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India-Russia friendship like the pole star: PM

Appreciating Russian President Vladimir Putin for taking the India-Russia relationship to "new heights" over the past quarter of a century, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid out an expansive canvas of energy and trade collaborations between the two countries, stretching to 2030. Addressing the media after bilateral talks at Hyderabad House on Friday, Mr. Modi described the India Russia friendship as a "pole star" and called for a peaceful solution to Russia's war with Ukraine.



Mr. Putin's visit has attracted global attention as it comes months after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed punitive tariffs on India for purchasing Russian energy. Mr. Trump described his move as a tactic to push Russia to the negotiating table on Ukraine. The India-Russia joint statement also made an extensive reference to energy security, noting "the current and potential cooperation between Indian and Russian companies in fields such as oil and oil products, oil refining and petrochemical technologies, oil field services and upstream technologies and related infrastructure." Both sides have also agreed to resolve the challenges faced by their "investors in the energy sector". Referring to the Kudankulam power plant as the "largest nuclear reactor of India", Mr. Putin announced that Russia is also willing to collaborate with India for small modular nuclear reactors. The two sides signed sixteen MoUs covering areas such as the mobility of semi-skilled workers, fertilizers, media, and academic collaboration. India and Russia committed to "regular bilateral consultations" on "Arctic related issues" and welcomed the progress made in multi-faceted bilateral cooperation on the Northern Sea route.



French President Emmanuel Macron, right, and his wife, Brigitte Macron, with Chinese President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, during a visit to the Dujiangyan site, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site, in southwestern China's Sichuan province.



Simone Tata, who is remembered for her pivotal role in shaping Lakme into India's leading

cosmetics brand and for laying the foundation of modern fashion retail in the country through the creation of the Westside chain, passed away on Friday, at Mumbai's Breach Candy Hospital after a brief illness. Born in 1930 in Geneva, Switzerland, Simone Tata studied at Geneva University before coming to India in 1953, where she met Naval H. Tata, Ratan Tata's father.

Election Commission extends SIR schedule of Kerala by one week

Election Commission of India (EC) has extended the schedule for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Kerala by one week to accommodate local body election timelines and administrative constraints.

Key decision and reason

- The EC has lengthened the SIR schedule for Kerala by one week, primarily to give more time for the submission of enumeration forms and completion of related procedures needed for the electoral roll revision.
- This extension follows a request from the Government of Kerala submitted on 3 December, which the EC considered in light of the Supreme Court's permission to extend such deadlines.

Impact on Kerala's revision and polls

- Kerala's local body elections are scheduled in two phases on 9 and 11 December, so the EC's adjustment is meant to avoid a clash between ongoing electoral roll revision work and actual polling preparations.
- Draft rolls in Kerala will now be published on 23 December, final rolls on 21 February, and the enumeration phase will conclude on 18 December, reshaping the earlier timetable but keeping the election dates intact.

National SIR exercise and coverage

- SIR is a nationwide exercise covering about 51 crore voters, aiming to update and correct voter lists that were last comprehensively revised between 2002 and 2004 in most states.
- Many states have almost completed mapping their current electors based on that earlier SIR, and the present exercise seeks to bring the rolls up to date ahead of upcoming electoral cycles.

States and Union Territories involved

- Twelve States and Union Territories are specifically named as being under this SIR exercise: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Revised timelines outside Kerala

- For States and Union Territories other than Kerala, the enumeration phase will now continue till 11 December instead of 4 December, the draft electoral rolls will be out on 16 December, and the final rolls will be published on 14 February.

