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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. President gives assent to Delhi Bill

Context:

The President of India gave assent to a Bill to accord primacy to Delhi's Lieutenant Governor (L-G) over the government.

Details:

- The Union government announced the presidential assent to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 through a gazette notification.
- The law says the government in Delhi means the Lieutenant Governor and the city government will now have to seek the opinion of the L-G before taking any executive action.

2. Tackling the period taboo

Context

- A college in Gujarat had forced girls to remove their undergarments to check if they were menstruating.

Additional Information

- This was after the warden accused them of venturing into the temple on the college premises.
- The college is managed by the Swaminarayan Dwisatabdi Medical & Charitable Trust.
- The Swaminarayan sect's norms state that girls, when menstruating, cannot enter a temple or kitchen. At the institute, girls are reportedly also barred from touching other students during those days.

Notions of purity and pollution

- The stigma of menstruation is perpetrated by cultural taboos, discrimination, lack of education, silence, period poverty (the inability to access/afford

feminine hygiene products) and such practices have been in existence as part of women's life.

- The stigma finds its roots in the notion of purity and pollution attached historically to menstruation. This was explained exceptionally by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud in **Indian Young Lawyers Association v. The State of Kerala (2018)**
 - He reasoned that any social practice which excludes women from participation in public life as a result of their menstruation is discriminatory on the ground of their sex.
 - This is because it is drawn from the notion of menstruating women being "impure", a notion which targets the physiological feature of being women.

Concerns

- Menstruation discriminates women on the basis of gender thus violating Article 14 of the Constitution. It is against the notion of substantive equality adopted by the Constitution. Hence such practices have to be rejected
- The conduct of the authorities, in SSGI, amounts to a violation of the Right to Privacy which is an integral component of the 'Right to life and personal liberty' guaranteed under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.
- Restrictions of movement imposed on these students are one of the many attempts of state and non-state actors to take control of their person.
- It perpetuates female subordination.
 - Patriarchy plays a pivotal role in restricting or changing practices and perceptions about women's reproductive rights, and sexuality rights.
 - For instance, creating embarrassment and humiliation around menstruation and regulating social exclusion and taboos to exclude and marginalize women during their period
- Taboos about menstruation present in many societies impact on girls' and women's emotional state, mentality and lifestyle and most importantly, health.

Court intervention

- Taking cognizance of the incident at SSGI, the Gujarat High Court, proposed to introduce a set of guidelines that prohibit the social exclusion of menstruating women from private, public, religious and educational places.

Way forward

- The State Government should spread awareness among its citizens regarding the social exclusion of women on the basis of their menstrual status through

various mediums like putting up posters at public places, including it in the school curriculum, using audiovisual mediums like radio, entertainment/news channels, short films etc;

- Sensitization of health workers, Accredited Social Health Activists and Anganwadi Workers regarding menstruation biology must also be done so that they can further disseminate this knowledge in the community and mobilize social support against busting menstruation-related myths.
- The State Government should include the issue of social exclusion of women on the basis of their menstrual status in all existing campaigns/schemes that aims at menstrual hygiene
- The State Government should prohibit all educational institutions, hostels, and living spaces for women-studying working and others, private or public by whatever name called, from following social exclusion of women on the basis of their menstrual status in any manner;
- The State Government should undertake surprise checks, create an appropriate mechanism and take such other actions, steps as may be necessary to ensure its compliance including the imposition of an appropriate penalty against the erring institution.

Conclusion

- It is high time that we understood that Menstruation is a human issue and not only a women's issue.
- People need to know and understand that it is a normal physiological function of womanhood.

3. UN in dialogue with China for 'unrestricted' Xinjiang visit

Context:

The UN is in negotiations with Beijing for a visit without restrictions to Xinjiang to see how the Uighur minority is being treated.

Details:

- According to U.S. and Australian rights groups, at least one million Uighurs and people from other mostly Muslim groups have been held in camps in the north-western region (Xinjiang).
- They accuse Chinese authorities of forcibly sterilising women and imposing forced labour.
- China has repeatedly denied criticism of its treatment of the group.

Details:

- Britain's Foreign Secretary recently introduced import controls on firms that may have sourced goods from the region in northwest China using forced labour from the mainly Muslim Uighur community.
- He opposes efforts underway in Parliament to give U.K. courts the power to declare a genocide in Xinjiang, which would bar the government from proceeding with any free-trade agreement with China.

Note:

- China is facing mounting global criticism over its treatment of the Uighur population in Xinjiang province – with claims of forced labour camps and mass sterilisation.
- However, China denies allegations and says it equally protects the rights and interests of its ethnic minorities.

Uighurs

- The Uighurs are a minority Turkic ethnic group originating from and culturally affiliated with the general region of Central and East Asia.
- The Uighurs are recognized as native to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.
- They are considered to be one of China's 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities.
- The Uighurs have traditionally inhabited a series of oases scattered across the Taklamakan Desert comprising the Tarim Basin, a territory which has historically been controlled by many civilizations including China, the Mongols, the Tibetans and the Turkic world.
- An estimated 80% of Xinjiang's Uyghurs still live in the Tarim Basin. The rest of Xinjiang's Uyghurs mostly live in Urumqi, the capital city of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), which is located in the historical region of Dzungaria.

4. The needless resurrection of a buried issue

Background

- The five-judge Constitution Bench, led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi in *M. Siddiq v. Mahant Suresh Das* popularly known as Ram Janmabhoomi temple case had upheld the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.

The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 :

The Preamble of the Act reads: “An act to prohibit conversion of any place of worship and to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on the 15th day of August, 1947, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.”

What is the law about?

- Passed in 1991, the law seeks to maintain the “religious character” of places of worship as it was in 1947 – except in the case of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, which was already in court

Important Provisions

- Sections 3 and 4 of the Act declare that the religious character of a place of worship shall continue to be the same as it was on August 15, 1947, and that no person shall convert any place of worship of any religious denomination into one of a different denomination or section.
- Section 4(2) says that all suits, appeals or other proceedings regarding converting the character of a place of worship, that were pending on August 15, 1947, will stand abated when the Act commences and no fresh proceedings can be filed.

Exemption

- Section 5 expressly exempts Ram Janmabhumi-Babri Masjid, situated in Ayodhya, from the Act.

Was there opposition when the law was drafted?

- Opposition parties had opposed the law when it was introduced, arguing that the Centre has no power to legislate on “pilgrimages” or “burial grounds” which is under the state list.
- However, the government had said it could make use of its residuary power under Entry 97 of the Union List to enact this law.
 - Entry 97 confers residuary powers to the Centre to legislate on subjects that are not enumerated in any of the three lists.

What has the Supreme Court said about the Act?

- The SC said the law manifests the secular values of the Constitution and strictly prohibits retrogression.
- “In providing a guarantee for the preservation of the religious character of places of public worship as they existed on 15 August 1947 and against the conversion of places of public worship, Parliament determined that

independence from colonial rule furnishes a constitutional basis for healing the injustices of the past by providing the confidence to every religious community that their places of worship will be preserved and that their character will not be altered.

- The law addresses itself to the State as much as to every citizen of the nation. Its norms bind those who govern the affairs of the nation at every level.
- Those norms implement the Fundamental Duties under Article 51A and are hence positive mandates to every citizen as well.
- The State, has by enacting the law, enforced a constitutional commitment and operationalized its constitutional obligations to uphold the equality of all religions and secularism which is a part of the basic structure of the Constitution,”

The court had stated: “Historical wrongs cannot be remedied by the people taking the law in their own hands. In preserving the character of places of public worship, Parliament has mandated in no uncertain terms that history and its wrongs shall not be used as instruments to oppress the present and the future.”

Context

- The Supreme Court has asked the Centre to respond to a plea challenging the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.
- In agreeing to examine the law, the court has opened the doors for litigation in various places of worship across the country including Mathura and Varanasi.

Why is the law under challenge?

- Advocate Ashwini Upadhyaya has challenged the law on the ground that it violates secularism.
- He has argued that the cut-off date of August 15, 1947 is “arbitrary, irrational and retrospective” and prohibits Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs from approaching courts to “re-claim” their places of worship

A deeply disturbing move

The Supreme Court’s order on issuing notice on this petition is deeply disturbing on many counts.

- Every argument being raised in the petition was answered by the five judges in their binding judgment in *M. Siddiq v. Mahant Suresh Das*.

Conclusion

- Upholding the challenge to the Act will thus reopen old fault lines and jeopardize the path to reconciliation shown by the **Ayodhya verdict**.

5. NRC-excluded to get rejection slips

Context:

The Centre has told the Assam government that “rejection slips” to those excluded from the final National Register of Citizens (NRC) published in 2019 should be issued immediately.

National Register of Citizens (NRC):

- NRC is an official record of those who are legal Indian citizens.
- It includes demographic information about all those individuals who qualify as citizens of India as per the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- Assam is the only state where an NRC was compiled under the supervision of the Supreme Court.

Details:

- The Assam state government has rejected the NRC in its current form and demanded re-verification of 30% of names included in the NRC in areas bordering Bangladesh and 10% in remaining State.
 - According to Article 6 of the Constitution, the cut-off date for migration to India from Pakistan is July 19, 1948 whereas according to the 1985 accord, in Assam (that borders Bangladesh) it is March 24, 1971.
- More than 19 lakh of the 3.29 crore applicants in Assam were left out of the final register.
- The NRC exercise in Assam took five years to be compiled and cost ₹1,220 crore.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs had earlier said that non-inclusion of a person’s name in the NRC does not by itself amount to him/her being declared as a foreigner and that they would be given adequate opportunity to present their case before the Foreigners Tribunals (FTs).

The time limit to appeal before the FTs, the quasi-judicial bodies unique to Assam, has been increased from 60 to 120 days.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

6. Centre mulls unique ID for all plots of land by March 2022

What's in News?

The Centre plans to issue a 14-digit identification number to every plot of land in the country within a year.

Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) scheme:

- The Department of Land Resources said that the ULPIN scheme has been launched in 10 States this year and will be rolled out across the country by March 2022.
- The number would uniquely identify every surveyed parcel of land and prevent land fraud, especially in rural India, where land records are outdated and disputed.
- The identification will be based on the longitude and latitude of the land parcel, and is dependent on detailed surveys and geo-referenced cadastral maps.

Details:

- It would subsequently integrate its land records database with revenue court records and bank records, as well as Aadhaar numbers on a voluntary basis.
- This is the next step in the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP).
 - DILRMP began in 2008 and has been extended several times as its scope grew.
 - The programme has been extended to 2023-24, to complete its original targets as well as expand its ambit with a slew of new schemes.
 - The department has undertaken new initiatives under the programme like NGDRS [or the National Generic Document Registration System], ULPIN, linking of court to land records, integration [of] consent based Aadhaar number with land records etc. which necessitated its further extension beyond 2020-21 till 2023-24.
- The ULPIN scheme components will enhance the service deliveries to the citizen of the country and will also function as inputs to the schemes of the other sectors like Agriculture, Finance Disaster Management.
- Clear land titles will ease a lot of constraints from making it easier for the poor to borrow from the formal financial sector to easing commercial land

acquisition for infrastructure projects instead of the misuse of eminent domain.

Note:

- The government had launched the computerisation of land records in 1988.
- Then in 2008, the government launched the National Land Record Modernization Programme (NLRMP) which has been brought under Digital India as Digital India Land Record Modernization Programme.

7. 27 migratory birds found dead at wildlife sanctuary in Himachal

What's in News?

As many as 27 migratory birds have been reported dead on account of avian influenza in the Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary area of Himachal Pradesh.

Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary:

- The Pong Dam also called the Beas dam is an artificial embankment Dam constructed across the Beas river in Himachal Pradesh.
- The Reservoir created by the dam is called Maharana Pratap Sagar and is a renowned Bird Sanctuary.
- The dam was constructed for hydroelectric power generation and irrigation.
- Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary is also a Ramsar Site.
- Maharana Pratap Sagar is located in the wetland zone of Shivalik Hills.

Note:

- Earlier in January 2021, avian influenza (H5N1) led to the death of over 5,000 migratory birds in the Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary area.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. NASA and ISRO collaborate on satellite NISAR

In news

- **NASA** and **ISRO** are collaborating on developing a satellite called NISAR.
- It will detect movements of Earth's surface as small as 0.4 inches over areas about half the size of a tennis court.

Key takeaways

- It is an SUV-sized satellite.
- The name NISAR is short for NASA-ISRO-SAR.
- SAR here refers to the synthetic aperture radar that NASA will use to measure changes in the surface of the Earth.
- Also, SAR refers to a technique for producing high-resolution images.
- Because of the precision, the radar can penetrate clouds and darkness, which means that it can collect data day and night in any weather.
- NASA will provide one of the radars for the satellite, a high-rate communication subsystem for science data, GPS receivers and a payload data subsystem.

Do you know?

- ISRO will provide the spacecraft bus, the second type of radar (called the S-band radar), the launch vehicle and associated launch services.
- The satellite will be launched in 2022 from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota, India, into a near-polar orbit.
- It will scan the globe every 12 days over the course of its three-year mission of imaging the Earth's land, ice sheets and sea ice to give an "unprecedented" view of the planet.

2. China and Iran Sign 25-Year 'Strategic Pact'

In news

- China and Iran signed a 25-year "strategic cooperation pact" recently.

Key takeaways

- It includes “political, strategic and economic” components.
- This document can be very effective in deepening relations
- It would establish a blueprint for “reciprocal investments in the fields of transport, ports, energy, industry and services”.
- The agreement comes amid a major push from China to back Iran as it deals with the continuing weight of sanctions
- China is its largest trading partner.

Do you know?

- China and Russia called for the U.S. to “unconditionally return to the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** as soon as possible and revoke the unilateral sanctions against Iran.
- In this context, they proposed “the establishment of a regional security dialogue platform to converge a new consensus on resolving the security concerns of countries in the region”.

3. Permanent Commission for Women

The story so far:

- **Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs. Babita Puniya Case:** The Supreme Court in February 2020 directed the government to ensure that women officers in the Army be granted permanent commission (PC) as well as command postings in all services other than combat.
- **Appeal by Women questioning implementation:** Later, questioning the compliance of the Army with the directions in the judgment, around 80 women short service commission officers approached the Supreme Court challenging the arbitrary process, including unjust medical standards, applied to deny permanent commission to women officers
- **Lt. Col. Nitisha vs. Union of India Case:** On 25th March 2021, the Supreme Court held that the Army’s selective evaluation process discriminated against and disproportionately affected women officers seeking permanent commission.

What did the Supreme Court observe?

- SC observed that the pattern of evaluation inherently **caused economic and psychological harm** to women short service commission officers.
- The judgment said the evaluation criteria set by the Army constituted “**systemic discrimination**” against the petitioners.
- SC found several deviations in the standards adopted by the Army for evaluating women officers.

- The court observed that the reliance placed on the women officers' ACR [annual confidential reports] evaluation for determining the grant of permanent commission was unfair.

What is the procedure for granting permanent commission?

- In 1992, the Union Government issued a notification making women eligible for appointment as officers in select non-combat branches.
- In 2008, the government extended the permanent commission to women in two branches – Judge Advocate General (JAG) and Army Educational Corps (AEC).
- In a long legal battle for equality, 322 women officers had approached the top court for granting permanent commission, and the Supreme Court delivered its landmark verdict in February 2020.
- In July 2020, the Defence Ministry issued the government sanction letter, specifying grant of permanent commission to women officers in all streams in which they are presently serving

How did the Army respond to the sanction letter?

- Following the sanction letter, the Army constituted a special selection board for screening women officers for grant of permanent commission who joined the service through the Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) and Short Service Commission Women (SSCW).
- Of the 365 optee officers who were considered fit for permanent commission by the Selection Board, 277 women short service commission officers (WSSCOs) were granted permanent commission after medical scrutiny.
- However, some petitioners said the process followed was arbitrary and challenged it in the top court.

What are the fresh directives?

- **Benchmarking against male batch is irrational:** The Supreme Court noted that the Army process of benchmarking women officers against the officers lowest in merit in the corresponding male batch is “irrational and arbitrary”, and said this requirement should be removed.
- **Criteria for grant of Permanent Commission:** All women officers who have fulfilled the cut-off grade of 60% in the Special Selection Board held in September 2020 shall be entitled to the grant of permanent commission, the judgment said, subject to their meeting the prescribed medical criteria and receiving disciplinary and vigilance clearance.
- **Equality upheld:** SC stated that in the spirit of true equality with their male counterparts in the corresponding batches, the WSSCOs must be considered

medically fit for grant of PC by reliance on their medical fitness, as recorded in the 5th or 10th year of their service.

- **Case of petitioners to be reconsidered:** Other than “non-optees”, the cases of all WSSCOs, including the petitioners who have been rejected on medical grounds, shall be reconsidered within a month and orders for the grant of permanent commission must be issued within two months
- Also, for the **Babita Puniya case**, the court held that for officers within the service bracket of 10 to 14 years who have been denied permanent commission, it has allowed them to continue in service till they attain 20 years of pensionable service.

GS 3 :Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

4. Bihar Special Armed Police Bill, 2021

Context: The Bihar legislature witnessed noisy disorder inside and outside the Assembly on March 23-24 as Opposition parties opposed the government’s attempt to pass the Bihar Special Armed Police Bill, 2021.

Protesting Opposition lawmakers were forcibly ousted by marshals and additional police forces called in by the Speaker’s office, with many injured in the scuffle that followed. However, the contentious Bill, was passed in both the Houses.

What is the new Bihar Special Armed Police Bill, 2021?

- **Special Armed Force:** The contentious bill proposes to set up a special armed force to maintain public order and combat any threat to security or extremism. It apparently seeks to arm the Bihar Military Police, rename them, and empower it on the lines of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).
- **Power to arrest people on mere suspicion:** Section 7 of the Bill gives the force the power to arrest people on the basis of mere suspicion of disrupting state government functions, or attempting to conceal their presence with the aim to commit a crime or cognizable offence.
- **No requirement of warrant:** The forces wouldn’t need a warrant from a magistrate to carry out an arrest or to search their premises, and the provisions to search under Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 will be applied.
- **Check on arrest power:** The only check in place for this is that it would allow any Special Armed Police Officer, not below the notified rank to carry out an arrest. The officer must take the suspect to a nearby police station to get a report lodged detailing the arrest.

- **Role of Courts & Government Sanction:** The Special Armed Forces personnel cannot be taken to court for any proceeding against them unless authorised by the government.

What is the Government Saying?

- The Bill says it will be for maintenance of **public order, combating extremism**, ensuring the better protection and security of specified establishments.
- The Bihar government cited that the Bihar Military Police, with its distinct organisational structure, has been handling industrial security, such as that in airports and Metros, and **needs a separate identity** as Special Armed Forces to fulfil the changing needs of the state's security.
- Chief Minister has stated that the specially trained force will **strengthen internal security**.

Why is the Opposition protesting?

- The Opposition has termed the Bill "**draconian and unconstitutional**" and an attempt by the government to enforce "**Police Raj**" in the State.
- The joint Opposition statement said the Bill will "effectively transform the police force into an armed militia to **throttle the voice of the people**, academics, activists, journalists, political opposition and those who would dare to speak the truth".
- There is also criticism of the bill on the grounds of **separation of power**. Section 15 of the Bill says even if a person is shot, the inquiry will be done not in the court or by the magistrate but by the police.
- Through this Act, it has been alleged by opponents that the BMP will function as National Investigating Agency (NIA)

5. Earth Hour

Why in News

The **Earth Hour** is being observed on **27th March 2021**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Earth Hour is the **World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF)**'s annual initiative that began in 2007.
 - It is **held every year on the last Saturday of March**.

- It encourages people from more than 180 countries to **switch off the lights from 8.30 pm to 9.30 pm as per their local time.**
- The idea is to refrain from the use of non-essential lighting to save energy in a **symbolic call for environmental protection.**
- **Impact:**
 - Earth Hour has become a **catalyst for positive environmental impact**, driving major legislative changes by harnessing the power of the people and collective action.
 - **Examples:** It helped
 - Create a **3.5 million hectare marine-protected area in Argentina.**
 - **Ban all plastics in the Galapagos in 2014.**
 - **Plant 17 million trees in Kazakhstan.**
 - Light up homes with **solar power in India and the Philippines.**
 - Push new legislation for the **protection of seas and forests in Russia.**

World Wildlife Fund for Nature

- **About:**
 - It is the **world's leading conservation organization** and works in more than 100 countries.
- **Established:**
 - It was **established in 1961** and is **headquartered at Gland, Switzerland**
- **Mission:**
 - To conserve nature and reduce the most pressing threats to the diversity of life on Earth.
- **Other Initiatives of WWF:**
 - **TX2 Goal**
 - **TRAFFIC**
 - **Living Planet Report**

6. NPNT Compliance: Drone Operations

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Civil Aviation** has granted permits to **"No-Permission-No-Takeoff' (NPNT)** compliant drone operations at **34 additional green zones** to **facilitate, smoothen, and promote** drone operations in the country.

Key Points

- **About:**

- NPNT is a **software program** that enables every Remotely Piloted Aircraft (except Nano) to obtain a valid permission through **DigitalSky platform** before operating in India.
 - **Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA)** is defined as an Unmanned Aircraft (UA), which is piloted from a remote pilot station. Drone is a layman terminology for UA.
 - **DigitalSky is a Ministry of Civil Aviation initiative**, a highly secure and scalable platform which supports technology frameworks such as NPNT designed for **enabling flight permission digitally and managing Unmanned Aircraft operations and traffic efficiently**.
- If a NPNT compliant drone tries to breach geo-fencing (to go beyond the permissible boundary in the airspace), the in-built software will compel the drone to return-to-home (RTH).
- Drone flights in the green zone sites **shall be compliant with the applicable conditions of Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Rules, 2021**.
- **Flying in the 'green-zones' require only intimation of the time and location** of the flights.
 - Permissions are required for flying in 'yellow zones' and flights are not allowed in the 'red zones'.
- **Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Rules, 2021:**
 - **UAS categorised as airplane, rotorcraft and hybrid** with further categorisation as remotely piloted aircraft, model remotely piloted aircraft and autonomous unmanned aircraft system.
 - **UA is classified as nano, micro, small, medium and large unmanned aircraft** based on the maximum all up weight.
 - **Mandatory for individuals and companies to obtain approval from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** to import, manufacture, trade, own or operate drones.
 - **No Permission- No Take-off (NPNT) policy** adopted for all UAS except for those in the nano category.
 - Micro and small UAS are not permitted from flying above 60m and 120m, respectively.
 - **UAS prohibited from flying in strategic and sensitive locations**, including near airports, defence airports, border areas, military installations/facilities and areas earmarked as strategic locations/vital installations by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - Research and development (R&D) organisations, including start-ups, authorised UAS manufacturers, any accredited recognised institution of higher education located in India, are **permitted to carry out R&D of UAS** only after obtaining authorisation from the DGCA.

- Penalties ranging between rupees ten thousand and one lakh for individuals, and for organisations, a 200, 300 and 400% of the amount specified for individuals, based on the size of the organisation.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Dzukou Valley is located at the borders of which of the following states?

- a. Nagaland and Manipur
- b. Manipur and Mizoram
- c. Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh
- d. Assam and Meghalaya

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Dzukou Valley, situated at an average altitude of 2,452 metres, is a popular trekking destination known for its exotic flowers.
- It is located at the borders of the states of Nagaland and Manipur in Northeast India.

2. The World Sustainable Development Summit is organised by which of the following?

- a. UNDP
- b. UNEP
- c. TERI
- d. UNFCCC

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The World Sustainable Development Summit is organised by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).

3. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to the newly discovered *Hypnea indica* and *Hypnea bullata* species?

1. The genus *Hypnea* consists of calcareous, erect, branched red seaweeds.
2. They grow in the intertidal regions of the coast

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Two new species of seaweed named *Hypnea indica* and *Hypnea bullata* have been discovered by a group of marine biologists.
- While *Hypnea indica* was discovered Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu, and Somnath Pathan and Sivrajpur in Gujarat, *Hypnea bullata* was discovered from Kanyakumari and Diu island of Daman and Diu.
- The seaweeds are part of the genus *Hypnea* or red seaweeds. The genus *Hypnea* consists of calcareous, erect, branched red seaweeds.
- They grow in the intertidal regions of the coast, namely the area that is submerged during the high tide and exposed during low tides.

4. The Bhagoriya festival is associated with which of the following states?

- a. Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh
- b. Odisha and West Bengal
- c. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar
- d. Rajasthan and Gujarath

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Bhagoriya festival is celebrated by the tribal people of the Indian states Madhya Pradesh & Maharashtra. The Bhangoriya Festival is celebrated by the local tribes includes Bhil, Bhilala, Pateliya etc.
- Bhagoriya Festival has an agricultural significance attached to it, it coincides with the end of harvesting of crops. People celebrate it to mark the completion of harvesting.

5. Enceladus is a natural satellite of which of the following planets?

- a. Jupiter
- b. Saturn
- c. Mars
- d. Uranus

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Enceladus is one of Saturn's moon.

6. Which of the following Indian State celebrates Cherry Blossom Mao Festival?

- a. Manipur
- b. Mizoram
- c. Meghalaya
- d. Nagaland

Answer : a

Cherry Blossom Mao Festival

- The Manipur government and Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), started organizing the festival since 2017.
- The Mao area of Senapati district in Manipur is known for Cherry Blossom, a plant which is popularly known as Sakura in Japan.
- The festival features the picturesque landscape of Mao town adorned with beautiful Cherry Blossom flowers.
- It is the world's only autumn cherry blossom festival.

- A cherry blossom is a flower of many trees of genus Prunus (Prunus cerasoides, called wild Himalayan cherry).

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. The accounting of contribution of informal sector in the national economy is crucial, not only for the sector itself, but for the entire economy . Discuss (250 words)

Approach

- Define informal economy.
- Examine the contribution of informal sector and why its accounting is important.
- Give conclusion.

2Q. In shedding “hesitations of history”, India’s foreign policy seems to be moving away from “non-alignment.” Comment. (250 words)

Approach

- Briefly describe policy of Non alignment and its context.
- Talk about the historical stand India has taken over the years.
- Mention what led to the recent shift in the policy.

Give examples showing change not country specific - having broad contours.

Conclude by giving India’s balanced approach.