

ECONOMY

- ❖ **Will all overseas spends come under the tax net?**
- ❖ **CONTEXT:** The Centre has amended rules under the **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA)**, bringing international credit card spends outside India under the **Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS)**. Also, from July 1, spending on international credit cards will attract a higher rate of Tax Collected at Source (TCS) at 20%. The government said the decision was taken in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India.
- Widespread outcry from businesses and taxpayers first compelled the government to issue an elaborate explainer on the rationale for the tax levy. By the end of the week, the Finance Ministry had made a partial U-turn to quell criticism that ranged from a return to “tax terrorism” and harassment of Indians going abroad for work or leisure trips.
- **Origin of these Changes:**
 - In the Budget for 2023-24 presented on February 1, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed to raise the tax collection at source (TCS) rate on overseas tour packages as well as foreign remittances under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS). Indians are allowed to remit up to \$2.5 lakh a year abroad under the LRS.
 - For overseas tour packages, the TCS rate was to be raised from 5% to 20%. Similarly, a 20% tax was proposed for all remittances under the LRS, as opposed to the extant treatment — a 5% TCS on remittances over ₹7 lakh. This did not cover remittances made for education or medical expenses abroad, which are permitted up to ₹7 lakh each annually, and already attracted a 5% TCS.
- **What were the notifications issued?**
 - On May 16, the Finance Ministry notified the Foreign Exchange Management (Current Account Transactions) (Amendment) Rules, 2023, to bring all credit card spends abroad under the remit of the LRS.
 - The new notification, drafted in consultation with the RBI, omitted **Rule 7 of the Foreign Exchange Management (Current Account Transactions) Rules, 2000**, which had kept credit cards out of the \$2.5 lakh annual LRS limit as a liberalisation measure.
 - These changes enabled the levy of a higher TCS on credit card spends overseas from July 1 this year, and the government gave an assurance that this will not impact purchases of foreign services like newspaper or streaming services subscriptions while being in India.
- **Why did it trigger a furore?**
 - The 20% TCS levy on credit card spends abroad would mean any such expenses made abroad, barring for education and healthcare, would entail additional funds of the taxpayer being blocked which they could either adjust against any advance tax payments or await refunds from their income tax returns.
 - For IT refunds, tax payers may end up waiting as long as 15 months if not more, as each assessment year’s taxes are filed in the following financial year.
 - Several people flagged this as unnecessary harassment and blocking of funds for honest taxpayers, and questioned the need for a 20% levy if the intent was to track such spending which is likely captured by the banks issuing credit cards already. A 2% or 5% TCS would have done the tracking job as well. Concerns were also raised on employees using cards during overseas work trips, and escalating costs for those who aspire for a foreign holiday.
- **How did the government counter criticism?**
 - Reacting to sharp retorts from industry leaders, as well as citizens on social media, the Finance Ministry issued a statement highlighting instances that have come to their notice where LRS payments are disproportionately high when compared to individuals’ disclosed incomes.
 - According to Finance Ministry, bona fide business visits overseas by employees won’t be affected and the primary impact will be on tour travel packages, gifts to non-residents and domestic high net-worth individuals investing in assets such as real estate, bonds, and stocks outside India.
 - Ministry further added that “Individuals remitting from their own funds are normally expected to be higher-income taxpayers,”, adding that the 20% TCS rate is “not” high. “The tax rate slab of 20% starts in the new regime for incomes over ₹12 lakh and is 30% for incomes over ₹15 lakh,” it pointed out.
- **What is Rule 7 of Foreign Exchange Management (CAT) Rules, 2000?**
 - Rule 7 of the Foreign Exchange Management (CAT) Rules, 2000 exempted the use of international credit cards from the LRS for payments by a person towards meeting expenses while such a person is on a visit outside India.
- **About Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA):**
 - FEMA is an enactment that deals primarily with the provisions relating to cross-border trade and payments
 - It defines the procedures, formalities, and dealings of all foreign exchange transactions in India.

