

P2. NATIONAL



India-China Border: Expansion - Amid conflicting territorial claims and military buildup along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), India and China have expanded their military dialogue mechanism to the Eastern Sector

P3 NATIONAL



Tamil Nadu government mulling over abolition of State Planning Commission - The proposed restructuring raises questions about how development planning institutions must adapt to the changing role of the state

P6. WORLD



UN adopts Equal Earth map: The shift from Mercator to Equal Earth highlights how map projections distort geographical reality and can influence how people perceive the relative importance of different regions.

P7. ECONOMICS



Harnessing BRICS 'POWER' to empower the world : India can use the BRICS platform, with Russia and China participating, to promote collective support for de-escalation and negotiations.

Editor's Note

Happy Reading is a wish we extend to our readers with every edition, because knowledge is one of the best gifts we can receive, and reading is the medium through which we unravel it.

A meaningful reading of today's edition begins with understanding why the changing role of Tamil Nadu's State Planning Commission matters to the State's development agenda. The discussion on India-China Early Harvest arrangements requires us to look beyond the immediate border talks and understand their place within the wider geopolitical relationship between the two countries. In the Decoded Editorials, we explore India's role in navigating the complex space between the United States, Russia and other major geopolitical partners, where understanding the how and why is as important as knowing the facts.

The edition also looks at the EOS-05 mission and its wider applications, reminding us that space technology has implications that extend well beyond a single successful launch. Each topic therefore demands more than a quick reading; it calls for connecting the development with its larger context and significance.

We hope our readers take the wish of Happy Reading seriously and approach today's edition with the focus, curiosity and care that meaningful learning deserves.

Happy Reading.

Editorials Decoded

THE HINDU

Steady gaze

India's EOS-05 mission demonstrates how advances in satellite technology can strengthen Earth observation capabilities and generate applications extending beyond the immediate success of a space launch.

The Indian EXPRESS

Moscow-Kyiv to Delhi, connect the dots

India's engagement with Moscow and Kyiv reflects its strategic autonomy and creates an opportunity to contribute more actively to peace efforts.

India-China Border: Expansion of Corps Commander-Level Dialogue to Eastern Sector



Amid conflicting territorial claims and military buildup along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), India and China have expanded their military dialogue mechanism to the Eastern Sector. The first Corps Commander-level meeting in Arunachal Pradesh marks an important development in managing tensions beyond the Ladakh sector.

Latest Developments

- The meeting sought to maintain military communication and manage tensions along the eastern LAC, particularly amid reports of Chinese activity and alleged incursions in the Taksing area (Upper Subansiri district).
- The Indian side was led by the Commander of 3 Corps, headquartered at Rangapahar, Nagaland, which along with 4 Corps at Tezpur is responsible for the frontier in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Corps Commander mechanism gained greater importance after the 2020 Galwan Valley clash and has since complemented diplomatic mechanisms for preventing escalation along the border.
- The latest engagement followed the 36th Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) meeting and the 25th Special Representatives (SR) talks, indicating the use of multiple levels of dialogue to manage the boundary issue.
- The SR talks produced an eight-point outcome, including plans for two additional Border Personnel Meeting Points and new hotlines, strengthening communication and confidence-building along the frontier.

IIT Mandi Poster Controversy: Caste, Equality and Constitutional Values

IIT Mandi ordered an inquiry after a student-led poster displayed during Janmashtami celebrations described Shudras as serving "higher classes". The institute distanced itself from the poster and reaffirmed its commitment to equality, social justice and constitutional values.

Latest Developments

Student-led poster: The poster presented the four traditional social divisions—Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras—and associated them with different social roles.

Institute response: IIT Mandi constituted an inquiry committee including faculty members and representatives from different social categories, including SC and OBC members, to examine the incident.

Constitutional position: The institute condemned caste discrimination and emphasised equality, social justice and scientific temper as its guiding values.

Interpretation of Gita: The controversy centres on the interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita's reference to social divisions based on "guna and karma" (qualities and actions) and its presentation in the poster.

What is Caste Discrimination? Unequal or prejudicial treatment of individuals based on caste or social birth, contrary to the constitutional commitment to equality and social justice.

