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# Centre notifies four new Labour Codes



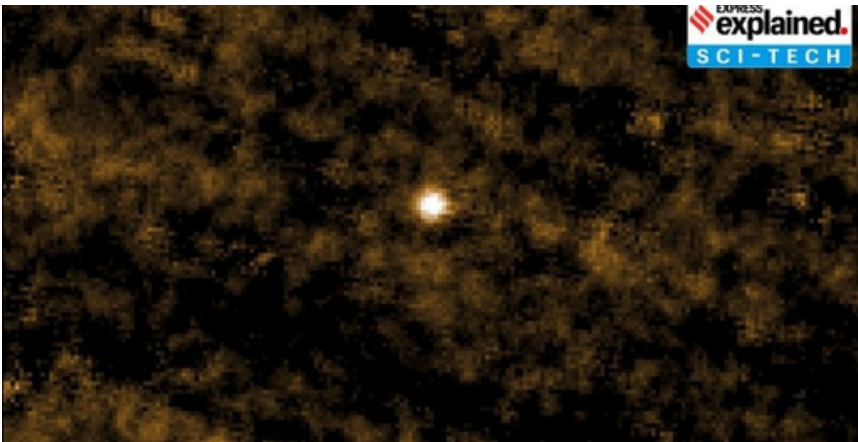
The Centre on Friday notified all four Labour Codes, ushering in major reforms, including extending universal social security coverage for gig workers, promising gender pay parity, expanded rights and safety for women workers, giving statutory backing for minimum wages, and introducing fixed-term employment. The laws, which came into effect on Friday, replace 29 fragmented laws, many of which date back to pre-Independence and early post-Independence period.

The Code on Wages (2019), Industrial Relations Code (2020), Code on Social Security (2020), and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHC) Code (2020) had been held back due to protests from trade unions, which continue. In a joint statement, 10 Central Trade Unions called the Codes an “anti-worker and pro-employer” reform. Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said the Codes will formalise employment, strengthen worker protections, and make the labour ecosystem simpler, safer and globally aligned. The reforms include expanded rights and safety for women, including night-shift work, free annual health check-ups for workers aged over 40 years, pan-India ESIC coverage including hazardous process units, and a single registration, licence and return system. Additional systemic reforms include a national floor wage, gender-neutral work policy, inspector-cum-facilitator model for supportive compliance, faster dispute resolution through two member tribunals, and a National Occupational Safety, Health (OSH) Board to harmonise safety standards. The Codes have defined gig work, platform work, and aggregators for the first time.

## On the decline!



Chilean scientists warned of further risks to the world's shrinking population of Humboldt penguins. Chile's Pacific coast is home to 80% of the world's remaining Humboldt penguins.



NASA on Wednesday (November 19) released new images of Comet 3I/Atlas, an interstellar object that astronomers have determined is billions of years old. Interstellar objects are celestial bodies that originate outside the solar system, and travel through it. These objects are not gravitationally bound to a star. They can come from other solar systems and be thrown into interstellar space — the area between the stars — due to collisions or be slingshotted by a planet's or star's gravity.



# Modi meets Australian PM, discusses cooperation in trade, defence and security

## Purpose and Context of Meeting

- The meeting took place in Johannesburg on the sidelines of the G20 Leaders’ Summit, aimed at deepening bilateral relations and expanding cooperation in key areas.
- The leaders reviewed progress under the India–Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, in place for five years.

## Areas of Cooperation Highlighted

- Main topics discussed included defence and security, trade and investment, critical minerals, clean energy, education, and people-to-people ties.
- Both leaders noted satisfaction with recent economic initiatives and ongoing diversification in bilateral ties.

## Statements and Perspectives

- Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal posted on social media about the substantial progress and diversification achieved recently.
- PM Albanese stressed the importance of strengthening economic, security, and defence ties, and referred to the relationship as fundamentally important for both nations.
- PM Modi echoed these sentiments and looked forward to continued high-level discussions.

