

www.vishnuias.com



DECEMBER

30.12.2021

CURRENT AFFAIRS

A MAGAZINE FOR CIVIL SERVICES PREPARATION

JOIN OUR TELEGRAM: <https://t.me/vishnuiasmentor>

Articles of the day
THE HINDU & INDIAN EXPRESS

UPSC

General Studies

Test Series

Online &
Offline
classes

One-Stop
Solution

Free daily
materials

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA), 2021

Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA) 2021 has been recently released.

About ARIIA

- ARIIA is an initiative of erstwhile Ministry of HRD, implemented by AICTE and Ministry's Innovation Cell.
- It systematically ranks all major higher educational institutions and universities in India on indicators related to "Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development" amongst students and faculties.
- ARIIA 2020 will have six categories which also includes special category for women only higher educational institutions to encourage women and bringing gender parity in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- The other five categories are 1) Centrally Funded Institutions 2) State-funded universities 3) State-funded autonomous institutions 4) Private/Deemed Universities and 5) Private Institutions.

Major Indicators for consideration

- Budget & Funding Support.
- Infrastructure & Facilities.
- Awareness, Promotions & support for Idea Generation & Innovation.
- Promotion & Support for Entrepreneurship Development.
- Innovative Learning Methods & Courses.
- Intellectual Property Generation, Technology Transfer & Commercialization.
- Innovation in Governance of the Institution.

Key highlights of 2021 report

- Seven IITs and the IISc, Bengaluru, are among the top 10 central institutions in promotion and support of innovation and entrepreneurship development.
- The top rank has been bagged by the IIT, Madras followed by the IITs in Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur and Roorkee.
- The IISc has bagged the sixth position in the ranking followed by the IITs in Hyderabad and Kharagpur, the NIT, Calicut.

2. Aryan Invasion Theory

The 2022 calendar of the IIT, Kharagpur on the theme of “evidence” for “rebutting the Aryan invasion myth” has caused controversy.

Aryan Invasion Theory

- It has always been understood that the Aryans migration from the Steppe happened after 2000 BCE.
- In 1953 Mortimer Wheeler proposed that the invasion of an Indo-European tribe from Central Asia, the “Aryans”, caused the decline of the Indus Civilization.
- As evidence, he cited a group of 37 skeletons found in various parts of Mohenjo-daro, and passages in the Vedas referring to battles and forts.
- However, scholars soon started to reject Wheeler’s theory, since the skeletons belonged to a period after the city’s abandonment and none were found near the citadel.

Basis of this theory

- This was first propounded when linguistic similarities between Sanskrit and the major European languages were discovered by European scholars during the colonial era.
- This tool was used by the colonizers to legitimize their rule in India.
- The theory hypothesizes that during 2000BC Aryans from Europe invaded or migrated into the Asian subcontinent.
- It states these ‘invaders’ killed the original Dravidians and set up the Aryan race in the South-Asian subcontinent.
- The Aryan Invasion Theory claimed that these ‘invaders’ were the root of modern Indian civilization, not the Harappan civilization.

Its rebuttal

- Recent studies have debunked the theory after DNA samples from 5000-year old Harappan remains were proven to be similar to modern Indians’ DNA as part of the Rakhigarhi Project.

Who were the Harappans then?

- The Harappans who created the agricultural revolution in northwestern India and then built the Harappan civilization were a mix of First Indians and Iranians who spoke a pre-Arya language.

- The Arya were central Asian Steppe pastoralists who arrived in India between roughly 2000 BCE and 1500 BCE, and brought Indo-European languages to the subcontinent.
- The new study says the Iranians arrived in India before agriculture or even herding had begun anywhere in the world.
- In other words, these migrants were likely to have been hunter-gatherers, which means they did not bring a knowledge of agriculture.

3. A whiff of trouble in the Nord Stream pipeline

Geopolitical developments surrounding the **Nord Stream 2** pipeline project between Russia and Germany.

