



Yojna IAS

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JULY 2023

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

YOJNA IAS WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

23/7/2023 TO 29/7/2023

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CURRENT AFFAIRS

JULY 2023

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “National Commission for Women”. The topic “National Commission for Women” has relevance in the “Indian Polity and Governance” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

What is the National Commission for Women? Composition? Functions?

For Mains:

GS2: Statutory, regulatory and quasi judicial bodies

Why in the news?

National Commission for Women (NCW) has condemned incidents in Manipur and Rajasthan, takes suo-motu cognizance, and directs respective state's DGP to act promptly.

National Commission for Women (NCW)

Established in 1992 through the National Commission for Women Act, 1990, it functions as a statutory body with the following objectives:

1. To assess the Constitutional and Legal protections for women.
2. To propose necessary legislative actions for improvement.
3. To assist in resolving women's grievances.
4. To provide guidance to the Government on policies impacting women.

NCW AT A GLANCE

Constitution of NCW	The Union Government shall establish the under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990 Act.
Composition of the Commission	Chairperson
	Five Members nominated by the Union Government
	Inclusive of individuals with expertise in various fields such as law, trade unionism, management, women's organizations, administration, etc.
	At least one Member each from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Term of Office	Chairperson and Members' tenure not exceeding three years, as specified by the Union Government.
	Members can resign by notifying the Union Government in writing.
Conditions of Service	The terms and conditions of service for the Chairperson and Members shall be determined by the Union Government.
Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and examine women's safeguards under laws and the Constitution. • Present regular reports to the Central Government on safeguard functioning. • Recommend legislative measures to improve women's conditions. • Review and suggest amendments to laws affecting women. • Take up cases of women's rights violations with appropriate authorities. • Address women's complaints and non-implementation of laws. • Conduct special studies on discrimination and propose strategies. • Research to promote women's representation and identify barriers. • Advice on socio-economic development planning for women. • Evaluate women's progress under the Union and States. • Inspect jails, remand homes, women's institutions for remedial actions. • Fund litigation on issues affecting many women. • Submit periodic reports to the Government on women-related matters. • Address other matters referred by the Central Government. • Reports presented to Parliament with actions on recommendations. • NCW has civil court powers for investigations.

Significance of NCW

- **Providing legal aid to women:** The NCW offers legal aid to women who have been victims of violence or discrimination. This includes providing them with free legal advice and representation in court.
- **Monitoring the implementation of laws and policies:** The NCW monitors the implementation of laws and policies that affect women, ensuring they are being applied in a gender-sensitive manner.
- **Advocating for women's rights:** The NCW advocates for women's rights at both the national and international levels. This includes raising awareness about women's issues and advocating for changes to laws and policies.
- **Conducting research:** The NCW conducts research on issues affecting women, which informs their advocacy work and provides valuable insights into the challenges facing women in India.
- **Providing training and capacity-building:** The NCW offers training and capacity-building programs to organizations and individuals working on women's issues, thereby enhancing the skills and knowledge of those promoting women's rights.

Specific examples of how the NCW has tackled problems faced by women:

- In 2005, the NCW played a key role in the passage of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.

lence Act. This law has provided much-needed protection to women who are victims of domestic violence.

- The NCW has also been involved in the fight against human trafficking. In 2012, the NCW launched a national campaign to raise awareness about human trafficking and to provide support to victims.
- The NCW has also been working to improve the representation of women in decision-making positions. In 2015, the NCW launched a campaign to encourage women to run for office.

Challenges Faced by the National Commission for Women (NCW) in India:

- **Silence on Sexual Violence in Militarized Areas:** The Commission's limited action regarding the use of sexual violence against women by police and army personnel in Jammu and Kashmir, north-east, and Chhattisgarh has raised concerns and criticism.
- **Ineffectiveness in Tackling Women's Issues:** Criticism has been directed at the NCW for its perceived inability to strategize and effectively address problems faced by women in both public and private spheres.
- **Controversy over Reports:** NCW faced controversy over its handling of the report on the Mangalore pub attacks, leading to the removal of a member on disciplinary grounds.
- **Criticism of Recommendations:** Recommendations concerning section 497 of the Indian Penal Code, which deemed women as victims rather than offenders in adulterous cases, came under fire.
- **Influence of Patriarchy on Members:** Instances of bias and prejudice within the Commission have been attributed to the prevailing patriarchy in society.
- **Limited Enforcement Power:** Critics describe the NCW as toothless and spineless since it lacks the authority to enforce its decisions. Its role is largely recommendatory.
- **Lack of Control over Internal Complaint Committees:** NCW is unable to take legal actions against Internal Complaint Committees with lax attitudes towards addressing women's workplace harassment grievances.
- **Financial Constraints:** The Commission's functions are reliant on grants from the central government, which have been insufficient to meet its needs adequately.
- **Political Interference in Member Selection:** NCW's inability to choose its own members exposes it to politicisation due to the nature of India's volatile political scenario.
- **Absence of Constitutional Status:** NCW's lack of constitutional status restricts its legal powers, preventing it from summoning police officers or witnesses when required.

To empower the National Commission for Women (NCW) in India, essential steps include granting constitutional status, ensuring financial independence, unbiased member selection, collaboration with civil society, prompt implementation of recommendations, and increased outreach. These reforms can strengthen the NCW's advocacy for women's rights and foster a more inclusive society.

Sources:

National Commission for Women had been apprised of Manipur video incident on June 12 – The Hindu

Q1. With reference to National Commission for Women (NCW) , consider the following statements:

1. The National Commission for Women (NCW) was established in 1992 through the National Commission for Women Act, 1990. (Correct)
2. The Chairperson and Members of the NCW serve a tenure of five years, as specified by the Union Government, and they cannot resign before completing their term. (Wrong)

3. One of the functions of the NCW is to inspect jails, remand homes, and women's institutions for remedial actions to ensure the well-being of women in such establishments. (Correct)

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following bodies:

- National Commission for Women (NCW)
- National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)
- National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)
- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)

How many of the above mentioned bodies are statutory bodies ?

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

Answer: (b)

Q3. Examine the constitutional and legal framework governing the National Commission for Women (NCW) in India.

TRIBAL EMPOWERMENT

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Tribal Empowerment". The topic "Tribal Empowerment" has relevance in the Social Justice section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

Recent Steps for Empowerment of Tribes in India?

Constitutional Provisions Related to Scheduled Tribes?

For Mains:

GS 2: Social Justice

Issues Faced by the Tribes in India?

Way Forward?

Why in the news?

Government has enlisted retired officials to monitor tribal welfare schemes

Recent Steps for Empowerment of Tribes in India:

Zonal Cultural Centres (ZCCs):

- Establishment of seven ZCCs to organize cultural activities and programs across the nation.
- ZCCs focus on conserving tribal languages and culture.

Regional Festivals:

- The Ministry of Culture organizes Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsavas and regional festivals through ZCCs.
- These festivals promote and showcase tribal culture.

Promotion of Tribal Languages:

- Grants provided to State Tribal Research Institutes for promoting tribal languages.
- Development of bilingual primers and tribal literature.

Eklavya Model & Museums:

- Establishment of 750 Eklavya Model Residential Schools for tribal students' education.
 - Creation of ten tribal freedom fighter museums to honor tribal heroes.
- Adivasi Grants Management System (ADIGRAMS):** Monitoring and tracking the utilization of grants provided by the Ministry to States.

Other Related Government Initiatives:

- **TRIFED:** Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India supports tribal livelihoods by promoting tribal products.
- **Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools:** Initiatives to introduce technology and improve education in tribal schools.
- **Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups:** Schemes and programs focused on upliftment and development of particularly vulnerable tribal groups.
- **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana:** Scheme aimed at improving tribal livelihoods by value addition and marketing of minor forest produce.

Constitutional Provisions Related to Scheduled Tribes:

Constitutional Provisions	Description
Fifth Schedule	Setting up Tribes' Advisory Council in States having Scheduled Areas.
Article 15(4)	Special provisions for the advancement of other backward classes (includes STs).
Article 29	Protection of the Interests of Minorities (includes STs).
Article 46	State shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of SCs and STs, and protect them from social injustice and exploitation.
Article 350	Right to conserve a distinct Language, Script, or Culture.
Political Safeguards	
Article 330	Reservation of seats for STs in the Lok Sabha.

Article 332	Reservation of seats for STs in State Legislatures.
Article 243	Reservation of seats for STs in Panchayats.
Article 275	Provides for the grant of special funds by the Union Government to the State Government for promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and providing them with better administration.

