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**Daily Current Affairs**

**GEO IAS**

SOURCES



**Date: 13 July 2024**

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## Important News Articles

### GS II

#### 1. How PM Modi's visit to Austria sends a message both to Moscow and the West- INDIAN EXPRESS

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

**NEWS:**

- The Prime minister visit to Vienna this week was the first by an Indian Prime Minister to Austria since June 1983, when Indira Gandhi travelled to the country.
- The Prime Minister's decision to travel to Vienna immediately after he met the President in Moscow was significant — Austria is a European country that is not a part of Nato
- the US-led anti-Russia trans-Atlantic military alliance, whose 32 leaders gathered in Washington DC this week.

**Prelims Takeaway**

- Cold war
- Anti-Russia trans-Atlantic military alliance

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- **From Occupation to Freedom:** Vienna's history is deeply intertwined with World War II. Nazi occupation gave way to Allied division, but Austria's road to independence wouldn't end there.
- **A Diplomatic Triumph:** 1955 marked a turning point. Austria, caught in the Cold War tug-of-war, gained its freedom with the signing of the Austrian State Treaty. Notably, India, a champion of non-alignment, played a key role in securing this treaty, similar to Switzerland's neutral status.
- **A Longstanding Bond:** Diplomatic ties between India and Austria stretch back to 1949, laying the groundwork for a strong relationship.
- **A Future Focused on Sustainability:** Today, both nations are looking to solidify their partnership with a focus on eco-friendly economic ventures.
- **Shared Values, Diverse Interests:** Austria and India navigate the complexities of global issues like the Ukraine war, while forging new paths in areas like infrastructure, renewable energy, and technology.

#### 2. Release of SDG India Index 2023-24- PIB

**Relevance:** Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability, E-governance-applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; Citizens Charters, Transparency & Accountability and institutional and other measures.

