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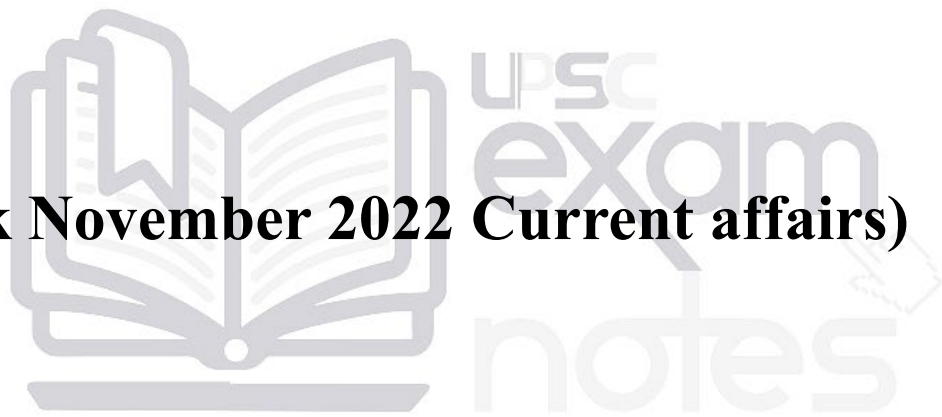


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(3rd Week November 2022 Current affairs)



GS-IV: Ethics & Integrity

ETHICS-CASE STUDY

1. Context

Here recognizing the efforts of Minal Karnwal, Development Officer at the Nandurbar Project on the subject of Education and the learning gap specifically. Going beyond the case we put forward some relevant points from the ASER report and highlighted the effort of Dr. A. Sharath, I.A.S in the field of education.

2. The Case

The pandemic years have led class 5 students like Bhavana and Kiran in Nandurbar taluka in Maharashtra to know how to solve division sums or read full sentences, which is part of the learning outcome expected at the level. The case remains relevant for many school-going children for whom Covid resulted in significant learning losses.

The Issue

Need for a good governance policy to bridge the gap in learning outcomes after two years of the pandemic which kept children out of school.

3. The Problems/challenges

- Along with the pandemic, general laxity had contributed to poor Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) among students.
- It was found that class 5 students did not know how to solve division sums, or even read full sentences, which is a part of the learning outcome expected at that level.
- Remote learning opportunities for students, the quality and reach of such initiatives differed-in most cases, they offered, at best, a rather partial substitute for in-person instruction.

4. The Solutions

4.1 Vedh Project' is based on the novel concept of heutagogy

- As part of a pilot project, the Ashramshalas, residential schools covered under the Tribal Development Project Office, in Nandurbar taluka in Maharashtra, have been experimenting with a unique way to learn.
- Here, teachers are facilitators, who instead of following the fixed pattern of facing the class and conducting lessons, set challenges for students and encourage them to learn their curricula by developing innovative methods on their own, in the form of group activities.

- The pilot project, called the 'Vedh Project', is based on the novel concept of heutagogy, a student-centered instructional strategy. Launched last year for class 5 students in all 60 residential schools in this tribal district, educators say the project has helped to bridge the gap in learning outcomes after the Covid pandemic kept children out of schools for nearly two years. The Tribal Development Project Office in Nandurbar has now decided to extend the project to include classes 2 to 7.
- A baseline assessment conducted with help from the NGO Pratham revealed a huge learning loss. It all began with helping teachers identify where their class stood.
- With the baseline assessment report at hand, teachers knew that their class had students with different learning levels and that they couldn't teach everybody in the same manner.
- This was followed by a breaking up of the traditional seating arrangements, with teachers forming smaller groups. For instance, Shital Hande, a teacher at a school in Kochara in the district's Shahada taluk, has divided her class into three groups to cater to students at different learning levels: those who could identify letters, words, and sentences.
- The groups were then presented with challenges to help bridge the learning gaps revealed in the baseline tests.
- The goal of the project was to create a student peer group and then handhold them as they interact with other as part of their learning process.
- Besides the baseline test, the evaluation process involves a 'mid-level progress' and a 'end-line progress' that teachers conducted. These two evaluations were deliberately called "progress" and not "tests" to avoid pressure on teachers that would have possibly led to fudging of data.
- While for baseline and mid-level evaluations, teachers from nearby Zilla Parishad schools were invited.
- After the baseline test reports, which showed where each student stood in terms of expected learning outcomes, days were dedicated to implementing remedial teaching based on peer challenges in a class.
- After the mid-level progress, teachers had more clarity on the learning levels of their students. At this stage, teachers, too are encouraged to learn from each other by way of sharing experiences or solving one another's problems. This led to another round of remedial teaching in classrooms, where students were motivated to help each other learn.
- Finally, the end-line progress was conducted and that showed tremendous progress in the pilot project. There were instances when children helped each other. Teachers developed challenges based on the skills of students. For example, a child who was good at multiplication was given the challenge to make it simpler for those in class who were struggling with it. This completely changes the way a class traditionally runs.

5. The Outcome

- According to the data provided by the Tribal Development Project Office, the baseline test showed that only 20 percent of class 5 students in the District's Ashramshalas

could read an entire story and 14 percent were still at beginner level, with no ability to identify letters, at the end of 55 days of the project, 41 percent students could read an entire story, with no one left at the beginner level.

- Karnwal says that at a time when schools are given fancy kits and encouraged to start smart classes, the Nandurbar teachers devised their own creative teaching learning material (TLM) using sand, pebbles, electrical wires, ropes, and handmade cards.

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

1. Ethics

- Ethics is a branch of philosophy that defines what is right and what is wrong.
- We follow ethics everywhere, we follow moral values and a code of conduct and we are guided since birth by these to decide what is right and what is wrong.
- It is the desired behaviour that is expected from us.
- Now, when it comes to the environment and when it comes to environmental ethics, there should also be certain moral values and certain codes of conduct regarding our relationship with nature.

2. Environmental Ethics

- Environmental ethics is a branch of applied philosophy that studies the moral and ethical relationship of human beings to the environment.
- Environmental ethics helps to define man's moral and ethical obligations toward the environment.

3. Importance of Environmental Ethics

- With the deterioration of ecological systems and the worsening of environmental issues, humans have realised that they cannot fix environmental pollution and ecological imbalances just by economical, technological and judicial means.
- Only after adopting a proper attitude toward nature and forming a new ethical relationship between humans and nature, we will be able to automatically love and appreciate nature, as well as cope with challenges like pollution and ecological imbalances.
- In this context, environmental ethics and practices can play a critical role in ensuring that our lives function smoothly and that humans and other beings in our environment are treated equally.