'Reworking' procedures to resume MGNREGS in West Bengal: Centre informs RS

- Union Ministry of Rural Development has begun "reworking and refining" modalities and procedures with the stated aim of resuming Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) implementation in West Bengal, as informed to the Rajya Sabha.
- Minister of State Kamlesh Paswan gave this information in a written reply to a question by Trinamool Congress MP Derek O'Brien, indicating that the issue has become a prominent point of contention between the State and the Centre and is being formally contested in Parliament.
- The Centre had stopped releasing MGNREGS funds to West Bengal in March 2022, invoking Section 27 of the Act and citing continued non-compliance by the State with Central directives, framing the stoppage as a legal and procedural response rather than a purely political decision.
- In June 2023, the Calcutta High Court ordered the resumption of MGNREGS in the State, but the Union government appealed to the Supreme Court, which in October stayed the High Court's order, thereby keeping the fund freeze effectively in place while the legal dispute continues.
- This highlights that, before the stoppage in 2022, West Bengal was counted among the top-performing States under MGNREGS, suggesting that the suspension hit a region where demand for and use of the scheme had been relatively strong.
- According to the Centre's own figures cited in the article, New Delhi owes West Bengal ₹3,082.52 crore under MGNREGS, of which ₹1,457.22 crore corresponds specifically to wages for completed work by registered workers; this underscores the scale of pending liabilities and the immediate impact on rural workers' incomes.
- Trinamool Congress leaders describe the fund stoppage as a "vindictive regime" move, accusing the Centre of starving an entire State of legally due funds to settle political scores, thereby reframing what the Centre presents as a compliance issue into a debate about federalism and misuse of fiscal powers..
- At the all-India level, the Ministry informed the Rajya Sabha that nearly 80% of the allocated MGNREGS funds for FY 2025-26 have already been spent with about four months left in the year, signalling high demand for the scheme nationwide and raising concerns about adequacy of remaining funds.
- The budget allocation for MGNREGS for that year is stated as ₹86,000 crore, of which almost ₹68,400 crore has been used, suggesting continued central commitment to the scheme overall even as West Bengal's share remains blocked, thereby sharpening the contrast between national implementation and the State-specific impasse.

Govt. to streamline its public communications framework

- Union government has initiated a broad revamp of its information network, aiming to reorganise human resources and upgrade technological infrastructure so that official communication becomes quicker, more coordinated and data-driven.
- The core objective is to build real-time media response mechanisms and improve campaign planning, thereby creating a more streamlined and centrally managed public communications framework across ministries and departments.
- In the near term, the intake of Indian Information Service (IIS) officers is expected to rise significantly because the number of departments and functions requiring professional communication support has increased.
- A major element of the reform is the proposed restructuring of the IIS cadre, which is already at an advanced stage of consideration, suggesting changes in hierarchy, deployment and career patterns to better align with contemporary media ecosystems.
- The government is also considering setting up a Board on media communications that would provide overarching guidance on outreach strategy and could additionally be empowered to take decisions on transfers and postings of IIS officers, centralising control over communication personnel.
- As part of an integrated “unified outreach plan”, officials indicate that more IIS officers will be inducted to serve the growing communication needs of ministries, while simultaneously rationalising and standardising how information is disseminated to the public and media.
- Another notable move under consideration is the creation of new communication posts in more than 40 Indian embassies abroad, with the aim of strengthening India’s public diplomacy and messaging in foreign capitals through dedicated information professionals.
- Overall, government has framed these steps as an attempt to build a cohesive, professional and technologically enabled government communication architecture that can respond rapidly to news cycles, manage narratives, and project a consistent message both domestically and internationally.

Lok Sabha passes Bill to levy a special cess on pan masala

1. Lok Sabha has passed the Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025, which introduces a special cess on pan masala to raise additional resources for public health and national security expenditure.
2. This new cess will replace the existing GST compensation cess on pan masala, reshaping the tax structure for this product while remaining embedded within the broader GST framework.
3. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman states that the revenue from the cess will be shared with the States, arguing that this is appropriate since public health is constitutionally a State subject and States bear a substantial part of the health-related spending burden.
4. The cess will be calculated on the production capacity of machines in pan masala manufacturing units rather than on actual output or traditional ad-valorem excise, addressing what the government describes as difficulties in effectively taxing this sector under conventional methods.
5. Sitharaman explains that pan masala already falls in the highest GST slab of 28%, and that the new Health and National Security Cess will operate over and above this rate, specifically to fund security and health priorities without altering the base GST structure.
6. The Bill’s articulated purpose is to create a “dedicated and predictable resource stream” for two core domains of national importance—health systems and national security capabilities—so that these expenditures are not overly dependent on general revenue.
7. Initially, the cess is confined to pan masala, but the legislation gives the government the power to extend the cess to other goods in the future through notification if fiscal or public health considerations so require.
8. This notes that the cess as a share of gross tax revenue currently stands at about 6.1%, which Sitharaman contrasts with levels above 7% during 2010–2014, implying that the government views the new levy as fiscally manageable within historical norms.
9. Politically and economically, the measure targets a product associated with negative health externalities, allowing the Centre to justify the cess as both a “sin tax” and a means of bolstering security spending, while also offering States a share of the proceeds to secure broader support.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1.The term “Auramine” recently seen in news is?

