

P2. NATIONAL



M.H. State govt. to test drivers on ‘working knowledge’ of Marathi - move to make Marathi proficiency a condition for auto and taxi drivers raises questions of migrant livelihoods and State language policy.

P3 NATIONAL



Operation Toofan: Kerala's Anti-Drug Campaign - Kerala's anti-drug drive combines strict action against traffickers with community mobilisation and rehabilitation.

P4. WORLD



India to build hospital in West Bank; seeks to deploy field hospital in Gaza - India strengthens its developmental and humanitarian partnership with Palestine while reaffirming support for a negotiated two-state solution.

P7. ECOLOGY



Amazon Rainforest Regeneration: Role of Pioneer Species - Research shows that a small group of resilient pioneer species drives early Amazon forest recovery, offering valuable insights for ecosystem restoration and carbon sequestration.

Editor's Note

Another edition of the Pala Civil Times brings together a diverse set of developments that reflect how governments and societies are responding to some of today's most pressing challenges. Our National Page looks at State-level efforts to address drug abuse, promote the use of regional languages among the working class, and expand industrial activity while safeguarding essential drinking-water needs.

Turning to the International Page, we examine a turbulent West Asia, where India continues to advocate a two-state solution while extending medical assistance to Palestine. At the same time, tensions between Iran and the UAE are deepening, with Tehran warning that States supporting the U.S. could become part of the wider conflict.

Our Decoded Editorials shift the focus from events to the institutions and principles shaping them. We examine the legal limits of regulatory intervention in tackling surrogate advertising, while also looking beneath the Jharkhand protests to understand the institutional weaknesses affecting public examinations and the need for a fairer transition into public employment.

Our Ecology Page, meanwhile, turns to the Amazon rainforest, highlighting the often-overlooked but crucial role of pioneer species in enabling the regeneration of degraded forest landscapes.

We hope this edition helps our readers connect these developments to the broader questions they raise. Happy reading!

Editorials Decoded



Due diligence



The Maharashtra FDA's action against celebrity endorsements highlights the challenge of curbing indirect tobacco promotion while ensuring evidence-based regulation and endorser accountability.



Cancel with caution, livelihoods are at stake



The cancellation of the JSSC-CGL examination exposes the tension between tackling recruitment malpractice and protecting candidates who secured government jobs fairly.

State govt. to test drivers on 'working knowledge' of Marathi from today

The Maharashtra Transport Department has begun enforcing Marathi language proficiency for autorickshaw and taxi drivers. Around 1.65 lakh drivers obtained proficiency certificates recently. Drivers found lacking proficiency will initially receive one month to learn Marathi. Continued non-compliance can lead to suspension of the PSV badge/licence, followed by cancellation/permanent suspension.

Rationale behind the move : The government argues that drivers need basic Marathi to understand destinations, directions, fares and routine communication with passengers. Driver associations have opposed immediate enforcement, arguing that the measure could threaten livelihoods, particularly of migrant and older drivers, and could create scope for harassment and corruption during testing.

Why is it Significant? It highlights the tension between promoting a State's regional language and ensuring equal access to livelihoods in a linguistically diverse society. Since a significant proportion of Mumbai's commercial drivers are migrants, making language proficiency an employment condition raises questions of inclusion and non-discrimination. The government views language proficiency as a functional requirement because auto/taxi drivers have continuous, direct interaction with the public.

Legal Dimensions : In 2017, the Bombay High Court struck down a similar Marathi requirement for autorickshaw permits. The Court held that autorickshaws fall within the definition of "motor cabs" and that Rule 24 of the Maharashtra Motor Vehicles Rules, which prescribed language requirements for certain Public Service Vehicle badges, specifically excluded motor cabs. Therefore, the government could not use Rule 24 to impose Marathi proficiency as a condition for an autorickshaw contract-carriage permit. The present government, however, distinguishes the current measure from the 2017 case: it argues that the present requirement concerns PSV badges and enforcement of amended rules, rather than simply imposing a language condition on an autorickshaw permit.

Order of State Song, National Song & National Anthem

The Madras High Court held that the order in which a State song is performed alongside the national song and national anthem is left to the concerned State Government. The issue arose from a PIL challenging the placement of Tamil Thai Vazhthu, Tamil Nadu's State song, after the national song and national anthem at the Chief Minister's swearing-in ceremony on May 10, 2026. The petitioner argued that this diluted its ceremonial status and violated federalism and Article 29(1).

