

Prelims Question

Q1. Sambhar Lake- India's largest Inland Saline Water Body recently in news is located in which of the following state?

Answer: (C)

Explanation:

The Rajasthan Government is Planning to **Build Temporary Shelters** for Migratory Birds near **Sambhar Lake** when a large number of avian guests from the cold Northern Regions of Central Asia are expected to arrive at the country's largest inland saline water body.

- **More than 20,000 migratory birds had died due to avian botulism** in the lake last year. The Rajasthan High Court, which took *Suo Motu* cognisance of the mass death, has also constituted a seven-member expert committee to study the impact of salt-forming and identify any illegal salt mining in the lake.

About Avian Botulism:

- **Botulinum** is a natural toxin produced by a bacteria known as **Clostridium botulin**. It produces toxin when it starts reproducing.
 - The bacteria is **commonly found in the soil, river, and seawater**. There are around eight types — A, B, C1, C2, D, E, F, and G — of botulinum toxin and they are distinguishable when diagnosed. But **all types of toxins attack the neurons, which leads to muscle paralysis**.
 - Botulinum **affects both humans and animals** but the type of the toxin varies — botulinum C in birds and A, B and E in humans. The toxin has been recognised as a **major cause of mortality in wild birds since the 1900s**.

Q2. State of Global Air 2020 Report, recently in news, was released by which among the following?

- (a) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
 - (b) Health Effects Institute
 - (c) International Union of Air Pollution Prevention and Environmental Protection
 - (d) None of the above

Answer: (B)



Explanation:

Health Effects Institute (HEI1), an independent, non-profit research institute funded jointly by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and others have released the **State of Global Air 2020 Report**. It uses both data from ground monitors and satellite to make their assessments.

Highlights Of The Report:

- **India recorded the highest annual average PM 2.5 concentration exposure in the world last year.** India was followed by Nepal, Niger, Qatar and Nigeria in high PM 2.5 exposures. **India has been recording an increase in PM 2.5 pollution since 2010** contrary to the Centre's claims that annual air pollution levels in the country are coming down. Out of the 20 most populous countries, 14 have recorded a gradual improvement in air quality but India, Bangladesh, Niger, Pakistan and Japan are among those that have recorded a modest increase in air pollution levels.
- Out of 87 health risk factors based on the total number of deaths caused in 2019 assessed by the team, **air pollution has the fourth-highest risk globally preceded by high systolic blood pressure, tobacco and dietary risks.**
- **But in India, air pollution is the highest risk factor** because of the huge burden of premature deaths it contributes to. **High particulate matter contributed to the deaths of more than 116,000 Indian infants** who did not survive their first month.
- **India is among the top ten countries with the highest ozone (O₃) exposure in 2019.** Among the 20 most populous countries, India recorded the highest increase (17%) in O₃ concentrations in the past ten years. On average, **global exposure to ozone increased from about 47.3 parts per billion (ppb) in 2010 to 49.5 ppb in 2019.**

Q3. Shivalik Elephant Reserve, recently in news, is located in which among the following states?

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| (a) Himachal Pradesh | (b) Haryana |
| (c) Uttarakhand | (d) Uttar Pradesh |

Answer: (C)

Explanation:

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF) has asked the Uttarakhand government to consider **avoiding sensitive areas of Shivalik Elephant Reserve** while exploring land suitable to use for **expansion of Dehradun's Jolly Grant Airport**. This observation in response to a Uttarakhand government proposal for the diversion of 87 hectares (ha) of forest land in Dehradun district for the expansion of the airport.
- The proposal sent to the MoEF itself says that **the area is a part of the Shivalik Elephant Reserve and it falls within a 10-km radius of Rajaji National Park**. Thus there is regular

movement of wild animals, especially elephants, from one area to another, leading to man-animal conflict affecting humans as well as wild animals.

- Thus, to mitigate the conflict, the Dehradun forest division is proposing a wildlife mitigation plan which includes the **construction of elephant proof wall, solar fencing, weed eradication, construction of water holes**, purchase of a tranquillizing gun and other rescue equipment.
- Shivalik elephant reserve constitutes three protected areas, Jim Corbett National Park, Rajaji National Park and Sona-Nadi Wildlife Sanctuary apart from other forest divisions.