- (a) A dormant Volcano
- (b) Nuclear Submarine
- (c) Malware used in cyberattacks
- (d) A banned hazardous dye used as food additive

2.According to the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India, the expression “Scheduled Areas” means such areas as declared by:

- (a) President
- (b) Parliament
- (c) Governor of a state
- (d) State legislature

3.Hayli Gubbi volcano recently seen in news located at?

- (a) Ethiopia
- (b) Eritrea
- (c) Kenya
- (d) Tanzania

4.The Changthang plateau of Ladakh region is known for the production of:

- (a) Saffron
- (b) Pashmina Wool
- (c) Golden Silk
- (d) Wheat

DETAILED ANSWER KEY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE CHRONICLE PAGE

Judges are conscious, won't let AI overpower judicial process: SC

1. Supreme Court hearing on a petition about the dangers of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in judicial work, where the Court stressed that judges are fully conscious—and even “overconscious”—about the risks and will not allow AI tools to overpower or replace the judicial decision-making process.
2. Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud (through Justice Surya Kant in this Bench) indicates that while courts may use technology for assistance, they reject any notion of “robotic systems” taking over adjudication, reinforcing that human judges remain central to interpreting law and evaluating facts.
3. The petition, filed by advocate Kartikeya Rawal and argued by senior advocate Anupam Lal Das and Abhinav Shrivastava, seeks either a policy or detailed guidelines to regulate the use of GenAI in courts, tribunals and quasi-judicial bodies, emphasizing transparency, security and uniform use where AI is deployed.
4. Petitioners warn that GenAI's capacity to use neural networks and unsupervised learning to generate new data and automate complex processes can lead to “hallucinations,” including fake case law, biased outputs and unnecessarily lengthy observations, which could culminate in fictitious or misleading judgments.
5. The Court highlights that judicial officers and lawyers have a responsibility to independently verify any AI-generated citations or research and must not blindly rely on lower-court decisions that mis-cite non-existent Supreme Court precedents, using the incident as a reminder for the Bar to cross-check authorities.
6. The article notes that the CJI-led e-courts and judicial training initiatives are already engaging with these issues, suggesting that capacity-building efforts are underway to help judges and staff understand AI's limitations and prevent misuse in legal drafting or research.
7. The petition also raises constitutional and human-rights concerns, arguing that unregulated AI and machine-learning technologies in the justice system could compromise due process, particularly if opaque models produce outcomes that cannot be adequately explained or challenged by affected parties.
8. A key worry outlined is that AI-driven hallucinations might fabricate precedents, leading to rulings “based on a law that might not even exist,” which would erode legal certainty and accountability; hence the plea for strict norms governing data ownership, bias mitigation and liability for erroneous outputs.
9. AI systems trained on historically biased data (for example, policing or sentencing records) can reproduce or amplify discrimination against certain groups, undermining fairness and potentially violating constitutional guarantees of equality and due process.

Significance of DRDO's recent fighter pilot ejection test

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Tuesday (December 2) conducted a successful high-speed rocket-sled test of a fighter aircraft escape system at controlled velocity. The technical achievement places India in an elite club of nations with advanced in-house escape system testing capability.

- The test was conducted in collaboration with the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) of the Ministry of Defence and public sector entity Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). It was carried out at the Rail Track Rocket Sled (RTRS) facility of the Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL), a key DRDO facility in Chandigarh.
- Dynamic ejection tests are significantly more complex than static tests, which occur with the aircraft stationary or at zero altitude and zero speed. They are also considered the true measure of evaluating the pilot's escape aid, such as ejection seats and canopy severance systems.
- This is a highly sensitive mechanism, and pilot survival depends on timing, down to the millisecond.
- At high speeds, pilots experience extreme aerodynamic forces. Emergency ejections can happen under a variety of circumstances — low or high altitude, zero or supersonic speed, during aircraft spin, or even inverted flight. The safety systems must function perfectly across all these conditions, which makes testing critical.
- The pilot's body is exposed to forces at a massive scale, and wrong sequencing can cause serious injuries. Thus, safety testing under flight-like conditions is critical to meet global safety standards