4. Environmental issues

- Excessive global warming has come out to be a major problem and in 2022 Global warming and Climate Change has immensely impacted everyone across the globe including India.

- The recent prolonged Heatwave in North India or the Devastating floods along with unprecedented landslides in Assam is the severe outcome of climate change in India.
- The unmindful development and ignorance towards the environment have now raised ethical issues for the human race:
- The upcoming and younger generation are the least responsible for climate change, yet they will bear the greatest burden of its impact.

5. Environmental Ethics vs Development

- The World's population was said to be around 2.5 billion during the 1950s.
- By the year 2050, it is expected to have grown to between nine and 10 billion.
- As the population is increasing, infrastructural development is essential to accommodate the growing demand, a major burden of which will fall on the environment.
- Mostly, development takes place at the cost of the environment.

5.1 Ken Betwa River Linking Project

- For instance, development Project like the Ken Betwa River linking Project, ever since it was proposed by National Water Development Agency in 1995, has been considered unviable by several experts for their immense environmental cost.
- In 2011, the Environment Minister rejected the project.

In August 2016, an Environment Ministry panel cautioned that the Ken Betwa Linking Project "May not be the best possible option for addressing livelihood and development of the region" and "it would be best to avoid such project when it runs the risk of providing justification or unhealthy precedence for more such developmental projects within the protected areas. It will not be in the interest of wildlife and the overall well-being of society in the long term".

6. Policy Challenges for Environment Ethics

- The environment is no longer to be considered as a sector to be managed exclusively by the environmental authorities, but rather a theme to be incorporated into different policy areas whether energy, transport, agriculture, industry or trade.

For instance in India, to balance the development and environment, the policymakers have established institutions like NGT, Central Pollution Board, National Ganga River Basin Authority, National Biodiversity Authority and many others. Also, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is made mandatory for various projects such as mining, thermal power plants, river valley, infrastructure (roads, highways, ports, harbours and airports) and industries including very small electroplating or foundry units to get the environment clearance.

- For policymakers, the major challenge is that the clearances through these institutions are very time-consuming, which leads to some bottlenecks, which hamper the whole execution process.
- Sometimes the projects have to be stopped in between due to these clearance issues, which leads to financial loss to the government exchequer also.
- The major challenge in front of the policymakers is to reduce the time in taking environmental-related clearance and reduce the litigation arising out of it.

7. Environmental Ethics and Sustainable Development

- Creating a healthy balance between development and the environment is the major factor in obtaining the sustainable development goal.
- Sustainable development implies harmony in human-environment interactions and inter-generation responsibility, with an emphasis on a harmonious relationship among population, resources, environment and development.

The role of environmental ethics toward sustainable development is that it not only harmonises the relationship of population, resource, environment and economic development but also guides behaviour selection, push social and political system transformation, strengthens the legal system and raises environmental awareness of the public.

- Sustainable Development recognises that all development decisions must simultaneously consider aspects of Economy, Environment and Equity.
- If future generations are to enjoy a high quality of life, then this generation's plans must guarantee the integrity of our natural resources.
- Viewing sustainable development from an environmental ethics perspective, extends the emphasis of sustainable development from the traditional understanding, to take into account ethical issues relating to a wide range of economic, social and cultural factors which help achieve the ethical values of equity, justice, temperance and wisdom in the choices we make concerning the environment.

GSIII: Economy, Environment & ecology

DEMONETIZATION

1. What is Demonetization?

Demonetization is the act of stripping a currency unit of its status as legal tender. It occurs whenever there is a change in national currency. The current form or forms of money is pulled from circulation and retired, often to be replaced with new notes or coins. Sometimes, a country completely replaces the old currency with a new currency.

1.1 Key Takeaways

- Demonetization is a drastic intervention into the economy that involves removing the legal tender status of a currency.
- Demonetization can cause chaos or a serious downturn in an economy if it goes wrong.
- Demonetization has been used as a tool to stabilize the currency and fight inflation, facilitate trade and access to markets, and push informal economic activity into more transparency and away from black and gray markets.
- A famous example of demonetization occurred in 2016 when India demonetized 86% of its nation's currency.
- Demonetized may also refer to social media or digital content that formerly qualified for revenue distribution but has since been denied income proceeds.

2. Understanding Demonetization

- Removing the legal tender status of a unit of currency is a drastic intervention in an economy because it directly affects the medium of exchange used in all economic transactions. It can help stabilize existing problems, or it can cause chaos in an economy, especially if undertaken suddenly or without warning. That said, demonetization is undertaken by nations for several reasons.
- Demonetization has been used to stabilize the value of a currency or combat inflation. The Coinage Act of 1873 demonetized silver as the legal tender of the United States, in favor of fully adopting the gold standard, to stave off disruptive inflation as large new silver deposits were discovered in the American West. Several coins, including a two-cent piece, three-cent piece, and half-dime were discontinued.
- In a more modern example, the Zimbabwean government demonetized its dollar in 2015 as a way to combat the country's hyperinflation.
- Some countries have demonetized currencies to facilitate trade or form currency unions. An example of demonetization for trade purposes occurred when the nations of the European Union officially began to use the euro as their currency in 2002.

3. Pros and Cons of Demonetization

Pros

- Often resulting in decreased tax evasion and decreased tax revenue.
- Often results in higher long-term GDP due to higher tax revenue being reinvested in the nation.

- Fosters innovation by converting currency to digital currency and promoting digital transactions.
- Reduces overall crime by enhancing transparency and discouraging the circulation of black money.

Cons

- Imposes a burden on citizens, especially those who must convert one currency to another.
- It likely stalls a nation's GDP during the conversion process.
- Incurs expensive administration costs including printing, adjusting ATMs, and marketing the changes.
- Negatively impacts and even stops cash-driven sectors.
- Introduces new types of currency risk such as cybercrime.

4. Demonetization example in India

- Lastly, demonetization has been tried as a tool to modernize a cash-dependent developing economy and to combat corruption and crime (counterfeiting, tax evasion). In 2016, the Indian government decided to demonetize the 500 and 1000 rupee notes, the two biggest denominations in its currency system; these notes accounted for 86% of the country's circulating cash.
- India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced to the citizenry on Nov. 8, 2016, that those notes were worthless, effective immediately- and they had until the end of the year to deposit or exchange them for newly introduced 2000 rupee and 500 rupee bills.

5. Why could a country Demonetize?

Demonetization has been used to stabilize the value of a currency or combat inflation. Some countries have demonetized currencies to facilitate trade or form currency unions. Lastly, demonetization has been tried as a tool to modernize a cash-dependent developing economy and to combat corruption and crime (counterfeiting, tax evasion).