Prescribed order : The MHA's revised circular of July 9, 2026 specifies that when the national song and national anthem are performed together, the national song should precede the anthem, but does not prescribe the position of a State song. Tamil Nadu subsequently issued a G.O. on August 12, 2026, directing that Tamil Thai Vazhthu be sung first at the commencement of official events. The High Court therefore dismissed the PIL as infructuous, as the revised central position and State order had addressed the issue.

Why significant? The case establishes State discretion over the ceremonial placement of State songs, while the Union prescribes the order between the national song and anthem. It highlights the balance between national symbols and regional linguistic-cultural identity within India's federal framework. Although Article 29(1) protects the conservation of language, script and culture, it does not prescribe a specific ceremonial protocol for State symbols. Thus, regional cultural autonomy can coexist with national symbols, subject to constitutional and legal limits.



PYQ Compass

Q. Which among the following events happened earliest? (2018)

- (a) Swami Dayanand established Arya Samaj.
- (b) Dinabandhu Mitra wrote Neel Darpan.
- (c) Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote Anandmath.
- (d) Satyendranath Tagore became the first Indian to succeed in the Indian Civil Services Examination

Operation Toofan: Kerala's Anti-Drug Campaign

Operation Toofan, Kerala's State-wide anti-drug campaign, has registered 10,213 cases, arrested 9,941 persons and seized narcotics worth over ₹100 crore within 76 days. Launched as a priority of the Home Department, the campaign targets the growing spread of drugs among young people and involves enforcement against traffickers, public mobilisation and rehabilitation of addicts.

Why is it significant? The initiative recognises drug abuse as a public-health and social problem, particularly affecting youth, rather than treating it solely as a criminal-justice issue.

Three-pronged approach: The campaign operates through three pillars : Toofan Strike (enforcement), Toofan Warriors (community participation) and Toofan Care (treatment and rehabilitation). Around 40 private hospitals/de-addiction centres have been partnered, with over 150 persons admitted for treatment.

User-trafficker distinction: The government seeks to treat addicts as victims requiring care, while imposing stringent action on those profiting from drug trafficking, including attachment/confiscation of trafficking-linked property.

Evolving trafficking networks: The campaign highlights the increasingly inter-State and transnational nature of drug trafficking, with traffickers exploiting sea, air, rail, courier, parcel and even food-delivery networks.

Inter-agency cooperation: Coordination with the Narcotics Control Bureau, Customs, Railway Police, Intelligence Bureau and neighbouring States, including joint intelligence-sharing mechanisms, is central to the campaign.

Key concerns : The campaign illustrates that a balanced anti-drug strategy must be accompanied by prevention, awareness, accessible de-addiction services and rehabilitation for users.

Water for Vizag data centres not at the cost of city's needs



The Andhra Pradesh Government has defended the proposed 6.5-GW data-centre hub in Visakhapatnam, stating that its water and power requirements will be met without compromising the city's drinking-water and agricultural needs. Water for the data centres will be drawn from the industrial allocation of Polavaram water, with dedicated pipelines planned to supply the facilities. The Government also highlighted plans for green power, desalination and sustainable cooling technologies to reduce resource pressure.

Water & Power Requirements : The proposed 6.5-GW data centres are estimated to require around 3 TMC of water annually once fully operational. The Government proposes to divert a portion of Godavari water through the Polavaram project and bring it to Visakhapatnam by gravity, without drawing from existing city water infrastructure. A 100-MLD desalination plant is also being established, while advances such as air-cooling are expected to reduce water consumption. At least 70% of the electricity for the data centres is expected to come from renewable sources such as solar, wind and pumped storage.

Why is it significant? The project is intended to transform Visakhapatnam into an 'AI City' and major digital infrastructure hub, supported by three planned cable landing stations connecting the city to global networks. Beyond data centres, the Government expects an ecosystem involving advanced chips, cooling systems, power electronics, logistics, warehousing, real estate, and transport services, potentially generating wider economic activity and investment.



PYQ Compass

Q. Comment on the strategies adopted by Colombia to eliminate its drug cartels (2011)

Q. Despite strict prohibitory regulations, "doping" has become increasingly common amongst athletes. Name five commonly used performance - enhancing drugs. What are the risks associated with their use?