PYQ Compass



Q. Siachen Glacier is situated to the: (2020)

- East of Aksai Chin
- East of Leh
- North of Gilgit
- North of Nubra Valley

Tamil Nadu government mulling over abolition of State Planning Commission



Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission

The Tamil Nadu government is considering abolishing the State Planning Commission (SPC), arguing that its role as a standing policy advisory body can be replaced by subject-specific expert committees. The move reflects the declining relevance of traditional planning institutions after economic liberalisation.

What is State Planning Commission?

An apex advisory body created to provide policy guidance and, originally, to assess State resources and plan their balanced and effective utilisation.

Latest Developments

Alternative approach: The government is considering issue-specific expert committees instead of maintaining a permanent planning body. A committee headed by Montek Singh Ahluwalia has already been formed to examine ways to strengthen the State's own-tax and non-tax revenues and fiscal self-reliance.

Changing role of planning: The SPC was created in 1971, when development policy was based on planned allocation and utilisation of State resources. Economic liberalisation from the 1990s reduced the relevance of such planning commissions.

Institutional evolution: The AIADMK government proposed replacing the SPC with the State Development Policy Council (SDPC) in 2017. The SDPC was established in 2020 but was renamed SPC in 2021 after the DMK returned to power.

Present policy ecosystem: Besides the SPC, the State uses the Department of Economics and Statistics (DoES) and Department of Evaluation and Applied Research (DEAR) for policy inputs.

No provision in Forest Rights Act to obtain gram sabha consent for projects, Tribal Affairs Ministry says

A dispute has emerged over whether 100% Gram Sabha consent is legally required for forest diversion under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), after the Power Ministry identified it as a major cause of delays in hydropower projects.

Latest Developments

Inter-ministerial issue: The Tribal Affairs Ministry stated that the FRA, 2006 does not specifically provide for Gram Sabha consent for forest clearance, while forest-diversion procedures require completion of FRA-related processes.

Project delays: A Parliamentary committee reported that forest clearance for National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC)'s under-construction projects takes an average of 106 months, with Gram Sabha consent identified as a major bottleneck.

Proposed reform: NHPC suggested 70–75% "qualified super-majority" consent of affected Gram Sabhas for nationally important hydropower projects instead of 100% consent.

Institutional ambiguity: The Tribal Affairs Ministry, despite being the nodal ministry for FRA implementation, has maintained that implementation-related matters concerning Gram Sabha consent fall under State/UT governments.

PYQ Compass



Q.Consider the following statements: (2018)
 1. The definition of "Critical Wildlife Habitat" is incorporated in the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

2. For the first time in India, Baigas have been given Habitat Rights.

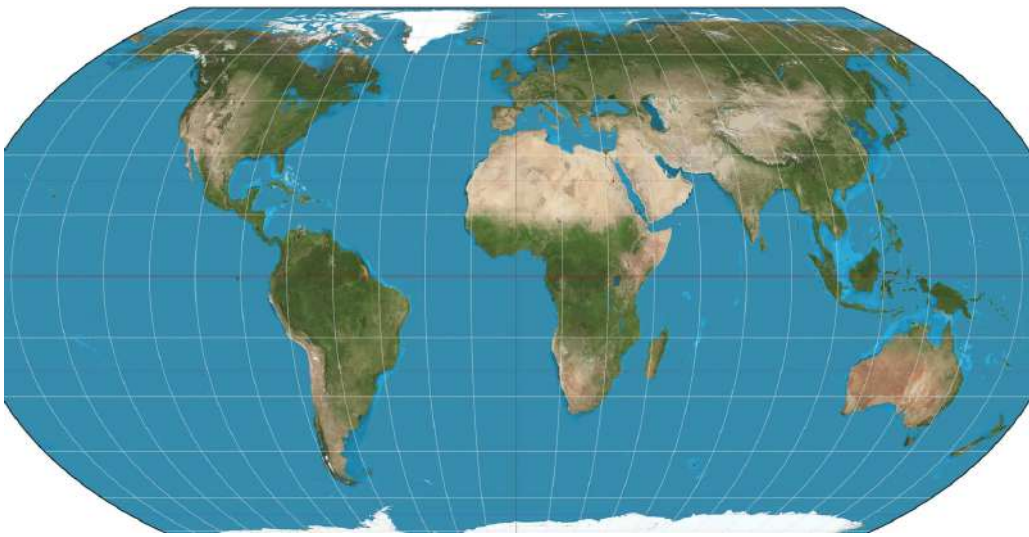
3. Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change officially decides and declares Habitat Rights for Primitive and Vulnerable Tribal Groups in any part of India.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