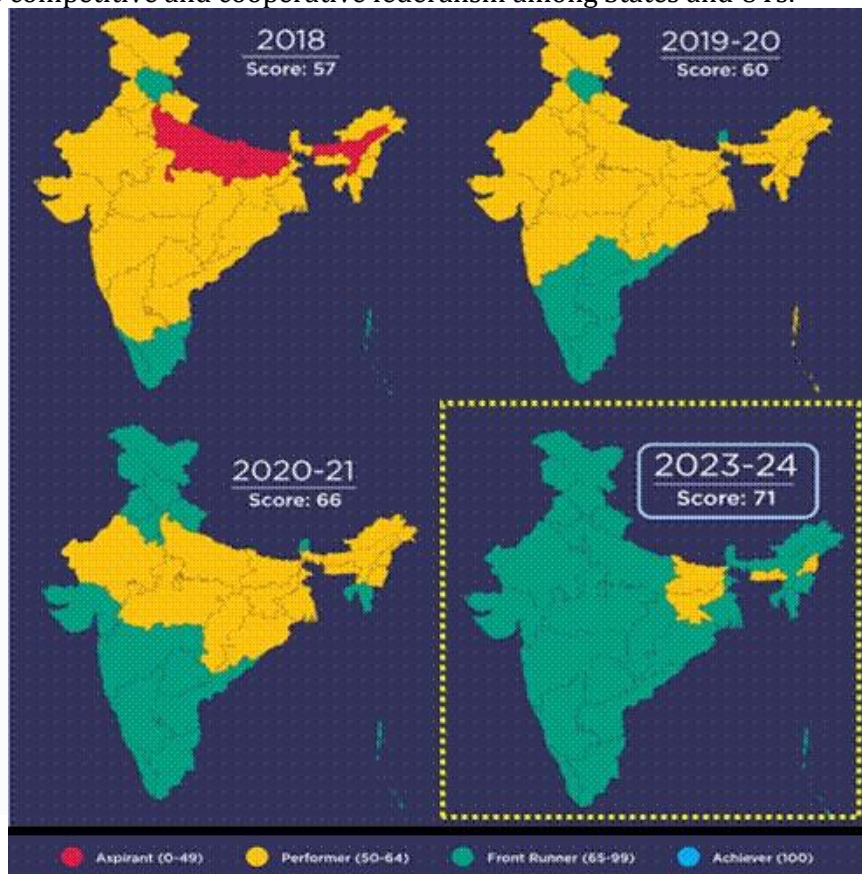
**News:**

- Significant progress in goals on eliminating poverty, providing decent work, economic growth, climate action and life on land.
- Targeted interventions by the Government such as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Ujjwala, Swachh Bharat, Jan Dhan, Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY, Ayushman Arogya Mandir, PM-Mudra Yojana, Saubhagya, Start-up India etc. had impact and led to rapid improvement.
- All States have shown an improvement in overall score
- Overall **SDG score for the country is 71 for 2023-24**, significant improvement from 66 in 2020-21 and 57 in 2018.
- Scores for States range from 57 to 79 in 2023-24, marking a substantial improvement from the year 2018 range of 42 to 69.
- Significant progress in Goals 1 (No Poverty), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 13 (Climate Action) and 15 (Life on Land)
- Goal 13 (Climate Action) records highest increase in score from 54 in 2020-21 to 67 in 2023-24 followed by Goal 1 (No Poverty) from 60 to 72
- Between 2018 and 2023-24, fastest moving States are Uttar Pradesh (increase in score by 25), followed by J&K (21), Uttarakhand (19), Sikkim (18), Haryana (17), Assam, Tripura and Punjab (16 each), Madhya Pradesh and Odisha (15 each)

**Prelims Takeaway**

- SDG India
- Niti Aayog

- SDG India Index 2023-24 measures and tracks national progress of all States and UTs on 113 indicators aligned to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's (MoSPI) National Indicator Framework (NIF).
- The SDG India Index computes goal-wise scores on the 16 SDGs for each State and UT. Overall State and UT scores or Composite Scores are generated from goal-wise scores to measure the aggregate performance of the sub-national unit based on its performance across the 16 SDGs.
- These scores range between 0–100, and if a State/UT achieves a score of 100, it signifies it has achieved the targets. The higher the score of a State/UT, the greater the distance covered to the target.
- India's commitment to the SDGs since adopting the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development is reflected in concerted efforts on SDG localisation spearheaded by NITI Aayog, which works closely with States and UTs.
- NITI Aayog has the twin mandate to oversee the adoption and monitoring of the SDGs in the country and promote competitive and cooperative federalism among States and UTs.



## 3. Centre amends rules to broaden the administrative role of J&K L-G- THE HINDU

**Relevance:** Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

**News:**

- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) widened the ambit of the administrative role of the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir by amending the Transaction of Business Rules.
- The amendment gives the L-G more say in matters pertaining to police, public order, All India Service (AIS) which require prior concurrence of the Finance Department and also their transfers and postings.

**Prelims Takeaway**

- Special Category States
- Election Commission

**Key Highlights**

- Any proposal regarding appointment of Advocate-General, Law Officers and proposals regarding grant or refusal of prosecution sanction or filing of appeal shall be placed before the L-G first.
- On August 5, 2019, the special status granted to J&K under Article 370 of the Constitution was revoked and the former State was divided into two Union Territories:
  - J&K and Ladakh, the latter without an assembly.
- J&K has been under Central rule since June 2018.
- The government has said that Statehood will be restored after Assembly elections are held.
- The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court has ordered the Election Commission to conduct elections to J&K Assembly before September 30, 2024.
- the MHA notified the amended Rules under Section 55 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 which inserted new Sections defining the L-G's role.
- No proposal which requires previous concurrence of the Finance Department with regard to 'Police', 'Public Order', 'All India Service' and 'Anti Corruption Bureau' to exercise the discretion of the Lieutenant Governor under the Act shall be concurred or rejected unless it has been placed before the Lieutenant Governor through the Chief Secretary," the notification said.
- It added another provision which said, "Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs shall submit the proposal for appointment of Advocate-General and other Law Officers to assist the Advocate-General in the court proceedings, for approval of the Lieutenant Governor through the Chief Secretary and the Chief Minister."
- It said that any proposal regarding grant or refusal of prosecution sanction or filing of appeal shall be placed before the Lieutenant Governor through the Chief Secretary by the Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.
- All matters connected with Prisons, Directorate of Prosecution and Forensic Science Laboratory are also to be submitted to the L-G.