India to build hospital in West Bank; seeks to deploy field hospital in Gaza

India has reiterated its support for Palestine, including its commitment to developmental and healthcare assistance and a negotiated two-state solution to the Israel–Palestine conflict. During MEA Secretary Sripriya Ranganathan's visit to Ramallah, India discussed strengthening bilateral cooperation with Palestinian leaders and highlighted its humanitarian assistance, including medicines, anti-cancer drugs, an artificial-limb camp and the proposed deployment of an Indian field hospital in Gaza.

Key Developments : India and Palestine jointly conducted the groundbreaking ceremony for a 200-seat super-speciality hospital at Arrabeh in Jenin Governorate, West Bank, on August 19, 2026.

- India handed over a consignment of medicines to the Palestinian Ministry of Health and reiterated support for the Palestinian healthcare sector.
- Indian assistance includes essential medicines, anti-cancer drugs, artificial-limb support and a proposed field hospital in Gaza.
- India reiterated support for a negotiated two-state solution and called for addressing the humanitarian situation in Gaza.
- The visit also focused on strengthening the longstanding India–Palestine partnership and bilateral cooperation.

Why is it significant? India's approach reflects a combination of developmental diplomacy, humanitarian assistance and political support for a negotiated settlement. The visit is also significant as the highest-level Indian diplomatic visit to the West Bank since the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack, signalling continued Indian engagement with the Palestinian Authority amid the wider regional crisis.

Broader Significance for India : The engagement allows India to maintain its historical ties with Palestine while pursuing balanced relations in West Asia. It combines humanitarian assistance with diplomatic support for a political settlement and demonstrates India's use of development partnerships and capacity-building as instruments of foreign policy.

Iran warns Gulf countries against helping U.S. after UAE cuts trade ties

Tensions between Iran and the United States escalated after Iran warned Gulf countries against providing military assistance or logistical support to U.S., stating that any assistance or facilitation provided to U.S. military operations would amount to participation in the conflict, signalling potential retaliation against countries hosting U.S. military assets. The warning came after the UAE suspended all trade, commercial exchanges and financial transactions with Iran following Iranian missile attacks on vessels off its coast. Meanwhile, the Strait of Hormuz remains blockaded by Iran, disrupting commercial shipping and keeping the conflict focused on a critical global energy corridor.

Key Developments : The UAE halted economic and financial dealings with Iran until further notice and had earlier recalled its ambassador and restricted Iran-linked institutions. The Strait of Hormuz, through which a major share of global oil and gas trade passes, has become the principal strategic flashpoint, with both Iranian and U.S. naval blockades affecting maritime traffic.

Why is it significant? The crisis has transformed the Strait of Hormuz from a shipping route into a major strategic pressure point, with disruptions potentially affecting global energy supplies, shipping costs and regional economies. It also places Gulf states in a difficult position: they host important U.S. military infrastructure while maintaining varying degrees of economic and diplomatic ties with Iran. Iran's warning therefore raises the risk of the conflict expanding from U.S.–Iran confrontation into a wider regional conflict.



PYQ Compass

- Q. The term "two state solution" is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of
- China
 - Israel
 - Iraq
 - Yemen

Due diligence (The Hindu : 20-08-2026)

The Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued notices to actors Shah Rukh Khan, Ajay Devgn and Tiger Shroff over their endorsement of Vimal Elaichi, alleging that the advertisement could amount to surrogate or indirect promotion of Vimal Pan Masala, a prohibited tobacco/nicotine-containing product in Maharashtra. The FDA's concern is that the "Vimal" brand identity and presentation may reinforce consumer association with the prohibited product, even though the advertised product is formally presented as elaichi.

Legal Framework

Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 —

Section 24: Restricts misleading food advertisements and unfair trade practices.

Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018: Require advertisements and claims to be truthful, unambiguous and non-misleading.

Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011: Regulate substances/products considered injurious to health, including pan masala under the FSSAI framework.

COTPA, 2003: Prohibits tobacco advertising and related promotional practices; the FDA has invoked its provisions against the alleged surrogate promotion.

CCPA Guidelines, 2022: Provide safeguards against misleading advertisements and misleading endorsements.

Consumer Protection Act, 2019 — Section 21: Enables the CCPA to order discontinuation/modification of misleading advertisements, penalise endorsers and restrict them from future endorsements.