NORD STREAM 2:

- The energy pipeline will facilitate an uninterrupted supply of natural gas under the Baltic Sea from Ust-Luga city of Russia to Lubmin city in Germany, bypassing transit through Ukraine and other countries.
- Nord Stream 2 will become a shorter and cheaper option compared to the transit through multiple countries.
- The construction of Nord Stream 2 started in 2015 and is expected to increase the capacity of the existing Nord Stream 1 by two times.
- It covers a distance of 1,225 km and is being built at a cost of €11 billion.

Geopolitical Concerns:

- The Ukrainian authority has called the project a 'dangerous geopolitical weapon'.
- The US and other European countries have raised concerns stating that the project would render more leverage to Russia in Europe and its energy market.
- It is also criticized that Russia is using the project as a political weapon to put pressure on European security and undermine the democratic resilience of European institutions.

Latest Developments:

- In 2019, the U.S. administration under Donald Trump imposed sanctions on a company that was involved in building the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. German authorities condemned the move as "extraterritorial sanctions".
- In 2021, the Joe Biden administration decided to waive off sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 AG company that was involved in the construction of the

pipeline. The main reason was to reinstate trust and cooperation between the U.S. and Germany.

- Amidst the fears of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there have been growing tensions between Russia and the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies. In this regard, EU leaders have called for strict actions (including its termination) against the controversial pipeline, in case of further military escalation.
- Germany will have to make difficult choices going forward.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. Regression Theorem

This newscard is an excerpt from the original article published in the TH e-paper edition.

Regression Theorem

- The regression theorem refers to a theory of the origin of money.
- It states that money must have originated as a commodity with intrinsic value in the marketplace.
- The idea was first proposed by Austrian economist Carl Menger in his 1892 work "On the Origins of Money."
- This theory is offered as an alternative to the state theory of money which states that money (fiat money) can come into existence only when it is backed by the government.

Evolution of Money

- The regression theory argues that money comes into existence through a gradual process of evolution in the marketplace, without the need for any government sanction.
- Economists who try to explain the regression theory generally start with the question of why money, particularly fiat money which is simply just a piece of paper, has any value at all in the marketplace.
- The most common answer to this question is that fiat money can be used to buy other useful goods such as houses, cars etc.
- But this answer is insufficient – it tries to tackle the question of why fiat money can buy other useful goods by simply saying that it can buy other useful goods.

Why is fiat money, which has little intrinsic value, considered valuable?

- In real life, people accept money in exchange for goods in the present because they are aware that money was accepted as a medium in exchange for other goods in the past.
- For example, people accept wages in the US dollar today because they are aware that the dollar was used to buy cars, groceries and other goods in the market yesterday.
- This gives them confidence in the value of their money.

What made people accept money in exchange for other useful goods in the past?

Ans. Intrinsic Value

- Economists who advocate the regression theory of money argue that money must have originated as a useful commodity like gold or silver or the barter system.
- This is the only way, they argue, it could have possibly been accepted by people in exchange for other useful goods at some point in the past.
- If a thing did not possess any intrinsic value, it is unlikely that people in the marketplace would have accepted it in exchange for other goods and services.
- So, commodities like gold and silver must have been traded in exchange for other goods and services at some point in history purely because they offered some kind of personal utility to people.
- For example, these precious metals could have been used to make ornaments, to fill teeth, etc., which gives them intrinsic value.
- They maintain value over time because their supply cannot be easily ramped up as mining gold involves significant production costs.

5. More defence systems to be locally manufactured

- A **positive indigenisation list of defence subsystems and components** has been notified by the Department of Defence Production.

Details:

- The list includes **2,500 subsystems and components that have been localised.**
- These components would only be procured from the Indian industry. DPSUs will work in close coordination with the local industrial supply chain to ensure the availability of such components.

