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1. The area known as 'West Bank' sometimes appears in the news in the context of events related to
- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
 - Occupation of the region by the ISIS
 - Issue of Israeli settlements
 - Chinese aggression in the South China Sea

Solution: c.

"..Mr. Carmon was speaking in the context of the current controversy over the United Nations Security Council resolution 2334 that has pitted the Obama administration against the Israeli government over the issue of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel has responded sharply to the 14 countries that voted for the resolution and the US that refused to veto it.."

[TH: India's policy shift reflects improvement in ties: Israel envoy;](#)

2. Consider the following pairs:

Legal Case	Subject matter
1. Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record v. Union of India	: Unconstitutionality of 99th Constitutional Amendment
2. Coelho case	: Immunity of 9th schedule items to judicial review
3. Subramanian Swamy v. Union of India	: Article 19(2) unconstitutionality

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Solution: a.

- "The present battle lines between the judiciary and the executive were drawn in October 2015 when the court delivered its verdict in *Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India*. Here, the court struck down the 99th Constitutional Amendment and consequently the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC), which had been created to replace the collegium."
- "Two decisions from the past year exemplify the court's remarkably unflattering outlook on fundamental rights. The first, rendered in May — *Subramanian Swamy v. Union of India* — rebuffed a challenge to the colonial-era criminal defamation law and upheld Sections 499 and 500 of the Indian Penal Code."
- "The second decision, delivered on November 30, extraordinarily takes rights even less seriously. In an interim order on a public interest litigation filed by a supposed social activist from Bhopal, the court directed that all cinema halls in India play the national anthem before the screening of any film, and that persons present in the hall compulsorily stand up to show their respect for the anthem."

[TH: The SC's report card;](#)
[Q6, GS2 Paper, 2016;](#)

3. 'Chillai-Kalan' is

- A violent dust storm which blows during winter in the Thar.
- A 40-day harsh winter period in Kashmir.
- A peculiar weather phenomenon observed annually in Tripura when hailstones, rain and snow falls at the same time.
- A cold wind rushing down from the Eastern Himalayas in violent gusts between 60 and a 100 kilometres per hour.

Solution: b.

This question was posted here around the same time a year ago.

“Chillai-Kalan ... is the period of winter when the chances of snowfall are usually most frequent and maximum.”

[2015: The Hindu;](#)

[Improvisation: TH: The empowerment diaries;](#)

4. In the world of finance and business, a ‘Unicorn’ refers to

- (a) A start-up with a stock market valuation of more than \$1 billion.
- (b) An environment-friendly start-up with a stock market valuation of more than \$100 million.
- (c) An investor who sells his stock in a start-up the moment its value begins to plummet.
- (d) A start-up firm which specialises in keeping a lookout for takeovers.

Solution: a.

- A unicorn, in the world of business, is a company, usually a start-up that does not have an established performance record, with a stock market valuation or estimated valuation of more than \$1 billion.
- The term was [first popularized](#) by the venture capitalist Aileen Lee, according to whom, “Those that do reach the \$1 billion mark are so rare that finding one is as difficult as finding a unicorn.”

[Investopedia: Unicorn;](#)

[Improvisation: TH: Obscure Unicorns may boost IPO market;](#)

5. With reference to the validity of the levy of tax on the entry of goods into local areas in states, by respective state governments, consider the following statements:

1. The levy of such a tax is valid only if the income accrued is utilised by

the states for services such as provision of weighing scales on highways or for maintenance of state highways.

2. The Supreme Court recently struck down the constitutional validity of any such tax.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: d.

The Court held the following:

- **Validity of levy of entry tax:** The levy of entry tax by states is valid. However, such *levy should not discriminate between the goods imported from other states and the ones locally*
- **Compensatory tax:** The Supreme Court *overruled its previous decisions* on the levy of entry tax. *In the past*, the Supreme Court held that the entry tax levied on goods should be for the purpose of compensating the states for the services provided by Examples of such services provided may be provision of weighing scales on highways. *The Court in this judgement held that the levy of entry tax need not be just for compensatory purposes.*

Source: [PRS MPR: November 2016;](#)

6. With reference to the draft bill to ban unregulated deposit schemes, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. An unregulated scheme is one that is not registered with any regulatory body such as SEBI or RBI.
2. States are responsible for the appointment of a competent

authority to investigate matters related to an unregulated scheme within their borders.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: c.

- 'Unregulated Deposit Scheme' means a scheme or arrangement under which deposits are accepted or solicited by any Deposit Taker by way of deposit taking business, and which is not a Regulated Deposit Scheme.
- The State Government shall appoint .. the Competent Authority for this Act, who shall have the power to summon or cause to be conducted any inquiry, investigation or survey in respect of any person, place, property, assets, documents, books of account or any other relevant matter and shall have such powers as may be necessary for carrying out the purpose of this Act. Where investigation involves multiple states, the case may be referred to the CBI.

Source: [PRS MPR: November 2016](#);

7. The "Two-State Solution", sometimes in the news, is associated with which one of the following pairs of countries/regions?
- (a) Israel and Palestine
 - (b) China and Taiwan
 - (c) Pakistan and Balochistan
 - (d) Germany and Belgium

Solution: a.

"Secretary of State John Kerry on Wednesday joined a growing chorus warning that the so-

called two-state solution, which he called "the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians," could be on the verge of permanent collapse."

"The two-state solution has for decades been the primary focus of efforts to achieve peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but the contours of what it would actually look like — and why it has been so hard to achieve — can get lost. Here's a basic guide."

"Vexed question of Israeli settlements, the many roadblocks on the way out", Explained Page, Indian Express, 2nd January, 2017;

[NYT: The Two-State Solution: What it is and why it hasn't happened](#);

8. The Election Commission will introduce for the first time a mobile app-based system to monitor the law-and-order situation during the Assembly elections of which one of the following states?
- (a) Uttar Pradesh
 - (b) Punjab
 - (c) Gujarat
 - (d) Manipur

Solution: b.

- The Election Commission (EC) will introduce a mobile app-based system to monitor the law-and-order situation during the Punjab Assembly elections.
- Numerous mobile applications, based on the Android platform, have been developed for this purpose.
- These apps are meant for maintaining law and order, streamlining the functioning of polling officers and monitoring criminals.
- A database was prepared. It included a list of proclaimed offenders, the number of pending warrants and arms licences, police personnel deployment and sensitive areas.
- *The application will be visible only to the EC and officials designated by it.* An officer from the control room in Delhi can access

any information for any police station in Punjab. Based on the data gathered through the application, mapping and listing of sensitive polling stations would be done.

[TH: Panel to use mobile apps to track Punjab polls;](#)

9. Consider the following list of tasks:

1. Superintendence, direction and conduct of free and fair elections
2. Preparation of electoral rolls for all elections to the Parliament, State Legislatures and the Office of the President and the Vice-President
3. Giving recognition to political parties and allotting election symbols to political parties and individuals contesting the election
4. Proclamation of final verdict in the case of election disputes

Which of the above are the functions of the Election Commission of India?

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

Solution: a.

“The symbol is not a property to be divided between co-owners. The allotment of a symbol to the candidates set up by a political party is a legal right. And in case of a split, the Commission has been authorised to determine which of the rival groups or section is the party entitled to the symbol. The Commission, in resolving this dispute, does not decide as to which group represents the party, but which group is that party,” a three-judge Supreme Court Bench clarified the purpose of Paragraph 15, while upholding the constitutionality of the test of majority in *Sadiq Ali v. Election Commission of India*.

This 1972 verdict dealt with a split in the Indian National Congress following differences over the choice of the Congress nominee for the office of the President of India... The EC had to use the test of majority to determine “which of the two groups was the recognised political party known as the Indian National Congress for the purpose of the Election Symbols Order”.

The Supreme Court has time and again upheld the test of majority in the Symbols Order to be a “valuable and relevant test” to decide a dispute between rival groups within a “democratic organisation” like a recognised political party. But on the flip side, the entire process may take considerable time.

Q11, CS(P) 2004, Indian Polity 4th Edition by M Laxmikanth;

Improvisation: [TH: Who will get ‘cycle’? It’s poll panel’s call;](#)

1. The phrase 'neo-middle class' sometimes in the news, refers to

- (a) A class which is the product of the post-liberalisation era.
- (b) Those who have risen from the category of the poor but are yet to stabilise in the middle class.
- (c) Young start-up entrepreneurs belonging to Scheduled Castes.
- (d) a, b and c.

Solution: d.

"Defined by the BJP as those who have risen from the category of the poor but are yet to stabilise in the middle class, the "neo middle class" figured prominently in Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's maiden Budget speech... Even as Jaitley announced a slew of measures targeted at poverty reduction, the acknowledgement of the new aspirational class, a product of the post-liberalisation era, indicated that the politics of freebies, hailed as welfare schemes by the previous governments, may have come to an end... While setting aside Rs 200 crore for credit enhancement facility for young start-up entrepreneurs belonging to the Scheduled Castes, he again referred to their aspiration "to be a part of the neo middle class"..."

[IE 2014: 'Neo middle class' is the new 'Aam aadmi';](#)

[Improvisation: PM's address to the nation on the eve of New Year;](#)

2. A new digital payments app called "BHIM", was recently launched. In this context, consider the following statements:

- 1. Users can send money to people who don't have the app.
- 2. The app is based on the United Payments Interface.