Strategic importance of indigenous pilot safety tests

- The successful test of India's indigenous fighter aircraft escape system represents a major strategic milestone. Escape systems are among the most safety-critical components of a combat aircraft, and their reliability directly affects pilot survivability during emergencies.
- Until now, India has had to rely upon test ecosystems abroad to evaluate the performance of the ejection mechanisms. Sources have said that the indigenous tests cost between one-fourth and one-fifth as much as the tests conducted abroad.
- Officials said that possessing an in-house dynamic ejection-testing facility boosts India's ability to design, certify, and upgrade ejection systems for both current and future fighter platforms. A DRDO scientist said that this not only reduces dependence on foreign testing facilities but also significantly shortens development cycles.
- Moreover, the ability to simulate real-world emergency conditions using instrumented anthropomorphic dummies provides India with valuable insights into pilot safety parameters such as loads, accelerations, and impact forces.
- Notably, TBRL has had an RTRS since 2014, which can test defence and aerospace systems at supersonic speeds (exceeding the speed of sound). Earlier in February, drogue parachutes of Gaganyaan, India's planned crewed orbital spacecraft, were successfully tested at the RTRS facility of the TBRL in Chandigarh.
- The test involved the simultaneous firing of two drogue parachutes to simulate deployment at the maximum angle of attack of the crew module during descent. The escape system testing facility, which includes high-speed cameras and state-of-the-art measurement mechanisms, was developed over the last year.



Cheaper loans likely as repo rate cut by 25 bps

1. This reports that the Monetary Policy

Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India has unanimously cut the policy repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.25%, with immediate effect, signalling the first easing move after a period of stable rates.

2. This decision is framed against data showing

strong real GDP growth of 8.2% in Q2 FY 2025-26 and rapid disinflation, with average headline inflation falling to 1.7%, below the lower tolerance band of 2% in the RBI's inflation-targeting framework, and dipping even further to 0.3% in October 2025.

3. Following the repo cut, the standing deposit

facility and liquidity adjustment facility rates are adjusted downward, and the marginal standing facility and bank rate are set at 5.5%, meaning borrowing costs for banks across the liquidity corridor fall in tandem.

4. This explains that lower policy rates are

expected to translate into cheaper loans for households and firms as banks reduce lending rates, while deposit rates may also ease, thereby affecting both borrowers and savers.

5. RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra (through the

MPC statement) notes that the stance remains "neutral," implying that future rate moves will depend on incoming data and that the central bank is not committing in advance to a sustained easing cycle.

6. On the rationale, the MPC emphasises that

inflation has eased significantly amid subdued food prices, benign core inflation and falling global commodity prices, while growth momentum remains resilient, helped by government capex, festive-season demand and GST-driven formalisation.

7. This highlights that India's economy is

currently in what the Governor calls a "rare goldilocks period," combining strong real GDP growth with low and stable inflation, which provides room for a calibrated rate cut without jeopardising macroeconomic stability.

8. At the same time, the MPC signals it will watch

for risks such as any rebound in food or fuel prices, external shocks or financial stability concerns, suggesting that subsequent policy decisions could either pause, reverse, or extend easing depending on how these factors evolve.

RBI to conduct OMO purchases of 1 lakh cr. G-Secs for liquidity

- Given the evolving liquidity conditions and its macro outlook, the Reserve Bank of India has announced Open Market Operation (OMO) purchases of government securities worth ₹1 lakh crore to inject durable liquidity into the banking system.
- In addition, the RBI plans a three-year USD/INR buy-sell swap of 5 billion dollars during the month, which functions as a liquidity-neutral foreign-exchange operation aimed at managing rupee liquidity without signalling a directional view on the currency.
- The central bank has also separately notified phased purchases of G-Secs worth ₹50,000 crore on December 11 and another ₹50,000 crore later in the month, indicating that liquidity support will be staggered rather than front-loaded.
- Governor Sanjay Malhotra emphasises that the RBI remains committed to providing sufficient durable liquidity so that banks can seamlessly meet credit demand, manage payments and settlements, and maintain smooth market functioning.
- On the exchange-rate side, Malhotra notes that the RBI is "comfortable" with the current rupee level and has factored in global dollar strength into its projections, stressing that the dollar-rupee swap is purely a liquidity management tool and not an attempt to defend any particular rate.
- He points out that India's foreign-exchange reserves are adequate, with the current account described as manageable, and argues that strong domestic fundamentals should continue to support capital inflows and limit external vulnerability.
- Responding to a query on the impact of recent U.S. tariff hikes on Indian exports, the Governor assesses the effect as "mostly minimal," explaining that demand for most of the affected products—such as textiles, leather, shrimp, jewellery and engineering goods—remains robust and that India retains external competitiveness.
- Taken together, the OMO purchases, FX swap, and RBI's comfort with the rupee signal a proactive strategy to keep money markets liquid and stable while cushioning the economy against external shocks without resorting to abrupt policy shifts.
- Open Market Operations (OMOs) are market operations conducted by RBI by way of sale/purchase of government securities to/from the market with an objective to adjust the rupee liquidity conditions in the market on a durable basis.
- If there is excess liquidity, RBI resorts to sale of securities and sucks out the rupee liquidity.
- Similarly, when the liquidity conditions are tight, RBI buys securities from the market, thereby releasing liquidity into the market.
- It is one of the quantitative (to regulate or control the total volume of money) monetary policy tools which is employed by the central bank of a country to control the money supply in the economy.