Issues Faced by the Tribes in India:

- **Land Rights:** Lack of secure land rights leading to displacement and land alienation.
- **Socio-economic Marginalisation:** Poverty, lack of access to education, healthcare, and basic amenities.
- **Education Gap:** Lower educational levels due to limited access and cultural barriers.
- **Exploitation and Bonded Labor:** Vulnerability to exploitation, bonded labor, and human trafficking.
- **Cultural Erosion:** Threat to tribal cultures, languages, and traditional practices.
- **Lack of Representation:** Inadequate political representation and limited participation in decision-making.

Way Forward:

- Secure Land and Resource Rights.
- Improve Education and Skill Development.
- Enhance Healthcare and Sanitation Facilities.
- Empower Women in Tribal Communities.
- Preserve and Promote Indigenous Culture.
- Encourage Participation and Inclusion in Governance.



SOURCE:

<https://theprint.in/india/governance/mp-govt-enlists-retired-officials-to-monitor-tribal-welfare-schemes-as-bjp-works-to-regain-votebank/1637221/>

Q.1 Which Article of the Indian Constitution provides for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the Lok Sabha?

- (A) Article 330
- (B) Article 243
- (C) Article 46
- (D) Article 275

ANSWER: A

Q.2 Which of the following statements about TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India) is/are correct?

1. TRIFED is an apex organization under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.
2. The primary objective of TRIFED is to provide financial assistance to tribal communities for setting up small-scale industries.

Select the correct answer from the options below:

- (A) 1 only
(B) 2 only
(C) Both 1 and 2
(D) None of the above

ANSWER: D

Q.3 Discuss the challenges faced by tribal communities in India and suggest measures to empower them for inclusive development.

INDIA SRI LANKA RELATIONS

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "India Sri Lanka Relations". The topic "India Sri Lanka Relations" has relevance in the "International Relations" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

Map of Sri Lanka, New initiatives in Sri Lanka

For Mains:

GS2: India and its neighbourhood

Why in the news?

Ranil Wickremesinghe, the President of Sri Lanka, arrived in India on July 20 for a formal visit.

Bilateral Talks Highlights

MoUs exchanged and documents handed over:

- The aim of the MoU on Trincomalee is to transform the port and its surrounding regions into a prominent "regional hub" for industry, energy, and renewable energy.
- An important agreement on digital transactions was signed between Lanka Pay and ECI International, facilitating the acceptance of India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in Sri Lanka.

Major Points: India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership Vision

- **Opportunity for Bilateral Economic Partnership:** The rapid economic growth and technological advancement in India, along with Sri Lanka's current phase of stabilisation and economic recovery, create an opportunity for a deeper economic partnership between the two countries.

- **Strengthening Connectivity:** The leaders recognized connectivity as a key enabler and agreed to promote and strengthen it in various dimensions:
- **Maritime Connectivity:** India and Sri Lanka will cooperate in developing ports and logistics infrastructure at Colombo, Trincomalee, and Kankesanthurai to improve regional logistics and shipping. Passenger ferry services between India and Sri Lanka are also planned to be resumed.
- **Land Connectivity:** A feasibility study will be conducted to establish land connectivity between Sri Lanka and India, providing access to the ports of Trincomalee and Colombo, fostering economic growth and strengthening the relationship between the two countries.
- **Air Connectivity:** Efforts to expand flights between Jaffna and Chennai to Colombo and explore connectivity to other destinations in Sri Lanka. Focus on investment and cooperation in civil aviation.
- **Energy and Power Connectivity:** Cooperation in developing renewable energy to achieve Sri Lanka's target of 70% power generation from renewable sources by 2030. Establishment of a high capacity power grid interconnection between India and Sri Lanka for bidirectional electricity trade. Joint exploration and production of hydrocarbons in Sri Lanka's offshore basins.
- **Trade, Economic, and Financial Connectivity:** Facilitating mutual investments, enhancing bilateral trade and investments through agreements, and promoting digital payments for trade transactions.
- **People-to-People Connectivity:** Promotion of India's Buddhist circuit, Ramayana trail, and religious places in Sri Lanka for tourism. Cooperation in education, research, and academic institutes in various fields.

Sr. No.	MoUs/Agreement exchanged
1.	Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) in the field of Animal Husbandry and Dairying
2.	MoU on cooperation in the field of renewable energy
3.	Memorandum of Cooperation for economic development projects in Trincomalee district of Sri Lanka
4.	Network to Network Agreement between NIPL and Lanka Pay for UPI application acceptance in Sri Lanka
5.	Energy Permit for Sampur Solar Power Project

13th Amendment Issue

- Indian PM urges Sri Lanka to implement 13th Amendment, announce development assistance for Tamils of Indian origin, and hopes for provincial council elections.
- The Indian Prime Minister urged Sri Lanka to implement the 13th Amendment, which grants greater autonomy to provinces, in order to ensure a "life of respect and dignity" for the Tamil population in the country. The PM also announced a development assistance package for the Tamils of Indian origin who are commemorating the 200th anniversary of their arrival in Sri Lanka.
- Finally, the PM expressed hope that Sri Lanka will hold provincial council elections in the country.

About 13th Amendment:

- The 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka was passed in 1987 as part of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord. It created a system of provincial councils with substantial powers over land, police, education, health, agriculture, housing, and finances. The amendment also made Tamil an official language of Sri Lanka, along with Sinhala.
- However, the 13th Amendment has never been fully implemented. The Sri Lankan government has resisted devolving power to the provinces, particularly in the areas of land and police. This has led to resentment among the Tamil community, who feel that they have been denied their rightful share of power and resources.



INDIA -SRI LANKA RELATIONSHIP AT A GLANCE

About	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India and Sri Lanka share a 2500-year-old relationship with cultural, religious, and linguistic interactions. • Trade, investment, and cooperation in development, education, culture, and defence have strengthened their friendship. • India supported Sri Lanka during the conflict with the LTTE, and developmental assistance projects have further solidified their bonds.
Commercial Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both countries have a vibrant economic partnership with bilateral merchandise trade reaching around USD 3.6 billion in 2020. • India is a significant contributor to Sri Lanka's Foreign Direct Investment.
Projects under LOCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Export-Import Bank of India has extended 11 Lines of Credit to Sri Lanka in various sectors like railway, transport, connectivity, defense, and solar. • A USD 100 million LoC for solar projects was signed in June 2021.

People-to-people ties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddhism is a strong connection between the two nations, dating back to Emperor Ashoka's era. • India offers numerous scholarships and training programs to Sri Lankan students and government officials to enhance human resource development.
Defence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India and Sri Lanka conduct joint military exercises named 'Mitra Shakti' and a naval exercise named SLINEX.
Support during crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India provided a \$2.4 billion financial assistance package, appointed experts to aid economic recovery, and extended currency swap and credit line for fuel purchases during the recent Sri Lankan crisis. • Additionally, several bilateral agreements were signed, including joint development projects and maritime security pacts.

India and Sri Lanka share a close and stable partnership, and India's role in addressing Sri Lanka's current economic challenges has been significant. Through various forms of support, cooperation, and connectivity initiatives, India continues to play a vital role in promoting sustainable and inclusive growth in Sri Lanka.

Sources:

Focus on joint projects during Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe's India visit – The Hindu

Q1. With reference to major international ports, consider the following pairs:

1. Hambantota – Sri Lanka
2. Chabahar – Iran
3. Trincomalee – Myanmar
4. Bandar Abbas – Pakistan

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

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

Answer: (b)

Q2. Which of the following countries is frequently in news due to the "13th Amendment"?

- (a) South Korea
- (b) Sri Lanka
- (c) United States
- (d) France

Answer: (b)

Q3. Analyse India's support, cooperation, and connectivity initiatives in fostering sustainable and inclusive growth in Sri Lanka.

ROADMAP FOR PROMOTING SOLAR ENERGY FOR UNIVERSAL ENERGY ACCESS

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Roadmap for Promoting Solar Energy for Universal Energy Access”. The topic “Roadmap for Promoting Solar Energy for Universal Energy Access” has relevance in the Energy security section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

Target Range?

Current Scenario of Indian Export?

For Mains:

GS 3: Energy security

Solar Mini-grids?

Key Highlights of the Report?

Challenges in Deployment of Solar Energy for Universal Energy Access?