6. Advantages of Demonetization

The main benefit of demonetization is to curtail criminal activity as their supply of money is no longer legal tender. This affects counterfeiters as well as they cannot exchange their "merchandise" for fear of discovery. It can prevent tax evasion as those who were evading taxes must come forward to exchange their existing currency at which time the authorities can retroactively tax them. Finally, it can usher in the digital currency age by slowing down the circulation of physical currency.

7. Disadvantages of Demonetization

The chief disadvantage is the costs involved in printing and minting the new currency. Also, demonetization may not have the intended effect of reducing criminal activity as these entities might be savvy enough to hold assets in other forms other than physical currency. Finally, this process is risky as it can plunge the nation into utter chaos if not handled with the utmost competence.

8. Impact of Demonetization on GDP

In the short term, demonetization usually stunts economic growth and causes GDP to decline.

During the conversion process, many industries and sectors may temporarily come to a halt. Some industries may not be able to pay laborers as the demonetization process occurs. Once demonetization is finished, it often creates long-term economic benefits that increase GDP in the long run. Demonetization attempts to fight financial crime; by making transactions more transparent or discouraging the trade of illegal bills, a government is usually able to collect more tax revenue and invest heavier in their country.

GROUNDWATER

1. Water Table:

The water table defines the depth at which cracks & pores in rocks are saturated with water. Such water, stored in subterranean spaces, is called groundwater & the water-bearing rock strata are called Aquifers.

2. Groundwater:

- Groundwater is a critical resource.
- It is the principal water resource for a fourth of the world's population.
- India is the world's largest user of groundwater, nearly 250 cubic kilometres were taken out in 2017.
- Nearly 90% of this was used for irrigation, the rest went to towns & villages.
- The agrarian economy of the Indo-Gangetic plains is sustained by groundwater.
- There are fears that the Indo-Gangetic basin aquifer may soon be incapable of supporting irrigation.
- This is noticeable in states like Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan.
- The green revolution was sustained by using tube wells.
- The lowering of the water table forces farmers to use high-powered submersible pumps, which worsened the situation.
- Satellite gravimetry provided convincing evidence in support of the alarming rates of groundwater depletion.

- The data is reinforced with local-level water table measurements in wells.
- The average rate of groundwater decline in India has been 1.4 cm per year in this century.

3. Raising Water Table:

- Aquifers are recharged with water from rainfall & rivers.
- There is an increase in the construction of canals for distributing water after independence. These canals leak water which augments groundwater levels.
- To the good health of aquifers, there are community-based movements to recharge groundwater in some parts of our country.
- Thousands of small & large check dams were built across seasonal rivers & streams in Saurashtra.
- These slow the flow of water & contribute to groundwater recharge & check soil erosion.
- In villages, sand-filled bags are placed in the path of rainwater runoff.

Interestingly, the major source of groundwater in urban areas like Bangalore is leaked into water distribution pipes.

4. Recovery:

- Studies comparing the water table status in Saurashtra with the climatically similar regions show a net positive impact.
- These regions of Maharashtra have started their own Managed Aquifer Recharge programs like *Jalyukt Shivar*.
- Another part of the country where the decline of groundwater was observed is the region overlapping Tamil Nadu & Karnataka where the aquifers are located in crystalline bedrock.
- In such rocks, water is found only in cracks & fissures as the rock itself is not porous.
- Under these circumstances, tanks & ponds do not contribute much to groundwater recharge.
- In rural areas of this region, recharge is mostly affected by rainfall & irrigation-related recycling.

DATA LOCALISATION

1. Context

Most countries mandate data created within their borders remain stored within its borders. Such stringent laws, while allowing governments and their law enforcement agencies to work more efficiently, will result in the hindrance of global trade and increase the operational costs of businesses.

2. Data Localisation

- Data localization, in general, refers to the process of physical storage of data within the national boundaries of the country, where its processing is done at the local level, within the country, governed by the laws of the land.
- India's mandatory data localization position has garnered support from United Nations-backed bodies, marking a shift towards genuine concerns as expressed in many quarters. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in its Digital Economy Report 2019, observed that government may choose to restrict data flow for the reasons of privacy of data and protection of their citizen's interest in security and development.
- India is one of the most powerful markets in terms of data creation and use, and the need for data localization is essential. The recently withdrawn Bill on data protection also emphasized this fact. While some governments may feel that such a move "will serve as a significant barrier to digital trade".
- There is a necessity for such requirements as law enforcement agencies in India face a lot of difficulties in getting timely access to data that may be stored elsewhere by businesses operating in India. In a similar pattern, due to the increasing number of digital payments in the country, the Reserve Bank of India has also mandated payment system data information to be stored in India for better monitoring and safety.

3. Importance of Data Localisation

3.1 Protecting Personal Data

The personal and financial data which is available on the cloud is subject to foreign surveillance. The issue of Cambridge Analytica (who are alleged to have influenced voting behavior, and thereby the outcome, on data.).

Data harvesting threats and better control on the nature of the use of Data, the extent of use.

3.2 Economic Aspect

India would have a competitive edge over the local companies, in the case of localized data. The information capital available to the domestic market and company in specific will be profitable for them.

The government can tax the revenue generated from the data, wherever feasible, akin to taxation on the inflow and outflow of goods and services. Job Opportunities within the country will rise for the data analytics sector and thus, witness economic development.

3.3 Law Enforcement Issues

Storage of data at a local location facility accesses to information by the authority when needed. Local Storage of data is necessary for smooth law enforcement, without any additional measures.

3.4 National Security Dimension

Law enforcement agencies often require information while investigating crimes. Local storage of data can help these authorities to access it promptly. When data is not stored locally, agencies have to access the Data through Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs). Countries sign agreements under this, intending to aid each other in the legal processes of respective countries. In some cases, it delays the investigation of crimes.

4. Challenges of Data Localisation

- Lack of proper infrastructure required to collect and manage data.
- Localization of data can address foreign misuse, but the threats and risks involved in the domestic management of data are valid concerns.
- When data is stored within the country, then the government will have to work on the functioning and effectiveness of payment system operators, incurring a much higher operational cost than usual.
- Difficult for small-scale firms, and startups to scale up their operation for creating local storage infrastructure.
- Inadequate infrastructure can hamper the paramount objective of localization, i.e., security.
- Could be a time-consuming process, where easy and profitable offshore cloud host services are available.

5. Personal Data Protection Bill

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, formed a committee under the chairmanship of retired supreme court judge, Justice B.N.Srikrishna. The Committee aimed to comprehend and formulate data protection laws and drafted the Personal Data Protection Bill.