**GS III**

## 4. Major credit card issuers go live on Bharat Bill Payment Systems platform- BUSINESS STANDARD

**Relevance:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

**News:**

- Major credit issuers, including the largest — HDFC Bank —have integrated their systems with the Bharat Bill Payment Systems (BBPS) for receiving credit card repayments via third-party applications

**Prelims Takeaway**

- Bharat Bill Payment Systems

**Key Highlights**

- According to the BBPS website, currently Axis Bank, the fourth largest credit card issuer, Indian Overseas Bank, and Yes Bank are in the process of getting their systems integrated and are expected to go live on the platform soon.
- Currently, 15 major issuers are live on the platform, including ICICI Bank, SBI Cards, Kotak Mahindra Bank, BoB card, and IndusInd Bank.
- There are now over 30 credit card issuers in the country.
- The issuers that live on the BBPS platform constitute almost 80–85 per cent of the credit customers.
- So, in essence, the majority of the transactions are now being processed through the BBPS platform
- The remaining credit card issuers are currently working on their systems and would integrate with the BBPS platform as and when they are ready.
- While there is no definite timeline on when these smaller players will go live, all them have to eventually go live, the source added.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had mandated that starting July 1 all credit card repayments had to be processed through the BBPS platform.
- This move is aimed at centralizing the bill payment process and ensuring greater security.

- Previously, certain third-party applications had opted to facilitate credit card bill payments exclusively for banks integrated into the BBPS starting from July 1. This was to comply with the RBI's mandate.
- While there has been a delay in credit card issuers going live on the BBPS platform, the disruption among customers has not been widespread because users have multiple options to settle their dues.
- Currently, third-party apps like Cred, Paytm, PhonePe, or Amazon Pay utilise national electronic fund transfer, real-time gross settlement, or other payment methods to transfer funds to credit card issuers.

## 5. NABARD unveils ₹750-cr. agri fund to promote innovation- The Hindu

**Relevance:** Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies and Minimum Support Prices;

**News:**

- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) said its arm has launched a Rs 750-crore agri fund for startups and rural enterprises.

**Highlights:**

- The fund called 'Agri-SURE' is announced by NAB VENTURES, a subsidiary of NABARD, with an initial corpus of Rs 750 crore with Rs 250 crore each from NABARD and the Ministry of Agriculture, and Rs 250 crore from other institutions.
- This fund aims to promote investment in innovative, technology-driven, high-risk, and high-impact activities in agriculture and allied areas.
- Managed by NAB VENTURES, a wholly-owned subsidiary of NABARD, the fund is structured to support approximately 85 agri startups with investment sizes of up to Rs 25 crore each.
- The fund will provide support through investments in sector-specific, sector-agnostic, and debt Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), as well as direct equity support to startups.

### Prelims Takeaway

- NABARD
- AGRI fund

## 6. Reading the tea leaves ahead of China's Third Plenum- THE HINDU

**Relevance:** Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**News:**

- Commentators in the West have been stating for some time that it was time to move beyond the rosy vision of a post-Cold War world, as, according to them
- Moscow and Beijing could no longer be expected to become responsible stakeholders within a rules-based international order

**China's Third Plenum: Setting the Stage for the Next Decade**

- **Looking Back, Looking Ahead:** Third Plenums in China act as major policy checkpoints, charting the economic course for the next half-decade or more. The 1978 Plenum under Deng Xiaoping stands out as a pivotal moment for reform and opening-up.
- **Challenges and Opportunities:** China's aging population, shrinking workforce, and mounting debt pose significant challenges. The upcoming Third Plenum could unveil reforms to address these issues and reignite economic growth.
- **The World Watches:** Global observers wait with anticipation, hoping for bold reforms that solidify China's economic position. However, doubts linger about the current leadership's appetite for experimentation.
- **China's Stance on the World Stage:** Western commentators expect China to continue its assertive tactics, including information warfare, military maneuvers, and pressure on Taiwan.
- **Shaping the World Order:** China's global initiatives – the GDI, GSI, and GCI – project its values and security concerns onto the international stage.
- **Navigating a Complex Relationship:** Asian nations might face a combination of Chinese cultural influence and a heightened sense of national security anxieties from China.