Taiwan, Japan voice concern over Chinese military movements

- Taiwan and Japan have publicly expressed concern over recent Chinese military movements in East Asian waters, following information that Beijing has deployed a large number of naval and coast-guard vessels in what is described as its biggest maritime show of force in years.
- at one point more than 100 Chinese ships were operating across East Asian waters, including areas stretching from the Yellow Sea down through the Taiwan Strait to the South China Sea and Western Pacific, signalling a broad operational footprint rather than a narrow Taiwan-centric deployment.
- Taiwanese presidential spokesperson Karen Kuo characterises these activities as a threat to regional peace and stability, stressing that they affect not only the Taiwan Strait but the wider Indo-Pacific, and calling on China to act responsibly and exercise restraint befitting a major power.
- Taiwan President Lai Ching-te is quoted as instructing security forces to maintain full situational awareness, provide timely updates and preserve communication with unspecified “friendly partners,” underscoring Taipei’s intent to coordinate with regional and extra-regional allies to manage any escalation.
- On the Japanese side, Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi indicates that Tokyo is closely monitoring the Chinese deployments “with great attention,” reflecting Japan’s strategic anxiety about Chinese naval activity near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and along sea lanes critical for its security and trade, though he refrains from detailing specific counter-measures.
- Overall, this frames China’s maritime build-up as a demonstration of power that heightens tensions across several interconnected flashpoints—the Taiwan Strait, East China Sea and South China Sea—while prompting Taiwan and Japan to signal resolve, seek international support and emphasise the need for restraint to preserve Indo-Pacific stability.

Survivors pick up pieces in flood-hit Indonesia as more rain is predicted

1. Survivors across Indonesia are attempting to rebuild their lives after catastrophic floods and landslides that have killed more than 1,600 people across five countries in the region, with Indonesia suffering the highest toll and fresh heavy rain still forecast.
2. Indonesia’s official death toll has risen to 867 with 521 people still missing, and the piece notes that Aceh province on Sumatra island has been particularly devastated, with more than 8 lakh people displaced, while neighbouring Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia have also recorded significant casualties.
3. Individual testimonies from affected residents in Sumatra convey the scale of destruction: homes filled with mud “up to the ceiling”, possessions ruined, and people sheltering in schools or temporary camps, with some warning that full recovery from the deluge could take more than a year.
4. Aid agencies report that roads and bridges remain cut off in many remote areas, severely hampering relief operations, and that in some Sumatra provinces the flooded area is larger than the territory of Bangladesh, underscoring the geographical breadth of the disaster.
5. Indonesia’s meteorological agency warns of the likelihood of “very heavy rain” continuing through at least Saturday, placing North and West Sumatra and other regions at further risk and raising fears of additional floods and landslides on already saturated terrain.
6. Humanitarian organisations quoted in the article emphasise that the impact of the floods is “widespread,” with huge numbers at risk of food insecurity and disease outbreaks as clean water, shelter and medical services remain inadequate, making this one of the region’s most severe natural disasters in recent history.



Prelims Corner: Explanations

Q1. Ans d

Auramine O – It is a synthetic yellow dye, produced from compounds such as dimethylaniline and formaldehyde. The dye appears as yellow flakes or powder and dissolves easily when mixed with solvents. Used in – Industry, including textile and leather processing, printing inks, paper manufacturing, etc. Banned for food use – It is bright in colour, easily available and low-cost, yet remains unapproved for use as a food additive. International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) – classifies auramine as a substance that is possibly carcinogenic to humans. Commonly found in – Sweets, turmeric powder, and street food snacks, gives a bright yellow hue that looks more appealing to consumers.