It applies to the processing of personal data by companies registered in India, foreign companies dealing with the personal data of individuals in India, and the Indian Government.

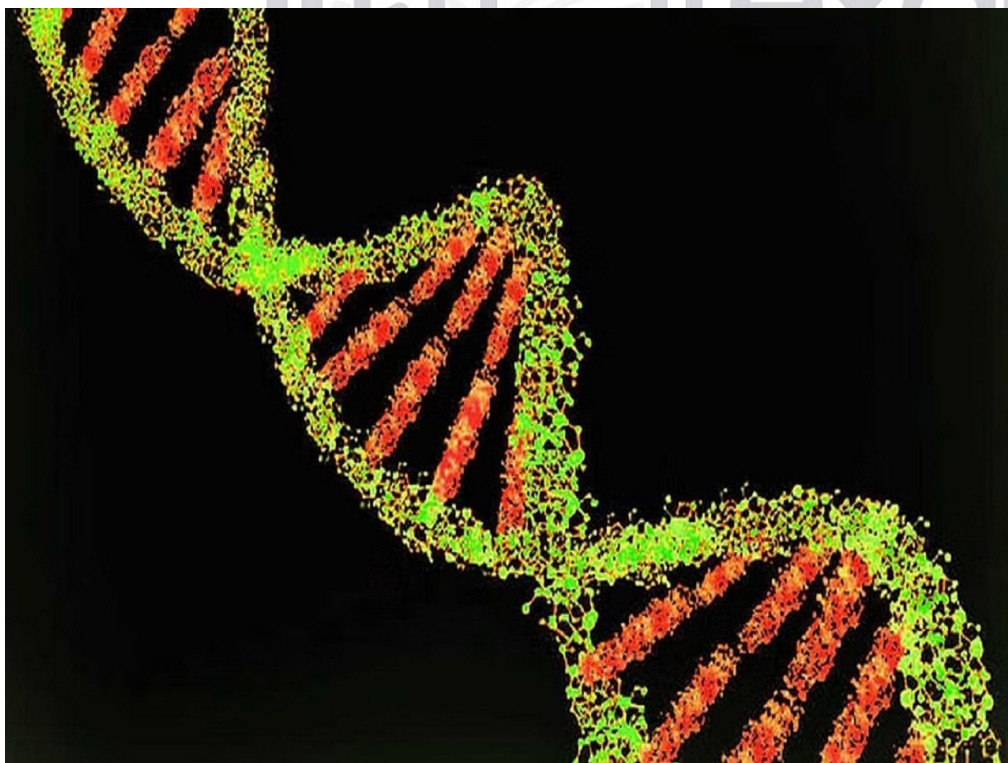
6. A Multiple Stakeholder Approach

- Data is the enabler of businesses and digitization that has been essential for growth and innovation. In this age of rapid technological growth, governments should shift to alternate standards (such as encryption) rather than enforcing strict measures on data localization that could restrict trade and innovation.
- One should also reflect on how far we can go with a sovereignty-based model in a digitally connected world. It has become increasingly troublesome to solve jurisdictional issues in case of cybercrimes and online defamation which rely heavily on international cooperation between countries, making it difficult and expensive for prosecutors to act.
- Therefore, a way forward could be to move with a multiple-stakeholder approach which can not only help in looking at data localization alone, but also other issues such as privacy and governance.
- The 'glocalization' approach is one such method in the digital space, wherein law can be harmonized globally, but by paying attention to local interests. Last but not the least, with the passing need for data localization by the government, it becomes important to assess the security of domestic systems for storing sensitive data.

CELL THERAPY

1.Key Points:

- The CRISPR gene editing technique is used in humans to remove specific genes to allow the immune system to be more activated against cancer, potentially leaving normal cells unharmed & increasing the effectiveness of immunotherapy.
- The CRISPR gene editing technique was previously used in humans to remove specific genes to allow the immune system to be more activated against cancer.
- CRISPR not only take out specific genes but inserts new ones in immune cells efficiently redirecting them to recognise mutations in patient's own cancer cells.
- When infused back to patients, these CRISPR-engineered immune cells preferentially traffic to the cancer & become the most represented immune cells.



2.Cell Therapy:

- The human immune system has specific receptors on immune cells that can specifically recognise cancer cells & differentiate them from normal cells.
- These are different for every patient, so finding an efficient way to isolate cancer cells & insert them back into immune cells to generate a personalised cell therapy to treat cancer is key to making the approach feasible on a large scale.
- An efficient way to isolate the immune receptors from the patient's own blood was found by researchers.

- After isolation, the immune receptors are used to redirect immune cells to recognise cancer using CRISPR Gene editing.
- This is a leap forward in developing a personalised treatment where the isolation of immune receptors that specifically recognise mutations in the patient's own cancer is used to treat cancer.
- The personalised cell treatment for cancer would not be feasible without the newly developed ability to use the CRISPR technique to replace the immune receptors in clinical-grade cell preparations in a single step.

MANGROVE ALLIANCE FOR CLIMATE(MAC)

1. Background

The Mangrove Alliance for Climate (MAC) seeks to educate & spread awareness worldwide on the role of mangroves in curbing global warming & its potential as a solution for climate change.

2. COP 27:

- 27th Session of the Conference of Parties (COP27), was held in Egypt, launching Mangrove Alliance for Climate(MAC).
- India's goal is to increase its carbon sink, New Delhi collaborating with Sri Lanka, Indonesia & other countries to preserve & restore the mangrove forests in the region.
- India is home to one of the largest mangroves-the Sundarbans & has years of expertise in the restoration of mangrove cover that can be used to aid global measures in this direction.

3. MAC:

- An initiative led by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) & Indonesia, the MAC includes India, Sri Lanka, Australia, Japan & Spain.
- UAE's Minister of Climate Change, while launching the alliance, said that their country intends to plant 3 million mangroves in the next two months, in keeping with UAE's COP26 pledge of planting 100 million mangroves by 2030.
- UAE is launching MAC in collaboration with Indonesia.
- The parties will share expertise & support each other in researching, managing, and protecting coastal areas.



4. Mangroves-Significance:

- Mangroves were the focus of conservationists for years & it is difficult to overstate their importance in the global climate context.
- Mangrove forests consist of trees & shrubs that live in intertidal water in coastal areas and host diverse marine life.
- They support a rich food web with molluscs, algae-filled substrate acting as a breeding ground for small fish, mud crabs & shrimps, providing a livelihood to local artisanal fishers.
- Mangroves act as effective carbon stores, holding up to four times the amount of carbon as other forested ecosystems.