### Prelims Takeaway

- Map based question

## 7. Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh holds meeting to review Indo-Norway collaboration on Blue-Economy- PIB

**Relevance:** Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; Indigenization of Technology and Developing New Technology.

### Prelims Takeaway

- India Arctic Mission
- Antarctic Missions

### News:

- The Union Minister holds a meeting to review the Indo-Norway collaboration on Blue-Economy with the Norwegian Ambassador to India.
- The Minister also recalled the 'India-Norway Integrated Ocean Management and Research Initiative' and stated that we need to further deepen our collaboration.
- He also shared with the ambassador that India is carrying out a deep-sea mission by sending three Indians to deep sea which will open a horizon of opportunities in mineral exploration and seabed mining.
- Prime Minister leadership enabled India's Journey to Marine and Ocean exploration" for the gathering pace in this sector as described by the Earth sciences Minister.
- He also Said "Blue economy will foster India's growth story in the coming years." He highlighted the deployment of IndARC in the Arctic- India's first sub-surface moored observatory in the polar waters, roughly halfway between Norway and the North Pole as India's major scientific accomplishments.
- The Norwegian Ambassador to India appreciated the efforts of the Minister for his increased co-operation, and guidance to the projects under the Earth Sciences Ministry.
  - The Ambassador recalled their Prime Minister's Remarks on India and Norway being neighbors in Antarctica as far as the scientific research and establishing research facilities are concerned.
- The Minister mentioned that MoU was signed between the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) and Norwegian Polar Institute (NPI) for close collaboration in various fields of polar sciences at the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting.
- Dr. Jitendra Singh recalled the draft framework jointly developed by India and Norway for Marine Spatial Planning (MSP).
- Going further he categorically stated both India and Norway look forward to the upcoming UN Conference on Ocean (UNOC-3) in France 2025.

## 8. GST system reforms panel rejigged- The Hindu

**Relevance:** Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

### Prelims Takeaway

- GST
- Art 279A(1)

### News:

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council has reconstituted a ministerial group tasked with identifying possible sources of revenue evasion, improving coordination between central and State GST authorities, and reviewing the IT systems in place for implementing the indirect tax.

### Highlights:

- These changes have been affected in order to bring in new ministers from the States of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh where new governments have been installed in recent months, as well as to replace the representative from Haryana.
- The reconstitution of this key GST panel comes soon after the Council reformulated the ministerial group tasked with recommending a rationalization of the GST rate structure and its tax rates.
- The Council, which met in late June after an almost nine-month hiatus, plans to take stock of the progress made by this GoM so far, and discuss the roadmap for the much-awaited GST rate restructuring exercise in its next meeting.
- Formed in late 2021 after the Council decided to dovetail two separate Groups of Ministers (GoMs) dealing with IT challenges and revenue mobilization, the GoM on GST system reforms was rejigged for the fourth time.

## Editorials, Gists and Explainers

### 9. Centralized recruitment for tribal residential schools leads to language, cultural barriers- The Hindu

**Relevance:** Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

**Context:**

- The large numbers of staff recruited from the Hindi-speaking States are protesting postings to the Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) located in southern States, where the language, food and culture are unfamiliar to them.

**Key highlights**

- Though Central officials point out that the willingness to be posted anywhere in the country was part of the requirement for those applying for jobs,
  - The bigger worry may be the impact on tribal students being taught by teachers who are unfamiliar with the local language and culture.
- Until last year, staff recruitment for the Ministry of Tribal Affairs' flagship Eklavya schools was done by State authorities.
- In the 2023 Budget Session of Parliament, however, the Finance Minister announced that the responsibility was being shifted to the National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS), which has now been given the task of staffing 38,000 positions in over 400 Eklavya schools across the country.