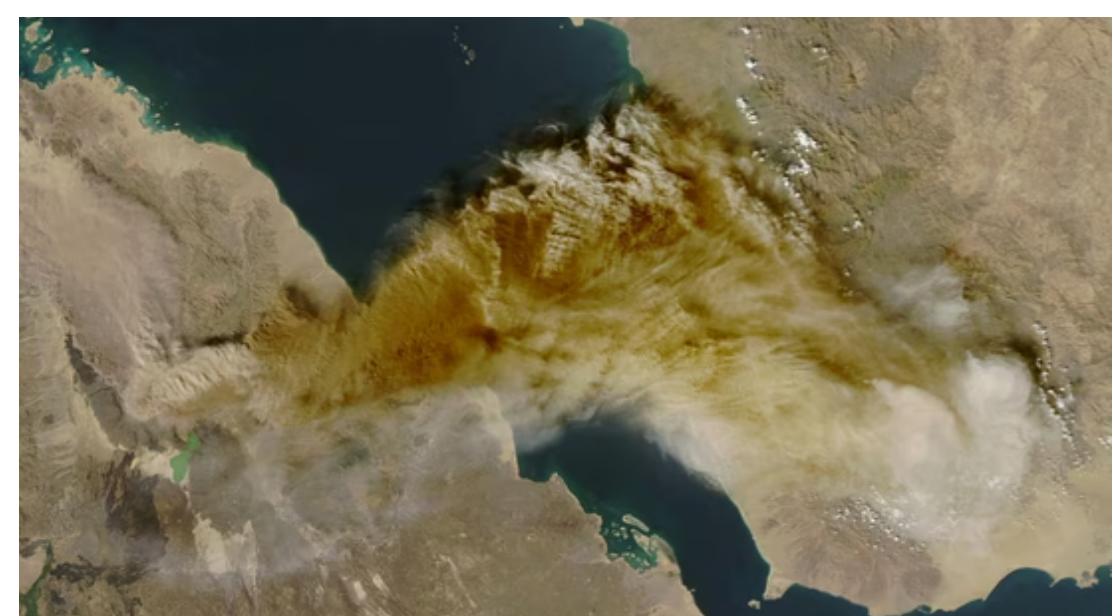


Q2. Ans a

Article 244 in Part X of the Constitution of India envisages a special system of administration for certain areas designated as 'Scheduled Areas' and 'Tribal Areas'. In the Constitution of India, the expression "Scheduled Areas" means such areas as the President may by order declare to be Scheduled Areas. The President is empowered to declare an area to be a scheduled area. He can also increase or decrease its area, alter its boundary lines, rescind such designation or make fresh orders for such re designation on an area in consultation with the Governor of the State concerned. Recently, the Supreme Court has held that Parliamentary or State law wouldn't apply to Scheduled Areas only if the Governor notifies so.

Q3. Ans a

Ethiopia's Hayli Gubbi volcano , dormant for over 12,000 years, erupted, sending a massive ash cloud across the Red Sea and South Asia. The thick ash cloud reached India, resulting in the diversion of several flights. **Type and Location:** Hayli Gubbi is a shield volcano in Afar, Ethiopia, part of the Erta Ale Range. Situated at the edge of the East African Rift, where the African and Arabian plates are slowly diverging. Shield volcanoes are broad, gently sloping, formed by thin, fluid lava flows. Eruptions are usually less explosive, with lava spreading wide like a warrior's shield.



Q4. Ans b

The Changthang plateau of the Ladakh region is primarily known for the production of Pashmina wool. This fine cashmere wool is sourced from the undercoat of a specific breed of goat known as the Changthangi or Changra goat, which is native to the high-altitude region. The local nomadic community, the Changpa tribe, are semi-nomadic pastoralists who have herded these goats, along with sheep and yaks, for centuries. Their livelihood and the regional economy are largely dependent on the trade of this world-class fiber.