Mangrove forests capture vast amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere & their preservation can aid in the removal of carbon from the atmosphere & prevent the release of the same upon their destruction.

5. Current State of Mangroves:

- South Asia houses the most extensive areas of mangroves globally, while Indonesia hosts one-fifth of the overall amount.
- India holds around 3% of South Asia's mangrove population. Besides the Sundarbans, the Andaman region, the Kachchh & Jamnagar areas in Gujarat have substantial mangrove cover.
- Infrastructure projects, industrial expansion, the building of roads & railways, shifting coastlines, coastal erosion & storms have significantly decreased mangrove habitats.
- During 2010-2020, around 600 sq km of mangroves were lost of which more than 62% was due to direct human impacts.

6. India at COP:

India's focus currently is on concessional & climate-specific grants to drive climate finance & has teamed up with Brazil, South Africa, and China (BASIC) to negotiate agreements.

7. Demands:

- In the previous sessions of the climate conference, building consensus among the 190+ countries that are members of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is a tough task.
- China has ramped up the use of coal amidst energy security risks & rising tensions with Taiwan.
- The European Union, which negotiates as a single entity for its 27 members, is at the lower end of the spectrum of gas emitters but is under pressure to ease its resistance to its staunch position against the issue of loss & damage.
- This issue calls for rich & developed countries to compensate poorer, developing countries disproportionately affected by climate change's effects.
- G77 & China is the UN's largest intergovernmental organisation of developing countries.
- Pakistan, which faced devastating floods this year, will lead the group in its demand for a dedicated fund for compensation from wealthy countries.
- The Climate Vulnerable Forum, which represents 58 countries that are disproportionately affected by the consequences of climate change like Bangladesh, Maldives reportedly demands a dedicated fund in which rich polluting nations help bear the costs of loss & damage.

RETAIL INFLATION

1. Context

The fight against inflation is in the news because Retail Inflation, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), eases to a three-month low of 6.77 percent in October this year.

Wholesale price inflation also dropped significantly from raising at double digits rate in the earlier months to 8.3% in October. The drop in inflation has led to hopes that RBI has managed to gain control over price rises.

2. What is Inflation?

- It is the rise in prices of goods and services within a particular economy wherein consumers' purchasing power decreases, and the value of the cash holdings erodes.
- In India, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) measures inflation.
- Some causes that lead to inflation are demand increases, reduction in supply, demand-supply gap, excess circulation of money, increase in input costs, devaluation of the currency, and rise in wages, among others.

3. Retail Inflation

Consumers often directly buy from retailers. So, the inflation experienced at retail reflects the actual price rise in the country. It also shows the cost of living better. In India, the index that reflects the inflation rate at the retail level is known as Consumer Price Index (CPI). Unlike WPI, CPI includes both goods and services. CPI is used to calculate the Dearness Allowance (DA) for government employees.

4. How Inflation is measured?

- In India, inflation is primarily measured by two main indices- WPI (Wholesale Price Index) and CPI (Consumer Price Index), Which measures Wholesale and retail-level price changes, respectively.
- The CPI calculates the difference in the price of commodities and services such as food, medical care, education, electronics, etc, which Indian consumers buy for use.
- On the other hand, the goods or services sold by businesses to smaller businesses for selling further are captured by the WPI.
- Both WPI (Wholesale Price Index) and CPI (Consumer Price Index) are used to measure inflation in India.

5. What is the Inflation Target?

- Under Section 45ZA, in consultation with the RBI Act, the Central Government determines the inflation target in terms of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), once in five years and notifies it in the Official Gazette.
- Accordingly, on August 5, 2016, the Central Government notified in the Official Gazette 4 percent Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation as the target for the period from August 5, 2016, to March 31, 2021, with the upper tolerance limit of 6 percent and the lower tolerance limit of 2 percent.
- On March 31, 2021, the Central Government retained the inflation target and the tolerance band for the next 5-year period-April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2026.
- Section 45ZB of the RBI Act provides for the constitution of a six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to determine the policy rate required to achieve the inflation target.

6. Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- The MPC is a statutory and institutionalized framework under the RBI Act, of 1934, for maintaining price stability, keeping in mind the objective of growth. It was created in 2016.
- It was created to bring transparency and accountability in deciding monetary policy.
- MPC determines the policy interest rate required to achieve the inflation target.
- The committee comprises six members and Governor RBI acts as an ex-officio chairman. Three members are from RBI and three are selected by the government. The inflation target is to be set once every five years. It is set by the Government of India, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India.
- The current inflation target is pegged at 4% with -2/+2 tolerance till March 31, 2021.

7. What Caused the drop in Inflation?

- Retail Inflation or price gains based on the Consumer Price Index, slowed to 6.77 % last month, from September's 7.41%, aided by an appreciable deceleration in food price inflation.
- The year-on-year inflation based on the Consumer Food Price Index eased by almost 160 basis points in October, to 7.01%, from the preceding month's 8.60%, helped by a 'decline in prices of vegetables, fruits, pulses and oils, and fats', the Government said.
- With the food and beverages sub-index representing almost 46% of the CPI's weight, the slowdown in food price gains understandably steered overall inflation lower even as price gains in three other essential categories, namely clothing, and footwear, housing, and health remained either little changed from September or quickened.
- Inflation at the Wholesale Prices Level also continued to decelerate, with the headline reading easing into single digits for the first time in 19 months. A favorable base effect along with a distinct cooling in international prices of commodities including crude oil and steel amid gathering uncertainty in advanced economies was largely instrumental in tempering wholesale price gains.

8. Recent Measures by the Government

To soften the prices of edible oils and pulses, tariffs on imported items have been rationalized from time to time. The stock limits on edible oils are also maintained, to avoid hoarding.

The Government has taken trade-related measures on wheat and rice to keep domestic supplies steady and curb the rise in prices.

The impact of these measures is expected to be felt more significantly in the coming months.

GS II: Polity, Governance

NINTH SCHEDULE

1.Context

The Jharkhand Assembly on Friday (November 11) cleared two Bills, one increasing reservation in vacant government posts and services in the state to 77 percent, and the second to use land records with 1932 as the cut-off year to determine domicile status as the definition of 'local residents'.