- Surrogate advertising promotes regulated products under the guise of another legal product, a situation sustained by uncritical endorsements and exploiting fragmented regulatory regimes.
- The Consumer Protection Act 2019 establishes endorser liability, preventing celebrities from using ignorance as a defense against hefty penalties.
- The Delhi High Court ruled that the state must prove surrogate advertising, as brand registration alone is insufficient.
- The FDA aims to treat certain advertisements as unfair trade practices with significant consequences for consumer health.



Penalties & Response

Under Section 21 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, an endorser may face a penalty of up to ₹10 lakh for the first contravention and ₹50 lakh for subsequent contraventions. Endorsement can also be prohibited for up to one year, extending to three years for subsequent violations. The actors have been given 15 days to respond and may submit written explanations with supporting evidence. A personal hearing is available if requested; failure to respond or an unsatisfactory response may lead to further action under applicable food-safety laws.

Policy Significance

Surrogate advertising is the use of a legally marketed product or brand to indirectly promote a product whose direct advertising is prohibited or restricted. Therefore, the FDA must substantiate its allegation with clear evidence that the Vimal Elaichi advertisement is being used to promote Vimal pan masala/tobacco products. Effective enforcement requires curbing such practices while ensuring that regulatory action is supported by sufficient evidence and can withstand judicial scrutiny.

PYQ COMPASS



Q. Consider the following organizations/ bodies in India: (2023)

1. The National Commission for Backward Classes
2. The National Human Rights Commission
3. The National Law Commission
4. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

How many of the above are constitutional bodies?

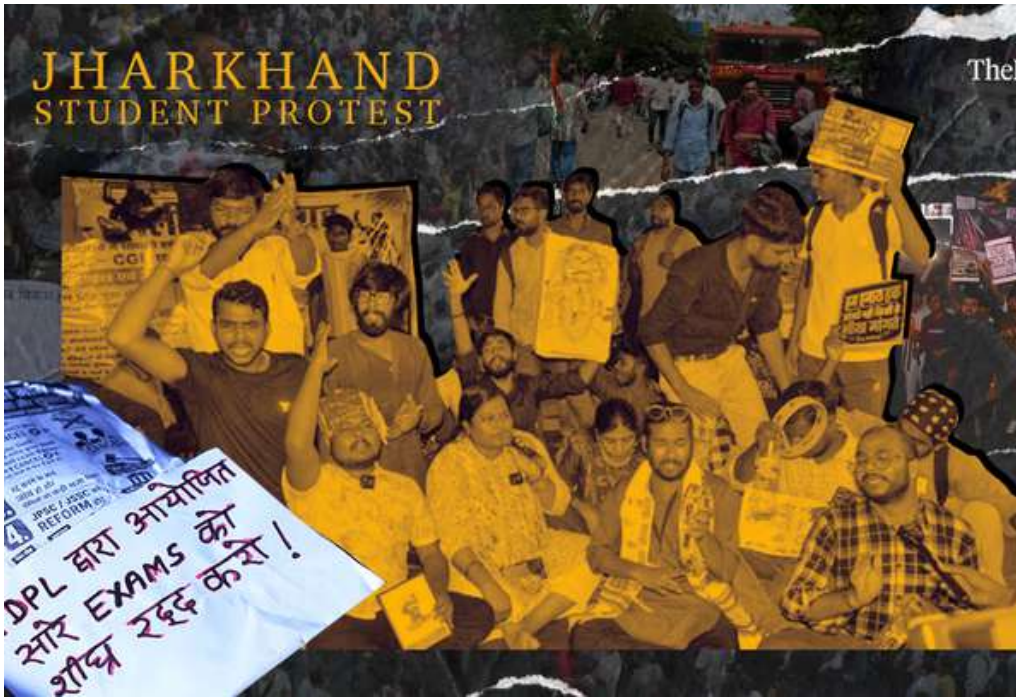
- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Cancel with caution, livelihoods are at stake

Protests over alleged irregularities and compromised public examinations in Jharkhand led the State Government to cancel the JSSC-Combined Graduate Level (JSSC-CGL) examination and other examinations conducted by outsourced agency TSR Data Processing Pvt. Ltd. However, the cancellation has triggered a counter-protest by more than 2,000 candidates who had already cleared the JSSC-CGL examination, been appointed and joined government service, as they now fear losing their jobs. Both groups of candidates have demanded a CBI probe.

Why is it significant?