Q4. The Cost of a Plate of the Food Report was recently released

1. The report is released by the Food and Agriculture Organization.
2. Conflicts and Climate Change are the core reasons for hunger.
3. India is the worst affected region in this report.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) 1 only | (b) 2 only |
| (c) 2 and 3 only | (d) None of the above |

Answer: (B)

Explanation:

World Food Programme (WFP) recently published the '**Cost of a Plate of Food 2020' Report**', on the occasion of World Food Day (October 16). **So statement 1 is incorrect.**

- The report highlights the impact of various factors on people's access to affordable food.
- It takes an estimated per capita average income across each country and calculates the **percentage of income that people have to spend for a basic meal** (some beans or lentils for example, and a carbohydrate matching local preferences).
- This is the third edition of the report (formerly called Counting the Beans) with 36 countries featuring in the report this year.

Highlights Of The Report:

- The report highlights **Conflict and Climate Change** as the core reasons for hunger in many countries, as they force people to move away from their homes, land and jobs. This leads to a drastic reduction in incomes and the availability of affordable food. **So statement 2 correct.**
- Now COVID-19 has added another challenge faced by most vulnerable groups, through increased unemployment, loss of remittances and weak economies.
- The pandemic has also disrupted trade and supply chains resulting in local food price increases, which contribute to making food more unaffordable to millions of people in the world.



- For millions of people, missing a day's wages means missing a day's worth of food, for themselves and their children. This can also cause rising social tensions and instability.

Status In Various Countries And Regions:

- Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, is the worst affected**, with 17 out of the top 20 countries in the report coming from this region. The region's high dependency on food imports makes it vulnerable to global economic conditions. Moreover, due to its dependence on high informal labour, a huge number of workers are vulnerable to sudden losses of income. So statement 3 is incorrect.
- South Sudan** is at the top of the list, with basic ingredients costing 186 % of a person's daily income.

India stands at 28th position as per the percentage of money, people have to pay on a plate of food compared to their salaries.

Q5. Blue Origin was recently in news;

- It is a certification system for beaches
- It is a microgravity test system
- It is a ocean ecosystem research vessel
- It is software to tackle malware

Answer: (B)

Explanation:

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos's space company called **Blue Origin** and will eventually allow space tourists to **experience microgravity** by taking them over 100 km above the Earth.

Q6. Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary is located at

- In Gujrat state on Western Satpura Ranges
- In Maharastra state on western Satpura Ranges
- In Gujrat state on Southern Satpura Ranges
- In Maharastra state on Southern Satpura Ranges

Answer: (A)

Explanation:

India's First Seaplane Service:

- India's first seaplane project was inaugurated on October 31, **the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**. The seaplane will connect **Sabarmati Riverfront** in Ahmedabad to the **Statue of Unity** in Kevadia in the Narmada district.

The seaplane may affect **Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary**, which is located at an approximate aerial distance of 2.1 km from the proposed project site.

About Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary:

Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary is a protected area in India's Gujarat state, located in the western Satpura Range south of the Narmada River and is 607.7 km² large. It shares a common boundary with Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Q7. Zombie fire was recently in news;

- It is an underground fire in the Arctic Region
- It is an underground fire in the Antarctic Region
- The phenomenon is happening at Ring of Fire
- Australian bushfire was named as zombie fire

Answer: (A)

Explanation:

Zombie Fires In Arctic Region:

- The fire regimes in the Arctic are changing rapidly, with '**zombie fires**' becoming more frequent in addition to fires occurring in the once-frozen tundra, according to a new study.
- A 'zombie fire' is a **fire from a previous growing season that can smoulder under the ground which is made up of carbon-rich peat**. When the weather warms, the fire can reignite.

Key Findings Of The Study:

- Fires in the Arctic is spreading to areas that were **formerly fire-resistant**. The tundra — north of the Arctic Circle — is drying up and vegetation there like moss, grass, dwarf shrubs, etc are starting to catch fire.
- Nearly all of this year's fires inside the Arctic Circle occurred on continuous permafrost, with over half of these **burning on ancient carbon-rich peat soils**.
- The fires and record temperatures had the potential of **turning the carbon sink into a carbon source** and increasing global warming.
- The issue was so important to the climate system that it had to be taken up as an issue of global importance. The study urged global cooperation, investment and action in monitoring fires.

- It called for learning from the indigenous peoples of the Arctic about how the fire was traditionally used. It said that **new permafrost- and peat-sensitive approaches** to wildland fire fighting were needed to save the Arctic.