## Broader Diplomatic Engagements

- PM Modi’s schedule in Johannesburg included multiple leadership meetings at the summit, especially on summit themes like ‘Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability’.
- Modi was expected to participate in the trilateral IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) summit, highlighting larger multilateral cooperation beyond the Australia-India bilateral context.

## Significance and Takeaways

- The meeting underscores the growing Indo-Australian partnership, especially in strategic sectors like defence, critical minerals, and clean energy.
- The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to economic and security cooperation, indicating intent to expand business, investment, and defence collaboration.
- The conversation contributes to ongoing momentum in coordinated multilateralism at venues like G20 and IBSA summits.

# Govt. plans to unify security regulations for 250 seaports

## Policy Announcement and Objective

- The Union Government has designated the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) as the security regulator for over 250 seaports across India.
- The plan aims to plug gaps in coastal and port security, particularly at private ports handling cargo, by introducing uniform security standards.
- A “sovereign entity” will take responsibility for security at private ports, which currently rely on private agencies or local police with no standard template.

## Scope and Execution

- Initially, CISF will regulate 80 major cargo-handling ports, overseeing access control, cargo screening, and seafront patrolling.
- The remaining 170 seaports will be gradually secured in phases, using hybrid security models where non-core duties may be delegated to local police or private security.
- CISF has requested the Ministry of Home Affairs to sanction 10,000 additional personnel for deployment across the 80 major ports.

## Existing Security Issues

- Only 13 key ports are currently secured by CISF; the rest have non-uniform standards and fragmented responsibilities.
- There is a significant gap compared to adequate security deployment at land borders and airports, with the government acknowledging “a long way to go” for comprehensive coastal security.

## Background and Recent Developments

- In 2023, the National Security Strategy Conference issued guidelines to address seaport security, but implementation and standardization lagged.
- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways formally designated CISF under the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code in November 2025, following recommendations from national consultations.

## Institutional Strengthening and Long-Term Plan

- A Joint Committee of CISF and the Directorate General of Shipping was instituted in 2024 to study vulnerabilities and recommend remedial measures for ports.
- CISF’s expanded role will involve audits and comprehensive review, mirroring its functions at airports—addressing core security while enabling regulatory oversight for port infrastructure.



## Guidelines defining ‘obscenity’ in online content proposed

- The Union Government has proposed amendments to the Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2021 to explicitly define "obscenity" and other prohibited content for digital platforms, including social media, OTT streaming, and digital news outlets.
- The note for the Supreme Court seeks to frame clear guidelines following court directions, advocating comprehensive regulation where previous rules contained only broad restrictions.
- The guidelines would apply to all digital content, broadening the scope beyond earlier rules adapted from the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995.

### Content Definition and Regulatory Expansion

- "Obscene digital content" would be defined to include pornography, paedophilia, privacy invasion, racial or ethnic insult, or harassment, and content relating to money laundering or gambling.
- Legal foundations for the amendment are derived from Section 67 of the IT Act and various broadcasting and media acts.
- The changes mark a substantial regulatory shift, moving from broad restraints to a detailed legislative framework for digital media, with significant implications for platforms and content creators.

### Specific Requirements and Scope

- For OTT platforms, the guidelines require compliance with standards in the Cinematograph Act, 1952 and Public Exhibitions terms, whereas these criteria do not apply to social media content.
- The Code of Ethics associated with IT Rules, previously stalled in court challenges, is now proposed to govern news platforms and curated content (like Netflix, Amazon Prime).
- The expanded definition introduces criminality (e.g., indecent, vulgar, offensive visual groups), extending restraint to a wide array of content that might not have clear legal standing in the past.

### Judicial Challenges and ‘Community Standard Test’

- The proposal responds in part to ongoing litigation, including cases before Delhi and Bombay High Courts about the viability and constitutionality of existing IT rules and codes.
- Decisions related to whether content is "obscene" could now reference the ‘Community Standard Test’ used by the Supreme Court, which evaluates if a piece passes the contemporary community standards for public exhibition.
- The Code would exclude content deemed to have scientific, literary, or artistic value entirely.