**Staff shortage**

- Officials said the centralisation of recruitment was meant to address a severe shortage of teachers in the EMRS system, and to standardize recruitment rules across States, which had earlier used varying criteria and applied reservation quotas as per their State legislations.
- Government sources said there was "nothing unusual" about the requirement of basic Hindi language competency as this is mandatory for Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas recruitment as well.
- Unlike in KVs, however, where students hail from across the country as they are often family members of Central government employees, most tribal students in Eklavya schools would benefit from teachers who understand their local cultural contexts.
- "The issue is that for EMRSs especially, teachers and school staff being hired from within their local communities is the obvious way to go ahead.
- These communities have very specific contexts under which learning can be made conducive and it would naturally help to have teachers who understand that context.
- "Some of the EMRSs are located in very remote regions, which have very specific cultural contexts. Something like this will only affect their learning.
- A child in a Telugu or Marathi context cannot be expected to adjust to teachers who are not aware of that. It will have a similar effect if non-Hindi speaking teachers end up in Hindi-speaking regions.
- Staff recruits have been told to learn the local language within two years, and that a "certain amount of hand-holding will be done in this process to train them".

### 10. Why saline lakes are the canary in the coalmine for the world's water resources- DOWN TO EARTH

**Relevance:** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

**News:**

- More lasting changes have become more common in recent years due to regional human activities and global climate change.

**Key Highlights**

- When it comes to inland surface water bodies, saline lakes are unique.
- They make up 44 percent of all lakes worldwide and are found on every continent including Antarctica.



- These lakes' existence depends on a delicate balance between a river basin's water input (precipitation and inflows) and output (evaporation and seepage).
- The reason a lake turns saline is often because it doesn't have a consistent stream outlet, leading to a build-up of dissolved salts from water inflows.
- The water levels of saline lakes are naturally unstable and these lakes are generally susceptible to any disturbance.
- This heightened sensitivity makes saline lakes more responsive than freshwater lakes to natural and human-caused factors.
- The main cause of change in a saline lake is disturbances in its water balance.
- These can be the result of natural or human-induced factors that are local, such as droughts, pollution, and upstream water diversions, or global, such as climate change, decreasing precipitation and increasing temperature.
- The rapid response of saline lakes to the changing conditions makes these lakes suitable candidates for reliably reflecting the regional, and potentially global, status of water resources, and revealing crucial changes in the water balance.
- Unsurprisingly, many of the world's saline lakes are shrinking rapidly, a major warning about the sustainability of regional water resources.

#### How are saline lakes changing?

- There have always been fluctuations in saline lakes.
- Most lakes have been shrinking and their water quality has declined.
- In permafrost regions of the Arctic and the Tibetan Plateau, however, some salt lakes have expanded due to areas of ice melting in a warming climate.
- Changes in saline lakes pose significant challenges.
- They can endanger local ecosystems and industries, threaten public health and cause broader socio-economic harm.
- Iran's Lake Urmia is a good example.
- Until a few decades ago, Lake Urmia was one of the world's largest saline lakes, but it shrunk rapidly due to unsustainable human activities.
- The resulting problems include a decline in tourism, dust and salt storms, falling agricultural productivity and a loss of biodiversity.
- The Aral Sea, once the world's fourth-largest inland water body, is another tragic example.
- Since the 1960s it has shrunk to a fraction of its former size largely due to poorly planned irrigation development in the region.
- The consequences have been disastrous. Despite many efforts, it has not been possible to restore the lake to its former glory.

#### Our natural early-warning systems

- Saline lakes, much like the canaries used to give coalminers early warning of dangerously poor air quality, could play a vital role in monitoring the health of our water resources.
- To better understand this analogy, we must first step back in time to the depths of underground mines where coalminers battled a hidden danger: carbon monoxide.
- This gas could build up silently, without any warning, endangering the miners' lives.
- Miners devised an ingenious solution: canaries. These small birds, with their rapid breathing rate, small size and fast metabolism, were tiny detectors of danger.
- When carbon monoxide levels rose, the canaries would be the first to show signs of distress, giving the miners a crucial warning to evacuate before it was too late.
- The natural world continues to offer us unexpected insights. Saline lakes, with their intricate ecosystems and unique characteristics, act as nature's early-warning systems.
- Just as the canaries signalled hidden dangers in coalmines, the behaviour of saline lakes can alert us to looming issues with our water resources.