- The positive indigenisation list is among a series of measures taken to **promote defence indigenization in India.**

Measures being taken to promote defence indigenization:

- Previously, two indigenous manufacturing lists had **barred the import of 209 major platforms and systems.** The ministry has also notified another 351 imported items to be so substituted with domestically produced goods in the next three years.
- The Defence Ministry will soon come out with the final version of the **Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020**, aimed at promoting domestic defence production.
- The **Defence Procurement Policy** and the New Defence Acquisition Procedure reserve several procurement categories for indigenous firms. It accords the greatest priority to Buy Indian – Indigenously Designed and Manufactured defence products.
- **Foreign Direct Investment limits into the defence sector have been increased** to promote the participation of major defence companies in the Indian defence manufacturing segment.
- **Strategic partnership model** to incentivize participation of private players in the segment.
- **Defence Innovation hubs** to promote research and development in the defence manufacturing sector.
- Establishment of **Defence Industrial Corridors** to link defence investment zones.

Significance of defence indigenization:

- Defence indigenization will help **reduce defence imports and achieve self-reliance** in defence manufacturing. This is very important for the security of the nation.
- The initiative will help **save valuable foreign exchange.** Thus it will help reduce the Balance of Payment deficit.
- By helping reduce the cost of production of its defence products, the move will also **help reduce the fiscal deficit for India.**
 - According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), in 2019, **India became the third-largest defence spender in the world.** The Indian Government has announced plans to spend USD 130 billion on military modernization in the next 5 years.
- The move will also help give a **push to domestic manufacturing** which can help **promote employment and also exports.**
 - At present, India's defence and aerospace manufacturing market is worth ₹85,000 crores. In 2022, the country's defence and aerospace

manufacturing market would increase to ₹1 lakh crore and could reach 5 lakh crore by 2047.

6. 'Bank GNPA's may rise to 9.5% by Sept.'

- The Reserve Bank of India in its Financial Stability Report (FSR) of December 2021 has noted that the **gross non-performing asset (GNPA) of commercial banks may increase** to 9.5% by September 2022 under a severe stress scenario.
- It also notes emerging signs of stress seen in the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) and the microfinance segments.
- The RBI Governor has also flagged **inflation concerns** and the **below-par performance of private investment and consumption in the Indian economy**.
- The report also expresses doubt over the **government's ability to contain fiscal deficit** at the budgeted 6.8% this fiscal year.

7. Far from over

- Syria has blamed Israel for carrying out missile strikes on its **Latakia port**.

Details:

- Syria has blamed Israel for carrying out missile strikes on its **Latakia port**. This is the second such instance within weeks.
- Israel, which has been occupying the **Golan Heights** region of Syria, has seen Iran's growing influence in the region as a security threat. In this regard, Israel has targeted Iranian and Hezbollah shipments at the Syrian port of Latakia.

Golan Heights:

- Golan Heights is a hilly area, originally a part of Syria.
- Israel captured the Golan Heights in the **1967 Middle East war** and later annexed the territory.

Problems associated with the approach of Israel

- With repeated strikes against Syria, Israel is violating international laws and norms. It has been blamed for disrupting peace in the region.
- In the recent past, Israel had carried out military strikes in Iran and assassinated prominent military personnel of Iran. Iran counterattacked and destroyed vessels of Israel.
- The repeated strikes are also a blatant violation of Syria's sovereignty.

Geopolitical Implications:

The recent developments suggest that Syria has been in the middle of the Iran-Israel tussle and it lacks resources to either check Iran's growing influence or counter Israel's military might. This has serious geopolitical implications in the West Asian region as various superpowers such as the US and Russia have a keen interest in the developments in this region.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA)

According to Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA), Seven IITs and the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, are among the top 10 central institutions in promotion and support of innovation and entrepreneurship development.

Key takeaways

- The top rank has been bagged by the **IIT, Madras** followed by the **IITs in Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur and Roorkee.**
- The **IISc** has bagged the **sixth position** in the ranking.

Atal Rankings of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA)

- **Initiative by:** Ministry of Education
- **Implemented by:** AICTE and Ministry's Innovation Cell

- **Aim:** To systematically rank higher education institutions and universities in India on indicators related to Innovation, Start-up and Entrepreneurship Development amongst students and faculty.
- **Parameters evaluated:**
 - Patent filed and granted
 - Number of registered students and faculty start-ups
 - Fund generation by incubated start-ups
 - Specialised infrastructure created by institutions to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

2. New Development Bank

India has welcomed Egypt as the fourth new member of BRICS New Development Bank that was established by the BRICS countries six years ago.