The controversy exposes the larger problem of credibility and integrity of public recruitment examinations, on which employment opportunities have become heavily dependent amid limited government jobs. The JSSC-CGL recruitment itself dates back to 2015-16 and had already faced prolonged litigation over alleged paper leaks. The Jharkhand High Court had ordered a status quo in 2024 but lifted the stay in December 2025, after which successful candidates were appointed. Cancelling the examination after such judicial scrutiny has therefore created uncertainty for candidates who may have cleared the examination fairly and entered government service in good faith.



Key legal and administrative concern

The central issue is how the government can punish examination malpractice without unfairly penalising candidates who were not involved in it. A blanket cancellation treats all candidates alike and may deprive successful candidates of employment without first establishing their individual involvement in wrongdoing. The affected employees are therefore seeking an opportunity to defend themselves, while accepting that those found guilty should face action. The controversy consequently raises concerns of due process, fairness and the credibility of government recruitment, particularly when appointments have already taken place following judicial proceedings.

Broader policy challenges

The episode shows that merely cancelling examinations after irregularities emerge does not address the systemic weaknesses that allow leaks and manipulation to occur. Governments need stronger examination security, transparent investigation, accountability of agencies conducting tests and timely recruitment. The protests have also highlighted the deeper education-employment crisis, where delayed or compromised examinations can affect thousands of young people for years.

PYQ Compass



Q Consider the following statements : (2023)

Statement-I: The Supreme Court of India has held in some judgments that the reservation policies made under Article 16(4) of the Constitution of India would be limited by Article 335 for maintenance of efficiency of administration.

Statement-II: Article 335 of the Constitution of India defines the term 'efficiency of administration'.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement I
- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
- (c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
- (d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

Amazon Rainforest Regeneration: Role of Pioneer Species

A Brazilian study published in *Global Change Biology* found that secondary forests in the Amazon regenerate through a relatively small group of 15–25 pioneer tree species, despite the rainforest containing thousands of species. These species can tolerate poor soils, intense sunlight and rapid growth, allowing them to quickly colonise deforested areas and initiate forest recovery. The study analysed more than 25,000 trees and palms across four regions of eastern Amazonia, covering forests recovering for 1–60 years.



How does regeneration occur?

Pioneer species rapidly colonise abandoned or degraded land and establish the initial vegetation cover. Their dense canopies can lower temperatures beneath them by up to 6°C, creating the shaded conditions required by species characteristic of mature forests. Their fallen leaves add organic matter and nutrients to the soil, gradually improving conditions for other forest species. Important regenerating species identified include **Cecropia palmata**, **Inga alba**, **Inaja** and **babassu palms**. These secondary forests can therefore restore significant carbon storage and ecosystem functions, although they do not immediately recreate the biodiversity of primary forests.

Why is it significant?

The study demonstrates the ecological resilience of the Amazon and identifies specific species that play a disproportionate role in restoring degraded forests and storing carbon. Understanding these natural regeneration pathways can help make forest restoration faster and more targeted, particularly in abandoned farms, pastures and legally mandated restoration areas.

Broader perspectives

The findings are also significant for climate change mitigation because the Amazon is a major global carbon store and climate-regulating ecosystem. However, the scale of past destruction remains substantial: roughly an area the size of Spain has been deforested in Brazil over four decades, while existing secondary forests cover an area approximately the size of Uruguay. Thus, natural regeneration offers an important restoration pathway but does not eliminate the need to prevent primary-forest loss and protect mature forests.

PYQ Compass



Q. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the vegetative propagation of plants? (2014)

1. Vegetative propagation produces a clonal population.
2. Vegetative propagation helps in eliminating the virus.
3. Vegetative propagation can be practiced most of the year.

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

Q. One of the following regions has the world's largest tropical peatland, which holds about three years worth of global carbon emissions from fossil fuels; and the possible destruction of which can exert detrimental effects on the global climate. Which one of the following denotes that region? (2024)

- a) Amazon Basin
- b) Congo Basin
- c) Kikon Basin
- d) Rio de la Plata Basin

PYQ Compass



Q. Which among the following events happened earliest? (2018)

- (a) Swami Dayanand established Arya Samaj.
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Ans : b

Here is the chronological sequence of the events:

- 1. Dinabandhu Mitra wrote Neel Darpan (1860):** This play highlighted the plight of indigo cultivators under British rule in Bengal.
- 2. Swami Dayanand established Arya Samaj (1875):** Arya Samaj was established to reform Hinduism and propagate Vedic principles.
- 3. Satyendranath Tagore became the first Indian to succeed in the Indian Civil Services Examination (1863):** This milestone was significant in the Indian nationalist movement.
- 4. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote Anandmath (1882):** This novel introduced the song Vande Mataram, which became a rallying cry for Indian independence.