### Commentary and Critique

- Experts highlight concerns about overreach and the risk of establishing a de facto content moderation system that could be used to suppress dissent or political speech.
- The amendment follows recent legal controversies involving high-profile cases about social media content alleged to be obscene or in violation of privacy norms.

## COP30 draft text skips mention of fossil fuel use

- The COP30 draft text, released on the last day of the UN climate talks in Belem, Brazil, omitted explicit mention of fossil fuels, creating a key point of contention among participating nations.
- The draft text is a consensus document that guides countries in united climate action, typically shaped by negotiations and released by the COP Presidency—in this case, Brazilian diplomat André Lago.

### Positions of Developing vs Developed Countries

- Over the past 10 days of COP30, developing countries—including some major petro-states—opposed stronger language that would commit all nations to a timeline for phasing out fossil fuels.
- These countries argue that such a timetable could threaten domestic economic interests and development, while developed countries insist such language is critical to keeping global warming under 1.5°C and meeting long-term climate goals.

### Finance and Adaptation Stances

- Developed nations emphasize that effective climate mitigation relies not only on ambitious language but also on robust financial commitments for transitioning away from fossil fuels.
- European Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra noted the need to mobilize both private and public funding for this transition, mirroring targets reached at previous summits.

### Outcome and Ongoing Negotiation

- The plenary session on the draft text is a decisive moment for countries to formally voice their support or objections before finalization.
- There is disappointment among some climate advocates, who argue the text is less ambitious than needed for true adaptation and mitigation results.
- The session highlights enduring fault lines within COP negotiations over the pace and method of fossil fuel transition, as well as financial responsibility for adaptation in developing economies.

### Incident at the Venue

- A fire broke out in the main area of the COP30 venue, prompting swift evacuation and emergency response—thirteen people were treated for smoke inhalation but the situation was safely managed.

### Expert Commentary and Broader Themes

- Indian climate experts stressed the importance of equity, fair rules, and support for developing nations, especially as these countries face climate-linked trade barriers despite not contributing significantly to historical emissions.
- The absence of firm fossil fuel language is interpreted as a signal of unresolved conflict between climate ambition and economic priorities, especially for resource-rich and emerging economies.





PRELIMS CORNER :

1.The Matabari Tourism Circuit which aims to boost cultural, spiritual, and eco-tourism is to be set up in which state?

- (a) Nagaland
- (b) Tripura
- (c) Assam
- (d) Sikkim

2.Ramman is a festival celebrated annually in April during Baisakhi in which of the following states?

- (a) Bihar
- (b) Uttar Pradesh
- (c) Uttarakhand
- (d) Assam

3.Which one of the following gases is the primary cause of Ocean acidification?

- (a) Methane
- (b) Carbon monoxide
- (c) Carbon dioxide
- (d) Sulphur dioxide

4.Which is the only national park that protects endangered Nilgiri tahr?

- (a) Periyar National Park
- (b) Eravikulam National Park
- (c) Kaziranga National Park
- (d) Gir National Park

DETAILED ANSWER KEY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE CHRONICLE PAGE

Emirates airline set to hire hundreds of pilots in 2026

Hiring Plans and Industry Context

- Emirates, based in Dubai, plans to recruit pilots in the "three digits" during the financial year starting April 2026, reflecting a global pilot shortage.
- The airline aims to hire 1,500 pilots in 2025 and 2026 combined, with 550 pilots planned for 2025 alone.
- Emirates has already hired 2,000 pilots between 2022 and 2025 as part of addressing ongoing demand.
- Senior Vice-President Bader Al Marzooqi explained that there is a chronic global shortage of pilots and high demand is expected to continue.

Current Pilot Strength and Competition

- Emirates currently employs 4,800 pilots and has lost pilots in similar numbers to competitors, such as Saudi Arabian Airlines, which recently launched full-service operations.
- The airline maintains a pool of shortlisted pilots ready for upcoming recruitment cycles.