Key takeaways

- Bangladesh, UAE, and Uruguay joined in September 2021.
- Membership expansion enables New Development Bank to position itself as a premier development institution for emerging economies.
- The New Development Bank aims to mobilize resources for development projects in BRICS, emerging economies, and developing countries.
- The bank is headquartered in Shanghai, China.

Components of financial architecture of the BRICS:

- **New Development Bank:** NDB's key areas of operation are clean energy, transport infrastructure, irrigation, sustainable urban development and economic cooperation among the member countries.
- **Contingent Reserve Arrangement:** It aims to provide short-term liquidity support to the members through currency swaps to help mitigate the BOP crisis situation and further strengthen financial stability.

3. Omicron has high immune escape potential: INSACOG

The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Sequencing Consortium (INSACOG) said there is clear experimental and clinical data supporting the very high immune escape potential of Omicron.

Key takeaways

- Initial estimates show the severity of illness being lower than what was seen in previous outbreaks.
- While Delta continues to be the most prevalent VOC [variant of concern] globally, the Omicron variant has completely displaced it in southern Africa and is on track to become the dominant variant in the U.K. and elsewhere.

Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortia (INSACOG)

- **Coordinated by:** Department of Biotechnology (DBT) along with MoH&FW, ICMR, and CSIR
- The consortium ascertains the status of a new variant of SARS-CoV-2 in the country.
- INSACOG has a high level Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee.
- It has a Scientific Advisory Group for scientific and technical guidance.
- **Aim:** To monitor the genomic variations in the SARS-CoV-2 on a regular basis through a multi-laboratory network.
- This vital research consortium also assists in developing potential vaccines in the future.
- The consortium will also establish a sentinel surveillance for early detection of genomic variants with public health implication, and determine the genomic variants in the unusual events/trends (super-spreader events, high mortality/morbidity trend areas etc.)

4. The dispute over Belagavi

The border town of Belagavi has been a part of Karnataka since boundaries were demarcated on linguistic lines under the States Reorganisation Act, 1956. But the inter-State border dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra erupts every now and then.

- In the most recent instance, trouble began after some Kannada activists blackened the face of a leader of **the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES)** – a Marathi outfit formed to demand Belagavi's inclusion into Maharashtra – during 'Maha Melava' rally.
- The rally coincided with the first day of the Legislature session of Karnataka in Belagavi on December 13, 2021.
- In turn, some Marathi outfits burnt the **Kannada flag** in Kolhapur in Maharashtra. This was widely condemned by Kannada organisations and state government Karnataka.

- To settle scores, some Kannada activists poured ink on a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji in Bengaluru. MES activists then vandalised a statue of Sangolli Rayanna, a 19th century icon of Karnataka who fought the British, at Belagavi.

What are the claims of both states?

- In 1957, unhappy with the demarcation of boundaries, Maharashtra demanded realignment of its border with Karnataka.
- It invoked Section 21 (2) (b) of the Act, and submitted a petition to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs stating its objection to **Marathi-speaking areas included in Karnataka**.
- **Maharashtra claimed 814 villages**, and three urban settlements of Belagavi, Karwar and Nippani, all **part of Mumbai Presidency** before independence.
- A petition by Maharashtra in the Supreme Court, staking a claim over Belagavi, is currently pending.
- Karnataka has consistently argued that inclusion of Belagavi as part of its territory is beyond dispute. It has cited the demarcation done on linguistic lines as per the Act and the later **Mahajan Commission Report** to substantiate its position.
- Karnataka has argued for inclusion of areas in Kolhapur, Sholapur and Sangli districts (falling under Maharashtra) as its territory.
- Karnataka started holding the winter session of the Legislature in Belagavi from 2006. It built a massive Secretariat building in the district headquarters, on the lines of the Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru, to reassert its claim.
- In 1960, a four-member committee was formed by both States. The committee could not arrive at a consensus and respective representatives submitted reports to their government. In the subsequent decades, chief ministers of both States have met several times to find an amicable solution but to no avail.

What were the terms of the Mahajan Commission?