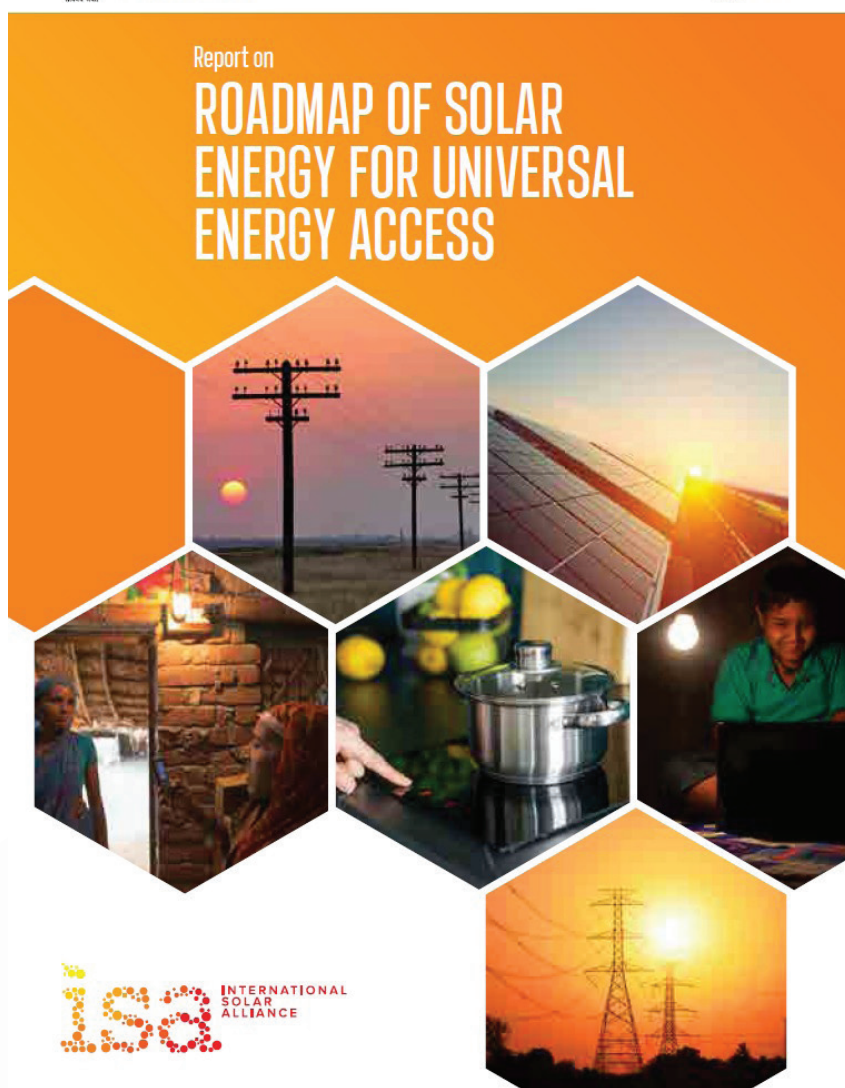
Way Forward?

Why in the news?

At an event of the 4th Energy Transition Working Group in Goa today, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India, in association with the International Solar Alliance, released a Roadmap of Solar Energy for Universal Energy Access.

Key Highlights of the Report:

1. **Emphasis on Solar Energy:** The report highlights solar energy as a key solution to achieve Universal Energy Access by 2030.
2. **Electrification Methods:** It identifies different methods for electrifying the unelectrified population:
 - Solar-based mini-grids for 59% (396 million people).
 - Grid extensions for 30% (203 million people).
1. Decentralized Renewable Energy solutions for 11% (77 million people).
2. **Investment Requirement:** The report estimates a total investment of around USD 192 billion for accomplishing the electrification goals through various solar energy solutions.
3. **Viability Gap Funding:** The deployment of mini-grids requires viability gap funding of around 50% (USD 48.5 billion).
4. **Challenges and Solutions:** The report emphasizes addressing challenges related to policies, regulations, financial risks, and technical expertise to scale up solar energy solutions successfully.
5. **Increased Investments:** The roadmap advocates for increased investments, ecosystem development, and optimal resource utilization to accelerate universal energy access.
6. **Integration of Solar PV-based Cooking Solutions:** The report emphasizes integrating solar PV-based cooking solutions with electrification initiatives to enhance energy access in remote and underdeveloped areas.



Solar Mini-grids:

- Solar mini-grids are small-scale electricity generation and distribution systems that utilize solar PV technology to generate electricity and store it in batteries.
- They provide reliable and affordable electricity to communities or areas lacking access to the main power grid or experiencing frequent power outages.
- Solar mini-grids can also power electric stoves or other cooking appliances, offering clean cooking solutions.

Challenges in Deployment of Solar Energy for Universal Energy Access:

- Lack of enabling policies and regulations supporting solar energy deployment.
- Challenges in equipment manufacturing, execution, and maintenance.
- Accumulation of dust on solar panels affects their efficiency.
- High financial risks in underdeveloped regions increasing project costs.
- Need for technical and financial expertise for successful implementation and maintenance.

International Solar Alliance (ISA):

- ISA is a collaborative platform co-founded by India and France in 2015 to increase the deployment of solar energy technologies.
- Its primary goal is to facilitate energy access, ensure energy security, and drive energy transition in member countries.
- The Alliance is the nodal agency for implementing One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG) that aims to transfer solar power generated in one region to meet electricity demands in others.

Government Schemes to Enhance Solar Energy Production in India:

- International Solar Alliance
- National Solar Mission
- Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM)
- One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWOG)
- Solar Park Scheme
- Rooftop Solar Scheme

Way Forward:

- Assisting access-deficit countries in developing enabling policy and regulatory frameworks.
- Facilitating private-sector participation in energy access projects.
- Exploring innovative financing models like green bonds.
- Hybridization with wind or biomass energy to enhance mini-grid reliability and lower power equipment costs.

SOURCE:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1941211>

Q.1 Consider the following statements:

1. The International Solar Alliance was launched at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2015.
2. The Alliance includes all the member countries of the United Nations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a)

Q.2 Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the National Solar Mission?

1. The National Solar Mission was launched in 2010 by the Government of India with the objective of promoting the use of solar energy in the country.
2. The mission aims to achieve 100 GW (Gigawatt) of solar power capacity by 2022.
3. The National Solar Mission is a part of India's commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
4. The mission focuses on the deployment of solar energy technologies for both grid-connected and off-grid applications.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: (d)

Q.3 India has immense potential for solar energy though there are regional variations in its developments. Elaborate.

GLOBAL REPORT ON FOOD CRISES 2023

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Global Report on Food Crises 2023". The topic "Global Report on Food Crises 2023" has relevance in the "Social Justice" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

What is the Global Report on Food Crises 2023? Who are its publishers?

For Mains:

GS2: Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

GS3: Food Security

Why in the news?

The 2023 Global Report on Food Crises was published recently.

Global Report on Food Crises

- The GRFC 2023 is published by Food Security Information Network (FSIN) in support of the Global Network against Food Crises (GNAFC).
- It helps understand acute food insecurity in 2022 globally, regionally, and at the country level.
- This report is the outcome of a collaborative effort involving 16 partners to reach a consensus-based evaluation of acute food insecurity in crisis-affected nations.
- Its purpose is to provide reliable and evidence-based analysis to guide humanitarian and development actions.

GRFC 2023 Highlights

- The GRFC 2023 shows a concerning trend of increasing acute food insecurity and urgent assistance needs.
- It reports that more than 250 million people are currently experiencing acute hunger due to factors like economic shocks and the Ukraine war.
- In 2022, around 258 million people across 58 countries faced acute food insecurity, up from 193 million people in 2021, spanning 53 countries and territories at crisis or worse levels.

GRFC 2023 Key Findings

- The Global Report indicates that hunger, while not rising alarmingly at a global level, remains well above pre-COVID levels, and **progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) is off track**. Urbanization's impact on food security is highlighted.
- New estimates show **no improvement in global food insecurity for 2022 compared to the previous year**. Approximately 2.4 billion people lacked adequate food access, 391 million more than in 2019. The prevalence of undernourishment also remained high, affecting around 9.2% of the global population in 2022, up from 7.9% in 2019.
- **Positive aspects include a decline in stunting and child wasting** among children under five years old, but there was a non-significant increase in overweight or obese children.
- The report reveals that **nearly 3.2 billion people worldwide couldn't afford a healthy diet in 2020**, with a slight improvement in 2021. The cost of a healthy diet rose globally by 6.7% between 2019 and 2021.
- Additionally, it predicts that around **600 million people will suffer from chronic undernourishment by 2030**.

