

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

❖ **BRICS Foreign Minister meeting in South Africa: What's on the agenda?**

➤ **Context:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is in Cape Town, South Africa, to attend a meeting of the foreign ministers of BRICS — a grouping comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, which is seen as the closest that the 'Global South' has come to organising itself as a collective to challenge a western global narrative.

➤ South Africa, which is in the chair this year, is hosting a Friends of BRICS meeting on Friday, with 15 foreign ministers from Africa and the Global South.

➤ The foreign ministers' meeting will finalise the agenda for the **15th BRICS summit** scheduled to be held in South Africa in August. Two items on the agenda are attracting notice for their potential for a greater geopolitical consolidation of the grouping: **a plan to expand the membership of BRICS**, and **a common currency**.

➤ **Looking for multipolarity**

- As many as 19 countries are said to be in the queue to join BRICS. Among the countries that have been mentioned frequently since last year:

- ✓ Argentina, Nicaragua, Mexico, Uruguay, Venezuela from Latin America;

- ✓ Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Senegal, Morocco from Africa;

- ✓ Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Türkiye, Syria, Iran from West Asia;

- ✓ Kazakhstan from Central Asia;

- ✓ Bangladesh and Afghanistan from South Asia; and

- ✓ Indonesia and Thailand from South-east Asia.

- It is not clear which countries might be admitted, but any expansion can be seen as strengthening the group's heft as a spokesperson of the developing world. By admitting some key countries in the list, BRICS could lay claim to representing more than half the world's population. Significantly, the list includes big oil producers Saudi, Iran, the UAE, Nigeria, and Venezuela.

- The rush towards BRICS is driven by two basic impulses: "First, there is considerable anti-US sentiment in the world, and all these countries are looking for a grouping where they can use that sentiment to gather together. Second, there is a lot of appetite for multipolarity, for a platform where countries of the Global South can express their solidarity."

➤ **China in BRICS:**

- The idea of BRICS came between 2001 and 2003 from then Goldman Sachs chief economist Jim O'Neill, who projected that the four emerging markets of Brazil, Russia, India, and China would be the future economic powerhouses of the world, with South Africa being added later.

- While the economic performance of BRICS has been mixed, the war in Ukraine — which has brought the West together on the one hand and strengthened the China-Russia partnership on the other — has turned it into an aspiring bloc that appears to be challenging the western geopolitical view.

- China is driving the expansion of the group. After a meeting of BRICS officials in February, China's foreign office said "membership expansion has become part of the core agenda of BRICS", but sought to dispel the impression that this was intended to create a bloc.

- "Rather, it is for the purpose of creating a bigger living space for the Global South," the statement said — and quoted South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa's view that BRICS was about allowing the "voices of the marginalised to actually be heard".

- Significantly, China does not use the word multipolarity instead using "multilateralism" whenever it hits out at "US hegemony". The **theme of BRICS 2023** is: **"BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Multilateralism"**.

➤ **India in BRICS:**

- If India's presence at the G7 summit in Hiroshima, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi also participated in an informal Quad summit, was seen as a sign of New Delhi's US tilt, the importance it attaches to the "anti-West" BRICS is an apparent contradiction — much like the several others it has negotiated through the last year.

- India should not be seen as ganging up with an anti-West coalition. "A lot of countries are misunderstanding this. India is also part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and despite problems, it has relations with Russia, with China. While China does want BRICS to be an anti-western group, the Indian view is that it is a "non-western" group and should stay that way,".

- Some analysts see BRICS as an improbable grouping, with hostiles like India and China unlikely to ever find common ground — a situation that could get pronounced as it adds members. One view on the expanding membership is that it could sideline India's role in the group.

➤ **Common currency:**

- The idea of a common currency was proposed by Russia's President Vladimir Putin at the Beijing BRICS summit last year. The idea got a cautious reception, with the leaders deciding to set up a committee to study its viability.
- The last year of war has seen economies around the world feel the impact of the sanctions on Russia, the resultant spike in energy prices, combined with the rising value of the dollar. An insulation from the dollar is a tempting proposal, but not all members believe that it is an idea whose time has come.
- There are other complications, such as the setting up of a common central bank of member countries that have different economic and political systems and are located on different continents.
- An option is for members to trade with each other in their respective currencies — but as the India-Russia example has shown, this is not easy either. Moscow wants payments in dollars because it does not import enough from India to use rupee payments. Negotiations are stuck.
- China has hit out against the “hegemony of the US dollar” as the source of all instability in the world, and is already trying to push the yuan as a trading currency in Central Asia. But there is no evidence that it is ready to dump the dollar yet.

➤ **About BRICS:**

- It is an association of five major emerging economies; Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
- The four countries (BRIC) arranged for an annual meeting of Foreign Ministers on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 2006.
- Initially, the grouping was termed BRIC as South Africa was inducted in 2010 and from there on it has been referred to as BRICS.
- BRICS is an important grouping bringing together the major emerging economies from the world, comprising: 41% of the world population, 24% of the world GDP, over 16% share in world trade. Total combined area of 29.3% of the total land surface of the world.

➤ **Initiatives of the BRICS:**

• **New Development Bank:**

- ✓ During the Sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza (Brazil) in 2014, the leaders signed the Agreement establishing the New Development Bank (NDB - Shanghai, China).
- ✓ It has so far approved 70 infrastructure and sustainable development projects worth.

• **Contingent Reserve Arrangement:**

- ✓ In 2014, the BRICS governments had signed a treaty on the setting up of the contingent reserve arrangement
- ✓ The arrangement is aimed at forestalling short-term balance of payments pressures, provide mutual support and strengthen financial stability of the BRICS nations.

• **BRICS Payment System:** BRICS countries are trying to create a payment system as an alternative to the SWIFT payment system.

- ✓ This has taken on a new urgency as post Ukraine war, Russia has been frozen out of SWIFT.

• **Customs Agreements:** Customs agreement were signed to coordinate and ease trade transport between BRICS countries

• **Launched of Remote Sensing Satellite:** A Remote Sensing constellation of satellites has been launched – with 6 satellites including 2 from India, 2 from China, 1 from Russia, and 1 Brazil-China collaboration.

NATURAL RESOURCES

❖ **Who should own the world's lithium?**

- **Context:** The news of potentially significant reserves of lithium, an element needed to manufacture batteries used in electric cars and other renewable energy infrastructure, in Jammu and Kashmir has been welcomed universally. Commentators have called this a boost for national prosperity and security without dismissing concerns about the potential social and environmental impacts.

➤ **What is the status of India's lithium industry?**

- India's electric-vehicle (EV) market was valued at \$383.5 million in 2021, and is expected to expand to \$152.21 billion in 2030. India imported 450 million units of lithium batteries valued at \$929.26 million (₹6,600 crore) in 2019-2020, which makes the development of the country's domestic lithium reserves a matter of high stakes.
- Scholars have argued that the ongoing global transition to low-carbon economies, the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI), and 5G networks will greatly reshape global and regional geopolitics. The access to and control over rare minerals, such as lithium and cobalt, will play a crucial role in these epochal changes.

➤ **Who should own these minerals?**

- In July 2013, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court of India ruled that the owner of the land has rights to everything beneath, “down to the centre of the earth”. Yet, large areas of land, including forests — which make up more than 22% of India’s landmass — hills, mountains, and revenue wasteland are publicly owned.
- The Supreme Court also recalled that the Union government could always ban private actors from mining sensitive minerals, as is already the case with uranium under the Atomic Energy Act 1962. In today’s context, lithium is as important as, if not more than, uranium.

➤ **How do other countries manage lithium reserves?**

- The stories of two South American countries, **Chile and Bolivia** — which have the largest known reserves of lithium — are particularly instructive.
- **In Chile**, the government has designated lithium as a strategic resource and its development has been made the exclusive prerogative of the state. The state has licensed only two companies — SQM and Albemarle — to produce lithium in the country. In April 2023, Chile’s president Gabriel Boric announced a new “National Lithium Strategy”, which many in the corporate sector took to be a declaration of his intention to nationalise the industry. The new strategy calls for public-private partnerships for future lithium projects, which will allow the state to regulate the environmental impact of lithium-mining, distribute the revenue from lithium production more fairly among local communities, and promote domestic research into lithium-based green technologies.
- **Bolivia**’s new constitution, developed under the leadership of former president Evo Morales and approved by a popular vote in February 2009, gave the state “the control and direction over the exploration, exploitation, industrialisation, transport, and commercialisation of natural resources.” The Morales administration nationalised lithium and adopted a hard line against private and foreign participation. This is believed to be one of the factors for the country’s failure to produce any lithium at a commercial scale nearly 20 years after the industry was nationalised. Bolivia’s current president, Luis Arce, seeks to change that. However, instead of handing over lithium resources to the private sector, Mr. Arce wants to join hands with other Latin American countries to design a ‘lithium policy’ that would benefit all their economies.
- **Mexico**’s president Andrés Manuel López Obrador also nationalised lithium in February this year, declaring, “Oil and lithium belong to the nation, they belong to the people of Mexico.”
- In general, the countries in Latin and South America are thinking through ways and means to pursue a multi-pronged strategy. While the national governments of these countries exercise a significant degree of control, the nature of private sector participation varies between these countries. The actions of these governments are also a response to the mobilisation of Indigenous Peoples in the region who want to hold corporations as well as governments to account.

➤ **What next?**

- As India explores and develops its own lithium reserves, it is notable that the appropriate development of this sector will require a very high level of effectiveness on the part of the Indian state. Much of India’s mineral wealth is mined from regions with very high levels of poverty, environmental degradation, and lax regulation.
- Effective and careful management of the sector should be paramount if India’s rare minerals development is to meet its multiple goals — social wellbeing, environmental safety, and national energy security.

➤ **Lithium Triangle Countries**

- As per the U.S. Geological Survey Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile is known as the “lithium triangle.” The three countries, along with Peru, contain about 67% of proven lithium reserves and produce about half of the global supply. 1/3rd of the lithium triangle is in South America which includes:
 - ✓ Bolivia has the world’s largest lithium reserves.
 - ✓ Argentina has the world’s second-largest lithium reserve.
 - ✓ Chile has the world’s third-largest lithium reserve.

BILATERAL RELATION

❖ **PM Modi, Nepalese counterpart Pushpakamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ hold talks**

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his visiting Nepalese counterpart Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda' held wide-ranging talks focusing on boosting India-Nepal cooperation in several areas including energy, connectivity and trade.
- Key Details of the Bilateral Meeting between Indian & Nepalese PM:
 - The Nepal Prime Minister, who is on a four-day visit to India, mentioned resolving the **“boundary matter”**.

- India and Nepal will strive to take their relationship to Himalayan heights and resolve the boundary issue and all such matters in this spirit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said after holding wide-ranging talks with his Nepalese counterpart.
 - In his media statement after the talks, Mr. Modi said he and Mr. Prachanda took many important decisions to make the partnership between the two countries a “super hit” in the future even as the two leaders remotely inaugurated a number of projects and laid the foundation stone of some others.
 - The two sides also signed **seven agreements to boost cooperation in a range of areas, including extension of cross-border petroleum pipeline, development of integrated check posts and boosting cooperation in hydroelectric power.**
 - When it came to discussions of the wider developments in the region, naturally the two Prime Ministers discussed other developments in the region, what challenges they pose to our bilateral cooperation and how exactly India and Nepal should cooperate to mitigate those challenges.
 - Taking forward their cooperation in the power sector, the two countries decided that **India will import 10,000 megawatts of power from Nepal in the next 10 years** under a new long-term power trade agreement. A “new pipeline will be constructed from Siliguri to Jhapa in eastern Nepal.”
 - In 2014, PM Modi had described the India-Nepal relationship as **“HIT” or Highways, I-ways and Trans-ways.**
 - The two leaders virtually **inaugurated integrated check posts at Rupaidiha in Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh and Nepalgunj in Nepal.** They also **flagged off a cargo train from Bathnaha in Bihar to the Nepal Custom Yard.**
 - The two sides signed a number of agreements including an MoU between NHPC and VUCL (Vidyut Utpadan Company Ltd), Nepal, for the development of Phukot Karnali Hydroelectric Project and a Project Development Agreement for Lower Arun Hydroelectric Project between SJVN (India) and Investment Board of Nepal.
 - Both Sides agreed to achieve tangible and time-bound progress on the Pancheshwar multipurpose project. PM Modi also announced that India will cooperate with Kathmandu to set up a fertilizer plant in Nepal.
 - “To further strengthen cultural and religious ties, PM Prachanda and I decided that projects related to the **Ramayana circuit should be expedited.**” Modi said.
 - **The two countries signed the Treaty of Transit.** Under its ambit, the two sides will construct new railway routes with Nepal as well as inland waterways. The two sides also decided that Nepal railway officials will be trained by Indian Railways.
 - The two sides signed six other MoUs/agreements pertaining to cooperation in sectors like **petroleum, hydro power, cross-border digital payments and others.**
 - The Nepalese Prime Minister said he appreciated Mr. Modi’s **“neighbourhood first policy”.**
 - “The relations between Nepal and India are age-old and multi-faceted. This relationship stands on the solid foundation built on one hand by the rich tradition of civilisational, cultural and socio-economic linkage and on the other by the firm commitment of the two countries to the time-tested principle of sovereign equality, mutual respect, understanding and cooperation,” he said.
 - It is the first bilateral trip abroad by the 68-year-old Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist) leader after he assumed the top office in December 2022.
- **Historical Ties between India-Nepal:**
- Nepal is important for India in the context of its overall strategic interests in the region, and the leaders of the two countries have often noted the age-old **“Roti-Beti” relationship** which refers to cross-border marriages between people of the two countries.
 - The country **shares a border of over 1,850 km with five Indian States** — Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
 - Land-locked Nepal relies heavily on India for the transportation of goods and services.
 - Nepal's access to the sea is through India, and it imports a predominant proportion of its requirements from and through India.
 - The India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 forms the bedrock of the special relations between the two countries.
 - India and Nepal share similar ties in terms of Hinduism and Buddhism with Buddha’s birthplace Lumbini located in present day Nepal.

PRELIMS FACTS

1. **Agni-1 ballistic missile**

- **In News:** A successful training launch of a Medium-Range Ballistic Missile, Agni-1 was carried out by the Strategic Forces Command from APJ Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha yesterday.

- Defence Ministry said, the missile is a proven system, capable of striking targets with a very high degree of precision. It said, the user training launch successfully validated all operational and technical parameters of the missile.
- **About Agni Series of Missile:+**
 - The Agni missile is a family of medium to intercontinental range ballistic missiles developed by India, named after one of the five elements of nature. Agni missiles are long range, nuclear weapons capable, surface to surface ballistic missiles. The first missile of the series, Agni-I was developed under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP) and tested in 1989.
 - About Agni-I :
 - ✓ The two-stage Agni technology demonstrator, with a solid-fuel first stage, was first tested at the Interim Test Range in Chandipur in 1989. It was capable of carrying a conventional payload of 1,000 kg (2,200 lb) or a nuclear warhead.
 - ✓ Operational Change: 700-1200 km



2. Men's Junior Asia Cup Hockey

➤ **In News:** In Hockey, the Indian hockey team defeated arch-rivals Pakistan in the final of the Men's Junior Asia Cup 2023 2-1 at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex Stadium in Salalah, Oman last night. With this title win, India become the most successful country in the history of the Men's Junior Asia Cup.

3. Swachh Jal se Suraksha (SJSS) Campaign:

➤ **In News:** Union Minister For Jal Shakti, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat Releases Swachh Jal Se Suraksha Campaign Report Under Jal Jeevan Mission.

- Under the campaign, several activities had been taken up including Testing of PWS(Public Water System) sources in all villages for chemical parameters and bacteriological parameters (post monsoon); Water quality testing at household level in villages; Water quality testing in Schools and Anganwadi Centres; Remedial action taken for contaminated samples; and Training of women for water quality testing using FTK/ H2S vials at village level.
- The Objective of the campaign was to ensure drinking water quality and create awareness among representatives of the Panchayati Raj institutions and rural communities about quality of drinking water in their respective villages, water quality issues, water borne diseases & health impacts and avoiding use of water from quality-affected sources.

➤ **Outcomes of the Campaign:**

- Water quality testing has been reported in 5.39 lakh (89.69 %) villages for chemical and in 4.47 lakh (74.46 %) villages for bacteriological contamination (post monsoon)
- Drinking water samples were tested in 6.58 lakh (67.63 %) schools and 7.16 lakh (67.43 %) anganwadi centres.
- 21.80 lakh women have been trained from 4.59 lakh (76.41 %) villages for water quality testing using Field Testing Kits (FTKs).
- Remedial action has been taken for 90.34% of contaminated sample reported.
- Performance of states/UTs was also measured during the Campaign. The states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh emerged as the best performing states during the Campaign.

➤ **About Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM):**

- Launched in 2019, it envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024.
- It comes under Jal Shakti Ministry.
- The fund sharing pattern between the Centre and states is 90:10 for Himalayan and North-Eastern States, 50:50 for other states, and 100% for Union Territories.

4. Electronics Repair Services Outsourcing (ERSO) initiative

➤ **In News:** Recently, the Union Ministry of Electronics & IT launched the ERSO Pilot initiative to validate certain transformational policy and process changes to make India the Repair Capital of the World.

➤ **About Electronics Repair Services Outsourcing (ERSO) initiative:**

- It aims to promote India as a hub for repairing electronic goods and to assess the feasibility and potential of capturing 20% of the global repair service market within five years.
- The pilot is being held in Bengaluru and will be run for three months.
- India's e-waste policy will be modified to enable repair companies to domestically recycle 5% of imported goods by weight on a trial basis.
- The repaired goods will not be permitted to be sold in the domestic market.
- New provisions will be made to allow their exportation to regions other than their country of origin.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Electronics & IT.

5. Grain Storage Plan

➤ **In News:** Recently, the Union Cabinet approved forming and empowering an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) to create the world's largest grain storage plan in the cooperative sector.

➤ **About Grain Storage Plan:**

- In order to ensure time-bound and uniform implementation of the Plan in a professional manner, the Ministry of Cooperation will implement a pilot project in at least 10 selected districts.
- The Pilot would provide valuable insights into various regional requirements of the project, learnings from which will be suitably incorporated for country-wide implementation of the Plan.
- An inter-ministerial committee (IMC) will be formed under the chairmanship of the Minister of Cooperation, with ministers of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Food Processing Industries, and secretaries as members "to modify guidelines/ implementation methodologies of schemes of the respective ministries as and when the need arises".
- Aim: To address the shortage of agricultural storage infrastructure in the country by facilitating the establishment of godowns at the level of primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) and also enables PACS to undertake various other activities.

6. MH-60 Romeo Helicopter

➤ **In News:** The Indian Navy recently achieved a unique feat after an MH-60 'Romeo' multi-mission helicopter landed on the indigenously-built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant

➤ **About MH-60 Romeo Helicopter:**

- It is the world's most advanced maritime helicopter and is the most capable naval helicopter available today designed to operate from frigates, destroyers, cruisers and aircraft carriers.
- It is manufactured by US defence major Lockheed Martin.
- It is an all-weather helicopter designed to support multiple missions with state-of-the-art avionics and sensors.
- Main missions of the MH-60R Seahawk are Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) and Anti-Surface Warfare (ASuW).
- This helicopter can detect and track submarines and surface ships and attack with torpedoes and missiles.
- Secondary missions are search and rescue, combat search and rescue, vertical replenishment, medical evacuation and insertion and extraction of special forces.
- Features:
 - ✓ This helicopter is operated by a crew of 4 in anti-submarine warfare role and crew of 5 in anti-surface warfare role. It can also accommodate additional passengers.
 - ✓ It carries advanced airborne active sonar, multi-mode search radar and nose-mounted forward-looking infrared (FLIR) turret.
 - ✓ The helicopter has an integrated self-defense system.
 - ✓ Maximum Speed: 267 km/h
 - ✓ Range: 454 km

ANSWER WRITTING

Q. ISRO's Navigation Satellite-01 (NVS-01), a part of NavIC constellation system, is poised to catapult India into the exclusive club of major global navigational systems. In light of this statement, elaborate on the multidimensional advantages that India can reap from such a system.

NVS-01 is a navigation satellite that will be launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) as part of the Navigation with Indian Constellation System (NavIC) system, which is a regional satellite navigation system that provides positioning, navigation and timing services to India and its neighbouring countries. It will replace the navigational capabilities of satellite IRNSS-1G in the constellation due to its malfunction.

NavIC constellation system:

- NavIC consists of seven satellites in geostationary and geosynchronous orbits and a network of ground stations operating 24 x 7. NavIC offers two services:
 - ✓ Standard Position Service (SPS) for civilian users
 - ✓ Restricted Service (RS) for strategic users.
- These two services are provided in both L5 and S-band frequencies. NavIC also provides a signal in the L1 band that is interoperable with other global navigation satellite systems (GNSS) such as GPS, GLONASS, Galileo and BeiDou.
- NavIC covers India and a region up to 1500 km beyond its boundary, with an accuracy of better than 20 meters.

Multidimensional advantages for India:

- Enhance the safety and efficiency of civil aviation by providing accurate and reliable navigation services for en-route and approach phases of flight. NavIC is compatible with the GPS Aided Geo Augmented Navigation (GAGAN) system, which is a satellite-based augmentation system (SBAS) developed by ISRO and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) for the Indian airspace.
- Support the defence and security needs: by providing a dedicated and encrypted service for strategic users. NavIC will also enable precise targeting and missile guidance for India's military capabilities.
- Disaster management: such as early warning of cyclones, floods, landslides and earthquakes. NavIC will also facilitate search and rescue operations by providing location and distress alerts.
- Efficiency and productivity of transportation systems: such as railways, roadways and waterways. NavIC will provide real-time information on traffic conditions, vehicle tracking, route optimization and navigation assistance.
- Agriculture sector: by providing information on soil health, crop yield, weather forecasting and irrigation management. NavIC will also support precision farming and smart irrigation techniques that can reduce water wastage and increase crop quality.

NVS-01 is a vital addition to the NavIC system, which will provide India with an independent and indigenous satellite navigation system that can pave the way for expanding India's navigational coverage from regional to global in the future. NavIC will not only enhance India's technological prowess but also its economic growth and social welfare in India's Azaadi ka Amrit Kaal.

MCQs

1. Consider the following statements with respect to Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic pollution
 1. It was established to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.
 2. It was established in 2014 during the COP 20 held in Lima, Peru.
 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
2. Consider the following statements with respect to Centralized Laboratory Network (CLN)
 1. It is a part of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI).
 2. Recently, Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Virology joined the CLN.
 Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Which one of the following is the best description of '2023 FW13', that was in the news recently?
 - a) It is a supermassive blackhole.
 - b) It is a quasi-moon.
 - c) It is an invasive alien species.
 - d) It is an Surface to Air Missile.
4. With reference to the CITIIS 2.0 Program, consider the following statements:
 1. It is an initiative of the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the World Bank.
 2. Under this program cities will be given financial and technical support for developing projects focused on building climate resilience, adaptation and mitigation.
 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. With reference to the Electronics Repair Services Outsourcing (ERSO) initiative, consider the following statements:
1. It is an initiative of the Union Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology.
2. Under this initiative repaired goods will not be permitted to be sold in the domestic market.
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. The Guarani tribe, which was recently seen in the news belongs to which of the following?
a) Central Asia countries
b) **South American countries**
c) Australia
d) None of these
7. With reference to the large Grain Storage Plan initiative of India, consider the following statements:
1. It will be implemented by the Union Ministry of Cooperation in at least 10 selected districts on a pilot basis.
2. It aims to address the shortage of agricultural storage infrastructure at the level of primary agricultural credit societies.
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
8. A Himalayan brown bear was recently captured by the Jammu and Kashmir Wildlife Department, at Rajwara in the North Kashmir district of Handwara. Consider the following statements regarding Himalayan Brown Bear:
1. It is endemic to the Eastern Ghats of India.
2. It is classified as Critically Endangered under the IUCN Red List.
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. Recently Govt. has decided to sell up to 3% stake in Coal India via OFS. Consider the following statements regarding Offer For Sale (OFS):
1. OFS is a simpler method of share sale through the exchange platform for listed companies.
2. The OFS method was brought in by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in 2012 as simpler one to aid promoters of listed forms to dilute their stake.
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. Consider the following statements regarding Small Finance Banks (SFBs):
1. They are required to extend 75% of their Adjusted Net Bank Credit to Priority Sector Lending.
2. SFBs are required to open at least 25% of their total branches in unbanked rural areas.
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