Fleet Expansion and Training Infrastructure

- Emirates has ordered 65 additional Boeing 777X aircraft and 8 Airbus A350-900 planes to expand its fleet, which currently numbers 269 aircraft.
- The airline is investing \$135 million in a new flight crew training center in Dubai covering 63,318 square feet, with plans to expand flight simulators and training infrastructure.

Training Facilities and Simulator Expansion

- Emirates operates 13 simulators, including six Boeing 777-300ER, two Airbus A350, and five A380 units.
- Additional simulators being added include Boeing 777, Airbus A350, and Boeing 777-9 (first of its type), with the 777-9 simulator expected to be operational by mid-2026.
- The aviation sector in the UAE is projected to create more than 20,000 new jobs in the next two years, affecting roles in technical, engineering, customer service, operations, management, and ground handling.
- Aviation is a cornerstone of the UAE's economy, contributing around 15% of Dubai's GDP in 2023, with forecasts to reach 24% by 2030 due to Emirates' ongoing expansion.



## To deter migration, U.K. government proposes new rules for settlement

- The UK government has announced proposed new rules for settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain, ILR), with the intent to deter migration, particularly targeting new arrivals and long-term non-EU migrants.
- The proposals were released shortly after a shake-up of UK asylum laws, reflecting an evolving approach to migration management under the Labour government led by Keir Starmer.

### Key Changes in Settlement Rules

- The default qualifying period for settlement will be doubled from 5 to 10 years; some individuals may face waits of 20 or even 30 years depending on their circumstances, such as receipt of public funds or visa overstay.
- High earners (those earning over £125,140 annually) and entrepreneurs on certain visas (Global Talent, Innovator Founder) could qualify for settlement in just three years.
- Those earning at least £50,270 annually would be eligible after five years.
- All applicants must meet new minimum salary requirements (at least £12,750 per year for three to five years, pending consultation outcomes) and satisfy minimum English standards and tax or government debt criteria.

### Provisions on Public Funds and Dependents

- Migrants who receive public funds could face up to 20 years to qualify for settlement; visa overstayers may wait up to 30 years.
- Adult dependents of economic migrants will need to meet their own qualifying periods and criteria instead of relying only on their partner's status.
- Health and social care workers arriving between 2022 and 2024 may have to wait 15 years for settlement.

### Retrospective Enforcement and Consultation

- The UK government aims to apply these new rules retrospectively, pending final transitional arrangements after the ongoing public consultation (open until February 12).
- The biggest change is the shift to a contributions-based system for ILR qualification.

### Judicial Review and Legal Precedents

- Reference is made to legal challenges from 2008-09, when the UK High Court overturned certain settlement changes for highly skilled migrants based on “legitimate expectation”.
- This clarifies that immigration rule changes are usually enacted by ministerial statement rather than legislation, which can make them less subject to parliamentary or judicial review.

## United States issues an ultimatum to Ukraine

- The US-brokered peace plan comprises 28 points and requires Ukraine to cede territory, accept limits to its military capabilities, and formally renounce any ambitions to join NATO.
- The sources cited indicate that Washington has imposed heavy pressure on Kyiv during earlier negotiations, underscoring the urgency and seriousness of the current ultimatum.
- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed citizens, emphasizing the dilemma facing Ukraine—choosing between national dignity and retaining its vital partnership with the US.
- Zelenskyy’s public response was resolute, stating that he would never betray Ukraine’s interests and pledging to fight for dignity and freedom, despite increasing Russian and Western pressure.
- He referenced continuous efforts (“I will fight 24/7”) to make sure national dignity and sovereignty remain paramount in negotiations and solutions.
- Zelenskyy’s interactions included calls with US and European leaders (Britain, Germany, France) to solicit support and coordinate responses to the ultimatum.

### Details of the US Peace Plan

- The deal includes substantial concessions: Ukraine must cede contested territory, accept limits on its armed forces, and renounce its aspirations to join NATO—aligning with key Russian demands.
- A focus is placed on future NATO-Russia relations, with provisions that Russia will not invade neighboring states in exchange for no further NATO eastward expansion, including a pledge that NATO will not accept Ukraine as a member or station troops in its territory.
- Additionally, the plan outlines future economic arrangements, where the US will receive 50% of profits from investments in Ukraine’s reconstruction, using frozen Russian assets.