Key drivers of food insecurity

The report attributes the rise in food insecurity to various factors, such as –

- the lockdowns and economic downturns in 2020, leading to job losses and reduced incomes
- Ukraine war
- less favourable government policies
- increasing urbanisation's impact on agrifood systems

Interestingly, the report finds that food insecurity is lower in urban areas when compared to rural and peri-urban populations.

What are the solutions ahead?

- **Identifying Vulnerable Groups for Targeted Policies and Programs:** The report helps identify vulnerable population groups and provides evidence for decision-making and effective action through targeted policies and programs.
- **Sound nutrition:** Sound nutrition is crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and the report emphasises the need for government policy, civil society, and private sector support.
- **Promoting Healthier Food Outlets and Addressing Street Food Challenges:** Some recommendations include promoting healthier food outlets to improve access to healthy diets. Policy incentives should encourage shops to sell more fresh and minimally processed foods. The report also highlights the significance of street foods, consumed by around 2.5 billion people daily, and calls for addressing infrastructure and regulatory gaps to enhance their nutritional safety and quality.
- **Enhancing Rural Infrastructure for Agricultural Development:** Building rural infrastructure, like quality roads and linkages between farms and enterprises, is another important suggestion. Public investments in warehousing, cold storage, electrification, digital tools, and water supply can support small farms and medium enterprises.
- **Local Governments' Vital Role in Ensuring Access to Healthy Diets:** The report stresses the vital role of local governments in implementing essential policies to make healthy diets available and affordable for all through multilevel and multi-stakeholder mechanisms.

Sources:

Q1. With reference Global Report on Food Crises 2023, consider the following statements:

1. The Global Report highlights the impact of urbanization on food security, indicating that food insecurity is generally lower in urban areas compared to rural and peri-urban populations.
2. According to the report, the Ukraine war is one of the key drivers of food insecurity globally.
3. The Global Report suggests that there is positive progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (a)

Q2. Consider the following reports/indices:

1. Global Report on Food Crises
2. Food Price Index
3. State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World
4. Global Hunger Index (GHI)

How many of the abovementioned reports/indices are published by Food and Agriculture Organization?

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

Answer: (b)

Q3. In 2023, global food insecurity is influenced by climate change, population growth, and geopolitical conflicts. Policy measures are needed to tackle these challenges effectively. Analyse.

PM-KUSUM (PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN URJA SURAKSHA EVAM UTTHAAN MAHABHIYAN)

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “PM-KUSUM”. The topic “PM-KUSUM” has relevance in the Energy Security section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

About PM-KUSUM?

Objectives of PM-KUSUM?

For Mains:

GS 3: Energy Security

Components of PM-KUSUM?

Major Challenges?

Way Forward?

Why in the news?

The Union Minister of New Renewable Energy provided an update on the current status of the PM KUSUM scheme in a written response to the Lok Sabha.

About PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan):

- PM-KUSUM is a flagship scheme launched by the Indian government in 2019 to promote the adoption of solar energy solutions in the agricultural sector.
- It operates on a demand-driven approach, allocating capacities based on demands from states and union territories (UTs).
- The scheme aims to add 30.8 GW of solar power capacity by March 31, 2026.

Objectives of PM-KUSUM:

De-dieselisation of the Farm Sector:

- Encourage the use of solar-powered pumps and renewable energy sources to reduce the dependence on diesel for irrigation.
- Help farmers increase their income by lowering irrigation costs through solar pumps and enabling them to sell surplus solar power to the grid.

Water and Energy Security for Farmers:

- Provide access to solar pumps and promote solar-based community irrigation projects to enhance water and energy security for farmers.

Curbing Environmental Pollution:

- Mitigate environmental pollution caused by conventional energy sources by adopting clean and renewable solar energy.

Components of PM-KUSUM:

- **Component-A:** establishment of 10,000 MW of Decentralized Ground/Stilt Mounted Solar Power Plants on various types of land, including barren, fallow, pasture, marshy, and cultivable land owned by farmers.
- **Component-B:** Installation of 20 lakh stand-alone solar pumps in areas without access to the electricity grid.
- **Component-C:** Solarisation of 15 Lakh Grid Connected Agriculture Pumps through individual pump solarisation and feeder level solarisation.

Recent Significant Developments:

- **Extension of Scheme Duration:** PM-KUSUM, the flagship scheme initiated by the Indian government to promote the adoption of solar energy solutions in the agricultural sector, has been extended until March 31, 2026.
- **State-Level Tendering:** State level tendering is allowed for the procurement of standalone solar pumps, making the process more streamlined and efficient.

- **Inclusion in AIF and PSL Guidelines:** The solarization of pumps under PM-KUSUM has been included in the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) and Priority Sector Lending (PSL) Guidelines of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), making it more accessible for farmers to access finance.

Major Challenges:

- **Geographical Variability:** Varying solar radiation levels in different regions can impact the efficiency of solar installations and the performance of solar pumps.
- **Inadequate Grid Infrastructure:** Weak or unreliable grid infrastructure can hinder the integration of solar power into the grid and limit the benefits for farmers.
- **Lack of Water Regulation:** The surge in irrigation demand with solar pumps can strain groundwater resources without proper water management practices.

Way Forward:

- **Mobile Solar Pumping:** Implement mobile solar pump stations that can be moved to different locations based on irrigation needs to enhance water access in remote areas.
- **Water Regulation and Monitoring:** Establish effective water regulation policies and monitoring mechanisms to control groundwater extraction and ensure sustainability.
- **Linking with MGNREGA:** Link PM-KUSUM with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to support the installation of micro-irrigation systems for improved water-use efficiency and crop productivity.
- **Technology and Training:** Promote the use of advanced technology and provide training to farmers for efficient utilization of solar pumps and solar energy solutions.
- **Awareness and Outreach:** Conduct awareness campaigns to educate farmers about the benefits of solar energy and encourage wider adoption of the scheme.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster partnerships with private sector entities to accelerate the implementation of solar projects and address challenges effectively.



SOURCE:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1941116>

Q.1 Which of the following statements regarding the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) is/are correct?

1. PM-KUSUM aims to promote the adoption of conventional energy sources in the agricultural sector.
2. Component-C of PM-KUSUM focuses on solarisation of grid-connected agriculture pumps through

individual pump solarisation and feeder level solarisation.

3. The scheme operates on a supply-driven approach

4. PM-KUSUM has been extended until 2026, to facilitate wider adoption of solar energy solutions among farmers.

Select the correct option(s):

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 1 and 4 only

(c) 1, 2 and 3 only

(d) All of the above

ANSWER: B

Q.2 Which of the following statements about the National Solar Mission is/are true?

1. The National Solar Mission was launched in 2010 with the goal of promoting solar power generation in India.

2. The mission aims to achieve 100 GW of solar power capacity by 2030, making India a global leader in solar energy.

3. The National Solar Mission focuses solely on grid-connected solar power projects and does not include off-grid solar installations.

4. The mission has various components, including solar park development, solar rooftop installations, and solar water pumps.

Select the correct option(s):

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 1 and 4 only

(c) 1, 2 and 4 only

(d) All of the above

ANSWER: C

Q.3 India has immense potential for solar energy though there are regional variations in its developments. Elaborate.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (NCPCR)

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "National Commission for Protection of Child Rights". The topic "National Commission for Protection of Child Rights" has relevance in the "Indian Polity" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

*What is the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights?
Its Composition and Functions?*

For Mains:

GS2: Statutory, Regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies

Why in the news?

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has sent a letter to the Manipur DGP, instructing them to acknowledge and lodge a FIR against three individuals.

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

The Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, passed in December 2005, led to the establishment of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) in March 2007.

- The Commission works under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- The primary objective of the commission is to ensure that all laws, policies, programs, and administrative systems align with the principles outlined in the Constitution of India and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- According to their definition, a child is considered to be an individual between the ages of 0 and 18 years.

Regulation/Act	Definition of a Child
Indian Census	Under the age of 14
Universal Declaration of Child Rights	Under the age of 18, unless majority is attained earlier according to applicable legislation
Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860	Minors under the age of 7; Children with mental disabilities under the age of 12 (Section 83 IPC)
Indian Constitution (Article 21A)	Ages 6 to 14
Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986	14 years
Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000	18 years

Composition

- The Central Government appoints a **chairperson**, who is a distinguished individual with a notable track record in promoting children's welfare.
- **Six members are appointed from various fields, including at least two women**, based on their eminence, ability, integrity, standing, and experience. –
 - Education;
 - Child health, care, welfare or child development;
 - Juvenile justice or care of neglected or marginalised children or children with disabilities;
 - Elimination of child labour or children in distress;
 - Child psychology or sociology; and
 - Laws relating to children.