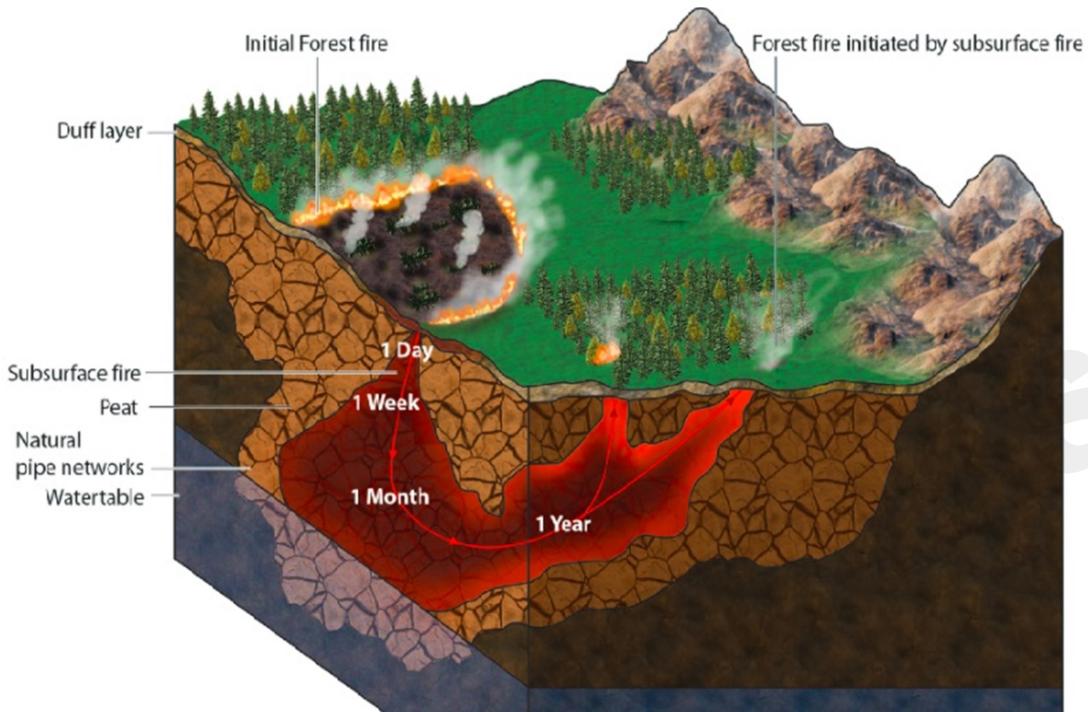


Image Representation of Zoombie Fire in Arctic Region

Q8. Ecosystem services were recently in the news

1. The report has been published by the Ministry of Environment, climate change and forest.
 2. The services include both direct and indirect benefit wildlife provides to the human being.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

Answer: (A)

Explanation:

Statement 1: the assessment was done by the energy and Resource Institute (TERI) and not by the Ministry of Environment. So statement 1 is incorrect.

Statement 2: The services include both direct and indirect benefit wildlife provides to the human being. So statement 2 is correct.

Q9. Consider the following statements regarding the Himalayan brown bear

1. There has been a drastic decline in its population in the past 10 years due to climate change
 2. It is exclusively found in Indian territories only
 3. IUCN status Himalayan brown bear is the least concern

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

Answer: (D)

Explanation:

Massive Habitat Decline For Himalayan Brown Bear:

- A recent study carried out by scientists of the Zoological Survey of India predicted a **massive habitat decline of about 73% for the Himalayan brown bear by 2050 due to climate change**. So **statement 1 is incorrect**.
 - These losses in habitat will also result in loss of habitat from 13 protected areas (PAs), and eight of them will become completely uninhabitable by the year 2050, followed by loss of connectivity in the majority of PAs.
 - In such a situation when the protected areas in the Himalayan region lose their effectiveness and representativeness, there is a need to adopt “**preemptive spatial planning of PAs in the Himalayan region** for the long-term viability of the species.