- It was introduced in 1999 as a replacement for the earlier Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA).
- FEMA's head office is known as Enforcement Directorate and is situated in Delhi.
- Primary objective is to help facilitate external trade and payments in India.
- **Other objectives:**
 - ✓ To help orderly development and maintenance of the foreign exchange market in India.
 - ✓ To facilitate transactions involving a foreign exchange or foreign security and payments from outside the country to India only through an authorized person.
 - ✓ To encourage dealings in foreign exchange under the current account through an authorized person.
 - ✓ To authorize the Reserve Bank of India to subject capital account transactions to a number of restrictions.
- **Applicability:**
 - ✓ It is applicable to all parts of India.
 - ✓ It is also equally applicable to the offices and agencies located outside India but managed or owned by an Indian Citizen.
 - ✓ FEMA is applicable to the following entities and transactions
 - ✓ Any citizen of India residing in the country or outside (NRI);
 - ✓ Any overseas company that is owned 60% or more by an NRI (Non-Resident Indian);
 - ✓ Any Associate Branches or subsidiaries, outside India, of companies or bodies corporate, registered or incorporated in India;
 - ✓ Exports of any goods and services from India;
 - ✓ Imports of goods and services to India;
 - ✓ Banking, financial, and insurance services provided outside India;
 - ✓ Cross-border sale, purchase, and exchange of any kind (i.e. Transfer).

➤ **About Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS):**

- This is the scheme of the Reserve Bank of India, introduced in the year 2004.
- Under the scheme, all resident individuals, including minors, are allowed to freely remit up to USD 2,50,000 per financial year (April – March) for any permissible current or capital account transaction or a combination of both.
- **Not Eligible:** The Scheme is not available to corporations, partnership firms, Hindu Undivided Family (HUF), Trusts etc.
- Though there are no restrictions on the frequency of remittances under LRS, once a remittance is made for an amount up to USD 2,50,000 during the financial year, a resident individual would not be eligible to make any further remittances under this scheme.

CLIMATE

❖ **G7's climate wishlist, and the realities of efforts to cap warming**

❖ **CONTEXT:** A series of recent studies and reports have once again sounded the red alert on climate change, saying the situation was worsening rapidly, and the window of opportunity for effective action was narrowing faster than ever before.

- Last week, the World Meteorological Organisation said the 1.5 degree Celsius threshold was likely to be breached, at least temporarily, over the next five years. It also said that at least one of the next five years was almost certain to become the warmest year on record.
- A few other studies have suggested that this year, 2023, is on track to become the warmest ever, surpassing 2016. New research claims that the heat wave in India and some neighbouring countries last month was almost certainly due to climate change, the probability of its occurrence having been increased at least 30 times by global warming.
- Studies calling for an immediate scale-up of climate action have been appearing almost weekly now. However, the response, though quite substantive in the last few years, does not seem to be able to keep pace. The latest example of the response gap has come from the G7 — first after the meeting of their climate ministers last month, and now following the leaders' summit.
- The G7 — a group of rich and developed nations with the economic heft to create the necessary momentum for global change — repeatedly acknowledged the urgency of the problem but offered little in terms of scaled-up action. In its final communique in Hiroshima, Japan, the G7 listed a set of milestones that need to be achieved for a realistic chance of containing the global rise in temperatures to within 1.5 degree Celsius.
- **Seeking 'peak' in 2025:**
 - The G7 stressed on the need for a global peak in emissions by 2025. The G7 — the US, the UK, Germany, Italy, Japan, France and Canada — claimed that their emissions had already “peaked”, and

asked all “major economies” to ensure that their individual emissions do not continue to rise beyond 2025.

- “Major economies” is not defined, but in the context of climate change, it usually includes countries like **India, China, Brazil, South Africa, and Russia**, each of which is a significant emitter.
- The 2025 peak year is not mandated under the Paris Agreement or any other international decision. India has long made it clear that it sees its emissions growing well into the next decade. Even China, **the world’s largest emitter**, has indicated that it would peak only towards the end of this decade.
- Still, a global peak of greenhouse gas emissions by 2025 is not implausible. The biggest emissions year so far has been 2019 — about 55 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. After a dramatic drop in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, emissions rose again in 2021, the last year for which data are available, but remained lower than in 2019.
- While emissions of developing countries, including India, are still increasing, most of the rich and industrialised nations are now seeing a decline, though not at the required pace. Estimates from UN Climate Change suggest that if all countries took only those measures that they have promised so far, emissions in 2030 would be about 11% higher than 2010 levels.