### International and European Reactions

- There is divided views among European allies, with many insisting on meaningful Ukrainian participation in finalizing the agreement, highlighting the stakes for Europe in both regional security and economic futures.
- EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas is quoted arguing that Russia has no legal right to concessions from invaded countries, positioning the EU as prioritizing Ukrainian agency and rights.

### Broader Security and Geopolitical Implications

- The US is attempting to stabilize security arrangements and wider economic opportunities in Eastern Europe through this compromise, seeking to prevent further conflict and geopolitical escalation with Russia.



# Despite shortages of food, medicine Cuba fights a deadly virus outbreak

## Outbreak and Shortages

- Cuba is experiencing an outbreak of chikungunya, a mosquito-borne viral disease, during its worst economic crisis in decades, causing severe shortages of clean water, food, fuel, and medicine.
- Residents are forced to manage the disease's symptoms, such as pain and fever, without access to basic medications, as common painkillers like paracetamol are not available in pharmacies.
- The crisis is exacerbated by lack of food and medicine, making it especially difficult for vulnerable populations like the elderly.

## Spread and Impact

- The virus was first reported in Cuba's Matanzas province in July and has rapidly spread to 15 of Cuba's provinces, affecting its 9.7 million population.
- More than 47,000 cases have already been diagnosed, with recent infections doubling from the previous week, and nearly a third of the population infected according to health ministry officials.
- Patients are often advised to "ride it out" due to the absence of effective medical or pharmaceutical support.

## Worsening Conditions

- The outbreak has spiraled out of control, worsened by "lack of hygiene, accumulated garbage," and widespread practice of storing water in tanks due to intermittent tap supply.
- Past successes in containing similar outbreaks—in 2014, Cuba managed to contain a similar epidemic—are difficult to replicate due to current healthcare system constraints.

## Broader Challenges and External Factors

- US sanctions and consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic have devastated Cuba's economy, reducing foreign currency inflows and undermining resources for public health, including mosquito fumigation.
- Cuba's medical expertise, once a source of international pride and resilience, is now stretched thin, with epidemic control programs suffering from lack of funding and supplies.

# Poland's battle to fix its justice system holds wider lessons for other nations

- Donald Tusk's government came to power aiming to reverse years of nationalist PiS party (Law and Justice) control over Poland's judiciary, which had stacked courts with friendly judges and consolidated control using disciplinary actions and judicial appointments.
- The PiS-aligned President has refused to accommodate these changes, resulting in a tense power struggle and constitutional stand-off.
- Under PiS rule (2015–2023), Poland's tribunal and judicial process were deeply politicized, with the President sending cases to constitutional review to block reforms, and European courts consistently challenging these moves.
- The legacy of PiS dominance remains embedded, even as Tusk's coalition pushes to restore judicial independence and neutralize "friendly" judges appointed by PiS.

## Reform Attempts and Obstacles

- Tusk appointed Adam Bodnar as Justice Minister to begin reform but replaced him with Waldemar Żurek—a more confrontational figure known for challenging PiS changes—when progress stalled.
- Żurek announced a tougher stance, pushing legal action against PiS-aligned officials and promising to expose corruption, notably involving surveillance tools like Pegasus used on political opponents.
- Żurek's approach involves both legislative reforms, which require Presidential approval, and more direct action in courts and prosecutorial investigations.

## Wider Lessons and Implications

- Poland's crisis illustrates challenges faced by other democracies in reversing "illiberal" judicial takeovers (e.g., Hungary, Turkey), where courts and legal systems are systematically politicized.
- This argues that undoing such legacies is slow and difficult—with legal uncertainty, continued obstruction by entrenched actors, and the risk of backsliding if nationalists return to power.
- International experts and Polish reformers emphasize the need for external vigilance, constitutional safeguards, and support from EU and international partners in sustaining genuine rule-of-law reforms.

