 - **For example**, the success of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan was influenced by the involvement of women panchayati raj leaders, who promoted behavioural change at the grassroots.
- **Functional competencies:** Representatives must deeply understand the rules and processes underpinning legislation and policy implementation.
 - This includes understanding their interventions in Parliament and State Assemblies
 - In **2022**, a Member of Parliament raised a matter in Zero Hour about unregulated advertising and promotion of tobacco use on OTT platforms, which prompted the Ministry of Health to mandate anti-tobacco warnings on such content.
- **Domain-based competencies:** are crucial for elected officials, and tailored to meet the specific needs of their constituencies and manage their unique portfolios effectively.
 - **For example**, a deep understanding of health-care policy would encompass public health management, health-care laws, insurance systems, and global health trends.
- **Awareness of the latest technological advancements and their implications on public services and economic growth** are essential, ensuring that policy decisions are forward-thinking and inclusive of technological progress.
- **Avoiding competency trap:** An excessive focus on specific skills might suppress the innovation and creativity needed to solve complex problems. That's why we should foster an environment that promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills alongside technical expertise.

Effective measures:

- **Promoting collaboration** between representatives with diverse backgrounds and expertise will ensure a multi-disciplinary approach to tackling complex challenges.
- **Identifying existing skill gaps** and evolving training needs through consultation with elected officials, citizens, and domain experts.
- The resulting needs analysis should inform a comprehensive **capacity-building** plan that includes orientation and induction programmes, online resources, workshops, peer learning opportunities, and mentorship programmes.
- **Regular impact assessments**, conducted annually.
- **Leverage existing resources** from central and State training institutions
- Every elected representative, even the local level ones must have **access to necessary information** and research support through dedicated research wings.
- Citizens need to **hold elected representatives accountable** not just for their promises but also for their ability to deliver on those promises.

10. Explained: History of India and Nepal's border issue- Indian Express

Relevance : Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context:

- **Nepal's** cabinet last week decided to put a **map on its Rs 100 currency note showing certain areas administered by India in Uttarakhand as part of its territory**,

Key highlights

- The territorial dispute is about a 372-sq-km area that includes Limpiadhura, Lipulekh, and Kalapani at the India-Nepal-China trijunction in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district.
- Nepal has claimed for long that these areas belong to it both historically and evidently.

Genesis of the issue

- The Treaty of Sugauli at the end of the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-16 resulted in Nepal losing a chunk of territory to the East India Company.
- Article 5 of the treaty took away the jurisdiction of Nepal's rulers over the land to the east of the Kali River.

Frictions in bilateral ties

- The goodwill of the 2005-14 period when India mediated the transition of the Hindu Kingdom into a secular federal republic,
 - But the Maoists rejected outright the suggestion of New Delhi, that Nepal's new constitution should be delayed until the concerns of the Terai parties were addressed.
- The 134-day blockade of Nepal that began in September 2015 created significant distrust against India
- Nepal quickly moved to sign a trade and transit agreement with China in order to create a fallback source for the supply of essential goods.
- Despite the in-principle agreement on resolution through appropriate platforms based on evidence, India and Nepal have not fixed a timeframe or called a meeting for the purpose.



Quick Look

1. Pawara Tribe

- Pawara tribes are mostly found in the Satpura range of Jalgaon and Nandurbar district of Maharashtra.
- Ancestrally, most local people of the Pawara community have been verified to have a history of migration from Pavagadh to the Satpura ranges.
- This spiritual place is located in Panchmahal district of Gujarat. The word Pawara came from the word Pavagadh.
- The 'Pawara' tribe had their original habitation in Rajasthan and Udaipur, with a history of migration to Pawagarh, and further to the Satpura ranges

2. Widal Test

- The Widal test, a serological test which was developed by Georges Fernand Isidore Widal in 1896
- A Widal test is a quick procedure to diagnose typhoid fever or enteric fever.
- It only requires a patient's serum and some reagents to detect this fever.
- However, because different factors can influence the test results, it is always best to perform this test one week after the infection, following proper instructions.

3. Artemis

- NASA's Artemis is the new generation lunar exploration mission .
- Through the Artemis programme, NASA's goal is to establish a sustainable human presence on the Moon as a stepping stone for missions to Mars .
- The mission takes its name from Artemis, the twin sister of Apollo and the Greek goddess of the moon
- Through the Artemis program, NASA will land the first woman and first person of colour on the Moon, make new scientific discoveries, and explore more of the lunar surface than ever before for the benefit of all.