Functions of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

- **Review and Recommend Safeguards:**
 - Examine and review the safeguards provided by existing laws for child rights protection.
 - Recommend effective measures for implementing these safeguards.
 - Present periodic reports to the central government on the working of these safeguards.
- **Inquire and Initiate Proceedings:**
 - Investigate violations of child rights.

- Recommend the initiation of legal proceedings in such cases.
- **Remedial Measures for Specific Situations:**
 - Examine factors hindering the rights of children affected by various situations, such as terrorism, violence, disasters, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, trafficking, etc.
 - Recommend appropriate remedial measures.
- **Special Care and Protection for Vulnerable Children:**
 - Address matters concerning children in need of special care and protection, including distressed, marginalized, disadvantaged children, those in conflict with the law, juveniles, children without families, and children of prisoners.
 - Recommend appropriate remedial measures.
- **Review Policies and Treaties:**
 - Study international treaties and instruments related to child rights.
 - Periodically review existing policies and programs on child rights.
 - Make recommendations for their effective implementation in the best interest of children.
- **Promote Research and Child Rights Literacy**
- **Inspection and Remedial Action:**
 - Inspect or cause inspections of custodial homes, residences, or institutions meant for children under government or authority control.
 - Advocate for remedial action when necessary.
- **Handling Complaints and Issues:**
 - Inquire into complaints related to child rights violations and take suo motu notice of relevant matters.
 - Address issues arising from non-compliance with laws and policies for child protection.
- **Incidental Functions:**
 - Perform other functions necessary for the promotion of child rights.
 - Not interfere in matters already under consideration by other duly constituted commissions.
- **Compliance with Convention on the Rights of the Child:**
 - Analyse existing laws, policies, and practices for compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
 - Undertake inquiries and produce reports on policy or practice affecting children.

Responsibilities under other Acts

- **The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012**
 - Monitoring of Special Courts Designation by State Governments
 - Monitoring of Public Prosecutors Appointment by State Governments
 - Guidelines Formulation for the involvement of NGOs, professionals, experts and Application Monitoring of these guidelines by State Governments.
 - Training Module Design and Implementation
 - Dissemination of Information and Awareness
 - Reporting and Collecting Data on specific cases of child sexual abuse under the jurisdiction of Child Welfare Committees (CWC).
 - Assess the implementation of the Act's provisions and include a separate chapter in the Annual Report to Parliament covering the findings.
- **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009**
 - Evaluate and assess the safeguards for rights provided by or under the act, and propose measures for their efficient implementation.
 - Inquire complaints concerning the child's right to free and compulsory education.

The NCPCR plays a crucial role in safeguarding, promoting, and advocating for children's rights in the country. Its primary objective is to ensure that all laws, policies, programs, and administrative processes align with the perspective of Child Rights, as outlined in the Indian Constitution and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Commission aims to adopt a rights-based approach in national policies and programs, while also tailoring responses at the state, district, and block levels to consider each region's unique characteristics and capabilities. It seeks to integrate better with communities and households to reach every child, and it anticipates that the on-ground experiences will influence the support it receives from all levels of government.

Sources:

NCPCR writes to Manipur DGP, seeks FIR against CPM leader, 2 others | India News – The Indian Express

Q1. With reference National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), consider the following statements:

1. NCPCR is required to analyze existing laws, policies, and practices for compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. One of the functions of NCPCR is to review and recommend safeguards for child rights protection provided by existing laws.
3. The NCPCR is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, and recommending measures for its effective implementation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (a)

Q2. Consider the following:

Regulation/Act	Definition of a Child
1. Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005	6 to 18 years
1. Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986	14 years
1. Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000	18 years

How many of the abovementioned pairs are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights's structure and functions. Highlight its significance in protecting and promoting children's rights in India.

NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “No-Confidence Motion”. The topic “No-Confidence Motion” has relevance in the Polity section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

About No-Confidence Motion?

For Mains:

GS 2: Polity

Types of Motions in Parliament?

Why in the news?

A No Confidence Motion was moved against the PM Modi government marking the first such motion in 20 years.

No-Confidence Motion:

- A No-Confidence Motion is a parliamentary motion in which members express a lack of confidence in the ruling government.
- Under Rule 198 of the Lok Sabha Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business, a No-Confidence Motion can be introduced by any member.
- For the motion to be admitted, it must be supported by at least 50 members in writing.
- Once admitted, the motion is debated, and a vote is held.
- The motion is deemed passed if a majority of the members present and voting support it.
- If the motion is passed, the Council of Ministers must resign, including the Prime Minister, as per convention.

NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION

➤ First-ever no-confidence motion was moved in 1963	Three in last 25 years
➤ Total 26 so far (the one on July 20 will be 27th)	July 1993 Against the Narasimha Rao govt after Babri Masjid demolition (Govt won confidence vote)
➤ Indira Gandhi govt had faced maximum number of no-confidence motion 15	April 1999 Against the Vajpayee govt (Govt lost by one vote)
	August 2003 Against the Vajpayee govt (Govt won confidence vote)
	July 2008 It was a trust vote after CPM-led Left Front withdrew support from the Manmohan Singh govt over the Indo-US nuclear deal. Govt proved its majority

In the Indian Parliament, various types of motions are used to discuss and debate matters of public importance. Some of the key types of motions used in Parliament are:

Adjournment Motion:

- Raised to discuss a matter of urgent public importance with the Speaker's consent.
- Requires the support of 50 members to be admitted.

- Available in the Lok Sabha but not in the Rajya Sabha.
- Passage does not require the government to resign, but it is a strong censure of the government.

Closure Motion:

- When a member proposes to curtail the debate on a particular matter in the House, the intention is to seek approval for its prompt conclusion and an immediate vote. Should this proposal be accepted, the ongoing discussion will be halted, and the House will proceed to vote on the matter in question.
- Motion with a Vote (Rule 184 in Lok Sabha):
- Allows for a debate with a vote on a specific question, and the outcome determines Parliament's position on the issue.
- If passed, the government is obliged to follow Parliament's decision on the matter.

Motion with a Vote:

- A Motion with a Vote is brought under Rule 184 in the Lok Sabha.
- It allows for a debate on a specific question followed by a voting process.
- The outcome of the vote determines Parliament's position on the issue.
- If the motion is passed, the government is obligated to follow Parliament's decision on the matter.
- Motions with a vote are relatively rare and are usually reserved for matters of significant national importance.

Short Duration Discussion (Rule 193 in Lok Sabha, Rule 176 in Rajya Sabha):

- Allows MPs to discuss a specific issue of public importance without voting.
- The typical format of a debate involves adhering to a predetermined timeframe, which generally spans a maximum of two hours.

Confidence Motion:

- Passed to prove the majority of the government when its majority is in doubt.

Privilege Motion:

- Initiated when a member believes a minister has violated the privileges of the House or its members.
- Aims to express disapproval and criticize the minister's actions.

Motion of Thanks:

- A parliamentary protocol designed to convey appreciation for the President's Address during the initiation of the Lok Sabha session.
- Its passage within the House holds significant importance, as its failure would be perceived as a defeat for the government.

Cut Motion:

- Cut motions are proposed by members of the Parliament to reduce the allocation of funds for a specific demand in the budget. These motions aim to express the discontent or disagreement with the proposed budgetary allocation and provide a way for MPs to voice their concerns about government spending on particular items.
- Passage by the Lok Sabha indicates a lack of parliamentary confidence in the government and

may lead to its resignation.

- These motions provide mechanisms for discussions, debates, and expressions of confidence or no-confidence in the government, contributing to the functioning of a parliamentary democracy.

SOURCE:

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/no-confidence-motion-in-lok-sabha-live-i-n-d-i-a-parliament-monsoon-session-pm-modi-manipur-congress-bjp-11690423265970.html>

Image credit: Economic Times

Q.1 What is a “Cut Motion” in the context of parliamentary proceedings, and what is its purpose?

- (a) A motion moved by the opposition to reduce the budgetary allocation for a specific government expenditure.
- (b) A motion moved by the ruling party to expedite the passage of a crucial bill.
- (c) A motion moved to censure a member of parliament for misconduct.
- (d) A motion moved to adjourn the House for an immediate discussion on an urgent matter.