- In 1966, at Maharashtra's insistence, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi established a one-man commission, the Mahajan Commission (Mehr Chand Mahajan, third Chief Justice of India) a few months before the 1967 general elections and its report was released after the elections.
- It recommended that 264 villages be transferred to Maharashtra and that **Belgaum and 247 villages remain with Karnataka**.
- Maharashtra rejected the report, while Karnataka welcomed it. Karnataka argued that either the Mahajan Commission Report should be accepted fully or status quo maintained.

- In the following decades, Belagavi has significantly **changed on demographic and economic fronts.**
 - - The middle-class core areas and surroundings of the city are predominantly Kannada-speaking people.
 - But in and around Belagavi a good number of people speak both Marathi and Kannada. Intercommunity marriages between the two linguistic groups exist.

What has been the politics around the dispute?

- In the immediate decades of formation of States, no national party, particularly the Congress which has a social base in both States, was willing to take the risk and address the dispute. This helped MES sustain its fight with a single agenda to seek Belagavi's inclusion in Maharashtra.
- MES-supported candidates, who have been winning one or more seats in the district since the 1957 Karnataka Assembly elections, were defeated in the 2018 Assembly elections.
- As another election draws close in 2023, **MES is keen to revive its political fortunes.**
- One factor for renewal of the conflict came from then Chief Minister in 1986 when he made the **Kannada language test mandatory for anyone** joining the State Government service.
- The stoppage of the concession given to linguistic minorities strained relations between two linguistic groups. Later, CM had to assure Marathi leaders that Kannada would not be made compulsory in primary education in the border areas.
- The dispute strongly resonates in the **cultural arena too.** For instance, two sahitya sammelanas – the 73rd Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelana (ABMSS) and the 70th Akil Bharatiya Kannada Sahitya Sammeala – were held in Belagavi in 2000 and 2003, respectively.
 - Both events prepared the ground for the re-opening of an otherwise muted issue.
 - Well known scholar Y.D. Phadke, president of the 73rd ABMSS, reminded the audience of the unfinished agenda of incorporating Belagavi into Maharashtra while noted Kannada writer and journalist Patil Puttappa who presided over the 70th Kannada literary meet said the town will remain part of Karnataka.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. Rythu Bandhu: Telangana DBT scheme for farmers' assistance

The total funds disbursed under Rythu Bandhu, Telangana government's direct benefit transfer scheme for farmers, will soon touch Rs 50,000 crore in the coming days.

What is Rythu Bandhu?

- Rythu Bandhu is a scheme under which the state government extends financial support to land-owning farmers at the beginning of the crop season through direct benefit transfer.
- The scheme aims to take care of the initial investment needs and do not fall into a debt trap.
- This in turn instills confidence in farmers, enhances productivity and income, and breaks the cycle of rural indebtedness.

DBT under the Scheme

- Each farmer gets Rs 5,000 per acre per crop season without any ceiling on the number of acres held.
- So, a farmer who owns two acres of land would receive Rs 20,000 a year, whereas a farmer who owns 10 acres would receive Rs 1 lakh a year from the government.
- The grant helps them cover the expenses on input requirements such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and labour.

How much does it cost the state exchequer?

- Since the Kharif season of 2018, the state government has been crediting Rythu Bandhu assistance to farmers.
- As of date, it has credited Rs 43,036.64 crore into the bank accounts of beneficiaries.
- This season, the state government will disburse another Rs 7638.99 crore, taking the total sum disbursed so far to over Rs 50,000 crore.

Comparing with the PM-KISAN scheme

- The state government has often said that the Centre's PM-KISAN (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi) scheme is a "copy" of Rythu Bandhu.

- Under PM-KISAN, a land-holding family receives an income support of 6,000 per year in three equal installments.
- Rythu Bandhu is based on anticipated input expenditure for each acre of land and there is no restriction on the number of acres owned by a farmer.
- PM-KISAN only provides support to the family and not to the farm units.