3. It will support Aadhaar-based payments.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: c.

The app is based on the **Unified** (and not 'United') Payments Interface.

- **Bharat Interface for Money** or BHIM is a digital payments solution app based on Unified Payments Interface (UPI) from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). If you have signed up for UPI based payments on your respective bank account, which is also linked to your mobile number, then you'll be able to use the BHIM app to conduct digital transactions.
- BHIM is also supposed to support Aadhaar-based payments, where transactions will be possible just with a fingerprint impression, but that facility is yet to roll out.
- BHIM app is not a mobile wallet. In case of mobile wallets like [Paytm](#) or [MobiKwik](#) you store a limited amount of money on the app, that can only be sent to someone who is using the same wallet. Your friend, relative or even a merchant who you're trying to pay doesn't necessarily need to be on the BHIM app. **All they need is a bank account to receive the payment.** (BHIM also has options to transfer via IFSC, MMID as well for non-UPI banks).

[IE: BHIM App for UPI-based payments – everything you need to know;](#)

3. Para 15 of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968 is applicable to disputes in

1. Recognised National Parties
2. Recognised State Parties
3. Registered but unrecognised Parties

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

- On the question of a split in a political party outside the legislature, Para 15 of the Symbols Order, 1968, states: "When the Commission is satisfied... that there are rival sections or groups of a recognised political party each of whom claims to be that party the Commission may, after taking into account all the available facts and circumstances of the case and hearing (their) representatives... and other persons as desire to be heard decide that **one such rival section or group or none of such rival sections or groups** is that recognised political party and the decision of the Commission shall be binding on all such rival sections or groups."
- This applies to disputes in recognised national and state parties. For splits in registered but unrecognised parties, the EC usually advises the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court.

[IE: SP Feud: Who gets the symbol?;](#)

4. Section 123(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 declares which of the following to be "corrupt" practice(s) by a candidate or his election agent?

1. Bribery
2. Undue influence, that is to say, any direct or indirect interference or attempt to interfere, with the free exercise of any electoral right.
3. The promotion of feelings of hatred between different classes of the citizens of India on grounds of religion, race, caste, community, or language.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: c.

- ...the Supreme Court ruled that "religion, race, caste, community or language would not be allowed to play any role in the electoral process" and that election of a candidate would be declared null and void if an appeal is made to seek votes on these considerations.
- By a 4-3 majority ruling, a seven-judge Constitution Bench held that an election will be annulled not only if votes are sought in the name of the religion of the candidate but also when such an appeal hinges on religion of voters or candidate's election agents or by anybody else with the consent of the candidate.
- The third class will include religious and spiritual leaders, often engaged by candidates to mobilise their followers.

- Section 123(3) of the Act defines as “corrupt practice” *appeals made by a candidate or his agents to vote or refrain from voting for any person on the ground of “his” religion, race, caste, community or language.*
- What came up for interpretation before the Constitution Bench was the *meaning of the term “his”* since that would define whose religion it has to be when an appeal is made. Previous judgments handed out conflicting views and hence the question came up before the seven judges.
- In their majority view, four judges ruled in favour of a purposive interpretation, stating that “*his*” would mean *religion of candidate, his agents, voters as well as any other person who, with the candidate’s consent, brings up religion in an appeal for the furtherance of the prospects of the election.*
- The minority (numerically) judges dissented, holding that the expression “his” used in conjunction with religion, race, caste, community or language is in reference to the candidate, in whose favour the appeal to cast a vote is made, or that of a rival candidate when an appeal is made to refrain from voting for another.

India Kanoon: [Section 123, RPA 1951](#);

IE: [Can’t seek votes in name caste, religion](#);

The above statements refer to which 19th Century social reformer of India?

- (a) Mumtaz Ali
- (b) Savitribai Phule
- (c) Pandita Ramabai
- (d) Tarabai Shinde

Solution: b.

Tech giant Google on Tuesday honoured social reformer Savitribai Phule on the occasion of her birth anniversary.

- Savitribai had many firsts to her credit — she was the first woman teacher of the first women’s school in India and a pioneer in modern Marathi poetry.
- Savitribai taught in the school which she and her husband, Jyotirao Phule, started in 1848 with just nine students on the rolls.
- Savitri set up a care centre for widows and even encouraged them to remarry. She also fought for the rights of the untouchables. When bubonic plague spread in Pune in 1897, Savitri and her son opened a clinic to treat the sick.
- The Government of Maharashtra has instituted an award in her name to honour women social reformers.

TH: [Google Doodle pays tribute to social reformer](#);

5. Consider the following statements:

1. She was the first woman teacher of the first women’s school in India.
2. She fought for the rights of the untouchables.
3. She set up a care centre for widows, and even encouraged them to remarry.
4. The Government of the State which she hailed from, has instituted an award in her name to honour women social reformers.

1. 'Counter-cyclical measures' in Economics, refers to the use of which of the following to financially stimulate an economy?

(a) Monetary Policy
 (b) Fiscal Policy
 (c) Both a and b
 (d) Neither a nor b

Solution: c.

"With the Union budget less than a month away, the coming weeks could well serve to provide clear signals on the potential need for a fiscal stimulus to reinvigorate flagging economic growth, especially if a revival in credit growth is going to be slower than anticipated."

- Economic stimulus consists of attempts by governments or government agencies to financially stimulate an economy. An economic stimulus is the use of monetary or fiscal policy changes to kickstart growth during a recession. Governments can accomplish this by using tactics such as lowering interest rates, increasing government spending and quantitative easing, to name a few.
- John Maynard Keynes, a British economist from the early 20th century, is most often associated with the concept of economic stimulus, sometimes referred to as counter-cyclical measures. His general theory argued that during times of persistently high unemployment, governments ought to deficit spend in an effort to stimulate further demand, elevate growth rates, and reduce unemployment. In stimulating growth, deficit spending could, in some circumstances, pay for itself through higher tax revenues resulting from faster growth.

[Investopedia: What is an 'Economic Stimulus';](#)

[Improvisation: TH – A nudge to borrowers;](#)

2. "The seven-judge bench hearing the case split four to three, revealing the complexity of the issues involved, as well as an inevitable collision of constitutional values. And it all began with a disagreement over a single word that appears in Section 123(3) of the Representation of the People Act: "his"...". To which one of the following cases do these statements refer?

(a) Abhiram Singh v. C.D. Commachen & Ors
 (b) Sastri Yagnapurushadji & Ors v. Muldas Bhudarda Vaishya
 (c) Commissioner of Wealth Tax, Madras & Ors. V. Late R. Sridharan
 (d) Sena Joshi & Ramchandra Kalse v. L. Verma

Solution: a.

Safe to be aware of the names of important cases.

[Improvisation: TH: Two takes on democracy;](#)
[Bar and Bench: Record of Proceedings;](#)

3. The 'Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System' refers to

(a) A country-wide database which aims to link all police forces to a single server so that information about arrested and wanted accused can be accessed by any policeman in the country.
 (b) The project by Mumbai Police to digitise finger-prints, and create a finger-print database to enable faster tracking and identification of arrested persons within the state – a first for any state in the country.

(c) A slew of high-tech measures initiated by the Karnataka State Government aimed at enhancing intra-cooperation-and-collaboration in the State police force.

(d) None of the above.

Solution: a.

"Taking another step towards digitisation of records, the Mumbai Police will soon be taking its entire fingerprint database online... The police are also exploring the possibility of linking the database to the countrywide Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS), an initiative that aims to link police forces to a single server so that information about arrested and wanted accused can be accessed by police anywhere in the country."

[TH: Soon, Mumbai police to digitise fingerprint data;](#)

4. A 'White Label ATM'

1. Does not have any bank logo.
2. Can be set up by non-bank entities.
3. Refers to those ATMs whose operations are outsourced by banks to a third party.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct with reference to White Label ATMs?

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

Solution: b.

Statement 3 refers to 'Brown Label' ATMs. "In a circular, RBI said banks should advise their currency chests to step up issuance of fresh notes to rural branches of Regional Rural Banks, District Central Cooperative Banks and commercial banks, White Label ATMs in rural

areas and post offices in rural areas on a priority basis."

- Traditionally, Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) have respective bank's logo. So just by looking, this is SBI's ATM, this is ICICI's ATM and so on.
- But White label ATM doesn't have such Bank logo, hence called White label ATMs.
- RBI has given license / permission to non-bank entities to open such ATMs.
- Any non-bank entity with a minimum net worth of Rs.100 crore, can apply for white label ATMs. (not just NBFC, any non-bank entity can apply.)

[Mrunal: White Label ATMs;](#)

[Improvisation: Th: RBI tells banks to ensure 40% of cash supply reaches rural areas;](#)

5. Which among the following is/are key features of the 'Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana'?

1. It will provide entrepreneurship education and training to over seven lakh students.
2. The scheme will span over five years.
3. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) will be utilised to implement it.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

- **Target group:** The scheme will provide entrepreneurship education and training to over seven lakh students over five years (2016-17 to 2020-21) through 3,050

institutes. It will also include easy access to information and mentor network, credit, incubators and accelerators and advocacy for the youth covered under the scheme.