Answer: (a)

Q.2 Which of the following statements regarding a No-Confidence Motion in a parliamentary setting is/are correct?

1. It requires support from a minimum of 25% of the total members of the legislative body to be admitted.
2. If the No-Confidence Motion is passed, the ruling government must resign, including the Prime Minister.

Choose the correct option(s) from the following:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) None of the above

Answer: (b)

Q.3 Discuss the significance and implications of a No-Confidence Motion in a parliamentary democracy. How does this motion serve as a vital instrument of accountability and parliamentary oversight?

HIMACHAL FLASH FLOODS

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Flash Floods”. The topic “Flash Floods” has relevance in the “Disaster Management” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

What are flash floods? Their Reasons?

For Mains:

GS3: Disaster and Disaster Management

Why in the news?

Flash floods during this year's monsoon season have caused unprecedented damage to both lives and assets in Himachal Pradesh.

Flash Floods:

Flash floods are events that occur in a small and specific area for a brief period, characterised by a rapid rise in water levels, reaching their peak within a few hours after the rainfall, typically within six hours.

Feature	Flash Floods	Floods in General
Definition	Sudden and intense flooding events that occur within a short span of time, typically within a few hours or even minutes.	An overflow of water that submerges land that is usually dry.
Cause	Heavy rainfall over a localized area, often associated with cloudbursts or intense thunderstorms. Can also result from factors other than rainfall, such as the release of water from a dam or the overflow of glacial lakes.	Prolonged and excessive rainfall over a wide area, usually lasting for days or weeks. Can also result from the melting of snow and ice, storm surges, tidal actions, or the failure of dams.
Onset	Rapid onset, catching people by surprise, and they can escalate quickly with little warning.	Slower onset compared to flash floods, as they take time to build up over a larger region and gradually inundate the surrounding areas.
Duration	Usually of short duration, but the impact can be severe due to the high intensity of the water flow.	Can last for an extended period, depending on the amount of rainfall and the water's source.
Scope	Highly localized and affect specific areas, such as narrow river valleys or urban regions with poor drainage systems.	Cover larger geographical areas, affecting extensive river basins or entire regions.
Characteristics	Often result in a swift and powerful surge of water, causing significant damage to infrastructure, posing dangers to human lives, and leading to landslides in mountainous terrains.	While floods may not have the same rapid intensity as flash floods, they can still cause significant damage to properties, disrupt transportation and communication, and result in the displacement of communities.

Causes:

Natural Causes of Flash Floods:

- **Cloudbursts:** Intense rainfall occurring suddenly over a specific area during a thunderstorm can lead to a massive amount of rainwater being dumped, causing flash floods.

- **Rivers and Streams Overflowing:** Prolonged heavy rains can cause rivers and streams to swell and overflow their banks, resulting in flash floods.
- **Blocked or Inefficient Drainage Systems:** When heavy rains exceed the capacity of drainage systems, they become blocked or inefficient, leading to flash flooding.
- **Volcanic Eruptions Melting Glaciers:** Volcanic eruptions on glacial mountains can melt ice, triggering flash floods.
- **Slow Moving Thunderstorms or “Trapped Thunderstorms”:** Thunderstorms that move slowly over an area or become trapped between mountains can dump significant rainfall, causing flash floods.
- **Upstream Thunderstorms:** Thunderstorms occurring upstream in mountainous areas can contribute to flash floods as the runoff joins downstream rivers.
- **Hurricanes and Tropical Storms:** Hurricanes and tropical storms bring heavy rainfall that can result in flash floods.
- **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF Events):** Glacial lake outburst floods can cause flash floods downstream, impacting mountainous areas.

Anthropogenic Causes of Flash Floods:

- **Dam Failures:** Human-induced dam failures can lead to flash flooding in an area, posing significant risks.
- **Climate Change:** Human activities causing climate change contribute to extreme weather events like hurricanes, leading to flash floods.
- **Destruction of Mangroves and Wetlands:** The destruction of mangroves and wetlands, which act as natural buffers against flooding, can exacerbate flash flood events.
- **Deforestation:** Deforestation removes the natural buffer provided by forests, allowing floodwaters to reach areas with greater force and intensity, leading to flash floods.

Probable causes of Himachal Flash Floods

- **Climate Change:**
 - Increased precipitation occurring in shorter periods of time in the Himalayas due to climate change.
 - The impact of the south-west monsoon combined with western disturbances leading to heavy rainfall.
- **Anthropogenic Factors:**
 - **Uncontrolled construction of hydropower projects**, which divert water through tunnels and contribute to the transformation of mountain rivers into streams.
 - **Road-widening projects for tourism promotion**, carried out without proper geological studies, leading to landslides and damage to existing roads.
 - **Establishment of massive cement plants** and extensive cutting of mountains altering the natural landscape and reducing the land’s capacity to absorb water.
 - **Changes in crop patterns**, with more farmers embracing cash crop economies over traditional cereal farming, leading to hastily constructed roads and improper dumping of muck that affects river ecosystems.

Impacts:

- **Loss of life:** Flash floods can be extremely deadly, as they often occur with little or no warning. In 2023, for example, flash floods in Himachal Pradesh and Punjab killed at least 41 people.

- **Damage to property:** Flash floods can cause extensive damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure. In 2022, flash floods in Assam damaged or destroyed over 100,000 homes.
- **Disruption of transportation:** Flash floods can wash away roads, bridges, and railways, making it difficult or impossible to travel. This can have a major impact on the economy, as it can disrupt the movement of goods and people.
- **Contamination of water supplies:** Flash floods can contaminate water supplies with mud, debris, and bacteria. This can lead to outbreaks of waterborne diseases, such as cholera and typhoid.
- **Damage to crops:** Flash floods can damage or destroy crops, which can lead to food shortages. In 2021, flash floods in Uttar Pradesh damaged or destroyed over 1 million hectares of crops.
- **Environmental damage:** Flash floods can cause erosion, landslides, and other environmental damage. This can have a lasting impact on the ecosystem.

Measures to Mitigate and Adapt to Flash Floods:

- **Early Warning Systems:** Implementing efficient early warning systems that utilize weather forecasting and monitoring technologies can provide timely alerts to vulnerable communities, allowing them to take necessary precautions and evacuate if needed.
- **Flood Mapping and Risk Assessment:** Conducting flood mapping and risk assessments helps identify flood-prone areas, enabling better land use planning and the development of flood-resistant infrastructure in high-risk regions.
- **Improved Drainage Infrastructure:** Investing in well-designed and properly maintained drainage systems can enhance water flow and reduce the risk of flash floods caused by blocked or inefficient drainage.
- **Afforestation and Reforestation:** Promoting afforestation and reforestation in catchment areas and vulnerable regions can help reduce soil erosion, improve water retention, and mitigate the intensity of flash floods.
- **Land Use Planning:** Proper land use planning is essential to avoid construction in flood-prone areas. Implementing regulations that prohibit building in high-risk zones can prevent human settlements from being exposed to flash flood hazards.
- **Sustainable Agriculture Practices:** Encouraging farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices, such as contour farming and terrace cultivation, can help reduce soil erosion and prevent sedimentation in rivers, thereby minimizing the risk of flash floods.
- **Flood Insurance and Relief Measures:** Providing access to affordable flood insurance for vulnerable communities and implementing efficient relief measures can help people recover from the impact of flash floods more effectively.
- **Public Awareness and Education:** Conducting awareness campaigns and educational programs to inform communities about flash flood risks, safety measures, and evacuation procedures is crucial in building community resilience.
- **Urban Planning and Green Spaces:** Integrating green spaces and rainwater harvesting systems in urban planning can improve water management and reduce the intensity of flash floods in cities.
- **River Restoration and Floodplain Management:** Restoring rivers to their natural state and managing floodplains can help absorb excess water during heavy rainfall and reduce the risk of flash floods downstream.
- **Climate Change Adaptation:** Implementing climate change adaptation strategies, such as building climate-resilient infrastructure and developing drought and flood management plans, can enhance the country's ability to cope with changing weather patterns.

Q1. With reference to Flash Floods, consider the following statements:

1. Flash floods usually last for an extended period, depending on the amount of rainfall and the water's source. (Wrong)
2. Flash floods are sudden and intense flooding events that occur over a wide geographical area, typically within a few hours or even minutes.
3. The cause of flash floods in Himachal Pradesh during the monsoon season is totally due to climate change-induced extreme weather events.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (d)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. Early warning systems are only useful for coastal regions and not for inland areas prone to flash floods.
2. Contour farming is a practice that increases the risk of flash floods.
3. Planting more trees in flood-prone areas can help reduce the intensity of flash floods.
4. Public awareness and education have no impact on flash floods as they are natural disasters that cannot be controlled through community knowledge.