2. About Bill

- The first Bill, 'Jharkhand Reservation of Vacancies in Posts and Services (Amendment) Bill, 2022', raised reservation to 77 per cent.
- Local Persons Bill, 2022: 'Jharkhand Definition of Local Persons and for Extending the Consequential, Social, Cultural and Other Benefits to Such Local Persons Bill, 2022', is aimed at granting local residents "certain rights, benefits, and preferential treatment" over their land
- In their stake in the local development of rivers, lakes, and fisheries in local traditional and cultural and commercial enterprises in rights over agricultural indebtedness or availing agricultural loans in maintenance and protection of land records for their social security in employment in private and public sector and, for trade and commerce in the state

3. Why the need to include in Ninth Schedule

The 77 per cent reservation breaches the 50 per cent ceiling set by the Supreme Court in the landmark 1992 Indra Sawhney v Union of India verdict. However, placing legislation in the Ninth Schedule shields it from judicial scrutiny.

4.Ninth Schedule

- The Ninth Schedule contains a list of central and state laws which cannot be challenged in court. Currently, 284 such laws are shielded from judicial review. Most of the laws protected under the Schedule concern agriculture/land issues.
- The Schedule became a part of the Constitution in 1951 when the document was amended for the first time. It was created by the new Article 31B, which along with 31A was brought in by the government to protect laws related to agrarian reform and to abolish the Zamindari system.
- The First Amendment added 13 laws to the Schedule.

5.Articles 31 A and 31 B

- While A. 31A extends protection to 'classes' of laws, A. 31B shields specific laws or enactments.

- Article 31B reads: “Without prejudice to the generality of the provisions contained in article 31A, none of the Acts and Regulations specified in the Ninth Schedule nor any of the provisions thereof shall be deemed to be void, or ever to have become void, on the ground that such Act
- Regulation or provision is inconsistent with, or takes away or abridges any of the rights conferred by, any provisions of this Part, and notwithstanding any judgment, decree or order of any court or Tribunal to the contrary, each of the said Acts and Regulations shall, subject to the power of any competent Legislature to repeal or amend it, continue in force.

6. Cases where Reservation Breaches 50% Ceiling

The Tamil Nadu Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions and Appointments or Posts in the Services under the State) Act, 1993, reserves 69 per cent of the seats in colleges and jobs in the state government.

6.1. I R Coelho v State of Tamil Nadu

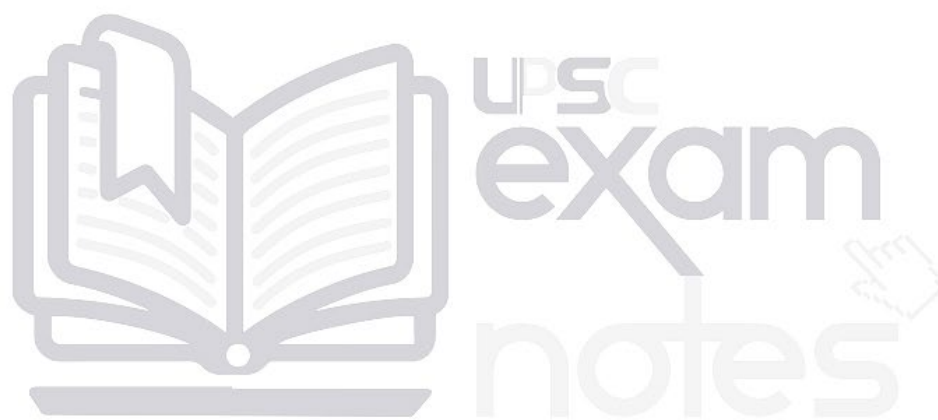
When the Tamil Nadu law was challenged in 2007 (I R Coelho v State of Tamil Nadu), the Supreme Court ruled in a unanimous nine-judge verdict that while laws placed under Ninth Schedule cannot be challenged on the grounds of violation of fundamental rights, they can be challenged on the ground of violating the basic structure of the Constitution.

The IR Coelho verdict said, "A law that abrogates or abridges rights guaranteed by Part III of the Constitution may violate the basic structure doctrine or it may not. If former is the consequence of the law, whether by amendment of any Article of Part III or by an insertion in the Ninth Schedule, such law will have to be invalidated in the exercise of judicial review power of the Court."

6.2. Scope of Judicial Review for laws placed under 9th Schedule

- The first amendment was brought by the parliament after the Kamleshwar case and with the insertion of article 31B along with the 9th schedule for giving effect to agrarian reforms.
- The provisions inserted were made to provide immunity to the laws inserted under them from judicial encroachment.
- After the first amendment, the major landmark case in which the question of immunity granted to parliament was presented before the court was the case of **Shankari Prasad**.
- It was asked whether Article 31B read with schedule 9 was unconstitutional by excluding the scope of judicial review.
- It was contended that excluding judicial scrutiny for such laws will amount to a violation of Article 13 (2)
- The Court rejected the petition by stating that “there is a chart clear demarcation between ordinary law and constitutional law, and so, the amendments made under Article 368 are not affected by the application of article 13 (2).

- In addition, the parliament under Article 368 is empowered to amend the fundamental rights also and in such instances judicial encroachment is impermissible.
- But, later in the Golaknath case, it was held that the parliament has no power to amend the fundamental rights including the provisions on personal property. The parliament aggrieved by the judgment in **Golaknath** passed the 24th amendment in 1971, which empowered it to amend any part of the Constitution including the fundamental rights.
- This stage i.e. the years following the 24th amendment may be considered as the years of a tussle on the issue of power and authority between the legislature and the Indian Judiciary which followed its course until the landmark judgment in Kesavananda Bharati (24 April 1973).
- This case put a check on the enormous power of the parliament through the introduction of basic structure doctrine and made the judiciary more powerful. This case is also regarded as the **saviour of Indian democracy**.



EWS RESERVATION

1.Context

The Supreme Court by a 3:2 majority has upheld the validity of the constitution (103 rd amendment)Act,2019, providing reservation up to 10% for Economically weaker sections (EWS)in education and employment among those groups that do not come under any community-based reservation.

2.Change in Concept

From a form of affirmative action in which membership of a social group was the main basis for extending a reservation, it moved towards using income and means as the basis for special provisions.