➤ **Net-zero by 2050:**

- The **G7 reiterated its commitment to turn net-zero by 2050**, and asked all ‘major economies’ to attain net-zero status by that year and to come up with detailed road maps to reach the target.
- Science says that the world as a whole must become net zero by mid-century in order to meet the 1.5 degree Celsius target. Interestingly, the 1.5 degree Celsius milestone is likely to be achieved a lot sooner — not just as part of annual fluctuation but also on a more stable basis. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has said this could happen before 2040 — but that it was possible to pull back from there, if aggressive action on climate continued. One of the prerequisites of the pullback is global net-zero by 2050.
- China has said it would turn **net-zero only in 2060**, while **India has set 2070 as the target**. Some other countries, including big emitters like Russia and Saudi Arabia, have 2060 as their net-zero targets.
- If these countries do not become net-zero by 2050, it would mean that the other major emitters, mainly the US and the European Union, would have to reach there much earlier. As of now, only Germany has said it would attain net-zero status by 2045.
- However, the post-2050 targets of major developing countries are not set in stone. With fast changing technologies, and rapid adoption of cleaner sources of energy, the situation could alter significantly over the next decade. But countries like India would want to keep some wiggle room for themselves, and not make a commitment that they are not mandated to do.

➤ **End to fossil fuels**

- The G7 countries put no deadline to ending the use of fossil fuels, only saying that they were committed to accelerating the phase-out of “unabated fossil fuels” in line with 1.5 degree Celsius trajectories. “Unabated” is not clearly defined; they also said they would eliminate “inefficient fossil fuel subsidies” by 2025 or earlier, without defining “inefficient subsidies”.
- The G7 also claimed they had stopped financing new fossil fuel-based energy projects “except in limited circumstances”.
- These circumstances include the need to end the dependence on Russian gas, because of which new investments in the gas sector would be considered legitimate.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

❖ **Quad Summit 2023**

- **CONTEXT:** Recently, Prime Minister of Australia, Prime Minister of India, Prime Minister of Japan, and President of the United States met for the third in-person Quad Leaders’ Summit. This summit was hosted by Prime Minister Albanese on the side-lines of the ongoing G-7 Summit in Hiroshima.
- This summit was scheduled to be held in Sydney on May 24 in Sydney, Australia.
- However, it was cancelled after US President announced his postponement of the visit due to debt ceiling negotiations in Washington.
- **Key highlights of Quad Summit 2023:**
 - The leaders issued a joint vision statement titled ‘Enduring Partners for Indo-Pacific’.
 - The statement expressed the resolve of the Quad leaders to act as a “force for good” to find common solutions for region-wide benefit.
 - The issued three other statements setting out Quad Principles on:
 - ✓ clean energy supply chains,
 - ✓ cyber security and secure software, and

- ✓ Critical and emerging technology standards.
- The Quad International Standards Cooperation Network and the Quad Principles on Critical and Emerging Technology Standards were released.
- This reflected the support of Quad leaders for industry-led, consensus-based multi-stakeholder approaches to the development of technology standards.
- PM Modi announced that the next Quad leaders' meeting would be held in India in 2024.
- Participating leaders, for the first time, explicitly expressed their deep concern over the war raging in Ukraine. They called for ending the Ukraine war through **dialogue and diplomacy** while asserting that it must not be an era of war.
 - ✓ Quad countries recognised its serious impacts on the global economic system including on food, fuel and energy security and critical supply chains.
 - ✓ However, they did not directly refer to Russia's actions, understood to be in deference to India's divergent stand on the issue.
- The leaders of the four countries also recommitted themselves to maintain and strengthen stability in **the Indo-Pacific region** according to international law.
- In his address at the summit, PM Modi described the Indo-Pacific region as an engine of global trade, innovation, and development.
- The Quad leaders announced they would now pursue a broader **"Quad Health Security Partnership"** rather than the earlier Quad Vaccine Partnership for COVID-19 vaccines.
 - ✓ Announced in March 2021, the Quad Vaccine Partnership aimed to donate 1.2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines to the Indo-Pacific by the end of 2022. Under this partnership, India would produce vaccine doses, the United States would finance dose production, and Australia and Japan would aid in vaccine manufacturing, distribution, and financing efforts.
- The joint statement also dealt with Quad concerns over North Korean missile launches, the coup in Myanmar, and the issue of terrorism.
- With specific references to the 2008 Mumbai attack and the 2016 Pathankot airbase attack, they committed to:
 - ✓ pursuing terrorist designations at the UN Security Council, and
 - ✓ Strengthening cooperation through a new Working Group on Counterterrorism.
- The new Working Group on Counterterrorism was announced during the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in March 2023.
- Quad leaders also announced a **new undersea cable infrastructure partnership** to build networks across the region.
- The Quad leaders emphasised the importance of adherence to international law and the maintenance of freedom of navigation and over flight.
- They noted progress on the **Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)** to help curb illicit maritime activities, illegal fishing, and humanitarian disasters.
 - ✓ In May 2022, U.S. President Joe Biden announced IPMDA, an initiative with regional partners and allies to promote a free and open Pacific.
 - ✓ The IPMDA intends to connect regional partners and allies with American technologies to provide greater maritime situational awareness in real-time.
- The leaders welcomed the launch of the private sector-led **Quad Investors Network (QUIN)**. QUIN aims to facilitate investments in strategic technologies, including clean energy, semiconductors, critical minerals, and quantum.