#### The bigger picture demands our attention

- Of course, it is crucial to act when lakes are shrinking, whether through preservation efforts or restoration projects.
- But we must not overlook the bigger picture. It would be like a miner focusing on a distressed canary when it's a sign of a more serious problem.
- The real challenge lies in delving into the root cause, much like improving poor air quality in mines rather than merely trying to revive the birds.

## Quick Look

### 1. Animal Welfare Board of India:

- AWBI is a statutory advisory body under the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying)
- It derives its legal structure from the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
- It was started under the stewardship of Late Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale, well known humanitarian.
- It frames rules on how animals ought to be humanely treated everywhere.
- It has also frequently litigated to have stricter laws to ensure animals were not unduly harassed or tortured.
- Several government organizations, along with animal rights activists and parliamentarians, are represented on the Board.
- The Board consists of 28 Members. The term of office of Members is for a period of 3 years.

### 2. Index of Industrial Production

- It is one of the Prime indicators of economic development for the measurement of trends in the behavior of Industrial Production over a period of time with reference to a chosen base year.
- It indicates the relative change of physical production in the field of industries during a specified year as compared to the previous year.
- It is computed and published by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) on a monthly basis. The base year is always given a value of 100.
- The current base year for the IIP series in India is 2011-12. So, if the current IIP reads as 116, it means that there has been 16% growth compared to the base year.

### 3. National Maritime Heritage Complex

- The NMHC is being constructed at the historic Indus Valley civilization region of Lothal, Gujarat, under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways.
- Its primary objective is to showcase the maritime heritage of India from ancient to modern times, utilizing an edutainment approach and incorporating the latest technology.
- The NMHC is set to become the world's largest maritime museum complex and an international tourist destination.
- It will play a crucial role in educating visitors about India's rich maritime history and elevate India's image in the global maritime sector.
- The project is part of the Sagarmala Programme and is being developed with the participation of public and private institutes, organizations, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Major ports in India have also contributed funds to support the project.

### 4. National Industrial Corridor Development Programme

- National Industrial Corridor Development Programme is India's most ambitious infrastructure programme aiming to develop new industrial cities as "Smart Cities" and converging next generation technologies across infrastructure sectors.
- The Government of India is developing various industrial corridor projects as part of the National Industrial Corridor Programme which is aimed at development of futuristic industrial cities in India which can compete with the best manufacturing and investment destinations in the world.

- The same will create employment opportunities and economic growth leading to overall socio-economic development.
- The programme is aimed at providing impetus to planned urbanization in India with manufacturing as the key driver.

## 5. iCET

- The iCET was announced by India and the US and is being run by the National Security Council of both countries.
- Under iCET, both countries have identified six areas of cooperation which would include co-development and co-production, that would gradually be expanded to QUAD, then to NATO, followed by Europe and the rest of the world.
- Under iCET, India is ready to share its core technologies with the US and expects Washington to do the same.
- It aims to promote collaboration in critical and emerging technology areas, including AI, quantum computing, semiconductors, and wireless telecommunication.



## Prelims Track Question

**Q1. Which of the following statements regarding the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)**

1. It is a permanent intergovernmental organization founded to coordinate and unify the petroleum policies of its member countries.
2. Its headquarters is located in Vienna, Austria.
3. Its primary goal is to regulate oil production to stabilize oil markets and ensure a steady income for its member countries.