WORLD

UN adopts Equal Earth map: Why no flat map can accurately show the globe

The United Nations has adopted a resolution supporting the 2018 Equal Earth projection as a more accurate representation of the relative sizes of continental landmasses. The move has renewed debate over the limitations of the widely used Mercator projection, geographical distortion and the role of maps in shaping perceptions of the world.



Equal Earth: Correcting Relative Size

Development: The Equal Earth projection was developed in 2018 by an international team of cartographers to provide a more accurate representation of the relative sizes of continental landmasses.

Area: Unlike the Mercator projection, Equal Earth preserves the relative sizes of continents more accurately, making Africa appear closer to its actual proportion.

Shape: It avoids some of the severe shape distortions associated with area-preserving projections such as Gall-Peters.

Limitations: Equal Earth does not eliminate distortion completely, with shapes and distances becoming more distorted towards the poles.

UN Resolution: The UN resolution recognised Equal Earth as a relevant option for improving the accuracy of cartographic representation, although UN resolutions are not legally binding.

Map Projections: No Perfect Flat Map

A globe can represent Earth most accurately, but transferring its surface onto a flat map inevitably introduces some form of distortion. Map projections can distort area, shape, distance or direction, depending on the method used and the purpose of the map.

Mercator Projection: A Map Designed for Navigation

Origin: Gerardus Mercator developed the Mercator projection in 1569 primarily to help sailors navigate across the globe.

Method: It projected the spherical Earth onto a cylinder, placing lines of longitude and latitude at right angles while progressively increasing the spacing between latitudes away from the equator.

Navigation: A major advantage was that straight lines on the map represented constant compass directions, making it highly useful for maritime navigation.

Popularity: Its rectangular format made it convenient for wall maps, atlases and schoolbooks, helping it become the dominant representation of the world.

Distortion: The Problem with a Flat World

Size: The Mercator projection significantly enlarges areas closer to the poles while making equatorial regions appear relatively smaller.

Africa: Africa, which lies largely around the equator, appears substantially smaller than its actual area, while Greenland can appear comparable in size to Africa despite being much smaller.

Countries: Regions such as Europe, Russia, Canada and the United States appear larger than their actual areas, while countries such as India also appear relatively smaller.

Trade-off: The distortion arises because a three-dimensional spherical Earth must be represented on a two-dimensional surface, making it impossible for a flat map to preserve every geographical property accurately.

PYQ Compass



Q. Consider the following statements (2025):

I. Anadyr in Siberia and Nome in Alaska are a few kilometers from each other, but when people are waking up and getting set for breakfast in these cities, it would be different days.

II. When it is Monday in Anadyr, it is Tuesday in Nome. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) I only (b) II only (c) Both I and II (d) Neither I nor II

Moscow-Kyiv to Delhi, connect the dots (I.E 07-09-2026)

India has stepped up diplomatic engagement with both Russia and Ukraine amid the continuing war. High-level talks involving Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy have strengthened India's role as a potential bridge between the two sides. New Delhi now faces an opportunity to convert this access into a stronger push for a negotiated settlement.

Diplomatic Space: Engaging Both Sides

High-level talks: Jaishankar's meeting with Putin, Modi's talks with Putin at the SCO summit and Jaishankar's visit to Kyiv reflect India's increasingly proactive diplomatic engagement.

Balanced access: India maintains communication with both Moscow and Kyiv, giving it diplomatic space that can potentially be used to encourage dialogue.

Peace message: Modi has urged an end to the war "for humanity's sake", while Zelenskyy has acknowledged India's commitment to ending the conflict.