## Current Status and Prognosis

- Tusk's coalition is advancing judicial reforms, but faces steady political and legal resistance, with possible scenarios hinging on results of next presidential elections and whether PiS regains sufficient power to reassert its old model.
- Żurek's campaign for "truth" and accountability is tied to public trust and the future coherence of Poland's legal system, but results are far from guaranteed.



# Prelims Corner: Explanations

Q1. Ans **b**

To transform Tripura into a vibrant hub of cultural, spiritual and eco-tourism by connecting key heritage and nature sites across the state. The project forms part of the Prime Minister Modi's vision of transforming Northeast India into a vibrant global tourism hub. It is a 4-night, 5-day itinerary designed to showcase Tripura's rich cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and spiritual landmarks. It includes: Agartala – the state capital and gateway to Tripura; Neer Mahal – a stunning lake palace blending Hindu and Mughal architecture; Sepahijala – known for its wildlife sanctuary and botanical gardens; Udaipur – home to the revered Tripura Sundari Temple (Matabari) Chabimura – famous for its rock carvings on steep hill faces; Dumboor Lake – a picturesque spot with islands and boating options

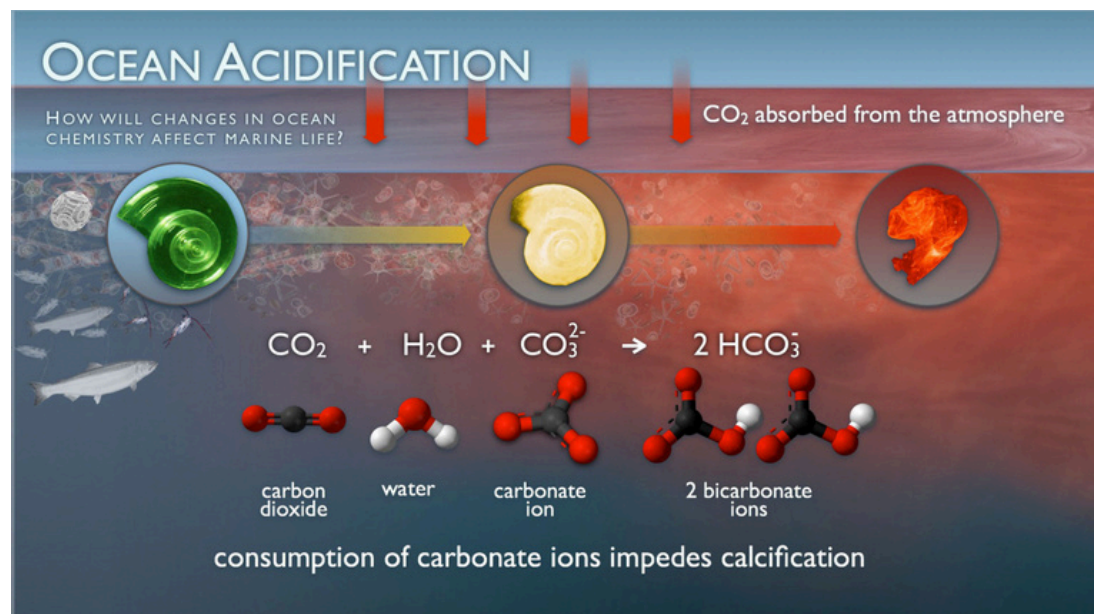


Q2. Ans **c**

Ramman is a festival celebrated annually in April during Baisakhi at the twin villages of Saloor-Dungra in Uttarakhand's Chamoli. It is a unique blend of ritual, theatre, music, and dance, deeply rooted in the local traditions of the Garhwal Himalayas. Community - It is dedicated to the custodial god, Bhumiya Devta, a local divinity whose temple houses most of the festivities. The festival involves theatrical performances of the Ramayana and local legends, in which people sing songs and wear masks while dancing. There are 18 different types of masks made of Bhojpatra, Himalayan birch, that performers wear during the event, represent different deities and mythological figures.