**How many of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Q2. With reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the role of NITI Aayog in India, consider the following statements:**

1. NITI Aayog is the nodal agency for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of SDGs in India.
2. The SDG India Index is a tool developed by NITI Aayog to measure the progress of states and union territories in achieving the SDGs.
3. The SDG India Index ranks states based on their performance in environmental and economic indicators only.
4. NITI Aayog collaborates with international organizations such as the United Nations to advance the SDG agenda in India.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

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

**Q3. Consider the following statements regarding Pangong Tso Lake**

1. It is an endorheic lake spanning eastern Ladakh and West Tibet
2. It is divided into five sublakes, called Pangong Tso, Tso Nyak, Rum Tso (twin lakes) and Nyak Tso
3. It is a freshwater lake

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

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 3 only
- D. None of the above

**Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Household Consumption Expenditure Survey**

1. It is conducted by the National Statistical Office usually every five years.
2. It helps to review critical economic indicators like Gross Domestic Product and poverty levels.

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

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

**Q5. With reference to the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and its role in agriculture, consider the following statements:**

1. NABARD was established based on the recommendations of the Shivaraman Committee.
2. NABARD is responsible for regulating and supervising the functions of cooperative banks and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs).
3. NABARD provides refinance support for building rural infrastructure.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

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

**Q6. With reference to Non-Aligned Movement, consider the following statements**

1. It was formed during the Cold War as an organisation of States that did not seek to formally align with or against any major power bloc.
2. The first NAM Summit Conference took place in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1961.
3. The countries of the NAM collectively comprise over 50% of the global population.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

**Q7. With reference to India's Arctic and Antarctic missions, consider the following statements:**

1. India established its first Antarctic research station, Dakshin Gangotri, in 1983.
2. India's National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) is responsible for managing the country's polar research activities.
3. India is a member of the Arctic Council and has observer status.
4. The primary objective of India's polar missions is to study the impact of climate change on polar ice caps.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

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

**Q8. With reference to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and GST reforms in India, consider the following statements:**

1. GST is a destination-based tax on consumption of goods and services.
2. The GST Council is a constitutional body that makes recommendations to the Union and State Governments on issues related to GST.
3. The Central Government alone has the authority to impose GST on the supply of alcoholic liquor for human consumption.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

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

**Q9. With reference to the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, consider the following statements:**

1. The Act recognizes the rights of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers over forest lands and their resources.
2. The Act allows for the diversion of forest land for developmental activities without the consent of the Gram Sabha.
3. Under the Act, the maximum forest land that can be granted to an individual or family for cultivation is 4 hectares.
4. The Act provides for the establishment of a three-tier structure for recognition and vesting of forest rights: Gram Sabha, Sub-Divisional Level Committee, and District Level Committee.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

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

**Q10. Chilika Lake is**

1. Asia's largest and world's second-largest lagoon.
2. designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention and also included in the Montreux Record.
3. largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian sub-continent and is home to a number of threatened species of plants and animals.

**Choose the correct answer using the codes given below.**

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

## Prelims Track Answer

### Answer 1 Option C is correct

#### Explanation

- OPEC is a permanent intergovernmental organization founded to coordinate and unify the petroleum policies of its member countries. It was established in 1960 and currently consists of 13 member countries.

**Hence, statement 1 is correct**

- The headquarters of OPEC is indeed located in Vienna, Austria. This is where the organization conducts its regular meetings and discussions on oil-related policies.

**Hence, statement 2 is correct**

- The primary goal of OPEC is to regulate oil production to stabilize oil markets and ensure a steady income for its member countries. OPEC aims to maintain a balance between the supply and demand for oil to avoid extreme price fluctuations. **Hence, statement 3 is correct**

### Answer 2 Option C is Correct

#### Explanation:

- **Statement 1** is correct: NITI Aayog is the nodal agency for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of SDGs in India.
- **Statement 2** is correct: The SDG India Index is developed by NITI Aayog to measure the progress of states and union territories in achieving the SDGs.
- **Statement 3** is incorrect: The SDG India Index measures performance across a wide range of indicators, including social, economic, and environmental dimensions.
- **Statement 4** is correct: NITI Aayog collaborates with international organizations, such as the United Nations, to advance the SDG agenda in India.

### Answer 3 Option C is correct

#### Explanation

- It is an endorheic lake spanning eastern Ladakh and West Tibet ( Thus Statement 1 is correct)
- It is divided into five sublakes, called Pangong Tso, Tso Nyak, Rum Tso (twin lakes) and Nyak Tso( Thus Statement 2 is correct)
- During winter the lake freezes completely, despite being saline water. ( Thus Statement 3 is incorrect)

- It has a land-locked basin separated from the Indus River basin by a small elevated ridge, but is believed to have been part of the latter in prehistoric times

### Answer 4 Option C is correct

#### Explanation

- Recently, the government released findings of the All India Household Consumption Expenditure Survey conducted between August 2022 and July 2023.
- It will play a key role in reviewing critical economic indicators, including the GDP, poverty levels, and the Consumer Price Inflation (CPI). **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) is usually conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) every five years. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is designed to collect information on the consumption spending patterns of households across the country, both urban and rural.
- The data gathered in this exercise reveals the average expenditure on goods (food and non-food) and services.

### Answer 5 Option C is Correct

#### Explanation:

- **Statement 1** is correct: NABARD was established based on the recommendations of the B. Sivaraman Committee (Committee to Review Arrangements for Institutional Credit for Agriculture and Rural Development) in 1982.
- **Statement 2** is correct: NABARD regulates and supervises the functions of cooperative banks and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs).
- **Statement 3** is correct: NABARD provides refinance support to various financial institutions and also supports the creation of rural infrastructure.

### Answer 6 Option C is correct

#### Explanation

- The Non-Aligned Movement was formed during the Cold War as an organization of States that did not seek to formally align themselves with either the United States or the Soviet Union, but sought to remain independent or neutral. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**

- The basic concept for the group originated in 1955 during discussions that took place at the Asia-Africa Bandung Conference held in Indonesia.
- The first NAM Summit Conference took place in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in September 1961. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It was an initiative of then PM Jawaharlal Nehru, Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah, Indonesian President Sukarno, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito.
- The countries of the NAM represent nearly two-thirds of the United Nations' members and contain 55% of the world population. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

**Answer 7 Option D is Correct****Explanation:**

- **Statement 1** is correct: India established its first Antarctic research station, Dakshin Gangotri, in 1983.
- **Statement 2** is correct: India's National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) is responsible for managing the country's polar research activities.
- **Statement 3** is incorrect: India is not a member of the Arctic Council; however, it has observer status in the Arctic Council.
- **Statement 4** is correct: One of the primary objectives of India's polar missions is to study the impact of climate change on polar ice caps and related environmental changes.

**Answer 8 Option A is Correct****Explanation:**

- **Statement 1** is correct: GST is indeed a destination-based tax, meaning the tax is collected by the state where the goods or services are consumed.
- **Statement 2** is correct: The GST Council is a constitutional body under Article 279A, and it makes recommendations on various aspects of GST.
- **Statement 3** is incorrect: Alcoholic liquor for human consumption is excluded from the purview of GST and is taxed by the State Governments.

**Answer 9 Option B is Correct****Explanation:**

- **Statement 1** is correct: The Forest Rights Act, 2006, recognizes the rights of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers over forest lands and their resources.
- **Statement 2** is incorrect: The Act requires the consent of the Gram Sabha before any diversion of forest land for developmental activities.
- **Statement 3** is correct: The maximum forest land that can be granted to an individual or family for cultivation under the Act is 4 hectares.
- **Statement 4** is correct: The Act provides for a three-tier structure for recognition and vesting of forest rights, which includes the Gram Sabha, Sub-Divisional Level Committee, and District Level Committee.

**Answer 10 Option C is correct.****Explanation:****Chilika Lake**

- Chilika is Asia's largest and world's second-largest lagoon. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It lies on the east coast of India in the state of Odisha, separated from the mighty Bay of Bengal by a small strip of sand.
- In 1981, Chilika Lake was designated the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention (but is not included in Montreux Record). **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- The major attraction at Chilika is Irrawaddy dolphins which are often spotted off Satpada Island.
- The large Nalabana Island (Forest of Reeds) covering about 16 sq km in the lagoon area was declared a bird sanctuary in 1987.
- It is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian sub-continent and is home to a number of threatened species of plants and animals. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- Kalijai Temple is located on an island in the Chilika Lake.



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