Strategic Reality: War Despite Diplomacy

US-Russia contact: Washington and Moscow continue diplomatic contacts, including meetings between U.S. negotiators and Putin, despite ongoing fighting.

Opposing roles: The U.S. continues to provide Ukraine with intelligence, while Russia is supporting Iran in the U.S-Iran conflict, leaving Washington and Moscow positioned on opposing sides of active conflicts.

Escalation: Russia has intensified drone and missile attacks on Ukraine, while Ukraine has targeted Russian energy infrastructure, worsening the disruption caused by the war.



Peace Path: From Ceasefire to Confidence Building

Humanitarian cost: Continuing attacks on energy and civilian infrastructure increase humanitarian risks, while suspected acts of sabotage in Europe raise concerns about a wider geographical escalation.

Ceasefire: The immediate priority should be bringing Russia and Ukraine back to negotiations and establishing a basis for a ceasefire.

Infrastructure: Protection of energy and civilian infrastructure could serve as an initial confidence-building measure between the warring sides.

Black Sea: Safeguarding commercial shipping lanes in the Black Sea could provide another practical step towards reducing the wider consequences of the conflict.

India's role : Converting Access into Action

Diplomatic leverage: India's access to both Moscow and Kyiv provides an opportunity to press more actively for negotiations at a time when the U.S. is also dealing with the conflict in West Asia.

BRICS platform: The upcoming BRICS summit, with Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping expected to attend, provides India with a platform to seek a collective call for confidence-building measures.

Strategic autonomy: A more proactive peace role would allow India to use its diplomatic relationships with competing powers while maintaining its independent foreign-policy space.

PYQ Compass



Q. What is the significance of Indo-US defence deals over Indo-Russian defence deals? Discuss with reference to stability in the Indo-Pacific region (GS II : 2019)

Steady gaze (The Hindu : 07-09-2026)

The latest UNEP report **Limiting Overshoot** acknowledges that the 1.5°C warming limit is likely to be breached, but argues that this does not make climate action futile. It proposes an “overshoot, peak and decline” pathway in which global temperatures are brought back below 1.5°C by the end of the century, while emphasising near-term action on methane.



Continuous Earth Observation

First-of-kind: EOS-05 is India's first dedicated Earth-imaging satellite designed for geosynchronous Earth orbit (GEO), expanding India's Earth-observation capabilities beyond low and polar orbits.

Geostationary view: At around 36,000 km above Earth, a GEO satellite revolves at roughly the same speed as Earth's rotation and appears stationary to an observer on the ground.

Continuous monitoring: Unlike low-orbit imaging satellites that move around the planet and capture different areas during successive passes, EOS-05 can repeatedly observe the same broad region at very short intervals.

Trade-off: Its greater orbital distance means it does not provide the ultra-fine detail of conventional low-orbit imaging satellites. Its major advantage is frequent observation of large areas.

Data sensing: Its specialised cameras and sensors examine how Earth's surface reflects different wavelengths of light, helping distinguish vegetation, water and other types of land cover.

Applications: From Disasters to Agriculture

Disaster management: Continuous observation can help track rapidly changing events such as floods, cyclones, forest fires and other natural disasters, supporting assessment and response.

Environmental monitoring: EOS-05 can monitor forests, water bodies, land use and changes in landforms, providing repeated observations of environmental conditions.

Agriculture: Its imagery can support crop monitoring and help assess agricultural conditions over large areas through repeated observation.

Weather tracking: The satellite can contribute to weather forecasting and the monitoring of cyclones and storms by providing frequent observations of changing conditions.

Early warning: Continuous observation may help identify changes in landforms associated with events such as glacier-breaks and avalanches, while also enabling monitoring of phenomena such as stubble burning.

Mission Significance: Strengthening India's Space Capability

Launch vehicle: On September 4, 2026, the GSLV F-17 successfully launched EOS-05 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, marking the 19th flight of the GSLV.

Cryogenic stage: The successful mission also restored confidence in the GSLV's cryogenic stage after its failure in 2021.