Criticisms of the Rythu Bandhu Scheme

- The scheme does not cover the landless or tenant farmers.
- Farmer bodies have been demanding that the state government should extend the agriculture assistance to tenant farmers as well.
- They have pointed out that those who work on lands taken on lease from landowners also need government assistance at the beginning of a crop season.
- It is difficult to bring tenant farmers under the ambit of the scheme because of the informal nature of the agreements they enter into.

6. What are Blockchain Funds?

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has ruled that Indian mutual funds (MFs) cannot invest in crypto-related products until government regulations on are clear.

What are Blockchain Funds?

- Blockchain is a digital ledger system that facilitates the process of recording transactions and tracking assets in a network.
- It is possible to have blockchain without crypto, but in practice the two are highly interlinked.
- Cryptocurrency tends to power the resources needed for a public blockchain network.
- Unlike specific crypto-based investments, blockchain funds invest in multiple companies that are driving sustainable earnings from blockchain businesses.
- Some key companies in this ecosystem are US-based Coinbase Global Inc and Advanced Micro Devices Inc, and Japan's GMO internet Inc.

Why has SEBI blocked Blockchain funds?

- **Absence of regulations:** SEBI concerns stem from unclear regulations around cryptocurrencies in India.

- **Unclear future:** While investing, trading and holding crypto assets are allowed in India as of now, the laws are still not clear as to how they are regulated and taxed.
- **Possible ban:** There is a possibility that the government may ban trading in crypto altogether or come up with stringent thresholds for investors to delve into this new asset.
- **Taxing the gains:** For taxation purposes, short-term capital gains from individual crypto investing are taxed at personal taxation rates, however, there are no clear guidelines for fund investing.

Are blockchain funds good investments?

- The technology is creating value by revolutionizing the way assets and digital records are managed and transferred.
- Many companies, particularly in financial services, are investing millions of dollars in researching and building Blockchain infrastructure.
- Although the technology is still in the nascent phase in India, its potential across the board is huge.

7. Deucha Pachami Coal Mines

Thousands of Tribals fear displacement following the implementation of the project to mine coals and basalts from the Deucha-Pachami coal block in West Bengal's Birbhum district.

Deucha-Pachami Mines

- Deucha-Pachami-Dewanganj-Harinsinga coal block is the second-largest coal block in the world; it is the largest in India.
- It is located in Deucha and Panchamati area under Mohamad bazar community Development Block of Birbhum district, West Bengal.
- The block has a thick coal seam trapped between equally thick layers of rocks, mostly basalt. It has a great economic value.
- The existence of these thick basalt layers, however, makes mining of coal difficult; foreign investment and technology will be hence needed for mining.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Which of these products has/have been conferred a GI tag in India?

1. Manipuri Black Rice from Manipur
2. Rasagola from Odisha
3. Bhagalpur Silk from Bihar
4. Feni from Goa
5. Patan Patola from Rajasthan

Choose the correct code:

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 2, 3 & 4 only
- c. 1, 2, 3 & 4 only
- d. 3 & 5 only

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Patan Patola, a unique textile weaving art, is from the area of Patan in the North Gujarat region of western India and not Rajasthan.

2. With reference to the AUKUS deal, consider the following statements:

1. It is a defence alliance of Australia, the UK and the US.
2. It is established to confront strategic tensions in the Indo-Pacific region.
3. Under this Australia would obtain nuclear-powered submarines.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer : D

Explanation

- In September 2021, the US announced a new trilateral security partnership for the Indo-Pacific, between **Australia, the UK and the US (AUKUS)**. Hence, **statement 1 is correct**.
- It is the first agreement on the technology to be publicly signed since the three countries announced the formation of a **defence alliance, AUKUS**, to confront strategic tensions in the Pacific where China-US rivalry is growing. Hence, **statement 2 is correct**.
- Under the AUKUS deal, Australia would obtain **eight state-of-the-art, nuclear-powered but conventionally armed submarines** capable of stealthy, long-range missions. Hence, **statement 3 is correct**.

3. Who amongst the following decides the date of the election for the speaker of the State Legislative Assembly?

- a. Governor
- b. President
- c. Chief Minister
- d. State Election Commission

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The date for the Speaker's election of the State Legislative Assembly is notified by the Governor.