PRELIMS

1. **World Health Assembly:**

- **IN NEWS:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually addressed **the 76th World Health Assembly in Geneva**. While congratulating the organisation for "serving the world for 75 years", PM Modi said the pandemic showed there was a need for greater collaboration and health equity.
- He mentioned that India showed its commitment towards international cooperation during the pandemic by shipping 300 million vaccine doses to over 100 countries, many from the Global South.
- The PM's call for equity in healthcare comes in the backdrop of India's G20 presidency where one of the priority areas is creating a global network for manufacturing medical countermeasures – diagnostics, drugs, and vaccines – so that everyone has access to it.
- **About World Health Assembly:**
 - World Health Assembly (WHA) is WHO's decision-making body attended by delegations from all of WHO's member states,
 - It is held yearly at the HQ of WHO, i.e., Geneva, Switzerland.

- Specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board remains the focus of this assembly.
 - Functions of WHA:
 - ✓ Deciding on Organization's policies.
 - ✓ Appointment of the Director-General of WHO.
 - ✓ Administration of financial policies.
 - ✓ Review and approval of the proposed programme budget.
- 2. Prime Minister's Visit To Papua New Guinea (PNG)**
- **IN NEWS:** Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi held a bilateral meeting with H.E. Mr. James Marape, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea (PNG) on 22 May 2023 in Port Moresby, on the sidelines of the 3rd Summit of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC).
 - Both leaders took stock of their bilateral relations and discussed ways and means to further strengthen their partnership across various sectors, including trade & investment, health, capacity building & skill development and Information Technology. They also discussed issues related climate action and promoting people to people ties. Prime Minister reiterated India's support and respect for the priorities and wishes of the Pacific Island nations.
 - Prime Minister and Prime Minister Marape launched a translation of the Tamil classic 'Thirukkural' to Tok Pisin language of PNG.
 - **About The Forum For India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC):**
 - The Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) was launched during Hon'ble Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi's visit to Fiji in November 2014.
 - FIPIC includes 14 of the island countries – Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
 - Though these countries are relatively small in land area and distant from India, many have large exclusive economic zones (EEZs), and offer promising possibilities for fruitful cooperation.
 - India's focus has largely been on the Indian Ocean where it has sought to play a major role and protect its strategic and commercial interests. The FIPIC initiative marks a serious effort to expand India's engagement in the Pacific region.
 - 3. Namami Gange Initiative:**
 - **IN NEWS:** Over 4,000 volunteers under the Namami Gange initiative have been keeping a check on littering and poaching in the river to make sure that its flora, fauna are intact; in return, the Wildlife Institute of India has helped them with livelihood training.
 - **Ganga Prahari (guardian):** This is a task force of volunteers constituted by the National Mission for Clean Ganga and the Wildlife Institute of India (NMCG-WII) under the Namami Gange programme to cover 8.61 billion sq. km of the river basin.
 - ✓ The task force, which now has over 4,000 volunteers in 100 districts across Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, and West Bengal, keeps a check on river protection, preventing people from littering, as well as reports poaching.
 - ✓ The concept of the Ganga Prahari was mooted by Ruchi Badola, the dean at WII and nodal officer of the Biodiversity Conservation and Ganga Rejuvenation project.
 - Since 2014, Namami Gange has aimed to clean the river, ecosystem, and the villages around, home to 40% of India's population at 520 million and 2,500 species of flora and fauna.
 - The United Nations in December 2022 recognised the initiative as one of the top 10 World Restoration Flagships involved in reviving the natural world — a project that has seen the Central government invest \$5 billion.
 - **About Namami Gange Programme:**
 - Namami Gange Programme is an Integrated Conservation Mission, approved as a 'Flagship Programme' by the Union Government in June 2014 to accomplish the twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution and conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga.
 - It is being operated under the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.
 - The program is being **implemented by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**, and its state counterpart organizations i.e State Program Management Groups (SPMGs).
 - NMCG is the implementation wing of National Ganga Council (set in 2016; which replaced the National Ganga River Basin Authority - NGRBA).
 - It has a Rs. 20,000-crore, **centrally-funded**, non-lapsable corpus and consists of nearly 288 projects.
 - The main pillars of the programme are:
 - ✓ Sewage Treatment Infrastructure
 - ✓ River-Front Development