How many of the abovementioned statement/s is/are correct ?

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

Answer: (a)

Q3. Discuss the causes, impacts, and measures to mitigate and adapt to flash floods and floods in general, with a specific focus on the recent flash floods in Himachal Pradesh.

BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021". The topic "Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021" has relevance in the Environment section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

Key Features of the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021?

For Mains:

GS 3: Environment

Concerns about the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021?

Way Forward?

Why in the news?

Recently, Lok Sabha has passed the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021

Key Features of the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021:

Access to Biological Resources:

- Currently, anyone seeking to access biological resources or associated knowledge in India needs prior approval or must inform the regulatory authority.
- The Bill modifies the classification of entities and activities that require intimation, introducing exemptions to certain cases.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):

- The Act requires NBA approval before applying for IPR related to biological resources from India.
- The Bill suggests that approval will be required before the actual grant of the IPR, not during the application process.

Exempting AYUSH Practitioners:

- The Bill proposes to grant exemptions to registered AYUSH medical practitioners and individuals accessing codified traditional knowledge, among others. These exemptions would relieve them from the requirement of giving prior intimation to State biodiversity boards when accessing biological resources for specific purposes.

Benefit Sharing:

- The Act mandates benefit sharing, involving both monetary and non-monetary benefits with those conserving biodiversity or holding traditional knowledge.
- The Bill removes the applicability of benefit sharing requirements from research, bio-survey, and bio-utilisation.

Criminal Penalties:

- The Act stipulates criminal penalties, which may include imprisonment, for offenses such as failing to obtain approval or provide intimation for specific activities.
- It proposes to replace criminal penalties with fines ranging from one lakh to fifty lakh rupees



Concerns about the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021:

Favoring Industry over Conservation:

- Critics argue that the amendments prioritize industry interests over biodiversity conservation,

contrary to the CBD's spirit.

- Benefit-sharing and community involvement frameworks may be weakened.

Decriminalization of Violations:

- The Bill proposes to decriminalize violations, reducing the NBA's power to file FIRs against non-compliant parties.
- Enforcement of biodiversity protection laws may be weakened.

Exemption for Domestic Companies:

- The Bill introduces a provision that requires only "foreign-controlled companies" to seek permission for using biodiversity resources. This exemption may create potential loopholes for domestic companies with foreign shareholding to avoid the approval process
- This may lead to unchecked exploitation of biodiversity.

Limited Benefit Sharing:

- Inclusion of "codified traditional knowledge" exempts certain users, such as Indian systems of medicine practitioners, from the need to share benefits.
Domestic companies may avoid sharing profits with communities holding traditional knowledge.

Ignoring Conservation Issues:

- Critics contend that the amendments fall short in effectively addressing the challenges related to biodiversity conservation in India.
- The focus on reducing regulations and facilitating business interests may negatively impact biodiversity and traditional knowledge holders.

Way Forward:

Striking a Balance: Strive for a balance between economic development and sustainable biodiversity conservation.

Inclusive Consultations: Engage in transparent and inclusive consultations with stakeholders, including local communities, indigenous people, conservationists, scientists, and industry representatives.

Consider All Perspectives: Ensure that all perspectives are considered in the decision-making process.

Alignment with Conservation Principles: Ensure that the amendments align with biodiversity conservation principles.

SOURCE:

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/biological-diversity-amendment-bill-passed-in-lok-sabha/article67120215.ece>

Q.1 Consider the following statements:

1. In India, the Biodiversity Management Committees are key to the realization of the objectives of the Nagoya Protocol.
2. The Biodiversity Management Committees have important functions in determining access and benefit sharing, including the power to levy collection fees on the access of biological resources within its jurisdiction.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c)

Q.2 Which of the following amendments were proposed by the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021 to the Biological Diversity Act, 2002?

1. Introducing criminal penalties for violations related to biodiversity resources.
2. Granting exemptions to registered AYUSH medical practitioners from prior intimation to State biodiversity boards.

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

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

Answer: (b)

Q.3 How is the Government of India protecting traditional knowledge of medicine from patenting by pharmaceutical companies?

MANUAL SCAVENGING IN INDIA

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Manual Scavenging in India". The topic "Manual Scavenging in India" has relevance in the "Social Justice" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

What is Manual Scavenging?

For Mains:

GS2: Government policies and interventions.

GS2: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population.

Why in the news?

The Ministry of Social Justice recently announced in Parliament that 530 districts across India have reported being free of manual scavenging.

About Manual scavenging

- Manual scavenging refers to the unsafe and manual removal of raw human excreta from unhygienic latrines or open drains.
- The official definition of a manual scavenger in Indian law is someone who is engaged or employed by an individual, local authority, agency, or contractor to manually clean, carry, dispose of, or handle human excreta from insanitary latrines, open drains, pits, railway tracks, or other designated spaces, as notified by the Central or State Government.

Causes of Manual Scavenging

- Inadequate waterborne latrines
- Incomplete rehabilitation and employment opportunities
- Poor liberation strategies
- Social stigmatization

Effects of Manual Scavenging

- Health-related issues
- Structural violence against manual scavengers
- Caste and gender discrimination
- Social discrimination

Causes of Manual Scavenging:

- **Inadequate waterborne latrines:** In urban areas, dry latrines are widely used, contributing significantly to manual scavenging. According to the latest census data, India has approximately 26 million insanitary latrines.
- **Incomplete rehabilitation and employment opportunities:** The absence of adequate employment opportunities and support for families whose breadwinners engage in manual scavenging further perpetuates this problem.
- **Poor liberation strategies:** Manual scavengers are not provided with proper strategies to liberate themselves psychologically. This lack of support can trap them deeper into the practice of manual scavenging.
- **Social stigmatisation:** Manual scavengers face societal stigma, being considered untouchable due to their work. This exclusion prevents them from participating in community activities, finding employment, or renting houses.

Effects of Manual Scavenging:

- **Health-related issues:**
 - Exposure to harmful gases such as hydrogen disulfide, carbon dioxide, ammonia, and methane puts manual scavengers at risk of developing severe health issues.
 - Prolonged exposure to hydrogen disulfide can result in asphyxia and even death. Musculoskeletal disorders, such as osteoarthritis, are common among scavengers.
 - Additionally, exposure to sewer infections, including diseases like Leptospirosis, poses a significant occupational health risk.
- **Structural violence against manual scavengers:**
 - Manual scavengers face two types of violence—social violence and violence based on caste discrimination.
 - In India, the caste system is often used to justify violence against them, perpetuating their plight. Discrimination and prejudice towards manual scavengers are systemic and form a type of structural violence.
- **Caste and gender discrimination:**
 - Manual scavengers, mostly women and members of marginalized castes, are trapped in this occupation due to caste-based discrimination.
 - They are excluded from accessing better job opportunities, making manual scavenging appear

as their only option for work.

- **Social discrimination:**

- They are considered untouchable, and this discriminatory attitude forces them to accept their circumstances.
- The problem extends to their children, who also face discrimination and are compelled to follow in their parents' footsteps, continuing the cycle of manual scavenging.

Major Legislative and Programmatic Interventions to Address Manual Scavenging:

Legislative Measures:

- **The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**
 - Enacted by Parliament to prohibit manual scavenging and provide rehabilitation to those engaged in this practice.
- **National Commission for Safai Karamcharis**
 - It was constituted on 12th August 1994 as a statutory body through The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993.

Programmatic Interventions:

- **National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem" (NAMASTE):** "NAMASTE" is a nationwide program aimed at promoting mechanized sanitation in all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) across the country. The primary components of this initiative encompass:
 - **Identification:** The scheme aims to identify Sewer/Septic Tank Workers (SSWs).
 - **Occupational Training and PPE Distribution:** It provides training to SSWs and supplies them with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits.
 - **Safety Devices for Sanitation Response Units (SRUs):** Assistance is given to Sanitation Response Units in acquiring safety devices.
 - **Health Insurance:** The scheme provides health insurance to identified SSWs and their families under the Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). This means that they will be able to access free or low-cost healthcare services at any of the empanelled hospitals across the country.
 - **Livelihood Assistance:** NAMASTE supports mechanization and enterprise development by offering financial aid and subsidies to sanitation workers for procuring sanitation-related equipment.
 - **IEC Campaign:** Joint campaigns by ULBs and NSKFDC will be carried out to raise awareness about the interventions of NAMASTE.
 - Namaste is a **central sector scheme** of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission:**
 - Construction of over 10.88 crore sanitary toilets in rural areas and 62.64 lakh in urban areas.
 - Conversion of insanitary toilets into sanitary toilets.
 - Contributed significantly towards eliminating manual scavenging.
- **Swachhata Abhiyaan Mobile App:**
 - Launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on 24th December 2020.
 - Aimed to capture data on insanitary latrines and associated manual scavengers.
 - Over 6000 cases have been uploaded on the app, but no confirmed insanitary latrine has been reported so far.
- **Survey and Identification:** Surveys Conducted by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment:

- Two surveys in 2013 and 2018 for identifying manual scavengers.
- Identified 58,098 eligible manual scavengers who received one-time cash assistance.