3.EWS Reservation

- Indra Sawhney 1992-a nine-judge bench had ruled that there can be no reservation solely based on economic criteria, as the constitution did not provide for it.
- The 103rd amendment introduced Article 15(6), an enabling provision for the state to make special provisions for "any economically weaker sections of citizens "other than those mentioned in the provisions two clauses, namely the" socially and educationally backward classes. "and scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes.
- It also introduced a corresponding clause 6 in article 16 to enable reservation for "economically weaker sections "other than the SEBCs and SC/ST, in public employment and education.
- Article 15 which protects against discrimination on any ground, and article 16, which mandates equality of opportunity in Public employment, were thus changed to allow special provisions and reservations for the EWS category, subject to a maximum of 10%

4.Criteria For EWS

- Persons who are not covered under the scheme of reservation for SCs, STs, and OBCs and whose family has a gross annual income below Rs 8 (Rupees eight lakh only) are to be identified as EWSs for benefit of reservation. Income shall also include income from all sources i.e. salary, agriculture, business, profession, etc. for the financial year before the year of application.
- Also, persons whose family owns or possesses any of the following assets shall be excluded from being identified as EWS, irrespective of the family income:
 - 5 acres of agricultural land and above;
 - The residential area of 1000 sq ft. and above;
 - Residential plot of 100 sq. yards and above in notified municipalities;
 - A residential, plot of 200 sq. yards and above in areas other than the notified municipalities.
- The property held by a "Family" in different locations or different places/cities would be clubbed while applying the land or property holding test to determine EWS status.

5.Main Grounds of Challenge

A substantive limitation is the principle that an amendment to the constitution cannot abrogate or destroy its basic structure .while there is no exhaustive list, concepts central to the constitution system such as secularism, federalism, independence of the judiciary, rule of law and equality before the law are considered its basic features.

The petitioners contended that the amendment violated the basic structure of the Constitution because it violated the equality code. The violation occurred-

(a) by the introduction of economic criterion when the reservation was only meant for groups that were socially and educationally backward due to historical disadvantages and not due to individual lack of means and by converting a scheme to overcome structural barriers for the advancement of social groups into an anti-poverty measure

- (b) By excluding OBC/SC/ST candidates from the EWS category and
- (c) by breaching the 50% ceiling on total reservations.

6.The rationale behind Upholding the EWS quota

- They held that there was nothing wrong in addressing economic weakness through reservation as an instrument of affirmative action.
- Reservation need not only be for socially and backward classes, but also cover any disadvantaged section.
- Classifying a section based on economic criterion alone was permissible under the constitution, and the EWS quota did not violate any essential feature of the constitution.
- The majority also ruled that the exclusion of the classes already enjoying reservation from the EWS category does not offend the equality principle.
- Unless the EWS segment was exclusive, the object of furthering economic justice cannot be achieved.
- Regarding the breach of the 50% limit, the majority view was that the ceiling itself was not inflexible or inviolable. Another point in favour of the extra 10% quota was that the 50% limit was applicable only to the existing reserved categories(OBC/S/ST).
-

7.Conclusion

Article 16 mandates equality of opportunity in public employment, with representation for the unrepresented classes through reservation being the only exception.

The EWS category “snaps this link between equal opportunity and representation “by introducing a category that is not premised on “inadequate representation This reservation for those already represented in public employment violates the equal opportunity norm, which is part of the basic structure.

22ND LAW COMMISSION

1.Why in news?

The Centre on Monday (November 7) constituted the Law Commission of India with Justice (retd) Rituraj Awasthi, former Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court, at its head.

2.About Law commission

- The Law Ministry describes the Law Commission of India as a non-statutory body that is constituted by a notification of the Government of India, with definite terms of reference to carry out research in the field of law.

- The Commission makes recommendations to the Government (in the form of Reports) as per its terms of reference.
- The Law Commission was first constituted in 1955, and has so far submitted 277 reports. According to the Law Ministry's website, the "Law Commission of India provides excellent thought provoking and vital review of the laws in India".

3.22nd Law commission

- The 22nd Commission has been constituted two and a half years after it was approved by the Union Cabinet on February 19, 2020, just before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- A petition had been moved in the Supreme Court subsequently against the delay in constituting the 22nd Commission.
- The Commission would have a tenure of three years from the date of publication of the Order of Constitution in the Official Gazette.
- The Commission shall, among other things, "identify laws which are no longer needed or relevant and can be immediately repealed"
- Examine the existing laws in the light of Directive Principles of State Policy and suggest ways of improvement and reform and also suggest such legislations as might be necessary to implement the Directive Principles and to attain the objectives set out in the Preamble of the Constitution
- Revise the Central Acts of general importance so as to simplify them and remove anomalies, ambiguities and inequities

GS IV: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

GM CROP REVOLUTION

1.Context

Some activists approached the Supreme Court to ban GM crop for various reasons. The Supreme Court has ordered the status quo to be maintained till the next hearing on the matter on November 17

2.GM crops scenario Across the Globe

GM crops have spread around the world since 1996. By 2019, roughly 190 million hectares were under GM crops, led by corn and soyabean in the US, Brazil, Argentina, and canola (rapeseed/mustard) in Canada, with no harmful impact on human or animal health or the

environment per se. Even Bangladesh has marched ahead with Bt brinjal. More than 70 countries have accepted the use of GM crops

3. History of BT crops in India

The First GM crop, Bt cotton, was released in 2002 by the Vajpayee government. He extended the original slogan of “Jai jawan, Jai Kisan” (salutation to the soldier and the farmer), given by Lal Bahadur Shastri, to include “Jai Vigyan” (salutation to science)

4. BT cotton

- Cotton production increased remarkably from a mere 13.6 million bales (1 bale = 170 kg) in 2002-03 to 39.8 million bales in 2013-14, registering an increase of 192 per cent in just 12 years, ushering the famous "gene revolution".
- Cotton productivity increased from 302 kg per hectare in 2002-03 to 566 kg per hectare in 2013-14, an increase of 76 per cent, while the area under cotton cultivation expanded by 56 per cent, of which about 95 per cent is under Bt cotton.
- But more important are the gains to cotton farmers whose incomes increased significantly. It won't be an exaggeration to say that Bt cotton led Gujarat's "agrarian miracle" of a very high (above 8 per cent) annual growth rate in agri-GDP during 2002-03 to 2013-14.
- It made India the second-largest producer after China, and the second-largest exporter after the US, of cotton in the world today.

5. The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) -

1. It functions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest And Climate Change, and the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) is the country's biotech regulator.
2. As per Rules, 1989, it is responsible for the appraisal of activities involving large-scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants in research and industrial production from the environmental angle.
3. The committee is also responsible for the appraisal of proposals relating to the release of genetically engineered (GE) organisms and products into the environment including experimental field trials.

6. Debate over BT

Several concerns have been expressed by NGOs, civil society groups, and farmers' groups from time to time to emphasize the risks associated with GM crops. Some of these include —, enhanced sucking pest damage in Bt cotton; an increase in secondary pests such as mired bugs and Spodoptera; exposure to a greater risk of monopoly in the seed business.

6.1..Bio-safety of human and animal health

1. Risk of toxicity, due to the nature of the product or the changes in the metabolism and the composition of the organisms resulting from gene transfer.