4. Cloud Seeding

- It is the process of artificially generating rain by implanting clouds with particles
- Cloud seeding uses planes to spray clouds with chemicals to condense smaller particles into larger rain droplets.
- This method involves introducing ice nuclei, such as silver iodide or dry ice, into cold clouds that have supercooled liquid water droplets.
- The ice nuclei can trigger the formation of ice crystals or snowflakes, which can grow at the expense of the liquid droplets and fall as precipitation.

5. Ritacuba Blanco glacier

- Ritacuba Blanco glacier, one of Colombia's highest peaks, was covered in a blanket of snow.
- But the El Nino phenomenon has opened up large cracks in it, a sign that the glacier is in trouble.
- Experts say the glacier is melting at dizzying speeds, with climate change intensifying the effects of El Niño
- Of the 14 tropical glaciers that existed in Colombia in the early 20th century, only six remain—and are fast receding.

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following Statements about NCRB:

1. Established in 1996 to act as a repository of information on crime and criminals.
2. It was set up based on the recommendations of the Tandon Committee
3. NCRB has been implementing the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and System (CCTNS) project.

How many of the above Statements is/are Correct?

- A. Only One
- B. Only Two
- C. All Three
- D. None

Q2. Consider the following Statements regarding Finance Commission:

1. Finance Commission is a statutory body set up by an Act of Parliament every five years
2. The allocation of resources among states is on a formula that reflects their fiscal needs, capacities and performance.
3. crucial role in shaping the fiscal federalism and development trajectory of India

How many of the above Statements is/are Correct?

- A. Only One
- B. Only Two
- C. All Three
- D. None

Q3. Consider the following Statements regarding CBI:

1. The establishment of the CBI was recommended by the Santhanam Committee, 1963
2. The CBI is a statutory body, derives its power from the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.
3. CBI Director is appointed on the basis of the DSPE Act, 1946

How many of the above Statements is/are Correct?

- A. Only One
- B. Only Two
- C. All Three
- D. None

Q4. Consider the following regarding PAHAL scheme:

1. The scheme was launched by the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas as Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme for LPG subsidy.
2. The main objective of the scheme is to install LPG connections in 80 million below-poverty-line households by 2020.
3. On introduction of the scheme, many households quickly switched to LPG from fuelwood, and reported that their cooking activities became fast and smokeless

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Q5. The South China Sea is bordered by which of the following countries

1. Indonesia
2. Indonesia
3. Vietnam

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

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

Q6. Consider the following Statements regarding Solar Power

1. India ranks third in terms of solar power generation
2. China is the leading producer of Solar power in the world
3. Solar power makes up 38% of India's total installed electricity

How many of the above statement is/are correct?

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

Q7. Consider the following statement regarding Green Steel

- 1. It is produced by making steel without using fossil fuels.
- 2. It's the foremost solution to decarbonize the steel industry.
- 3. Steel industry is one of the top three sources of carbon dioxide emissions

How many of the above statement is/are correct?

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

Q8. India follows which type of exchange rate regime

- A. Free Float regime
- B. Pegged regime
- C. Dirty Float/Managed
- D. Floating currency regime

Q9. Consider the following regarding qualifications of MP?

- 1. He/she must be a citizen of India
- 2. Not less than twenty-five years of age in case of council of state and not less than thirty years of age in case of Lok Sabha
- 3. These qualifications are given in Article 84.

How many of the above statement is/are correct?

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

Q10. Consider the following pairs

- 1. Nathu La Pass : Sikkim
- 2. Shipki La Pass : Himachal pradesh
- 3. Lipulekh pass : Uttarakhand

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

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

Prelims Track Answer

Answer 1 Option B is Correct

Explanation:

- It was established in 1986 to act as a repository of information on crime and criminals.
- It comes under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India. **Hence Statement 1 is Incorrect**
- It was set up based on the recommendations of the Tandon Committee, **Hence Statement 2 is correct**
- In 2009, the NCRB was entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring, coordination, and implementing the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and System (CCTNS) project. This project connects about 15,000 police stations and 6,000 high offices in the country. **Hence Statement 3 is correct**

Answer 2 Options B is Correct

Explanation:

- FCs are constitutional bodies set up under **Article 280** of the Constitution every five years to make recommendations on the distribution of financial resources between the Union and the states. **Hence Statement 1 is Incorrect**
- The allocation of resources among states based on a formula that reflects their fiscal needs, capacities and performance. **Hence Statement 2 is correct**
- Finance Commissions (FCs) play a crucial role in shaping the fiscal federalism and development trajectory of India. **Hence Statement 3 is correct**

Answer 3 Option A is Correct

Explanation:

- The establishment of the CBI was recommended by the Santhanam Committee on Prevention of Corruption, 1963. **Hence Statement 1 is correct**
- **The CBI is not a statutory body**, derives its power from the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946. **Hence Statement 2 is Incorrect**
- In 2014, the Lokpal Act provided a committee for appointment of CBI Director Headed by Prime Minister. **Hence Statement 3 is Incorrect**

Answer 4 Option A is correct

Explanation

- 'PAHAL' is the acronym for 'Pratyaksha Hastaantarit Laabh'. The scheme was launched on June 01, 2013, as Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme for LPG subsidy. The scheme was launched by the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in 291 districts.
- Direct benefit transfers for LPG under the 'PAHAL' scheme were initiated in 2015. **Hence statement 1 is correct**
- In 2016, direct home-refill deliveries were implemented
- and the 'Give it Up' program enrolled around 10 million LPG consumers to voluntarily discontinue subsidies and transfer their accounts to below-poverty-line households.
- The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) followed, to install LPG connections in 80 million below-poverty-line households by 2020. **Hence 2 & 3 statement are incorrect**
- On introduction of the PMUY scheme, many households quickly switched to LPG from fuelwood, and reported that their cooking activities became fast and smokeless

Answer 5 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The South China Sea is situated just south of the Chinese mainland and is bordered by the countries of Brunei, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. The countries have bickered over territorial control in the sea for centuries, but in recent years tensions have soared to new heights. **Hence all pairs are correct**

Answer 6 Option B is correct

Explanation:

- India overtook Japan to become the world's third-highest producer of solar power. **Statement 1 is correct.**
- The leading producer of solar power in the world is China which produced 584 BU of solar power in 2024. **Statement 2 is correct.**
- Solar power makes up 18% of India's total installed electricity of 442 GW. **Statement 3 is incorrect.**

Answer 7 Option C is correct

Explanation:

- Green steel is produced by making steel without using fossil fuels. **Statement 1 is correct.**
- Green steel is being promoted by the government largely because it is one of the foremost solution to decarbonize the steel industry. **Statement 2 is correct.**
- In the context of extensive energy and resource usage, the steel industry currently dominates the industrial sector and it is one of the top three sources of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. **Statement 3 is correct.**

Answer 8 Option C is Correct

Explanation:

- **Managed float regime** is the current international financial environment in Which exchange rates fluctuate from day to day in the global markets,
- but central banks(RBI) attempt to influence their countries' exchange rates by buying and selling currencies. It is known as a **"dirty float"**. **Option C is Correct**

Answer 9 Option B is correct

Explanation:

- Article 84 states that a person shall not be qualified to be chosen to fill a seat in Parliament unless
 - He is a citizen of India, and makes and subscribes before some person authorised in that behalf by the Election Commission an oath or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule. **Statement 1 & 3 are correct.**

- In the case of a seat in the Council of States, not less than thirty years of age and, in the case of a seat in the House of the People, not less than twenty-five years of age. **Statement 2 is incorrect**
- He must also possess such other qualifications as may be prescribed in that behalf by or under any law made by Parliament.

Answer 10 Option C is correct

Explanation

- Nathu La Pass : It is located in the state of Sikkim. This famous pass is located in the India- China border and was reopened in 2006. It forms a part of an offshoot of the ancient silk route. It is one of the trading border posts between India and China.
- Shipki La Pass: It is located through Sutlej Gorge. It connects Himachal Pradesh with Tibet. It is India's third border post for trade with China after Lipu Lekh and Nathula Pass.
- Lipulekh La, also known as Lipulekh Pass or Lipu Gad, is a Himalayan mountain pass that connects the Indian state of Uttarakhand with Tibet, China. It's located in the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand and is close to the Chinese trading town of Taklakot (Purang) in Tibet. **Hence all pairs are correct**



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