Earlier satellites: India has previously operated Earth-imaging satellites through families such as IRS, RISAT and CARSAT, but these have primarily used lower-altitude orbits. Other important Earth-observation satellites in GEO includes China's Gaofen-4 and the United States' GOES series.

Reliability: The successful EOS-05 launch comes after setbacks, including two consecutive PSLV failures. Continued launch reliability and a consistent mission cadence therefore remain important for sustaining confidence in India's space programme.

PYQ COMPASS



"With reference to India's satellite launch vehicles, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. PSLVs launch the satellite useful for Earth resources monitoring whereas GSLVs are designed mainly to launch communication satellites.
2. Satellites launched by PSLV appear to remain permanently fixed in the same position in the sky, as viewed from a particular location on Earth.
3. GSLV Mk III is a four-staged launch vehicle with the first and third stages using solid rocket motors; and the second and fourth stages using liquid rocket engines.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Harnessing BRICS 'POWER' to empower the world

The 18th BRICS Summit will be held in New Delhi on September 12–13, 2026, with India and China highlighting the need for stronger cooperation among BRICS members and partners. The grouping is being positioned as an important force for a more multipolar world, open economic cooperation, Global South participation and collective responses to global challenges.

Upholding a Multipolar Order

International norms: BRICS should uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, including sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs and peaceful settlement of disputes.

Global South: The grouping seeks to reflect the collective rise of the Global South and prevent international relations from reverting to a system where stronger states dominate weaker ones.

Global initiatives: China has presented the vision of a community with a shared future for humanity along with initiatives such as the Global Security Initiative and Global Governance Initiative.



Resisting Protectionism

Trade barriers: The global economy faces a sluggish recovery alongside growing protectionism, tariff barriers, decoupling efforts and disruptions to supply chains.

WTO system: BRICS should support the multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core and protect principles such as most-favoured-nation treatment.

Economic links: Greater cooperation in energy, mineral resources, infrastructure, industrial capacity and supply chains can support an open global economic landscape.

Development Agenda

Development focus: BRICS should keep development at the centre of its agenda, accelerate progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals and strengthen the participation of Global South countries as equals.

Financial cooperation: Greater coordination on macroeconomic policies, trade and investment facilitation, local currencies and cross-border payments can strengthen economic cooperation.

Financial safety: Improving the financial safety net can enhance the ability of BRICS countries to withstand external risks.

Food security: Cooperation should also address global energy and food-security challenges by building more resilient and sustainable agriculture and food systems.

India-China Coordination Potential

Shared responsibility: BRICS countries are presented as important forces for fairness, justice, unity and cooperation, with a responsibility to contribute to world peace and development.

Leadership transition: India and China will hold the BRICS rotating presidency in succession, making coordination between the two countries important for the continuity of greater BRICS cooperation.

Improving ties: China-India relations have shown improvement through strengthened dialogue, resumed direct flight routes and the reopening of border trade after a six-year suspension.

Future cooperation: China has expressed support for India's BRICS presidency and called for the two countries to translate their leaders' consensus into sustained, healthy and stable bilateral relations.

PYQ Compass



Q. BRICS acts as a powerful counterweight in global governance, actively amplifying the voice and influence of the Global South." Explain the role of BRICS in projecting itself as an alternative to other groupings (GS II - 2026)

PYQ Compass



Q. Siachen Glacier is situated to the: (2020)

- a) East of Aksai Chin
- b) East of Leh
- c) North of Gilgit
- d) North of Nubra Valley

Ans : d

The Siachen Glacier is part of Ladakh, which has now been converted into a Union Territory. It is located in the eastern Karakoram range in the Himalayan mountains. It lies to the south of the great drainage divide that separates the Eurasian Plate from the Indian subcontinent in the glaciated portion of the Karakoram.

Q.Consider the following statements: (2018) 1. The definition of "Critical Wildlife Habitat" is incorporated in the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

2. For the first time in India, Baigas have been given Habitat Rights.

3. Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change officially decides and declares Habitat Rights for Primitive and Vulnerable Tribal Groups in any part of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans : a

Statement 1 is correct. The Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 recognizes the concept of Critical Wildlife Habitat. It provides for the recognition of rights over forest lands and their management by Indigenous communities, while also addressing the issue of conservation. Under the FRA, Critical Wildlife Habitats are areas declared by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), where certain rights may be restricted to enable better protection of biodiversity and wildlife.