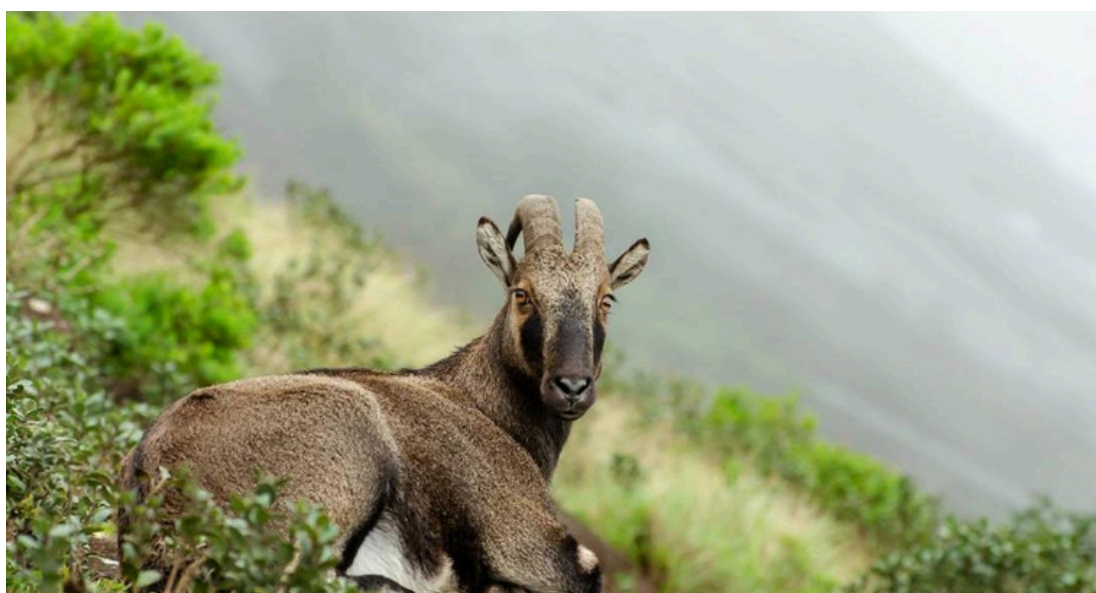
Q3. Ans **c**

The primary cause of ocean acidification is carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). When increased amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere dissolve in seawater, it reacts with water to form carbonic acid, which lowers the ocean's pH, making it more acidic. Most of the increased CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is due to burning fossil fuels for energy production and transportation. Ocean acidification can negatively affect many marine organisms, particularly those with calcium carbonate shells or skeletons, as it can make it difficult for them to build and maintain their structures.



Q4. Ans **b**

Eravikulam National Park is the only national park that primarily protects the endangered Nilgiri tahr. It is home to the largest population of Nilgiri tahrs in the world. The park was established to protect the indigenous population of the Nilgiri tahr, which is an endangered mountain goat species. It is located in the Western Ghats of Kerala and is a critical stronghold for the species' conservation. The park was declared a sanctuary in 1975 and upgraded to a National Park in 1978, specifically with the objective of protecting the Nilgiri tahr population.







Japanese local authorities approved the restart of the world's biggest nuclear plant on Friday for the first time since the 2011 Fukushima disaster. The plant was taken offline when Japan pulled the plug on nuclear power after a colossal earthquake and tsunami sent three reactors at the Fukushima atomic plant into meltdown in 2011. However, the resource-poor nation now wants to revive atomic energy to reduce its heavy dependence on fossil fuels, achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and meet growing energy needs from artificial intelligence. Fourteen reactors, mostly in western and southern regions, have resumed operation since the post-Fukushima shutdown after strict safety standards were imposed. The 400-hectare (1,000-acre) Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant on the Sea of Japan coast facing the Korean peninsula would be the first restart for Fukushima operator Tepco since the disaster. The huge facility in central Japan has been fitted out with a 15-metre (50-foot) wall in case of tsunamis, new power backup systems on higher ground and other measures. Before the 2011 quake and tsunami, which killed around 18,000 people, nuclear power generated about a third of Japan's electricity, with fossil fuels contributing most of the rest.



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