- **Institutes covered under the Scheme:** The scheme includes 2,200 institutes of higher learning (colleges, universities, and premier institutes), 300 schools, 500 Industrial Training Institutes and 50 Entrepreneurship Development Centres, through *Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)*.

[Source: PRS MPR: November 2016;](#)

6. 'Counter-cyclical measures' is a concept that is most often associated with which one of the following economists?

- (a) Adam Smith
- (b) Thomas Robert Malthus
- (c) John Maynard Keynes
- (d) Bertrand Russell

Solution: c.

Same explanation as provided for Question 1.

[Investopedia: What is an 'Economic Stimulus';](#)

[Improvisation: TH – A nudge to borrowers;](#)

1. If India is successful in getting the UN 1267 Committee to include certain individuals in the list of proscribed terrorists, what are the steps that must be taken by the member states of the United Nations?

1. Freeze funds and other financial assets or economic resources of designated individuals and entities.
2. All states are required to prohibit the supply, sale and transfer of arms and their use, to designated individuals and entities.
3. Prevent the entry into or transit through their territories by designated individuals.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

A similar question was posted here last August.

ON THE RADAR	
U.N.'s list 1267 imposes sanctions on global terror groups	
- India is seeking to send names of Masood Azhar (JeM) and 9 others to the 1267 committee - Proposal for inclusion in the list can only be submitted by member states of the United Nations	SANCTIONS AFTER LISTING - Freezing of assets and funds - Restrictions/ban on entry and transit in member states' territory - Prohibition on supplying, selling and transferring of arms and their use 

[UN: Sanctions 1267:](#)

Improvisation: [TH: Running into the Chinese wall;](#)

2. India's proposal for the resolution to designate Masood Azhar in the list of proscribed terrorists by the UNSC 1267 Sanctions Committee was **not** co-sponsored by which one of the following nations?

- (a) Russia
- (b) United States of America
- (c) France
- (d) None of the above

Solution: a.

Question framed from a mains-perspective.

"It is significant that among the P5, the U.S., U.K. and France co-sponsored India's resolution against Azhar, China vetoed it, but Russia, India's traditional backer, *did nothing at all*. At the BRICS summit in October and the Heart of Asia conference in December, it was the Russia-China combine that kept India's desire for tough statements on "cross-border terrorism" from Pakistan at bay, and it was the Russian envoy who told India not to use "multilateral forums for bilateral issues" ..."

[TH: Running into the Chinese wall;](#)

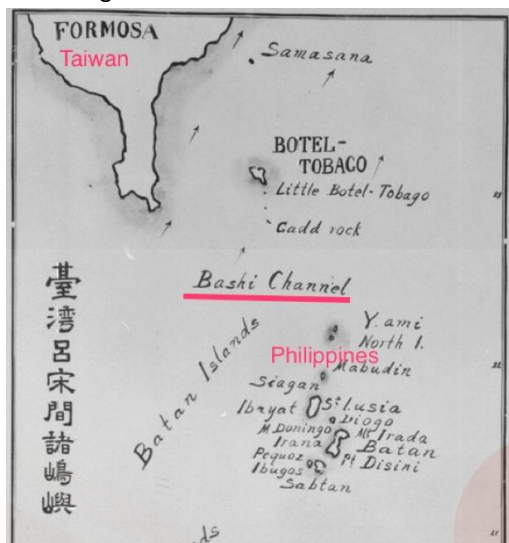
3. 'Bashi Channel' is a narrow passage of water separating

- (a) Taiwan and Philippines
- (b) China and Taiwan
- (c) South Korea and Japan
- (d) Paracel and Spratly Islands

Solution: a.

"China's recent moves, of positioning air defence weapons on a reclaimed island in the South China Sea, forays by fighters and bombers over the East China Sea, and even

sending its aircraft carrier Liaoning to Hainan via the Bashi Channel between Taiwan and Philippines, have sent an unwelcome message to its neighbours..”



The Bashi Channel is a waterway between Y'Ami Island of the Philippines and Orchid Island of Taiwan. **It is a part of the Luzon Strait (which links the South China Sea and the Philippine Sea) in the Pacific Ocean.**

TH: [Arms and the region;](#)

Wikipedia: [Bashi Channel;](#)

4. The 'Lab2Moon' competition – a global challenge for students under 25 to imagine, design and build a project that will accelerate human evolution into a sustainable multi-planetary species – is an initiative of

- (a) NASA
- (b) ISRO
- (c) Team Indus
- (d) A collaboration between ISRO and NASA

Solution: c.

"TeamIndus is flying to the Moon in 2017 and is carrying one youth experiment on board our Spacecraft. In our quest to catalyze humankind

as a multi-planetary species, we invite youth under 25 years to imagine, design and build an experiment that will help us build sustainable life on the Moon... *Team Indus*, run by Bengaluru-based aerospace start-up *Axiom Research Labs*, said that as many as 3000 teams from around the world participated in this competition."

[Team Indus: Lab2Moon;](#)

[TH: TI startup looks at brewing beer on the moon;](#)

5. "It will be the first river project that will be located within a tiger reserve. It will also be the first ever inter-state river inter-linking project." These statements refer to which one of the following river-linking projects?

- (a) Damanganga-Pinjal
- (b) Ken-Betwa
- (c) Par-Tapi-Narmada
- (d) Mahanadi-Godavari

Solution: b.

- "A new hurdle has come in the way of the marquee Ken-Betwa river interlink project in its terms of financing. The NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India) has recommended that Madhya Pradesh contribute 40 per cent of the project cost, with the Centre contributing 60 per cent. The Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) has opposed this and requested that 90 per cent of the funds be routed through the Centre."
- The Rs. 10,000-crore Ken-Betwa project will irrigate the drought-prone Bundelkhand region but, in the process, also submerge about 10 per cent of the Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh, feted as a model tiger conservation reserve.

TH: Ken-Betwa river-linking project faces new hurdle;

6. With reference to the Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) and the National Food Security Act (NFSA), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. IGMSY is a conditional cash transfer scheme.
2. IGMSY is aimed at arresting high maternal mortality rates.
3. IGMSY's benefits can be availed only by women not having more than 2 living children.
4. The NFSA states that every pregnant and lactating mother would be entitled to maternity benefit of not less than Rupees six thousand.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

- The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana, or IGMSY — was begun by the UPA 2 government in October 2010 on a pilot basis in 53 districts. The National Food Security Act, 2013, made it incumbent upon the incoming NDA government to *ensure universal coverage under the scheme.*

- It is a *conditional cash transfer scheme applicable to pregnant and lactating women of ages 19 and above for up to 2 living children.*
- The scheme originally provided Rs 4,000 to each beneficiary through her anganwadi centre, in all districts selected for the pilot project.
- All women are eligible, unless they have already received paid leave and maternity benefits from their employers in the private or government sector.
- The scheme is aimed at *arresting high maternal mortality rates by encouraging institutional delivery and ensuring proper nutrition for the mother and child.*
- It is also meant to offset wage losses suffered by women due to pregnancy, and is especially important for women in the unorganised sector, who make up 90% of the country's female workforce.
- Section 4 (b) of the National Food Security Act, which came into force on September 10, 2013, states that every pregnant and lactating mother would be entitled to "maternity benefit of not less than Rupees six thousand".
- On September 27 that year, the maternity benefit under the IGMSY was enhanced to Rs 6,000 in the 53 districts where it was ongoing. But universal implementation was not supported by commensurate Budget allocation.
- The scheme has retained the condition that the woman must not have more than 2 living children. Several civil society organisations have asked for such conditions to be removed so that the scheme could be truly effective.

IE: Maternity benefit scheme: Where things stand now;

7. The 'Ananthsayanam Ayyangar Committee', set up in the early years of Independent India was associated with which one of the following issues?

- (a) National Institutes of Technology
- (b) Criminal Tribes Act
- (c) Uniform Civil Code
- (d) Infant and Maternal Mortality rates

Solution: b.

- The Ananthsayanam Ayyangar Committee (1949-50) report looked at the way the Criminal Tribes Act had worked throughout India... its recommendations led to the repeal of the CTA in August 1952.
- The Ayyangar Committee recommended, "The Criminal Tribes Act, 1924, should be replaced by a Central legislation applicable to all habitual offenders without any distinction based on caste, creed or birth." Thus, the provisions of the replacement legislation were meant to be similar to the CTA, *but identification shifted to the individual, rather than the collective category.*
- There are certainly state-level statutes on habitual offenders.... *contrary to popular perception, there never was a Union-level statute.* After the CTA repeal, the Union government had a model bill. States used this as a template...

The following article discusses the "unfortunate legacy" of many 'denotified tribes' remaining unclassified: [IE: An unfortunate legacy](#);

Notes

1. 'Larsen C' ice shelf has been in the news in recent times for which one of the following reasons?

- (a) A huge iceberg, expected to be one of the largest ever recorded, is poised to break off from this ice shelf that is located in Antarctica.
- (b) Russia has identified the presence of one of the largest proven oil deposits beneath it in the Arctic.
- (c) It is being subject to a man-made breakup (collapse) by Russia so as to open up the Northern Sea Route all year, making it a commercially viable route.
- (d) This last known unexplored region on land on Earth, was subject to a detailed study and exploration by several scientists and researchers from the member countries of the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

Solution: a.