- ✓ River-Surface Cleaning
- ✓ Biodiversity
- ✓ Afforestation
- ✓ Public Awareness
- ✓ Industrial Effluent Monitoring
- ✓ Ganga Gram

4. **INS Tarini**

- **IN NEWS:** The Indian Navy is all set to receive the six-member crew of INSV Tarini, including 2 women officers at the "flag in" ceremony on May 23 at the Indian Naval Watermanship Training Centre (INWTC), INS Mandovi, Goa.
 - INSV Tarini is returning home after successfully completing the 17000-nautical miles trans-ocean inter-continental voyage in seven months.
 - The current sailing expedition of INSV Tarini is part of the run-up towards the Navy's next big project to send a woman to circumnavigate the globe solo.
 - The officers that participated in this expedition were shortlisted from volunteers after rigorous selection at the Ocean Sailing Node (OSN).
 - Ocean Sailing Node was established on 24 Aug 2016 with the aim of promoting and undertaking ocean sailing activities and is located at INS Mandovi.
- **About INS Tarini:**
 - It is the second sailboat of Indian Navy after INSV Mhedi.
 - It is known for circumnavigating the globe with an all-women officer crew in the historic expedition titled 'Navika Sagar Parikrama' in 2017.

ANSWER WRITING

Que. Discuss the important provisions of India's Space Policy 2023. How is the new space policy different from previous efforts taken by the government for the promotion of the space sector?

The Indian Space Policy 2023 was recently released with a vision to enable, encourage and develop a flourishing commercial presence in space. It aims to increase India's share in the global space economy from less than 2% to 10%. The policy also defines its role in India's socio-economic development and security, protection of environment and lives, pursuing peaceful exploration of outer space, stimulation of public awareness and the scientific quest.

Important provisions of Indian Space Policy 2023 are as follows:

- Policy delineates the roles and responsibilities of three important entities in the Indian space sector.
- **Role of ISRO:** The premier space agency of India, will focus its energies on developing new technologies, systems, and research and development. The operational aspect of ISRO's missions will be handled by NSIL which will work in a demand-driven mode to cater to the needs of the industry.
- **Role of NewSpace India Limited (NSIL):** NSIL will be responsible for strategic activities related to the space sector. The objective of NSIL is to augment private industry participation in the space economy and create a self-reliant space industry in India.
- **Role of Indian National Space Promotion & Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe):** According to the policy IN-SPACe shall function as an autonomous government organization, mandated to promote, hand-hold, guide and authorize space activities in the country. The policy also clearly defines the role of IN-SPACe, as a single-window agency for the authorisation of space activities by government entities as well as Non-Government Entities (NGEs).
- **Role of Non-Government Entities (NGEs):** The policy allows NGEs to undertake end-to-end activities in the space sector through the establishment and operation of space objects, ground-based assets and related services, such as communication, remote sensing, navigation, etc.
- The Department of Space (DOS) will oversee the implementation of the Indian Space Policy-2023, ensuring that stakeholders are suitably empowered to carry out their respective functions.

Inherent drawbacks with respect to earlier policy measures:

- **Issues with satellite communication policy:** The first satellite communication policy was introduced in 1997, with guidelines for foreign direct investment (FDI) in the satellite industry that were further liberalised but never generated much enthusiasm. Today, more than half the transponders beaming TV signals into Indian homes are hosted on foreign satellites, resulting in an annual outflow of over half a billion dollars.
- **Issues with remote sensing policy:** A remote sensing data policy was introduced in 2001 and in 2016, it was replaced by a National Geospatial Policy that has been further liberalised in 2022. However Indian users including the security and defence agencies spend nearly a billion dollars annually to procure earth observation data and imagery from foreign sources.