Q. The term "two state solution" is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of

- a) China
- b) Israel
- c) Iraq
- d) Yemen

Ans : b

Two state solution is the preferred solution adopted for the Arab-Israel conflict by creation of states of Israel and Palestine.

PYQ Compass



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- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Ans : a

The National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) was made a constitutional body by the 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2018, and is established under Article 338B.

The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission : It is a quasi-judicial statutory body established under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

Q Consider the following statements : (2023)

Statement-I: The Supreme Court of India has held in some judgments that the reservation policies made under Article 16(4) of the Constitution of India would be limited by Article 335 for maintenance of efficiency of administration.

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- (d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

Ans : c

Statement-I: This is correct. The Supreme Court has held in several judgments (e.g., Indra Sawhney case, M. Nagaraj case) that reservation policies under Article 16(4) (which provides for reservation in public employment) must not compromise the "efficiency of administration" as mandated by Article 335. Article 335 states that claims of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes must be balanced with maintaining administrative efficiency. Statement-II: This is incorrect. Article 335 mentions "efficiency of administration" but does not define the term. The interpretation of what constitutes "efficiency of administration" is left to judicial interpretation and administrative practice. Thus, Statement-I is correct, and Statement-II is incorrect, making the correct answer (c) Statement I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.

PYQ Compass



Q. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the vegetative propagation of plants? (2014)

1. Vegetative propagation produces a clonal population.
2. Vegetative propagation helps in eliminating the virus.
3. Vegetative propagation can be practiced most of the year.

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

Ans : C

Statement 1: Correct. Vegetative propagation produces genetically identical offspring (a clonal population) since no genetic recombination occurs.

Statement 2: Incorrect. Vegetative propagation does not eliminate viruses; in fact, viruses often persist in vegetative tissues.

Statement 3: Correct. Since vegetative propagation does not depend on flowering or seed production, it can often be practiced throughout the year.

Q. One of the following regions has the world's largest tropical peatland, which holds about three years worth of global carbon emissions from fossil fuels; and the possible destruction of which can exert detrimental effects on the global climate. Which one of the following denote that region? (2024)

- a) Amazon Basin
- b) Congo Basin
- c) Kikon Basin
- d) Rio de la Plata Basin

Ans : b

The Congo Basin in Central Africa is home to the world's largest tropical peatland, which is critical for global climate regulation.

This vast peatland stores an immense amount of carbon, and it is estimated that it holds about three years' worth of global carbon emissions from fossil fuels.

The potential destruction of this peatland could lead to significant carbon emissions, contributing to climate change. The Congo Basin is thus a vital carbon sink and its preservation is essential for mitigating global warming. Thus, the correct answer is b) Congo Basin

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q. *Cecropia palmata*, *Inga alba*, *Inaja* and *babassu* palms are described in the context of:

- a) Mangrove ecosystem restoration
- b) Regeneration of degraded Amazonian forests
- c) Pollination of tropical rainforest plants
- d) Carbon sequestration in Arctic tundra ecosystems

Ans: b) Regeneration of degraded Amazonian forests

Cecropia palmata, *Inga alba*, *Inaja* and *babassu* palms are among the pioneer species identified as playing an important role in the natural regeneration of secondary forests in the Amazon. These species can rapidly colonise degraded areas, tolerate intense sunlight and poor soils, and create favourable conditions for the establishment of other forest species. Their growth also contributes to carbon storage, soil improvement and temperature regulation, making them important for ecological restoration of deforested landscapes.

Q. The practice of using a legally marketed product or brand to indirectly promote a prohibited product is generally referred to as:

- a) Product placement
- b) Surrogate advertising
- c) Comparative advertising
- d) Misleading endorsement

Ans: b) Surrogate advertising

Surrogate advertising refers to promoting a prohibited or restricted product indirectly through the advertising of another legally marketed product, often using the same or a closely associated brand identity. It is commonly discussed in the context of tobacco and alcohol products, where direct advertising is restricted. For example, advertising a legally marketed product such as *elaichi* under a brand strongly associated with a tobacco product may be examined as possible surrogate advertising.