- **Larsen C** is the most northern major ice shelf in Antarctica. An iceberg expected to be one of the 10 largest ever recorded is ready to break away from this ice shelf in Antarctica, scientists say.
- Researchers have been tracking the rift in Larsen C for many years, watching it with some trepidation after the collapse of Larsen A ice shelf in 1995 and the sudden break-up of the Larsen B shelf in 2002.
- Last year, researchers reported that the Larsen C rift was growing fast. But in December the speed of the rift went into overdrive, growing by a further 18km in just a couple of weeks. What will become a massive iceberg (5000 sq.km) now hangs on to the shelf by a thread just 20km long.
- The researchers say that this is a geographical and not a climate event. The rift has been present for decades, they say, but it has punched through at this particular time.

- It is believed that climate warming has brought forward the likely separation of the iceberg but the scientists say they have no direct evidence to support this.

[BBC: Huge Antarctic iceberg poised to break away;](#)

2. The idea of an apparent pause in temperature rise between 1998 and 2014 had gained support in recent years with even the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2013 largely endorsing the findings. However, a number of studies in recent times have found there has been no such pause. Which one of the following is the primary reason cited by researchers for their contrarian conclusion?

- (a) Better models have been developed in recent times to fill the gap in data of ocean temperatures that was hitherto insufficiently measured from the Eastern Hemisphere.
- (b) Global warming has taken the form of increased glacial and ice melt in the past two decades, acting as a veil for the rise in temperature.
- (c) Ocean buoys used to measure sea temperatures tend to report slightly cooler temperatures than the older ship-based systems.
- (d) Temperature measurements from the older ship-based systems continued to be utilised to develop the main global climate models, even as technologically advanced the ocean buoys were deployed for improved accuracy.

Solution: c.

- ...but that consensus was brought into question by a number of studies, of which a report by the the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa)

published in Science last year was the most significant.

- Researchers from NOAA suggested that the temperatures of the oceans were being consistently underestimated by the main global climate models. The authors showed that the ocean buoys used to measure sea temperatures tend to report slightly cooler temperatures than the older ship-based systems.
- Back in the 1990s, ship measurements made up the vast majority of the data, whereas now the more accurate and consistent buoys account for 85% of measurements.
- When the researchers corrected the data to take this “cold bias” into account, they concluded that the oceans had warmed 0.12C per decade since 2000, nearly twice as fast as previous estimates of 0.07 degrees.
- As a result, the authors said that the warming experienced in the first 15 years of the 21st Century was “virtually indistinguishable” from the rate of warming between 1950-99, a time generally acknowledged to have seen significant rates of warming from human emissions of CO₂.

[BBC: Climate Change – Fresh doubt over climate warming ‘pause’](#);

- “An exception to Section 375 (rape) in the IPC allows a man to go scot-free despite having sex with his 15-year-old ‘wife’. This exception ensures that he will not be charged with rape even though child marriage is a crime. Nobel Peace laureate Kailash Satyarthi, through his organisation Bachpan Bachao Andolan, appealed to the Supreme Court on Thursday for help to end this “statutorily-backed” crime against children.”
- Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) symbolizes India’s largest grassroots movement for the protection of children, ensuring their quality education. As on October 2014, BBA has rescued more than 83,500 victims of trafficking, slavery and child labour and has helped them re-establish trust in society and find promising futures for themselves.
- Since its establishment by the Indian children’s rights activist Kailash Satyarthi in 1980, BBA has led the world’s largest civil society campaign in the form of the Global March Against Child Labour and has been at the forefront of laying down laws against child labour and trafficking in India.

[About BBA:](#)

[Improvisation: TH: SC asked to resolve conflict over ‘rape’ definition in two laws;](#)

3. ‘Bachpan Bachao Andolan’ is a grassroots movement for the protection of children and ensuring their quality education. It is an organisation established by

- (a) The Ministry of Women and Child Development
- (b) The Ministry of Human Resource Development
- (c) Late Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
- (d) Kailash Satyarthi

Solution: d.

4. Historically, the UN Secretary-General has been selected based on an informal system of regional rotation. The present UN Secretary-General belongs to which region?

- (a) Western Europe
- (b) Africa
- (c) Latin America and the Caribbean
- (d) Eastern Europe

Solution: a.

"On 13 October 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted by acclamation a resolution to formally appoint António Guterres of Portugal as Secretary-General for a five-year term of office, starting on 1 January 2017."

Improvisation: [TH: The trump challenge to Antonio Guterres;](#)

rapidly as life expectancy increases and societies age.

- It is unlikely that Ontario has the worst air quality in the world, so the risks might be even greater in cities that are habitually wrapped in smog, for instance, Delhi.

[TH: Living near heavy traffic increases risk of dementia;](#)

[Indian Express, Explained Page, 6th January, 2017;](#)

5. A study in The Lancet medical journal found that people who lived within 50m of high-traffic roads had a higher chance of developing which one of the following diseases compared to those who lived more than 300m away from busy roads?

- (a) Parkinson's disease
- (b) Multiple sclerosis
- (c) Dementia
- (d) Malnutrition

Solution: c.

- "Air pollutants can get into the blood stream and lead to inflammation, which is linked with cardiovascular disease and possibly other conditions such as diabetes. This study suggests air pollutants that can get into the brain via the blood stream can lead to neurological problems"..
- **Dementia** is caused by brain diseases, most commonly Alzheimer's disease, which result in the loss of brain cells and affect memory, thinking, behaviour, navigational and spatial abilities and the ability to perform everyday activities. The incurable condition is a leading cause of disability and dependency, and is starting to overtake heart disease as a cause of death in some developed countries.
- The World Health Organization estimates the number of people with dementia in 2015 at 47.5 million, and that total is rising

1. “The failure to place an ordinance before the legislature constitutes abuse of power and a fraud on the Constitution”, is a conclusion arrived at, in which one of the following cases?

- (a) D.C. Wadhwa v. State of Bihar
 (b) Krishna Kumar v. State of Bihar
 (c) Anupama Goel v. Union of India
 (d) R.K. Garg v. Union of India

Solution: b.

- The Supreme Court had already declared in 1986, in C. Wadhwa, that *repeated re-promulgation of ordinances was unconstitutional*.
- Now, in ***Krishna Kumar Singh v. State of Bihar***, it goes deeper and concludes that the **failure to place an ordinance before the legislature constitutes abuse of power and a fraud on the Constitution**.
- The judgment widens the scope of judicial review of ordinances. ***The court can go into whether the President or Governor had any material to arrive at the satisfaction that an ordinance was necessary and to examine whether there was any oblique motive.***

[Th: Clamping down on Ordinance Raj;](#)

2. In the early 2000s, this state hardly had any “akharas” that trained girls; now there are several. This state is also known for its low sex-ratio. The national “*Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*” campaign of the Union Government was launched from this state. Which state/region is being referred to here?

- (a) Rajasthan
 (b) Haryana
 (c) Punjab
 (d) Delhi

Solution: b.

“A thousand **akharas** are blooming in Haryana as the State promises to nurture girls inspired by the Phogats and Sakshi Maliks... the number of girls who are starting to take up the sport is any indication, then wrestling is booming in Haryana. Coaches and training centres are finding it difficult to accommodate the rush..”

[Th: The sisterhood of wrestlers;](#)

3. Section 126 of Representation of the People Act, 1951, prohibits displaying any election matter by means, inter alia, of television or similar apparatus, for how long a duration before the hour fixed for conclusion of poll in a constituency?

- (a) From the time the Model Code of Conduct comes into force
 (b) Ten days
 (c) One week
 (d) 48 hours

Solution: d.

[PIB: Media Coverage during the period referred to in Section 126 of the RPA, 1951:](#)

“The schedule for calling general election to the Legislative Assemblies of Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand has been announced on 4th January, 2017. Poll is scheduled to be held in seven phases. Section 126 of Representation of the People Act, 1951, prohibits displaying any election matter by means, inter alia, of television or similar apparatus, during the period of 48 hours before the hour fixed for conclusion of poll in a constituency..”

“...attention is also invited to *Section 126A of the R.P. Act 1951, which prohibits conduct of*

Exit poll and dissemination of their results during the period reckoned from the commencement of polls in the first phase and till half an hour after the close of poll for the last phase in all the States."

4. "Ekta aur Anushasan" is the motto of the

- (a) Bharat Scouts and Guides
- (b) Indian Army
- (c) National Cadet Corps
- (d) National Service Scheme

Solution: c.

"The **NCC**, with its motto of **Ekta aur Anushasan** (Unity and Discipline) has been providing our young people with opportunities for self-development and avenues to fulfil their potential for growth. In so doing, NCC is playing an important role in shaping the character and moral fibre of our young people, and ultimately the effectiveness and dynamism of the nation... NCC is dedicated to fostering the spirit of adventure among the youth, but also inculcates social responsibilities and encourages cadets to contribute towards AIDS awareness, Cancer Awareness, Adult education, Anti Dowry, Anti Drugs, Organ Donation and Cleanliness programmes."