4. Consider the following statements regarding the 'Apatani Textile Product':

1. It comes from the Apatani tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.
2. The traditional handloom of the Apatani tribe is called Chichin.
3. The fabric is known for its geometric and zigzag patterns and also for its angular designs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : D

Explanation

- The Apatani weave comes from the **Apatani tribe** of **Arunachal Pradesh** living at Ziro, the headquarters of lower **Subansiri district**. Hence, **statement 1 is correct**.
 - The Apatani community weaves its own textiles for various occasions, including rituals and cultural festivals.
- The woven fabric of this tribe is known for its **geometric and zigzag patterns** and also for its **angular designs**. Hence, **statement 3 is correct**.
 - The tribe predominantly weaves shawls known as jig-jiro and jilan or jackets called **supuntarii**.
- The people here use different **leaves and plant resources for organic dyeing** the cotton yarns in their traditional ways.
 - **Only women folk** are engaged in weaving.
- The **traditional handloom** of this tribe is a type of **loin loom**, which is called **Chichin**, and is similar to the traditional handloom of the **Nyishi tribe**. Hence, **statement 2 is correct**.
 - It is portable, easy to install and operated by a single weaver, especially the female members of the community.

5. Consider the following statements:

1. Flex-Fuel Vehicles have engines that can run on flexible fuel, even 100% ethanol.
2. Flex-Fuel Strong Hybrid Electric Vehicles can run solely on electricity.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer : C

Explanation

- **Flex-fuel vehicles (FFV):** They have engines that can run on flexible fuel – a combination of petrol and ethanol, which can include up to **100% ethanol**. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- **Flex Fuel Strong Hybrid Electric Vehicles (FFV-SHEV):** When FFV is integrated along with strong **hybrid electric technology**, it is referred as FFV-SHEVs.
- **Strong hybrid** is another term for full hybrid vehicles, which have the capability to run solely on **either electric or petrol modes**. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
 - In contrast, **mild hybrids** cannot run purely on one of these modes and use the secondary mode merely as a supplement to the main mode of propulsion.

6. Which of the following indices are used in assessing the Global Innovation Index (GII)?

1. Institutions
2. Infrastructure
3. Human Capital and Research
4. Market and Business Sophistication
5. Knowledge and Technological outputs

Choose the correct option.

- a. 1, 3 and 4 only
- b. 2 and 5 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Answer : d

Global Innovation Index (GII)

- The Global Innovation Index (GII) takes the pulse of the most recent global innovation trends.

- It ranks the innovation ecosystem performance of economies around the globe each year while highlighting innovation strengths and weaknesses and particular gaps in innovation metrics.
- It is released by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a specialized agency of the United Nations.
- The Global Innovation Index is measured using seven indices categorized into two pillars namely the Input Index and the Output Index.
- The Input Index includes the following indices:
 - Institutions
 - Human Capital and Research
 - Infrastructure
 - Market Sophistication
 - Business Sophistication
- The Output Index includes the following indices:
 - Knowledge and Technological outputs
 - Creative outputs
- Switzerland, Sweden and the US are the top three nations in the innovation rankings.
- With regard to the countries in Asia, Vietnam is at 44, India is at 46, and Iran is at 60.
- India has improved its ranking in the Global Innovation Index up from 48 in the previous year's ranking.

India is ranked second amongst the lower-middle-income group of economies and first in Central and South Asia

Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss how far Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) has been useful for our environment as well as society? (250 words)

Approach

- Write a few introductory lines about the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA).
- Discuss the importance of EIA for the environment as well as society.
- Discuss the shortcomings of the EIA process.
- Provide solutions to remove such shortcomings.
- Conclude suitably.

2. The US seeks to formalise ties with countries of the Indo-Pacific region similar to something like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) with an aim to counter China. Discuss the prospects and challenges for India to become a regional power. (250 words)

Approach

- Introduce with a few lines on the US intention to form a NATO like organisation in Indo-Pacific region.
- Discuss the prospect and challenges of India becoming a regional power considering the growing influence of the USA in South Asia.
- Provide a way forward that India should seek.
- Conclude suitably on a positive note.