Case Study:



Mining waste taints DR Congo communities

Global powers, notably China and the United States, are in a race to extract strategic minerals in the DRC, which supplies more than 70% of the world's cobalt, essential for making electric batteries and weaponry. But human rights groups say the mining operations are resulting in severe environmental damage in the mineral-rich nation. Carrying her sore-pocked daughter across her decaying field, Helene Mvubu says she is one of thousands to have fallen victim to the toxic waste defiling the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) mining capital. Ms. Mvubu said that she has for years suffered the consequences of flooding from contaminated water discharged by Congo Dongfang International Mining (CDM), a Chinese company that processes copper and cobalt ore in the outskirts of Lubumbashi, capital of the mineral-rich Katanga province in the southeastern DRC. "The food we prepare becomes bitter, our water sources are polluted," said the farmer as she walked across her plot, where the sugarcane has turned yellow with disease. The extent of the pollution is unknown. But when it rains, red water can be seen gushing out from four drainage points under the enclosure. Outrage over the flooding forced Congolese authorities to act by suspending the site's activities and appointing an investigative commission.

In a symbolic gesture reflecting India's rich cultural heritage, Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented Russian President Vladimir Putin with a curated set of gifts during his visit to New Delhi. The offerings included Assam Black Tea, a Murshidabad silver tea set, a handcrafted silver horse, a marble chess set from Agra, Kashmiri saffron, and a Russian translation of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. The project traces back to the 2019 SCO Summit in Bishkek, where Modi proposed translating ten contemporary Indian literary works into SCO languages. Despite pandemic disruptions, India completed these translations during its SCO Chairmanship, making Indian thought accessible across Central Asia and Russia.

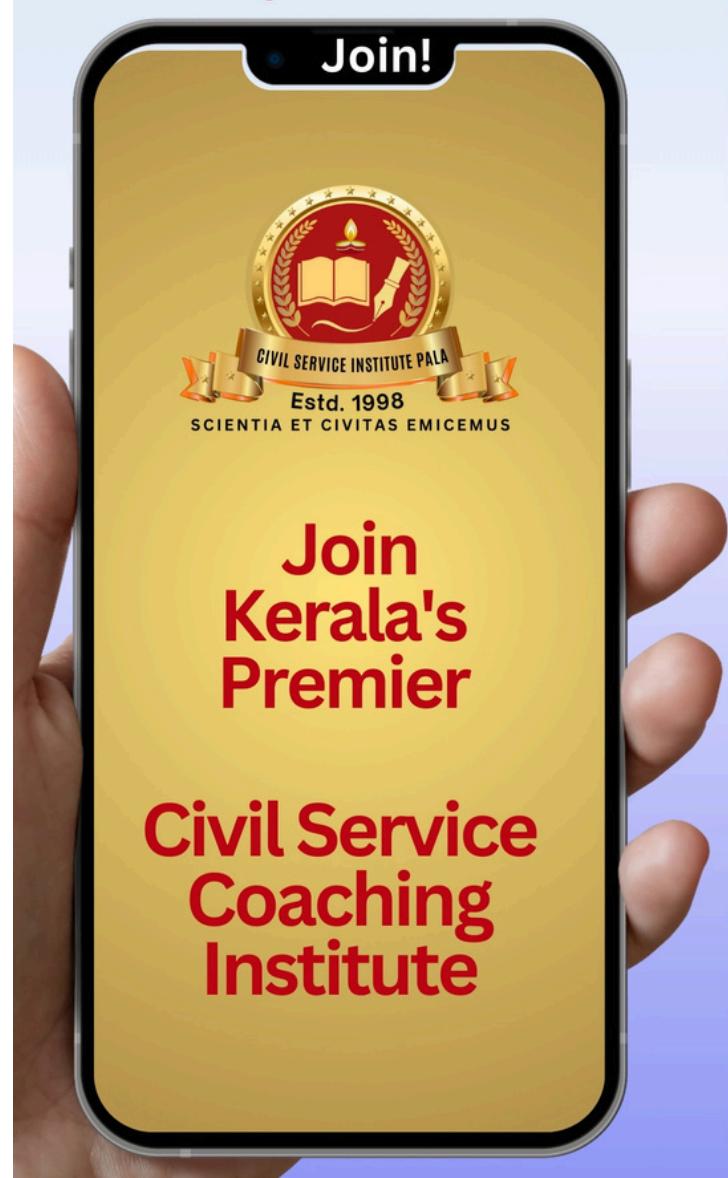


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“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.
Nothing can be done without hope and
confidence.”

Helen Keller