- Lapse of draft Space Activities Bill: To streamline the space sector a draft Space Activities Bill was brought out in 2017 however it lapsed in 2019.

New space policy stands out when compared to previous measures taken by the government in the following ways:

- Redefines ISRO's focus areas: After the newly defined role of ISRO in the policy, it can now use its biggest asset, its qualified and talented manpower, to concentrate on cutting-edge research and development and long-term projects such as Chandrayaan and Gaganyaan.
- Opening up of the space sector for private players: With the new policy, the entire gamut of space activities is now open to the private sector. It addresses the earlier problem of the absence of a framework for the private sector. This is particularly important as a number of startups such as Dhruva Space, Agnikul Cosmos etc are coming up in the space sector in the last few years.
- Ensuring competitiveness in the space sector: India has over 400 private space companies and ranks fifth globally in terms of the number of space companies. Therefore, the role of the private sector becomes important for ensuring the competitiveness of the sector.
- Industrial Collaboration and International Partnerships: The Indian Space Policy 2023 encourages fostering collaborations and partnerships with industry and academia, both national and international, to pursue research and development in space science, technology, and applications. This approach will help accelerate India's progress in the space sector and contribute to the global scientific community.

The Space Policy 2023 is a forward-looking document and marks an ambitious new chapter for India's space program. Through a combination of research and development, collaboration and innovation, the country can solidify its position as a global space leader.

MCQs

1. Consider the following statement regarding Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS).
 1. The Scheme is introduced by Reserve Bank of India in 2004.
 2. Under the LRS there are no restrictions on the frequency of remittances under LRS, once a remittance is made for an amount up to USD 2,50,000 during the financial year.
 3. The Scheme is not available to corporations, partnership firms, Hindu Undivided Family (HUF), Trusts etc.

Select the correct statement using the codes below

 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 1 and 3 only
 - c) 2 and 3 only
 - d) **1, 2 and 3**
2. Consider the following statement regarding Namami Gange Programme
 1. It is operated under the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.
 2. The program is being implemented by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG),
 3. The programme is fully funded by Government of India.

Select the correct statement using the codes below

 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 1 and 3 only
 - c) 2 and 3 only
 - d) **1, 2 and 3**
3. Recently Rajaji Tiger Reserve was in news, consider the following statements regarding the Tiger Reserve:
 1. It is situated in the State of Himachal Pradesh.
 2. It is located in a transition zone between temperate western Himalaya and central Himalaya.

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
4. Recently, the Union Minister inaugurated Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Land Management (CoE-SLM) at Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) in Dehradun. Consider the following statements with reference to the CoE-SLM.
 1. It is established by the Government of India to set Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets.
 2. It will develop drought risk and early warning systems.

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
5. Recently INS Tarini is in news , consider the following statements:
1. It is the second sailboat of Indian Navy after INSV Mhedi.
2. It is known for circumnavigating the globe with an all-women officer crew.
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
6. Minister of State for Science and Technology, recently announced that 231 stolen antiques have been repatriated to India in the last nine years. Consider the following statements with reference to antiquity law in India:
1. An antiquity can be any sculpture or painting that has been in existence for not less than one hundred years.
2. It is not lawful for any person in India to export any antiquity other than the Central Government or any agency authorised by the Central Government.
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
7. Wagner Group, recently seen in the news, is a paramilitary organization belonging to which one of the following countries?
a) Ukraine
b) USA
c) **Russia**
d) Iran
8. Baralacha La Pass was in news recently , Consider the following statements regarding Baralacha La Pass:
1. It connects Leh district in Ladakh and Lahaul district in Himachal Pradesh.
2. It is situated in the Zaskar range.
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
9. Consider the following statements with reference to the Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) Project of India:
1. It is a centrally sponsored scheme launched with the financial support from the World Bank.
2. It will be implemented in all North-Eastern States to improve school education system.
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
10. Recently, Union Minister inaugurated the Pashmina Certification Centre (PCC) at the Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun, Uttarakhand. With reference to the PCC, consider the following statements:
1. It was established by the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India.
2. It will provide a one-stop testing facility to certify genuine Pashmina Product free from any prohibited fibres.
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