About Himalayan Brown Bear:

- India has four species of bears: Asiatic Black, Sloth, Sun and Himalayan Brown Bear. The Himalayan brown bear is **one of the largest carnivores in the highlands of the Himalayas.**
 - **Range:** North-western and central Himalaya, including Pakistan, India, Nepal, the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China and Bhutan. Populations are present in the Great Himalayan National Park (Himachal Pradesh) and the Deosai National Park, Pakistan. **So statement 2 is incorrect.**
 - **Habitat:** High altitude open valleys and pastures. During the summer months, the bears move up as high as the snow-line at around 5,500 metres and then descend into the valleys in the autumn. Himalayan brown bears seem to be arguably the least arboreal of all the bear subspecies.
 - **Status:** The IUCN list Himalayan brown bears as **Least Concern**, and they are listed under Schedule 1 of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972. **So statement 3 is correct.**



- **Threats:** Habitat loss, killing by livestock herders, and poaching for fur and the illegal body parts trade. In Pakistan, there are additional threats of habitat insularization and bear-baiting. Overall, the population is in decline.



Q10. Means to achieve a carbon-neutral economy are;

1. Connected mobility
2. Circular economy
3. Bio-economy
4. Capture and storage of SO₂ emission

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (B)

Explanation:

Means to achieve a carbon-neutral economy are as follow;

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Energy Efficiency | 2. Development of Renewable |
| 3. Clean, Safe and Connected Mobility | 4. Circular Economy |
| 5. Bio-Economy | 6. Capture and Storage of CO ₂ Emission |

Q11. Consider the following statements regarding carbon tax;

1. They are levied on all carbon-emitting product irrespective of their carbon content
 2. The carbon tax will help achieve the 2015 Paris agreement target.
 3. In India, a carbon tax is imposed by the central government and collected by the state government.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

Answer: (D)

Explanation:

More About Carbon Tax

- ▶ Carbon taxes, levied on coal, oil products, and natural gas in proportion to their carbon content, can be collected from fuel suppliers.
 - ▶ They in turn will pass on the tax in the form of higher prices for electricity, gasoline, heating oil, and so on, as well as for the products and services that depend on them.
 - ▶ This provides incentives for producers and consumers alike to reduce energy use and shift to lower-carbon fuels or renewable energy sources through investment or behavior.
 - ▶ They can also raise significant revenue for governments, revenue that can be used to counteract economic harm caused by higher fuel prices.
 - ▶ Carbon taxes are generally straightforward to administer because they can be piggybacked on existing fuel taxes, which most countries already collect with ease.
 - ▶ It is also possible to integrate carbon taxes into the royalties paid by coal mining and oil and gas drilling industries.
 - ▶ Carbon taxes can play a key role in achieving countries' pledges under the 2015 Paris Agreement, which lays the foundation for international action to combat global warming.

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Carbon Tax in India

- ▶ The decision of the current government to increase fuel taxes as well as quadruple the coal cess is sometimes interpreted as a variant of a carbon tax.
 - ▶ Only a third of the sharp decline in global oil prices after 2014 was passed on to consumers.
 - ▶ However, steep price hike due to carbon tax may make such a tax a political issue, especially in a developing country like India, where on the one hand politically influential groups such as the urban middle class or rich farmers are the biggest consumers of energy, and on the other, people emerging out of poverty need access to cheap electricity and fuels.
 - ▶ The government in India, until recently, has not put in place a carbon tax or cap in the trade system. However, leading Indian companies have set up their own carbon pricing mechanisms following a three-phase process:
 - In the foundational phase, a company assesses how much carbon it is emitting through greenhouse gas inventories.
 - In the next phase, the company sets its green vision and identifies an ideal carbon pricing strategy to achieve it. Several pricing approaches are possible including shadow prices, taxes or fees, cap-and-trade and implicit carbon pricing.
 - Finally, in the roll out phase, the company operationalizes its scheme and sets in place a system to track its effectiveness.
 - ▶ 40 large Indian companies have priced or are planning to price carbon. Combined, their revenue exceeds \$7 trillion.
 - ▶ The Indian government's budget for 2020-2021 includes preliminary plans for some form of environmental taxation.

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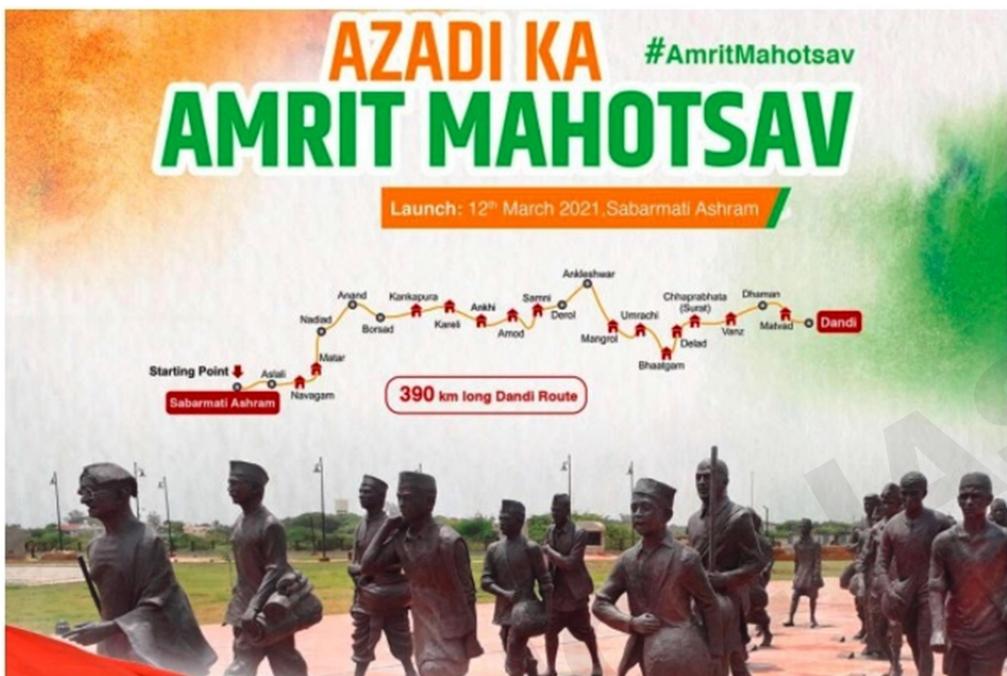
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MAINS QUESTION

Snippets



To commemorate 75 years of independence

241-mile march from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to Dandi in Gujarat's Navsari district to commemorate the 75th anniversary of India's independence.

The Mahotsav is being launched on March 12 to commemorate 91 years of Dandi March.

STATE ELECTION COMMISSIONERS:

The Supreme Court held that independent persons and not bureaucrats should be appointed State Election Commissioners.

About:

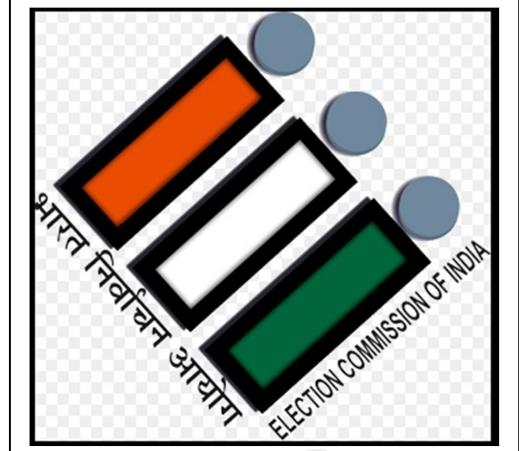
- It said that giving government employees the additional charge of State Election Commissioners is a "mockery of the Constitution".
- The top court directed that the States should appoint independent persons as Election Commissioners all along the length and breadth of the country.
- The judgment criticised the Goa government for giving its Law Secretary the additional charge of State Election Commissioner.

Article 243K?

- Article 243K deals with the Elections to the Panchayats.
- It states that The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to the Panchayats shall be vested in a State Election Commission.



- It shall consist of a State Election Commissioner to be appointed by the Governor.
- Subject to the provisions of any law made by the State Legislature, the conditions of service and tenure of office of the State Election Commissioner shall be such as the Governor may by rule determine. However,
 - The State Election Commissioner shall not be removed from his office except in the like manner and on the like ground as a Judge of a High Court.
 - The conditions of service of the State Election Commissioner shall not be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment.



MERA RATION MOBILE APP:

Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution launched Mera Ration Mobile App for the benefit of those ration card holders who move to new places in search of livelihood.

About:

- At present 32 States and Union Territories are covered under the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) and integration of the remaining four States and UTs is expected to be completed in the next few months.
- At present, the system covers nearly 69 Crore National Food Security Act- NFSA beneficiaries in the country.
- The ONORC scheme is being implemented by the Department of Food & Public Distribution under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution for the nation-wide portability of ration cards under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