2. Newer proteins in transgenic crops from organisms, which have not been consumed as foods, sometimes have the risk of these proteins becoming allergens.
3. Genes used for antibiotic resistance as selectable markers have also raised concerns regarding the transfer of such genes to microorganisms and thereby aggravate the health problems due to antibiotic resistance in the disease-causing organisms.

6.2..Ecological concerns

1. Gene flow due to cross-pollination for the traits involving resistance can result in the development of tolerant or resistant weeds that are difficult to eradicate.
2. GM crops could lead to the erosion of biodiversity and pollute gene pools of endangered plant species.
3. Genetic erosion has occurred as the farmers have replaced the use of traditional varieties with monocultures.

6.3.Environmental concerns

1. Effect of transgenic plants on population dynamics of target and non-target pests, secondary pest problems, insect sensitivity, the evolution of new insect biotypes, environmental influence on gene expression, development of resistance in the insect population, development of resistance to the herbicide
2. Gene escapes into the environment- accidental cross-breeding GMP plants and traditional varieties through pollen transfer can contaminate the traditional local varieties with GMO genes resulting in the loss of traditional varieties of the farmers.

What is a carbon border tax?

- A carbon border adjustment tax is a duty on imports based on the number of carbon emissions resulting from the production of the product in question. As a price on carbon, it discourages emissions. As a trade-related measure, it affects production and exports.
- The proposal is part of the European commission's European Green Deal that endeavors to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.
- A carbon border tax is arguably an improvement from a national carbon tax.
- A national carbon tax is a fee that a government imposes on any company within the country that burns fossil fuels.

GS I: INDIAN HERITAGE CULTURE

PATAN PATAOLA SCARF

1.Context

PM Modi presented US President Joe Biden with Kangra miniature paintings; UK PM Rishi Sunak with 'Mata Ni Pachedi', a handmade Gujarat textile offered in temples; 'Pithora', tribal folk art from Chhota Udaipur, to Australian leader Anthony Albanese; agate bowls from Kutch to the leaders of France, Germany and Singapore; and a 'Patan Patola' scarf to his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni.

2.About Patan Pataola

The ancient art of double ikat or Patola woven in pure silk dates back to the 11th century. The Patola fabrics bear an equal intensity of colours and design on both sides. This peculiar quality has its origins in an intricate and difficult technique of dyeing or knot dyeing, known as 'bandhani', on the warp and weft separately before weaving

Patola is woven on primitive hand-operated harness looms made of rosewood and bamboo strips. The loom lies on a slant. The other commonly worn Patola is the Rajkot Patola, woven on a flat loom

The difference between Patan Patolas and Rajkot Patola is that the motifs in Patan Patolas are sharp, while the Rajkot ones are hazy

3.The Salvis

One of the major practitioners of the dwindling art form is the Salvi family from North Gujarat. The last surviving family in Patola weaving is the Salvi family in Patan

The Salvi family said that in 1342 AD, the traveler Ibn Batuta had carried patolas as gifts to many kings. They were amply used in the 17th and 18th centuries as precious gift items

Before World War II, Indonesia was the major buyer of Patolas. Legend has it that King Kumarpal of the Solanki dynasty invited some 700 families of Patola weavers from Jalna (Maharashtra) to settle in Patan in North Gujarat, and the Salvis are among them.

4.The weaving process

The process involves warp and weft silk threads that are tied with cotton thread on portions marked with the proposed design. This tied portion then remains unexposed to colours while dyeing, which is followed by tying, untying, redyeing, and dyeing in different shades. Single and primary colours are applied one after another as mixed shades develop by overlapping. This makes the design stand out. The process is labour-intensive, time-consuming, and requires a high order of skill and dexterity

Traditionally, only pure silk and natural and chemical dyes were used, but since the last century, they have been replaced by fast-to-bleach and easy-to-dye chemical colours.

The product designs are based on traditional motifs called “bhat”, which include “narikunj”, “paan”, “phulwadi”, “rasbhat”, flowers, animals birds, human figures, etc



Prelims Corner

1. The “Common Carbon Metric” supported by UNEP, has been developed for
- (a) Assessing the carbon footprint of building operations around the world
 - (b) Enabling commercial farming entities around the world to enter carbon emission trading
 - (c) Enabling governments to assess the overall carbon footprint caused by their countries
 - (d) Assessing the overall carbon foot-print caused by the use of fossil fuels by the world in a unit time

Answer (A)

The Common Carbon Metric is a protocol developed by United Nations Environment Program's Sustainable Buildings & Climate Initiative (UNEP-SBCI) for **measuring energy use & reporting GHG emissions from Building Operations**.

Its purpose is to support greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions through accurate measurement of energy efficiency improvements in building operations.

2. The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee is constituted under ?

- (a) Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006
- (b) Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999
- (c) Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
- (d) Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

Answer (C)

The Union Environment Ministry's Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) is constituted under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

3. Which of the following statements is not true?

- 1. The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India lists the official languages of the Republic of India and English is not one of them.
 - 2. There were only 12 languages mentioned in the 8th schedule at the time of writing the Constitution of India.
- a) Only 1 b) Only 2
 - c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer (B)

The eighth schedule of the Indian Constitution recognizes 22 different languages. Articles 343 to 351 of Part XVII of the Indian Constitution address the country's official tongues.

The remaining languages were eventually added, following a number of changes, as initially only 14 languages were specified. View the list of all 22 Indian languages that the Indian Constitution recognizes.

4. Which of the following countries do not share border Ukraine?

- a) Belarus
- b) Romania
- c) Poland

d) Greece

Answer (D)

Ukraine is bordered by **Belarus to the north, Russia to the east, the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea to the south, Moldova and Romania to the southwest, and Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland to the west**

5. Which of the following statements is not true with respect to Law Commission of India?

- a) Law Commission of India is a statutory body constituted from time to time.
- b) The first Law Commission was established during the British Raj era in 1834 by the Charter Act of 1833 and was chaired by Lord Macaulay.
- c) A retired Supreme Court judge or Chief Justice of a High Court will head the Commission.
- d) It works as an advisory body to the Ministry of Law and Justice.

Answer (A)

Law Commission of India as a non-statutory body that is constituted by a notification of the Government of India, with definite terms of reference to carry out research in the field of law

Mains Corner

1. Government needs to remain watchful while fighting against Inflation. Comment?
2. Govt should enshrine in law, the composition, tenure, functions and work procedure of the Law Commission. Do you agree?
3. How have Article 15 and Article 16 been amended to allow special provisions for economically weaker sections
4. What is demonetization? Explain the impact of Demonetization on the Indian Economy.
5. What is Data Localisation? Explain why data localization is important in the present technological age