[PIB: VP inaugurates NCC Republic Day Camp;](#)

5. Which authority conducts the election to the Maharashtra Legislative Council?

- (a) Election Commission of India
- (b) Maharashtra State Election Commission
- (c) Maharashtra State Public Service Commission
- (d) Union Public Service Commission

Solution: a.

"**Article 324 (1)** also vests in the Commission the powers of superintendence, direction and control of the elections to both Houses of the State Legislature. Detailed provisions are made under the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and the rules made thereunder."

[ECI: Election Machinery;](#)

[Improvisation: PIB;](#)

6. The Government recently decided to constitute a Committee to study the existing sports governance frame work, issues relating to sports governance in the country, recent developments related to sports governance, including court judgments & international best practices and make recommendations on bringing out a comprehensive National Sports Development Code across sports disciplines. Its chairman will be

- (a) Abhinav Bindra
- (b) Injeti Srinivas
- (c) Prakash Padukone
- (d) Ratan Watal

Solution: b.

PIB: [Committee set up to study the Existing Sports governance framework and issues related to sports governance in the country;](#)



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1. In what is being called a 'radical experiment', which country is testing a programme of giving its citizens a guaranteed income of US Dollars 590 a month, regardless of their "income, wealth, or employment status"?

- (a) Australia
(b) Canada
(c) Finland
(d) Mexico

Solution: c.

- Recipients will not need to prove they are looking for work and the money will be given regardless of any other income the person earns.
- The Finnish government is planning to study whether the policy helps recipients find work. It suspects many unemployed people are put off getting a job because they will lose unemployment benefits and therefore be worse off financially.

[Forbes: Finland's basic income starts – really, its testing the Laffer curve for the poor;](#)
Page 16, The Sunday Express, January 8th, 2017;

2. The drug 'BDQ' or 'Bedaquiline', is known to double the chances of cure in patients affected by which one of the following diseases?

- (a) Multi Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis
(b) Cancer of the throat
(c) HIV/AIDS
(d) Parkinson's disease

Solution: a.

"An 18-year-old girl has taken the Indian government to court after being refused access to blockbuster tuberculosis drug bedaquiline. The girl has extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis or XDR TB and her case is emblematic of the desperation of TB patients in India, as the Health Ministry has delayed the roll-out of the life-saving drug beyond six centres in the country.."

[Th: Fighting TB;](#)

3. 'NewSpace', sometimes seen in the news, refers to

- (a) The word used to denote the private space-flight industry.
(b) The name of TeamIndus' co-contestant's rover from Japan, which the former will be carrying in its spacecraft.
(c) The name of TeamIndus' moon rover.
(d) The series of quantum satellites launched by China.

Solution: a.

"The Google Lunar X-Prize is about finding innovative, low-cost means of space exploration. The contest is happening at a time when NewSpace (the word for private space enterprises) is seriously getting into all the areas government space agencies were in in the last 60 years in unconventional and disruptive ways... TeamIndus hopes to land the craft on the satellite at the crack of dawn of Republic Day in 2018. The spacecraft will be carrying the rover of its Japanese co-contestant, **Hakuto**, too."

[TH: Moonstruck;](#)
[Wikipedia: Newspace;](#)

4. The organisation known as “Tarun Bharat Sangh”

- (a) Promotes decentralised, community-led management of natural resources.
- (b) Rescues victims of human trafficking and rehabilitates them.
- (c) Creates awareness about, as well as protect and defend human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- (d) Identifies and educates village communities on the causes and effects of gender violence, and offers services that address the needs of abused and violated women.

Solution: a.

Rajendra Singh runs this NGO. The NGO “has helped villagers take charge of water management in their semi-arid area as it lies close to Thar Desert, through the use of johad, rainwater storage tanks, check dams and other time-tested as well as path-breaking techniques.... built over 8,600 johads and other water conservation structures to collect rainwater for the dry seasons, has brought water back to over 1,000 villages and revived five rivers in Rajasthan..”

[Tarun Bharat Sangh: Our Mission;](#)

[Improvisation: TH: Water literacy campaign need of the hour;](#)

5. A “clear signal” of urbanisation was recently identified in the evolution of organisms, which is considered to have implications for sustainability and human well-being. This “clear signal” is associated with “phenotypic change”. Such a change in an organism relates to

- (a) Changes in its observable traits.
- (b) Changes in its manner of interaction with humans.
- (c) Improved resilience to ever-increasing pollution levels.
- (d) Ability to withstand harsh and extreme conditions, which would have been impossible for the organism in its natural habitat.

Solution: a.

- “We found that there is a clear urban signal of phenotypic change, and also greater phenotypic change in urbanising systems compared to natural or non-urban anthropogenic systems... So urbanisation, globally, is clearly affecting things,”
- Phenotypic change refers to change in an organism’s observable traits, such as its morphology, physiology, phenology, or behaviour. The changes in *plants and animals* included alterations in body sizes, shifts in behavioural patterns and adjustments in reproduction.
- They found that the seeds on *Crepis sancta*, otherwise known as hawksbeard, were larger on specimens that lived in urban areas, when compared with the seeds from the plants growing in rural settings. As the plant’s seeds were dispersed by the wind, the researchers suggested that heavier seeds fared better because they would drop on to nearby soil, whereas the lighter seeds would be

carried by the wind, resulting in them being deposited on concrete and tarmac, where it was impossible to germinate.

[BBC: Urbanisation signal detected in evolution, study shows;](#)

6. Recently, our scientists have discovered a new and distinct species of ginger plant whose fleshy tuberous roots is used locally for its medicinal values. In which part of India has it been discovered?

- (a) Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- (b) Mishmi Hills
- (c) Gurjhat Hills
- (d) Sharavati Wildlife Sanctuary

Solution: a.

- Scientists of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) have found a new species of Zingiber (commonly referred as Ginger) from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- The species Zingiber pseudosquarrosus, new to science, belonging to genus Zingiber, was already used by the local Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of the Andamans for its medicinal values.
- "The fresh extract [juice] of fleshy tuberous roots is used to treat abdominal pain and anti-helminthic troubles by Nicobarese and certain other tribal communities," Lal Ji Singh, taxonomist and one of the scientists behind the discovery, told.

[Th: New ginger species with medicinal properties found in Andamans;](#)

7. Consider the following statements about a material:

1. It is the thinnest and lightest material known to man, and is just one atom thick.
2. It is considered one of the best electricity conductors.
3. Recently, the Indian Institute of Science made a major breakthrough in this material-based transistor technology, which brings us closer to exploiting this material's potential to revolutionise the electronics industry.

Which material do the above statements refer to?

- (a) Monolayer Tungsten Disulphide
- (b) Silicene
- (c) Borophene
- (d) Graphene

Solution: d.

- Graphene is a wonder material with many special properties. Chemically, it is only carbon, just like graphite which is nothing but layers of graphene stacked one atop the other, but its uniqueness comes from its structure.
- It is the thinnest and lightest material known, just one atom thick. Essentially, it is just a two-dimensional material.
- Graphene has the ability to control flow of electrons at a speed several notches higher than the materials we currently have. As such, it has the potential to revolutionise electronics. One can think of wireless communication that may be 1,000 times faster than 4G or 5G technologies. It can also enable flexible, transparent electronics.
- But the very structure that lends the special properties to graphene also acts as

a huge barrier to its utilisation. Essentially, the problem is inherent in its dimension. Everything we otherwise work with is three-dimensional, whereas graphene is two-dimensional. This lends to it a compatibility problem.

- The problem comes when graphene is put in contact with any other material. As soon as it comes in contact with a metal, it gets contaminated by electrons, which behave conventionally. A team at IISc has now been able to break the barrier, which was unsolved for many years.

[IE: Breaking the Graphene Barrier;](#)

8. During the decade 2002-2012, credit uptake and the resultant debt burden among Indians grew at a phenomenal pace, a comparison of National Sample Survey Office data from the two years show. The biggest quantitative increase in borrowings was among the

- (a) Urban Scheduled Tribes community
- (b) Rural Scheduled Tribes community
- (c) Urban Scheduled Castes community
- (d) Rural Scheduled Castes community

Solution: c.

Question framed from a mains-perspective.

"..the biggest *quantitative increase* in borrowings was among the urban Dalit community, which in the 70th Round had a Debt-to-Asset Ratio of 18.46%, the highest among all social groups.. Urban SCs and STs used nearly 92% and 95% of their debt respectively to meet household needs, data from the 70th Round show."

Conclusion: "Increased consumption has fuelled increased borrowing. The borrowings are substantially higher in the SC community because of entitlement-driven loans where sops are provided to the community. The figures suggest that the community is catching up with others when it comes to consumption. However, the fact that the bulk of the money is spent in meeting household expenses rather than in wealth generation is a worrying aspect," Dr Abdul Shaban, chairperson of the Centre for Public Policy, Habitat and Human Development at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), said.

[IE: Indians' debt increasing, highest credit uptake among urban SC's ;](#)

9. According to National Crime Records Bureau's latest farmer suicides data, most number of farmers who killed themselves in 2015 due to

- (a) Crop failure.
- (b) Family problems.
- (c) Debts caused by loans taken from moneylenders.
- (d) Bankruptcy or debts caused by loans taken from registered micro-finance institutions or banks.

Solution: d.

Another mains-oriented question.

- According to National Crime Records Bureau's latest farmer-suicides data, of the over 3,000 farmers who committed suicides across the country in 2015 due to debt and bankruptcy, 2,474 had taken loans from banks or microfinance institutions.
- ...only 10 per cent farmers had committed suicide due to debts caused by loans taken from both banks and moneylenders — the

share of loans from moneylenders *under this section* was 9.8 per cent.

- Even today, more than half the people take loans from moneylenders,” said Abhijit Sen, a former member of the erstwhile Planning Commission. However, Sen said, moneylenders were more flexible compared to banks and microfinance institutions. “The organised sector is less flexible because rules don’t permit them flexibility. The microfinance sector is worse. They put pressure by telling others in self-help groups that their share would be cut if one person does not pay loans in time. This creates social pressure, as well. Many also send goons to the neighbourhood to scare borrowers,” he said.

[IE: farmer-suicides due to debt and loans, 80% from banks, not moneylenders::](#)

Notes

1. With reference to Departmental Standing Committees, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The main objective of such committees is to secure more accountability of the Executive to the Parliament, particularly financial accountability.
2. Each such committee consists of members only from the Lok Sabha.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: a.

Statement 1 is correct, statement 2 is wrong. Each DSC consists of members of both houses of the parliament.

There possibly were a few who marked option 'c' as the answer for Question 1 after reading this question. This question was just that – a trick question, meant to confuse a few in question 1.

Source: Improvisation of Q1 mentioned above and Ch23, Parliamentary Committees, Indian Polity 4th Edition by M Laxmikanth;

2. Which one of the following Parliamentary Committees recently sent a questionnaire on demonetisation to the RBI Governor and other top finance-related officials?

- (a) Ad Hoc Committee on Demonetisation
- (b) Committee on Government Assurances
- (c) Departmental Standing Committee on Finance
- (d) Public Accounts Committee

Solution: d.

- The Public Accounts Committee of Parliament has sent a questionnaire to RBI Governor Urjit Patel and other top finance-related officials on demonetisation. The committee is headed by Congress leader K.V. Thomas.
- The PAC, which scrutinises the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor-General, takes suo motu note of important matters.
- Sources say the committee is expected to quiz the officials on these issues, as several details about demonetisation and new notes put into circulation have not been made public.

About the PAC:

- It consists of members of both, the Lok Sabha as well as the Rajya Sabha.
- Members are elected by the Parliament every year from amongst its members (no ministers though) according to the principle of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. Thus, all parties get due representation in it.
- Since 1967 a convention has developed whereby the chairman of the committee selected invariably from the opposition.
- Its function is essentially to examine the annual audit reports of the CAG, which are

laid before the Parliament by the President.

Sources: Ch23, Parliamentary Committees, Indian Polity 4th Edition by M Laxmikanth;

TH: [Urjit to reply to MP panel's questions](#);

3. Which of the following statements with reference to the concept of "securitisation" is/are correct?

1. Under this process, certain types of assets are pooled so that they can be repackaged into interest-bearing securities.
2. It helps spread out credit exposures, thereby diffusing risk concentrations.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: c.

The following extract from this [TH article](#) should have helped you answer this question: "While credit enhancement has given an impetus to green bonds and will remain crucial, there is a scope for other innovative mechanisms such as securitisation. *Many standalone green projects such as roof top solar, energy efficiency and rural water supply still remain unattractive to institutional investors owing to the smaller scale and vast geographical spread. Aggregation and securitisation of such projects could be a welcome move in providing mainstream debt to small-scale green projects.*"

About Securitisation:

- It is the process in which certain types of assets are pooled so that they can be repackaged into interest-bearing securities. The interest and principal payments from the assets are passed

through to the purchasers of the securities.

- Increasing numbers of financial institutions employ securitization to transfer the credit risk of the assets they originate from their balance sheets to those of other financial institutions, such as banks, insurance companies, and hedge funds.
- They do it for a variety reasons. It is often cheaper to raise money through securitization. In principle, this "originate and distribute" approach brings broad economic benefits – spreading out credit exposures, thereby diffusing risk concentrations and reducing systemic vulnerabilities.

4. If "green bonds" finance environmentally friendly businesses and assets, "blue bonds" finance specifically

- (a) Development of sustainable fisheries.
- (b) Water infrastructure.
- (c) Energy-efficient systems for conventional electricity generation systems.
- (d) Adaptation projects in Small Island Nations.

Solution: b.

Option 'a' too is correct. This question, though, has been framed with reference to the article on green bonds which appeared in The Hindu (Click [HERE](#)). It is likely that such a question if asked, would be in the international context (in which case option 'b' is correct) and not country-specific unless specified (for instance, if blue bonds had been mentioned in association with the Republic of Seychelles, then answer would have been option 'a').

- **With regard to option 'b':** Following global trends, the upcoming year is poised to witness the first 'blue bond' issuance (bonds used to specifically finance water infrastructure) in India. *Globally, blue*

bond issuances have crossed \$10 billion, with India yet to enter the market. Given the rising financing gap in India's water sector, it is imperative to utilise such innovative mechanisms for water infrastructure augmentation as well.

- **With regard to option 'a':** January 2016 – "...unfortunately, the "deadly trio" of acidification, warming, and declining oxygen levels is posing a risk to marine and coastal resources and threatening the livelihoods of millions living in these countries. To address this challenge, the **Republic of Seychelles** has launched the 'Blue Bond', a novel financing initiative which taps into capital markets to fund ocean-related environmental projects.."

hectares) holdings are 14.3% and 0.7% of the total respectively."

- It's not as though the smaller the farmer the more likely he is to commit suicide due to farm distress. According to the NCRB data, small farmers were 45.2% of all farmer victims, while marginal farmers made up 27.4%... in a general sense, farmers who have alternate sources of livelihood (including as agricultural labourers) may cope with the crisis better when compared to those who may depend almost entirely on farming; relatively speaking, this may be one of the factors separating the marginal from the small farmer.

[IE: Small farmers most prone to commit suicide, show government data;](#)

5. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, which one of the following classifications of farmers according to their size of landholdings is/are correct?

1. Small farmers: 0 – 2 hectares
2. Medium farmers: 2 – 10 hectares
3. Large farmers: >10 hectares

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: b.

- "According to the latest (2010-11) landholding census by the Ministry of Agriculture, 67.1% of all landholdings are marginal — smaller than 1 hectare — while 17.9% are small (1-2 hectares). Medium (2-10 hectares) and large (over 10

6. The UNSC Resolution 1172

- (a) Banned international atomic energy cooperation between non-signatories to the Non Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and the permanent members of the Security Council.
- (b) Affirmed that the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery constitute a threat to international peace and security.
- (c) Called on India and Pakistan to sign the NPT and CTBT.
- (d) None of the above.

Solution: c.

"... China has dredged up a long forgotten UN Security Council resolution to declare India's nuclear deterrent illegitimate; in the same breath, it warned that it will boost Pakistan's

atomic weapons programme. The UNSC resolution 1172 was passed in June 1998 in the wake of Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests in May that year. The resolution called on India and Pakistan to sign the NPT and CTBT, freeze their strategic programmes and desist from developing and deploying nuclear weapons..”

[Raja Mandala: The myth of a political bond;](#)

7. The landmark judgement of *NALSA v. Union of India*, is related to

- (a) Rights of transgender persons.
- (b) Section 66A of the Information Technology Act.
- (c) The conception of compromise in a case of rape or attempt to rape.
- (d) An unwed mother as sole guardian of a child.

Solution: a.

“In April 2014, the Supreme Court delivered the landmark judgment of *NALSA v. Union of India*, which affirmed the fundamental rights of transgender persons. The court gave a series of directives to the government to institute welfare measures for transgender persons, including affirmative action. It also directed that the Expert Committee Report prepared by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE) be implemented.”

[TH: A rights bill gone wrong;](#)

NOTES

1. The Supreme Court recently directed the Government to audit nearly 30 lakh NGOs for which one of the following reasons?

- (a) Violation of General Financial Rules, 2005.
- (b) Violation of Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.
- (c) These NGOs, which received public funds have consistently failed to explain how they spent the money.
- (d) These NGOs have been blacklisted by the government and there has been no progress in related investigations for close to three years.

Solution: c.

“The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the government to audit nearly 30 lakh NGOs which received public funds but consistently failed to explain how they spent the money.”

- The judicial order is unprecedented because defaulting NGOs so far have been only blacklisted by the government.
- Pulling up the government for *failing to put in place a regulatory mechanism to keep a watch on the financial activities of NGOs and voluntary organisations*, the apex court ordered that by next hearing, the government should have framed guidelines for their accreditation, the manner in which these organisations should maintain their accounts and the procedure for recovery in case they fail to submit their balance sheets.
- *The General Financial Rules, 2005 mandate a regulatory mechanism for NGOs and voluntary organisations.*

[TH: SC orders audit of 30 lakh NGOs getting public funds;](#)

2. In India, which one of the following is the final authority in declaring a region to be drought-hit?

- (a) Union Ministry of Agriculture
- (b) Union Government
- (c) Indian Meteorological Department
- (d) The State Government

Solution: d.

“Tamil Nadu, comprising 32 districts, will be declared drought affected in view of poor rainfall received during the northeast monsoon, Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam said on Tuesday.”

- Drought is generally considered as a deficiency in rainfall /precipitation over an extended period, usually a season or more, resulting in a water shortage causing adverse impacts on vegetation, animals, and/or people.
- There is no single, legally accepted definition of drought in India. Some states resort to their own definitions of drought.
- State Government is the final authority when it comes to declaring a region as drought affected.

[TH: TN to be declared drought-hit, says CM;](#)
[Arthapedia: Drought;](#)

3. Which one of the following issues the “Global Gender Gap Report” periodically?

- (a) Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- (b) World Economic Forum
- (c) The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- (d) The World Bank

Solution: b.

"Through the Global Gender Gap Report, the **World Economic Forum** quantifies the magnitude of gender disparities and tracks their progress over time, with a specific focus on the relative gaps between women and men across four key areas: health, education, economy and politics."

[WEForum: Global Gender Gap Report;](#)

4. Which of the following is/are the key areas in which the relative gaps between women and men are measured to compute the Global Gender Gap Index?

1. Politics
2. Health
3. Education
4. Economy

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

The question, if asked in CSP, would in all likelihood be, "Which of the following is/are the key areas in which the relative gaps between women and men are measured **by the World Economic Forum** to compute the Global Gender Gap Index?" .. but since it would have given away the answer to the previous question, we omitted the text in bold, for this question.

"Through the Global Gender Gap Report, the World Economic Forum quantifies the magnitude of gender disparities and tracks

their progress over time, with a specific focus on the relative gaps between women and men across **four** key areas: *health, education, economy and politics.*"

[WEForum: Global Gender Gap Report;](#)

5. Consider the following statements:

1. Since 2005-06, the annual budget has included an exclusive note on Gender Budgeting.
2. The Gender Budgeting statement comprises two parts – one reflecting schemes having 100 per cent allocation for women, and the other reflecting schemes having at least 30 per cent allocation for women.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: c.

Since 2005-06, the Expenditure Division of the Ministry of Finance has been issuing a note on Gender Budgeting as a part of the Budget Circular every year. The Gender Budgeting Statement comprises two parts:

- Part A reflects *Women Specific Schemes*, i.e. those which have 100% allocation for women.
- Part B reflects *Pro-Women Schemes*, i.e. those where at least 30% of the allocation is for women.

Over the years, India has stood out for its implementation of gender budgeting, and with the Ministry of Finance (MoF) playing the central role, it has managed to successfully institutionalise the concept at both the national and State levels (16 States have embraced the exercise).

[TH: Mind the Gender Gap;](#)

6. The East African Community currently does **not** include which of the following countries?

1. Nigeria
2. Senegal
3. Angola

Select the correct answer using the code given below

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

Solution: d.



A map-based question. None of the countries mentioned in the list lie in East Africa. Image shows the current membership of the East African Community. The lake in the image is Lake Victoria.

Improvisation: [TH: Reaching out to Africa;](#)

"India's Africa policy is broadly in line with Agenda 2063, promoted by the African Union. However, some recalibration in New Delhi's approach may be needed..."

- Agenda 2063 is a call for action to all segments of African society to work together to build a prosperous and united Africa based on shared values and a common destiny.
- In their 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) laid down *vision and eight ideals to serve as pillars for the continent in the foreseeable future, which Agenda 2063 will translate into concrete objectives, milestones, goals, targets and actions/measures.*

About [Agenda 2063;](#)

Improvisation: [TH: Reaching out to Africa;](#)

7. 'Agenda 2063', sometimes in the news, is an initiative of the

- (a) Indian Ocean Rim Association
- (b) East African Community
- (c) African Union
- (d) Community of Sahel-Saharan States

Solution: c.

1. The President of which African nation recently declared a state of emergency a day before his official mandate ended?

- (a) Nigeria
 (b) Côte d'Ivoire
 (c) Senegal
 (d) The Gambia

Solution: d.

A GK question; useful example for essay/answer-writing.

"Gambian President Yahya Jammeh has declared a 90-day state of emergency a day before his official mandate ends. Regional leaders have been unsuccessfully trying to persuade him to hand over power to Adama Barrow, who won December's elections."

[BBC: The Gambia's President declares state of emergency;](#)

2. Which of the following statements with reference to India as an Associate Member (AM) of The European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) is/are correct?

1. India gets, albeit reduced, voting rights in meetings of the CERN Council.
2. Indian industry will be entitled to bid for CERN contracts.
3. India was an "Observer State" prior to becoming an AM.

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

Solution: d.

[Associate Membership](#): This status can either take the form of regular Associate Membership (of indefinite duration) or of Associate Membership as the pre-stage to Membership, normally for a period of between two and five years. Associate Members pay a reduced contribution to the CERN budget and enjoy benefits which are reduced accordingly. They are represented at the CERN Council, except at Closed Sessions, and do not have voting rights.

- As an Associate member India will have full access to all data generated at CERN. As there are many experiments in CERN, there will be plenty of information available. When we were not an Associate member, India could data only from those experiments where we were participating.
- Whenever any CERN facilities get upgraded and go through maintenance, it will provide opportunities for Indian industries to participate. "Indian industry will be entitled to bid for CERN contracts, which will allow it to work in areas of advanced technology.
- Since Indian scientists will become eligible for staff appointments, it will enhance the participation of young scientists and engineers in operation and maintenance of various CERN projects.

Source: [TH: India becomes CERN associate member;](#)

3. The "Prison Freedom Project", in South Africa, is related to

- (a) Building a commune within the confines of a prison.
 (b) Using Yoga classes as a form of rehabilitation for prison inmates.
 (c) Helping inmates prepare for life beyond the prison walls by offering them training in cooking.
 (d) None of the above.

Solution: b.

Not a prelims-oriented question. Helpful though, for mains – it can be cited as an example in essay/answer-writing.

Video: [BBC: The Yoga classes helping prisoners in South Africa](#);

[SevaUnite: Prison Freedom Project](#);

4. Consider the following statements with reference to the All-India Services:

1. There are three All-India Services – the Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service and the Indian Foreign Service.
2. Any disciplinary action against the officers of these services can only be taken by the Central Government.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution: b.

- The Indian Forest (and **not 'Foreign'**) Service is the third All-India Service.
- The all-India services are controlled jointly by the Central and state. The ultimate control lies with the Central government while the immediate control is vested in the state governments. Any disciplinary action (imposition of penalties) against these officers can only be taken by the Central government.

Ch-59, Public Services, Indian Polity 4th Edition by M Laxmikanth;

Improvisation: [TH: Compulsory exit for 2 IPS Officers](#);

5. The 'Raisina Dialogue' seeks to

- (a) Engage in a comprehensive debate on current and future security challenges in the Indian Ocean Region.
- (b) Explore prospects and opportunities for Asian integration as well as Asia's integration with the larger world.
- (c) Be a platform for a frank and open exchange of ideas, opinions and views among the government representatives of Europe and North America.
- (d) Gather officials and professionals of the SAARC nations in order to enhance South Asian nations' cooperation and economic integration.

Solution: b.

This question has been posted here before.

"The conference, attended by speakers from 40 countries, is being seen as the Indian government's attempt to rival conferences around the world that attract global players such as the Shangri-La dialogue in Singapore, and the Munich Conference on national security."

"The [Raisina Dialogue](#) is envisioned as India's flagship conference of geopolitics and geo-economics. It is designed to explore prospects and opportunities for Asian integration as well as Asia's integration with the larger world. It is

predicated on India's vital role in the Indian Ocean Region and how India along with its partners can build a stable regional and world order. The 2016 conclave will focus on Asia's physical, economic, digital connectivity and fostering common global spaces with an emphasis on Asia."

Improvisation: [Walk away from terror, PM tells Pak.;](#)

6. Whereas the Army, Air Force, Navy and Coast Guard fall under the Ministry of Defence, the paramilitary forces fall under the

- (a) Ministry of Home Affairs
- (b) Ministry of Border Affairs
- (c) Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region
- (d) Ministry of Defence

Solution: a.

"Today, no less than seven paramilitary forces exist, each created with less parliamentary debate than the previous one. These forces are all under the Home Ministry in contrast to the Army, Air Force, Navy and Coast Guard which are under the Defence Ministry."

[TH: Don't let messengers shoot themselves ;](#)

Notes

1. A famous movement at the time of the Second World War associated with this man is said to have “started as the Wanderer car drove out of the house”. This “Wanderer” car was recently restored by Audi, and unveiled by the President. To which individual does the first sentence refer to?

- (a) Mahatma Gandhi
 (b) Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose
 (c) Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan
 (d) Sardar Vallabhai Patel

Solution: b.

“President Pranab Mukherjee on Wednesday unveiled the Wanderer Car used by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose during his ‘Great Escape’ from Kolkata to the Gomoh railway station between January 16 and 18, 1941.”

“Krishna Bose, wife of Sisir Kumar Bose who drove Netaji to Gomoh (now in Jharkhand), said: “The Azad Hind movement started as the car drove out of the house” on Elgin Road which now houses Netaji Research Bureau....”

[TH: Pranab unveils Netaji’s restored car;](#)

2. Pratham’s Annual Status of Education (Rural) report for 2016 was recently released. In this context, which among the following is/are some of the indicators measured?

1. Usable toilet availability
 2. Reading ability
 3. Fraction of out-of-school children
 4. Attendance rates

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

Pratham’s ASER reports are considered important. Some of the indicators measured (both, private and public schools come within the scope of this survey) include:

- Arithmetic and reading ability
- Enrolment ratios, fractions of out-of-school children
- Attendance rates
- Usable toilet availability
- Number of schools with/without computers

[TH: UP registers increase in number of out-of-school children;](#)

3. Recently, a 450 metre pipeline was used to divert 2 million gallons of water per day from 7 tube-wells to which one of the following rain-fed lakes?

- (a) Sukhna
 (b) Chollas
 (c) Wular
 (d) Harike

Solution: a.

“Since January 16, the Chandigarh Administration has been using a 450 m pipeline to divert 2 million gallons of water per day to the Sukhna lake from 7 tubewells located near the Chandigarh Golf Club. The operation to fill

the rain-fed lake will continue until March, when the demand for water in the city is likely to rise.”

“In 2009, the Punjab and Haryana High Court took suo motu notice of the falling level of the lake, and proceeded to issue several directions to the Administration. In 2012, the Administration submitted to the court that no water was available to fill the lake; however, as the level kept falling, the Administration proposed that treated sewage water be pumped in. But experts objected on environmental grounds, following which the court directed the Administration to seek suggestions from residents and submit a plan. This week, drinking water was diverted to the lake.”

“...in November 2016, the Forest Department pumped water into dry tanks and ponds in Karnataka’s Bandipur National Park, and attempts have been made to fill the marshlands of the Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur artificially. *None of these projects are, however, comparable in scale, circumstances and methods to the efforts being put into the Sukhna Lake.*”

[IE: Pumping life into Sukhna;](#)

- Kevlar can be used by itself or as part of a composite material (one material combined with others) to give added strength.
- It is probably best known for its use in bulletproof vests and knifeproof body armor, but it has dozens of *other applications* as well.
- It’s used as reinforcement in car tires, in car brakes, in the strings of archery bows, and in car, boat, and even aircraft bodies. It’s even used in buildings and structures, although not (*because of its relatively low compressive strength*) as the primary structural material.

“...the structure of Kevlar is relatively simple: identical molecules packed tightly next to each other like pencils in a pencil box. *Knotted or woven strands of molecules*, on the other hand, can potentially create an even more flexible, lighter and stronger material — a tightly knit sweater on the molecular level...” Researchers stated that the number of crossings they managed to make, made their knot much tighter than anything that had ever been achieved before at the molecular level. The entire loop is tiny, the length of 192 atoms.

[Explainthatstuff: Kevlar;](#)

[Improvisation: NYT – the tightest knot ever tied; IE Explained Page, 19th January, 2017;](#)

4. ‘Kevlar’ is a chemical compound which is best known for its use in manufacturing

- Bulletproof clothing
- Biodegradable plastics
- Primary structural material for construction of buildings and bridges
- Battery packs

Solution: a.

5. The Central Government and State Governments recently resolved the contentious issue of sharing of administrative powers over the Goods and Services Tax. Which one of the following is the arrangement that has now been agreed upon?

(a) Small taxpayers – whose annual turnover is up to Rs 1.5 crore – will be divided between the states and the Centre in the proportion of 50:50, and the rest on a 10:90 basis.

(b) Small taxpayers will be divided between the states and the Centre in the proportion of 90:10, and the rest on a 50:50 basis.

(c) Small taxpayers will be divided between the states and the Centre in the proportion of 60:40, and the rest on a 50:50 basis.

(d) Small taxpayers will be divided between the states and the Centre in the proportion of 90:10, and the rest on a 30:70 basis.

Solution: b.

"In a welcome step, the Centre has now agreed to an arrangement where small taxpayers under the GST will be divided between the states and the Centre in the proportion of 90:10 for the purpose of audit and scrutiny that would be done on a random basis."

- Administrative control over all taxpayers falling above the Rs 1.5 crore turnover threshold will be shared, again randomly, on a 50:50 basis.

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, moreover, has clarified that *no assessee would be subject to oversight of both the Centre and states*. That should please industry and trade, which was dreading the prospect of dual control.
- The other crucial demand of the states that the Modi government has conceded relates to the power to tax economic activity in the high seas within 12 nautical miles of India's territorial waters.

[IE: Concede to win;](#)

Clarifications

Q2, 18th January, 2017 Quiz

(Click [HERE](#)): Regarding Associate Member privileges – a typo. The answer changes; it must be option 'b' and not 'd'. Associate Members do not have voting rights (as mentioned in the solution) although they are represented at the CERN Council.

1. The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India lists the official languages. Which among the following languages is/are not included in it?

1. Bhojpuri
2. Rajasthani
3. Urdu

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

The first two mentioned languages are dialects of Hindi.

MHA: List of languages in the eighth schedule;
Improvisation: Don't add Hindi dialects in Eighth Schedule say academics;

2. "Comfort Women", in the context of World History, is related to

- (a) Japan in World War 2
- (b) Mughal Harems
- (c) The Eastern Question
- (d) China's Great Purge

Solution: a.

A GK question.

"Known as "comfort women", these former sex slaves were "recruited" from Korea, China and parts of Southeast Asia. Although there are

only around 40 surviving comfort women in Korea, they are a potent reminder of Japanese wartime atrocities as well as what many consider to be the lack of sincere atonement on the part of Japan."

TH: [Reopening old wounds;](#)

3. Which one of the following pairs is/are correctly matched?

- (a) International Labour Organisation Convention 182 – Deals with seafarers' identity documents
- (b) International Labour Organisation Convention 138 – Deals with setting a minimum age of employment
- (c) Both a and b
- (d) Neither a nor b

Solution: b.

"...the Government of India finally decided last week to ratify the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour and Convention 138 on Minimum Age of Employment."

- ILO Convention 185 deals with Seafarers' Identity Documents, and this Convention was ratified by India in 2015.
- ILO Convention 182 deals with the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour.
- Since the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2016 has been passed by Parliament and prohibits employment of children up to 14 years of age, the ILO conventions 138 and 182 can now be ratified.

TH: [Safe Childhoods for a Safe India;](#)

4. The Chagos Archipelago, recently appeared in the news in association with which one of the following issues?

- (a) The Mauritius government recently leased the chain of islands to the Indian Navy to build an overseas base of operations there.
- (b) Refusal by the Mauritius government to recognise it as a British Indian Ocean Territory.
- (c) China's first military base in the Indian Ocean Region to have become functional.
- (d) A maritime dispute between India and Mauritius over control of the islands was won by the latter.

Solution: b.

"The British Foreign Secretary has sought Indian assistance in resolving current tensions between the U.K., the U.S. and Mauritius over the future of the U.S. military base Diego Garcia, and the **Indian Ocean Chagos Archipelago**, amid a warning from Mauritius last year that it would push to take the matter to the International Court of Justice."

- The British — acting on the request of the U.S. — are hopeful that India may be able to exercise its influence with the Mauritian government to help the three sides come to some agreement, to prevent the situation from escalating. The British believe that ensuring the future of Diego Garcia would be in *India's security interest in the region*
- The *Chagos Islands* — referred to by the British as the British Indian Ocean Territory, but which is not recognised as such by Mauritius — *is home to the U.S. military base Diego Garcia*. In the 1960s and 1970s, inhabitants were removed

from the islands. Tensions remain, with Mauritius maintaining that the archipelago remains its integral part.

[TH: UK seeks Indian help in resolving Chagos Archipelago dispute;](#)

5. Consider the following statements about an anadromous species of fish – the Hilsa – which can be found in the water bodies surrounding India:

1. It is known to travel up to 1400 kilometres to lay eggs
2. The commissioning of Farakka Barrage in West Bengal resulted in a consistent reduction in annual catch of the fish

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

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

Solution: a.

Question being repeated. See graphic in link provided below for justification for second statement being wrong. (Commissioning of the Farakka barrage resulted in a substantial increase in catch for a while, but it eventually resulted in a reduction).

- **Is the hilsa (*Tenualosa ilisha*) a sea or a river fish? Where is it found?**

It is what is called an **anadromous species** — like the salmon, sturgeon and shad, *it is born in fresh water, spends most of its life in the sea*

and returns to fresh water to spawn. The bony fish, with silver scales and a faint streak of pink on its belly, is found in marine, estuarine and riverine environments. The Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean, and Arabian Sea are its marine homes; the rivers Ganga, Bhagirathi, Hooghly, Brahmaputra, Rupnarayan, Narmada, Cauvery and Godavari are its spawning grounds.

- **And how far upstream does it travel?**

It's a long-distance swimmer that's been known to travel 1,200-1,400 km from the Bay of Bengal — up the Hooghly and then the Ganga up to Patna and Varanasi, and sometimes even Allahabad, Kanpur and, up the Yamuna to Agra.

September 2016: [IE: Fish ladders help Hilsa breeding;](#)

Improvisation: [IE: Small fry;](#)



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