Challenges:

- **Underreporting of Cases:** The majority of cases related to hazardous occupations like manual scavenging are not properly recorded. The existence of social media has shed light on some incidents that might have remained hidden otherwise. In certain instances, private companies offer monetary settlements to victims to deter them from filing complaints.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Most cases come to public attention only when a person dies while cleaning septic tanks. This indicates a lack of awareness and proper monitoring of such dangerous practices.
- **Poverty and Involvement of Oppressed Communities:** Many individuals from marginalized communities are forced into manual scavenging due to poverty, particularly in urban areas. They find themselves handling human and animal waste as a means of survival.
- **Inadequate Safety Measures:** Workers are often subjected to hazardous conditions with insufficient protective gear and technological support. Despite the risks, they continue to perform the tasks manually.
- **Poor Conviction Rate:** A Parliamentary Panel highlighted the dismal conviction rate in such cases. Out of 616 FIRs registered against contractors for unsafe sewer cleaning, only one conviction was recorded, indicating a lack of effective enforcement and justice for victims.

Measures Needed:

- **Acquisition of Machinery for Sewer and Septic Tank Cleaning**
- **Robust Monitoring by Local Government**
- **Implementation of Bio Toilets**
- **Increased Funding for Rehabilitation**

The elimination of manual scavenging requires a multi-faceted approach and collective effort from the government, civil society, and the public. It is not only a matter of sanitation but also of social justice and human rights. By prioritising this issue and implementing comprehensive measures, progress can be made towards a society free from this dehumanising practice.

Sources:

530 districts reported as free of manual scavenging: Centre – The Hindu
Infographic- Deccan Herald

Q1. With reference Manual scavenging, consider the following statements:

1. Manual scavenging refers to the safe and automated removal of raw human excreta from hygienic latrines or closed drains.
2. Public Health and sanitation is included in the Concurrent list of the Seventh Schedule.
3. The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 is enacted by the parliament to prohibit manual scavenging and rehabilitation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

(d) None

Answer: (d)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. Swachhata Abhiyaan Mobile App was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
2. NAMASTE is a centrally sponsored scheme of the Union of India.
3. National Commission for Safai Karamcharis a statutory body created under Act of the Parliament.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct ?

- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Answer: (a)

Q3. What are the reasons behind the continued prevalence of manual scavenging in India? Discuss the measures can be proposed to effectively address and eradicate this issue.

INDIA-AUSTRALIA DEFENCE POLICY TALKS

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "India-Australia Defence Policy Talks". The topic "India-Australia Defence Policy Talks" has relevance in the International Relations section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

Highlights of the Talks?

For Mains:

GS 2: International Relations

Multiple Aspects of India-Australia Relations?

Way Forward?

Why in the news?

During the recently held India-Australia Defence Policy Talks in Canberra, both countries reiterated their commitment to the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Highlights of the Talks:

- **Bilateral Defence Cooperation:** India and Australia reviewed and explored new initiatives to strengthen their defence engagements.
- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership:** Both parties reiterated their dedication to the complete implementation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, emphasizing the importance

of mutual trust, shared interests, and common values as the foundation of their cooperation.

- **Indian Defence Industry Cooperation:** During the discussions, India emphasized the possibilities of collaboration between its defense industry and the Australian Armed forces concerning shipbuilding and maintenance plans.
- **Hydrography Agreement:** Both sides agreed to finalize the hydrography agreement at an early stage.

Multiple Aspects of India-Australia Relations:

Historical Perspective:

- **Diplomatic Relations:** Diplomatic relations between Australia and India were established in 1941, with the opening of the Consulate General of India in Sydney, during the pre-Independence era.
- **Uranium Supply Deal:** In 2014, Australia signed a uranium supply deal with India, the first of its kind with a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, recognizing India's non-proliferation record.

Strategic Ties:

- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership:** In 2020, the bilateral relationship was elevated from Strategic Partnership to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the India-Australia Leaders' Virtual Summit.
- **High-Level Engagements:** Several high-level engagements and ministerial visits occurred in 2022 and 2023, including the India-Australia virtual summit and Foreign Ministers meet.
- **Defence Cooperation:** The first India-Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue took place in 2021. The Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) was signed in 2020 to enhance defence cooperation.
- **Joint Military Exercises:** Both countries conducted bilateral and multilateral military exercises, including Malabar with India, Japan, and the US.

China Factor:

- **Strained Australia-China Ties:** Australia's actions, such as banning Huawei and criticizing China's human rights violations, led to strained relations and trade barriers from China.
- **India-China Border Tensions:** India has faced aggression along its border with China, highlighting shared concerns between India and Australia.



- **Convergence of Interests:** Both countries support a rules-based international order and are part of the Quad, seeking regional institutions in the Indo-Pacific that promote economic integration.

Multilateral Cooperation:

- **Membership in Various Forums:** Both countries are members of Quad, Commonwealth, IORA, ASEAN Regional Forum, Indo-Pacific Economic Forum, East Asia Summits, etc.
- **Economic Cooperation:** India and Australia signed the Economic Cooperation Trade Agreement, and they are partners in the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative.

Cooperation in Education and Clean Energy

- **Educational Qualifications Recognition:** A mechanism for mutual recognition of educational qualifications was signed to facilitate student mobility.
- **Clean Energy:** Both countries signed a Letter of Intent on New and Renewable Energy and committed funds to the India-Australia Critical Minerals Investment Partnership.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthening Ties:** India and Australia aim to further strengthen their ties and play an active role in ensuring a rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Shared Objectives:** Both countries envision a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific region, resolving conflicts through dialogue and avoiding coercive actions.
- **Bilateral Summits:** Regular bilateral summits provide an opportunity to enhance cooperation and strategic alignment between India and Australia.
- **Active Indo-Pacific Role:** India and Australia seek to actively contribute to regional stability and economic integration in the Indo-Pacific region.

Facts about Australia Relevant for India	Description
Geography	
Location	Australia is a continent and a country located in the Southern Hemisphere.
Neighboring Countries	Australia shares maritime borders with Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and Papua New Guinea.
Trade Partnership	Australia is a significant trade partner for India, ranking as one of India's major trading partners.
Major Exports to India	Key Australian exports to India include coal, gold, and education-related services.
Major Imports from India	Major imports from India include precious metals, pearls, and machinery.
Strategic Importance	
Indo-Pacific Region	Australia is a key player in the Indo-Pacific region and supports India's Act East Policy.
Membership in Quad	Both India and Australia are members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad).

Climate and Environment	
Biodiversity and Conservation	Both countries share an interest in biodiversity conservation and environmental issues.
Climate Change Cooperation	India and Australia cooperate in addressing climate change challenges.
Defence Cooperation	
Military Exercises	India and Australia conduct joint military exercises to enhance defence cooperation.
Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA)	Signed in 2020 to strengthen military ties and support each other's operations.

SOURCE:

<https://www.aninews.in/news/world/others/india-australia-defence-policy-talks-held-in-canberra-both-sides-reaffirm-commitment-for-comprehensive-strategic-partnership20230726182731/>

Q.1 Which of the following forums have common membership of both India and Australia?

1. Quad
2. ASEAN Regional Forum
3. Commonwealth
4. Malabar Exercises

Select the correct option:

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1, 2, and 3 only
- (c) 1, 2, and 4 only
- (d) All of the above

Answer: (c)

Q.2 Consider the following statements regarding the location of Australia:

1. Australia is located in the Southern Hemisphere.
2. It is the largest country in Oceania.
3. The country is situated between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

Q.3 "Discuss the significance of India-Australia strategic cooperation in promoting regional stability and addressing common challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. Examine the key areas of cooperation and the potential for further enhancing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries."