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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Probing the origins of the SARS-CoV-2 virus

Context:

Calls to investigate into the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic have resurfaced.

Details:

- The novel coronavirus was first reported from Wuhan.
 - The Chinese city hosts a laboratory conducting virus research.
- The Program for Monitoring Emerging Diseases (ProMED) notified pneumonia of unknown cause in the city in December 2019.
 - The city's Huanan wet market was associated with many of the earliest cases.

What is the need for investigation into the origin?

According to a group of scientists, this is necessary because the two theories on the origins remain invalid. They are:

1. The virus could have been accidentally released from a laboratory.
2. It was the result of a spillover from some animal species to humans.

What have U.S. intelligence agencies been asked to do?

- Subsequent to the call issued by scientists, U.S. President Joe Biden, ordered an investigation by intelligence agencies into the origins of the virus.
- The Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) has also acknowledged that more work needs to be done on the lab leak theory.
 - Earlier, a WHO team that visited Wuhan thought a leak to be the least likely hypothesis.

Why has the demand for a fresh inquiry arisen?

- Understanding the origin of the virus is important to both increase safety in laboratories undertaking biological research, and to prevent pandemics of animal origin.

What is the basis for the natural origin hypothesis?

- The natural origin hypothesis is explained in a **Joint WHO-China study report**.
- It identifies a SARS-related coronavirus in a (horseshoe) bat (SARSr-CoV; RaTG13).
 - SARS-CoV-2 virus has 96.2% genomic similarity to this.
- The novel coronavirus is less similar to the genome of viruses that have caused other epidemics such as SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome).
- The higher infectivity of SARS-CoV-2 is attributed to the unique insertion of four amino acids in its spike protein that makes it more efficient.
- Their arguments are based on genetic differences between the viruses:
 - While the RaTG13 in bats is similar to SARS-CoV-2, the receptor binding domain (RBD) of the spike (the RBD protein binds to the ACE2 receptor) is divergent for the two.
 - RaTG13's RBD appears less efficient.
 - It is on the basis of this natural origin hypothesis, it was concluded that natural selection on a human or human-like host appeared to facilitate optimal binding of the spike protein of the novel coronavirus with ACE2 receptors. This ruled out the lab-leak hypothesis.
 - It is also believed that a virus was acquired by humans, and it became more efficient as it spread among humans during a certain phase that remains undetected.

2. Philippines protests against China's 'illegal' South China Sea presence

Context:

The Philippines has protested China's continuing illegal presence and activities near an island in the South China Sea held by it.

- A diplomatic protest was launched by Philippines over the incessant deployment, prolonged presence, and illegal activities of Chinese maritime assets and fishing vessels in the vicinity of **Thitu island**.
- According to Philippines, the **Pag-asa Islands** is an integral part of the country over which it has sovereignty and jurisdiction.
 - **Thitu, known as Pag-asa** in the Philippines, is 451 km from the mainland and is one of the **biggest among the eight reefs, shoals and islands it occupies in the Spratly archipelago**.

Issue:

- Tensions between China and Philippines have escalated over the months-long **presence of hundreds of Chinese boats in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.**
- The Philippines says it believes the vessels were manned by militia, while Beijing has said they were fishing boats sheltering from bad weather.
- This was at least the 84th diplomatic protest the Philippines has filed against China since President Rodrigo Duterte took office in 2016.
- An **international tribunal in 2016 invalidated China's expansive claim in the South China Sea**, where about \$3 trillion worth of ship-borne trade passes annually.
- Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also have competing claims to various islands in the South China Sea.

3. IIT-Hyderabad develops oral solution for black fungus

Context:

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (IIT-H), have approved the **mass production of an oral solution to treat black fungus.**

- At present, **Kala Azar (visceral leishmaniasis) treatment** is being used for black fungus and other fungus in the country.
- The oral solution developed is **made free from intellectual property** so that it can be mass produced and is made affordable and available to all.

4. Withdraw transfer order of Chief Secy., Mamata tells Centre

Context:

Following the absence of the West Bengal Chief Minister at the review meeting on Cyclone Yaas with the Prime Minister, the **appointments committee of the Union Cabinet attached the State's Chief Secretary- to the Centre.**

- West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has **urged the Centre to withdraw the order.**

What is the rule cited by DoPT ?

- The DoPT order said that the ACC has approved the transfer to Delhi under Rule 6(I) of the IAS (cadre) Rules, 1954.
- The said rule pertains to deputation of cadre officers.

What has been the practice so far?

- Before any officer of All India Services (AIS) is called for deputation to the Centre, **his or her concurrence is required.**
- The **Establishment Officer** in DoPT **invites nominations from State governments.**
- Once the nomination is received, their eligibility is scrutinised by a panel and then an offer list is prepared, traditionally done with the State government on board.
- Central Ministries and offices can then choose from the list of officers on offer.
- AIS officers are recruited by the Centre and they are lent to States.

What if the officer refuses to comply with the order?

- The All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969 are not clear on the punishment in such cases.
- But Rule 7 says the authority to institute proceedings and to impose penalty will be the State government while he or she was serving in connection with the affairs of a State.

The present case is peculiar as the IAS officer is set to retire on May 31, 2021 and is not on deputation to the Central government. The **Chief Minister can write to the Centre to reconsider its decision.**

5. Serosurvey learnings

Context:

- Since the pandemic began in 2020, the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) conducted three countrywide serosurveys** to measure the spread of infection due to the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- The third survey showed that 21.5% of the population had been exposed to the virus.
- ICMR is **unlikely to immediately undertake a fourth national serology survey.**

Serological surveys:

- Serological surveys are usually used to quantify the proportion of people or animals in a population positive for a specific pathogen.
- Antibodies are measured from the blood samples from participants to check past exposure to the virus.
- The prominent objective behind such surveys is to check for levels of 'herd immunity', or if 60%-70% of the population have encountered the infection.

- This level of exposure is believed to be effective in protecting the rest of those uninfected.

Can serology surveys reveal more than just exposure?

- The second serology survey did point to an increase in infections in rural India and hence a risk of infection – as the second wave underlined.
- The specific blood-analysis tests, called assays, can be used to check if antibodies produced by the body are targeting the spike region of the coronavirus or an inner envelope containing its genetic material called the nucleocapsid.
 - The antibodies against the spike are believed to be more relevant to preventing future infections and hence a better proxy for immunity.
- This can also provide inputs for improving vaccines.

Why is the ICMR not likely to conduct a fourth serology survey?

- Serosurveys **lose their scientific relevance when vaccination starts** in the population.
 - The antibodies that are triggered after a SARS-CoV-2 virus infection are structurally indistinguishable from those after one is vaccinated.
- Besides, a serology survey is a logistically demanding exercise.
 - Trained phlebotomists have to be available and dedicated laboratories have to earmarked to analyse the blood work.
 - This would also require extensive inputs from the districts.
- Apart from the infections, the focus at the moment must be on vaccination.

6. 10 lakh corpus fund for every child orphaned by COVID-19

Context:

The Union government has announced a special “**PM-CARES for Children**” scheme for all those orphaned due to COVID-19.

Details:

- **Children who have lost both parents or the lone surviving parent or their legal guardian or adoptive parent due to COVID-19** will be supported under the scheme.

Monetary Support:

- It will include a corpus of ₹10 lakh for each child till he or she reaches the age of 18.
 - When a child turns 18, he/she will draw a **monthly stipend from the corpus** of ₹10 lakh in order to meet expenses for personal needs and higher education.
 - On reaching the age of 23, the **child will get the entire ₹10 lakh.**

Schooling:

- The government will also assist such children with school education.
 - They will be given **admission in the nearest Kendriya Vidyalaya or in a private school as a day scholar.**
- If the child is admitted in a private school, the **fees will be paid from the PM CARES Fund** as per norms under the Right To Education Act, 2009.
- PM CARES will also meet the expenses on uniform, text-books and notebooks.
- Children in the age group of 11-18 will have the **option to study in a residential school** under the Central government such as Sainik School and Navodaya Vidyalaya.

Health:

- All children will be enrolled as a **beneficiary under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme** with a **health insurance cover of ₹5 lakh**, where the **premium amount will be paid by PM CARES** till a child turns 18.

Note:

- The government has also announced measures to help the families who have lost the sole earning member due to COVID-19.
- Pension scheme of the Employees State Insurance Corporation is being extended.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

7. Declining forest bird species in Western Himalaya

What's in News?

A study that analysed natural oak-dominated forests and modified forests in the State of Uttarakhand has noted that there was a **drastic loss of bird species in all modified landscapes.**

- The State of Uttarakhand is home to the Western Himalayan temperate forests which harbour a large number of endemic bird species.

Key Findings:

- The results of the study showed that there was a **low diversity of species in monoculture areas and urban sites**.
- They also noted a **drastic loss of pollinator birds and insectivores** in the degraded forests, monocultures and urbanised sites.
- It saw a **strong decline in some of the habitat guilds** in the areas that experienced land-use change.
 - Habitat guilds are **groups of bird species that have common habitat preferences**.
- Recognised oak forest specialists such as rufous-bellied woodpecker, greater yellownape, rufous sibia, white-throated laughingthrush and black-faced warbler dropped out of the modified land areas .
- It was noted that **two species (rufous-bellied woodpecker and greater yellownape)** showed great potential as **indicators of forest quality** as they were most likely to be found in dense canopied forests with larger and taller trees.

8. Ripples from Yaas and surging tides devastate the Sunderbans

Context:

Every cyclone poses **new challenges to the Sunderbans and its inhabitants**.

Details:

- Over just the past three years, the Sunderbans has been **damaged by four tropical cyclones – Fani** (May 2019), **Bulbul** (November 2019), **Amphan** (May 2020) and **Yaas** (May 2021).
- With every cyclone, the region has suffered damage because of gale winds and breached embankments, leading to ingress of sea water.
 - The intensity of the gale winds has ranged from 100 kmph to 150 kmph during each of the cyclones.

Effects of Cyclone Yaas:

- Cyclone Yaas made landfall about 200 km south of the Sunderbans in Odisha. But it **inundated large areas of the estuary**.
- There is a **scarcity of drinking water** because of inundation.
- The **combined effect of the full moon tide and the cyclone** led to the overflowing and breach of embankments in large areas of the Sunderbans.

- Not only the **western part of Sunderbans** that faces Bay of Bengal but large parts in the **eastern part of the delta** remain under water days after the cyclone and the high tide.
- Once the sea water enters the islands, the **crops are inundated and land cannot be cultivated because of the salinity**, even the **fish in the ponds die**.

Note:

- **Ghoramara** is one of the islands that has been sinking due to rising sea levels, where a few dozen houses and acres of land go under water every year.
- **Sagar Island**, the **biggest island of the Sundarbans chain** and site of the famous **Gangasagar Mela during Makar Sankranti**, has also suffered damage.

Way Forward:

- Solution to this perennial problem lies in **long-term planning**.
- Strategies that will **minimise the impact of climate change must be adopted**.
- Policy makers must prepare **disaster management plans suited to the region**.

9. 'Coast Guard will get more responsibilities'

What's in News?

Offshore Patrol Vessel Sajag was commissioned into the Coast Guard.

- This is **third of five OPVs indigenously designed and built by the Goa Shipyard Limited**.

Note:

- The concept of forming the Coast Guard was conceived **after the 1971 war**, when it was assessed, that **maritime borders are equally vital as land borders**.
- The blueprint for a **multi-dimension Coast Guard was conceived by the visionary Rustamji Committee**.
- Coast Guard plays a critical role in **anti-smuggling and anti-narcotics, both nationally and internationally**.

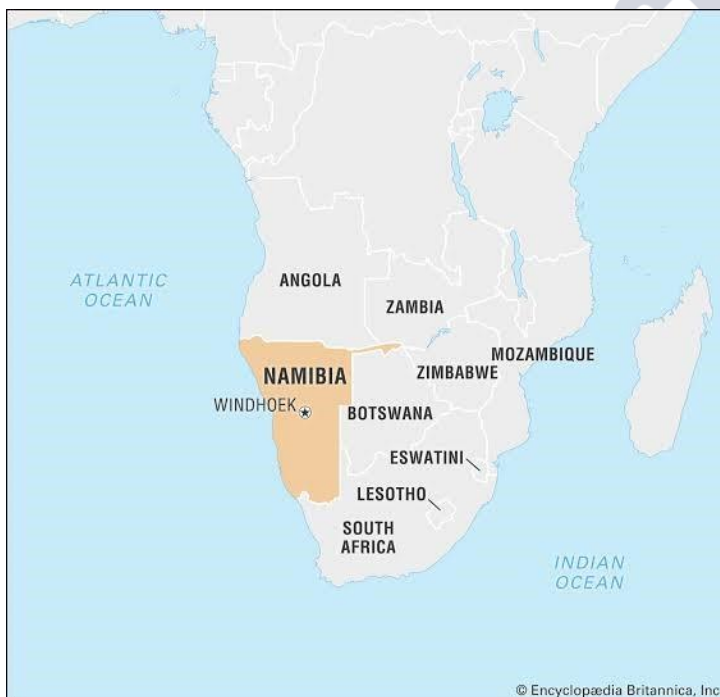
GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. What Germany recognising the colonial-era genocide in Namibia means for the African nation?

Context:

Germany for the first time has recognised that it committed **genocide against the Herero and Nama people in present-day Namibia** during its colonial rule over a century ago.

- Germany has also announced a fund of €1.1 billion (\$1.2 billion) to help aid community projects in Namibia.



About the Genocide- What happened then?

1. Between **1904 and 1908**, German colonial settlers killed tens of thousands of men, women and children from **the Herero and Nama tribes** after they rebelled against colonial rule in what was then called **German South West Africa**.
2. **Reasons for the rebellion:** Local tribes saw the German settlers as a threat to their land and resources.

3. **Important events- the Battle of Waterberg:** around 80,000 Herero, including women and children, were chased across the desert by German troops. A mere 15,000 survived.

How long was the present day Namibia under the control of Germans?

- Between 1884 and 1890, Germany formally colonised parts of present-day Namibia.
- The Germans continued to rule the region till 1915, following which it fell under South Africa's control for 75 years.
- Namibia finally gained independence in 1990.

So, what happens now?

The atrocities committed have been described by some historians as **the first genocide of the 20th century**.

Now, after the announcement, a declaration will be signed by Germany, following which it will be ratified by the parliaments of both countries.

- **President Frank-Walter Steinmeier** is then expected to officially apologize for Germany's crimes in front of the Namibian Parliament.

2. Scope of Section 304-B in dowry deaths widened by SC:

Context:

The Supreme Court has called **dowry harassment a "pestiferous" crime** where women are subjected to cruelty by "covetous" husbands and in-laws.

- Also, the Court indicated in a judgment that a **straitjacket and literal interpretation of Section 304-B, a penal provision on dowry death** may have blunted the battle against the "long-standing social evil".

About Section 304-B of the Indian Penal Code:

According to Section 304-B, **to make out a case of dowry death**, a woman should have died of burns or other bodily injuries or "otherwise than under normal circumstances" within seven years of her marriage. She should have suffered

cruelty or harassment from her husband or in-laws “soon before her death” in connection with demand for dowry.

Issues with Section 304-B:

The courts have mostly resorted to the narrow view of Section 304-B. For example:

1. Courts had interpreted the phrase ‘**soon before**’ in Section 304-B as ‘**immediately before**’. This interpretation would make it necessary for a woman to have been harassed moments before she died.
2. The phrase “**otherwise than under normal circumstances**” in the Section also calls for a liberal interpretation.

Dowry related deaths in India- a quick look:

- Dowry deaths accounted for 40% to 50% homicides in the country for almost a decade from 1999 to 2018.
- In 2019 alone, 7,115 cases of dowry death were registered under **Section 304-B of the Indian Penal Code**.

Need of the hour:

- Courts should instead interpret Section 304-B liberally while keeping in mind the law’s intention to punish dowry and bride-burning.
- Absurd interpretations should be avoided. Instead, courts need to show only a “proximate and live link” between the harassment and her death.
- The court must also put incriminating circumstances before the accused and seek his response. He should be given sufficient opportunity to give his side of the story.

Causes of dowry and related atrocities:

1. **Greed:** Expectations of material benefits from the bride’s family.
2. **Illiteracy:** The communities that are not knowledgeable about the laws and legislation face several atrocities owing to dowry exchange practices.
3. **Lack of Willingness** to adhere to laws.

3. What are monoclonal antibody therapies?

Context:

The Apollo Hospital in Delhi has started an “**antibody cocktail treatment**” for COVID-19 patients, who have mild symptoms and comorbidities. It comprises **neutralising monoclonal antibodies**.

What are Monoclonal antibodies?

They are **artificially created antibodies** that aim to aid the body’s natural immune system.

They target a specific antigen – a protein from the pathogen that induces immune response.

How are they created?

Monoclonal antibodies can be created in the lab by **exposing white blood cells to a particular antigen**.

To increase the quantity of antibodies produced, a single white blood cell is cloned, which in turn is used to create identical copies of the antibodies.

- In the case of Covid-19, scientists usually work with the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which facilitates the entry of the virus into the host cell.

Need for monoclonal antibodies:

In a healthy body, the immune system is able to create antibodies – tiny Y-shaped proteins in our blood that recognize microbial enemies and bind to them, signaling the immune system to then launch an attack on the pathogen.

However, **for people whose immune systems are unable to make sufficient amounts of these antibodies**, scientists provide a helping hand- using monoclonal antibodies.

History:

The idea of delivering antibodies to treat a disease dates as far back as the 1900s, when Nobel-prize winning German immunologist **Paul Ehrlich** proposed the idea of a '**Zauberkegel**' (magic bullet), a compound which selectively targets a pathogen.

- From then, it took eight decades of research to finally arrive at Muromonab-CD3, the world's first monoclonal antibody to be approved for clinical use in humans.
- **Muromonab-CD3** is an immunosuppressant drug given to reduce acute rejection in patients with organ transplants.

Applications:

Monoclonal antibodies are now relatively common. They are used in treating Ebola, HIV, psoriasis etc.

4. Biden orders probe into virus origins:

Context:

U.S. President Joe Biden has asked American intelligence agencies to "redouble" their efforts to analyse the origins of COVID-19, **to determine whether it emerged from human-animal contact or via a laboratory accident.**

- The United States also said that it will keep working with like-minded partners around the world to press China to participate in a full, transparent, evidence-based international investigation and to provide access to all relevant data and evidence.

Implications of this move:

This announcement significantly adds to **the growing pressure on China to be more open about the origins of the SARS-COV-2 virus**, an outbreak of which was seen first in early 2020 in the Chinese city of Wuhan, which houses the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV).

Why is the lab in Wuhan a focus on interest?

The institute collects genetic material from wildlife for experimentation.

- The lab has done extensive work on bat-borne viruses since the 2002 **SARS-CoV-1** international outbreak, which began in China.

- The search for its origins led years later to discovery of **SARS-like viruses** in a southwest China bat cave.

How the virus might have leaked from this lab?

1. Researchers **experiment with live viruses in animals to gauge human susceptibility**. To reduce the risk of pathogens escaping accidentally, the facility is supposed to enforce rigorous safety protocols, such as protective garb and super air filtration. But even the strictest measures cannot eliminate such risks. So, there is a reason to believe that the virus might have originated in the lab.
2. Additionally, **the lab is not far from the Huanan Seafood Market**, which early in the health crisis was cited as the most likely place where animal-to-human transmission of the virus may have taken place. **The market was also the site of the first known COVID-19 superspreader event.**

Above all, the **Chinese government's refusal to allow the lab-leak scenario to be fully investigated** adds fuel to these theories.

What do Scientists who favor the natural origins hypothesis say?

Some of the most lethal new diseases of the past century have been traced to human interactions with wildlife and domestic animals, including **the first SARS epidemic (bats), MERS-CoV (camels), Ebola (bats or non-human primates) and Nipah virus (bats)**.

While an animal source has not been identified so far, swabs of stalls in the wildlife section of the wildlife market in Wuhan after the outbreak tested positive, suggesting an infected animal or human handler.

GS 3 :Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

5. 43rd GST Council

In news

- The 43rd GST Council met under the Chairmanship of Union Finance Minister recently.

Key takeaways

The GST Council has made the following recommendations:

- As a COVID-19 relief measure, a number of specified **COVID-19** related goods such as medical oxygen, oxygen concentrators and other oxygen storage and transportation equipment, etc., have been recommended for full exemption from IGST.
- In view of rising Black Fungus cases, the exemption from IGST has been extended to Amphotericin B.
- To support the Lymphatic Filariasis (an endemic) elimination programme being conducted in collaboration with WHO, the GST rate on Diethylcarbamazine (DEC) tablets has been recommended for reduction to 5% (from 12%).
- GST on MRO services in respect of ships/vessels shall be reduced to 5% (from 18%).
- Amnesty scheme for small GST taxpayer's was also announced, allowing filing of returns with reduced late fees.
- Annual return filing has also been simplified.
- The Council has recommended amending the CGST Act to allow for self-certification of reconciliation statements, instead of getting it certified by Chartered Accountants.

6. Srinagar Leh Transmission System transferred to POWERGRID

In news

- Union Ministry of Power has transferred the 220 kV Srinagar-Drass-Kargil-Khaltsi-Leh Transmission System to **Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID)**, a Maharatna CPSU of Government of India.

Key takeaways

- The transmission system was commissioned in February 2019.
- It connects the Ladakh region to the national grid, ensuring quality and reliable power supply.
- It is built at a height of around 3000-4000 meters and 335-km long
- The project was executed by POWERGRID on consultancy basis under Prime Minister's Reconstruction Plan (PMRP) Scheme.

7. DRDO develops near-isothermal forging technology for aero-engines

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has announced step towards developing a jet engine with the thrust to power a fighter in combat.

Major Highlights:

- DRDO established the **near-isothermal forging technology** to produce all the five stages of high-pressure compressor (HPC) discs out of difficult-to-deform, titanium alloy, using its unique 2000 MT (metric tonne) isothermal forge press.
 - An **isothermal process** is a thermodynamic process in which the **temperature of a system remains constant**.
- This technological breakthrough involves developing **complex titanium and nickel-based alloys** that can withstand temperatures of more than 1,000 degrees Celsius.
- With this development, India has joined the **league of limited global engine developers** to have the manufacturing capabilities of such critical aero-engine components.

Rocket Propulsion:

- A **fighter jet engine functions** by sucking in a large volume of air, compressing it rapidly in several stages, injecting aviation fuel into the air and then setting it alight to create a high-pressure, high-temperature gaseous mix.
- That is expelled backward through the exhaust, its reaction **propelling the aircraft forward**.
- To achieve this, **jet engines have seven modules**, which from front to rear are: the input fan, low pressure and high-pressure compressors, the combustion chamber, high pressure and low-pressure turbines and the exhaust.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. The 'Great Gatsby Curve' deals with:

- a. inflation
- b. unemployment
- c. inequality and inter-generation mobility
- d. None of the above

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The "Great Gatsby Curve" highlights differences in mobility across countries.
- It shows the relationship between income inequality and intergenerational income mobility.
- The Great Gatsby Curve illustrates the connection between concentration of wealth in one generation and the ability of those in the next generation to move up the economic ladder compared to their parents.

2. Consider the following statements:

1. Jayanti is a new species of cricket identified under the genus of spider crickets.
2. The male crickets of the Jayanti subgenus produce the loudest sound among all the species of its genus.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 1 only
B 2 only
C Both 1 and 2
D Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : A

Explanation

- Recently, a **new species of Cricket** named '**Indimimus jayanti**' was found in the Kurra caves of Chhattisgarh.
 - The new species was named after Professor Jayant Biswas, one of the leading cave explorers in the country.

- The new species of cricket has been identified under the genus *Arachnomimus* Saussure, 1897.
 - Crickets of this genus are **commonly called spider crickets** because of their smaller body size and long legs. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Jayanti has led to the new subgenus 'Indimimus'.
- **Males of the new Jayanti subgenus cannot produce sound** and their females don't have ears. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
 - The newly discovered subgenus, *Indimimus*, is different from the two subgenera, *Arachnomimus* and *Euarachnomimus*, because of the male genitalia structure.
 - Insects have a lock-and-key model genitalia structure which is unique to each subgenus.

3. Consider the following statements regarding Veer Savarkar:

1. He was arrested in 1909 on charges of plotting an armed revolt against the Morley-Minto reforms.
2. The History of the War of Indian Independence is a book written by Veer Savarkar.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C Both 1 and 2
- D Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : C

Explanation

- **Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (Veer Savarkar)** was an Indian independence activist, politician, lawyer and writer.
 - He is also known as Swatantryaveer Savarkar.
- He was **arrested in 1909** on charges of **plotting an armed revolt against the Morley-Minto reforms** (Indian Councils Act 1909). **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
 - He was again arrested in 1910 for his connections with the revolutionary group India House.
- Savarkar wrote a book titled '**The History of the War of Indian Independence**' in which he wrote about the guerilla warfare tricks used in 1857 Sepoy Mutiny. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
 - He also wrote the book 'Hindutva: who is hindu?'.

4. With reference to Yellow fungus, consider the following statements:

1. It is also called Mucor septic
2. It may cause fatigue and burning sensation on skin.
3. It can invade internal organs of the body and affects the entire functioning.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 2 and 3 only
B 2 only
C 1 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer : D

Explanation

- Yellow fungus, also called mucor septic, initially develops by the presence of moulds (a type of fungi) in the environment. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It may be present with unnecessary fatigue, rashes, burning sensation on skin etc. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Humidity levels below 30-40% can promote the growth of fungus.
- It may **not start from the lungs but it invades internal organs of the body** and affects the entire functioning. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

5. Thitu or Pag-asa Island, sometimes seen in the news recently, is located in which of the following regions?

- a. Yellow Sea
- b. Arabian Sea
- c. South China Sea
- d. Mediterranean Sea

Answer : c

Explanation

- The Philippines has protested China's continuing illegal presence and activities near Thitu Island in the *South China Sea*.
- Thitu, known as Pag-asa in the Philippines, is the biggest of the eight reefs, shoals and islands it occupies in the Spratly archipelago.
- The Pag-asa Islands is an integral part of the Philippines over which it has sovereignty and jurisdiction.

- China has built a mini-city with runways, hangars and surface-to-air-missiles in the Subi Reef about 25 km from Thitu.

6. With reference to Mid-Day-Meal Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It is a centrally sponsored scheme which was launched in 1995.
2. It aimed to attain the goal of universalization of primary education.
3. The nodal ministry for its implication is the Ministry of Education

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 2 and 3 only
- B 2 only
- C 1 and 2 only
- D 1, 2 and 3

Answer : D

Explanation

- **Mid-Day-Meal Scheme** is a centrally sponsored scheme which was launched in 1995. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is considered as the world's largest school feeding programme aimed to attain the goal of universalization of primary education. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Nodal Ministry for the implementation of the scheme is the **Ministry of Education. Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. Discuss the achievements and failures of Non-cooperation movement of 1920. How did it impact the subsequent freedom movements in pre-independence India. (250 words)

Approach

- Describe the Non-cooperation movement.
- State its achievements and failures.
- Give conclusion

2Q. The MSME sector acts as a factory for entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities as well as a tool for poverty eradication. In this context highlight the challenges and solutions for MSME sector? (250 words)

Approach

- Introduce by mentioning the importance of MSME sector in India.
- Mention the challenges faced by MSME sector and suggest their solutions.
- Conclude by giving the key policy areas which need concerted efforts for the revival of MSME sector.