Statement 2 is Correct: Baigas, a tribal community, were indeed the first in India to be granted Habitat Rights under the Forest Rights Act. This was a landmark decision in the recognition of community rights over forest areas. It was part of the efforts to protect the rights of Indigenous people while promoting conservation efforts, particularly in areas like Madhya Pradesh where the Baigas reside.

Statement 3 is Incorrect: The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change does not directly declare Habitat Rights. According to the Forest Rights Act, the Gram Sabha (village council) is responsible for determining and recognizing individual and community forest rights, including Habitat Rights. These decisions are subject to the approval of higher authorities like the State Government. The Ministry plays a supporting role but does not directly declare such rights.

PYQ Compass



Q. Consider the following statements (2025):

I. Anadyr in Siberia and Nome in Alaska are a few kilometers from each other, but when people are waking up and getting set for breakfast in these cities, it would be different days.

II. When it is Monday in Anadyr, it is Tuesday in Nome. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) I only
- (b) II only
- (c) Both I and II
- (d) Neither I nor II

Ans : a

The time difference between Anadyr and Nome, Alaska, is 20 hours. Nome is 20 hours behind Anadyr. Hence, roughly, when people are waking up and getting set for breakfast in these cities, it would be different days. Thus, statement I is correct. The international date line (IDL) is an imaginary line that runs along the Earth's surface from the North Pole to the South Pole in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. When you cross it, you either gain or lose a day depending on which way you are traveling. If you are traveling westward, you gain a day, and if you are traveling eastward, you lose a day. Alaska lies in the west of International Date Line and Anadyr lies in the East. Hence, when it is Monday in Anadyr, it is Sunday in Nome and not Tuesday. Thus, Statement II is not correct.

Q. "With reference to India's satellite launch vehicles, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. PSLVs launch the satellite useful for Earth resources monitoring whereas GSLVs are designed mainly to launch communication satellites.
2. Satellites launched by PSLV appear to remain permanently fixed in the same position in the sky, as viewed from a particular location on Earth.
3. GSLV Mk III is a four-staged launch vehicle with the first and third stages using solid rocket motors; and the second and fourth stages using liquid rocket engines.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans : a

Satellites launched by PSLV do not remain fixed in the same position in the sky. PSLV typically places satellites in sun-synchronous orbits or polar orbits, where they move relative to the Earth's surface. Satellites that remain fixed in the sky are placed in geostationary orbits, which are achieved using GSLV.

The GSLV Mk III is not a four-staged launch vehicle. It has three stages: the first stage uses two solid rocket boosters, the second stage uses a liquid rocket engine, and the third stage uses a cryogenic engine.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q. With reference to the Forest Rights Act, 2006, consider the following statements:

1. The recognition of forest rights under the Act involves the Gram Sabha as the initiating authority in determining the claims of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.
2. Consent of the Gram Sabha and forest clearance under the forest conservation framework are legally identical processes under the Forest Rights Act.
3. The Act seeks to balance the recognition of forest rights with the conservation of forests and wildlife.
4. The role of the Gram Sabha is limited to individual forest rights and does not extend to the recognition of community forest rights.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Statement 1 is correct. The Forest Rights Act gives the Gram Sabha a central role in initiating the process of determining and recognising forest rights of eligible forest-dwelling communities.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Gram Sabha consent in the context of forest rights and forest clearance are distinct institutional and legal processes. The debate discussed in this chat arises partly from the question of how these processes should interact when forest land is proposed for diversion.

Statement 3 is correct. The FRA is not solely a rights-recognition law. It attempts to address the historical rights of forest-dependent communities while also incorporating forest and wildlife conservation considerations.

Statement 4 is incorrect. The Gram Sabha's role extends beyond individual claims. The FRA also provides for the recognition of community forest rights, making the Gram Sabha an important institution in collective forest governance.