

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

- ❖ **Why is OPEC+ cutting oil output?**
- **Context:** The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia, a group known as OPEC+ which pumps around 40% of the world's crude, agreed on a new oil output deal.
- Saudi Arabia, the group's biggest producer, will make a deep cut to its output in July on top of a broader OPEC+ deal to limit supply into 2024 as the group faces flagging oil prices.
- A surprise announcement by OPEC+ in April to deepen production cuts helped to raise prices by about \$9 a barrel to above \$87 per barrel in the days followed. Yet benchmark crude prices have shed those gains since, with Brent futures on Monday trading at just under \$78 a barrel.
- On Sunday, in addition to extending the existing OPEC+ cuts of 3.66 million barrels per day (bpd), the group agreed to reduce overall production targets from January 2024 by a further 1.4 million bpd to a combined output of 40.46 million bpd. The changes, however, included lowered targets for Russia, Nigeria and Angola simply to bring them into line with current production levels.
- Here are the main reasons why OPEC+ cut output:
- ❖ **Concerns about weak global demand**
 - Data from China has aroused fears that the economic recovery after coronavirus lockdowns by world's second-largest oil consumer is losing steam.
 - Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak has also pointed to "interference with market dynamics", a Russian expression to describe a Western price cap on Russian oil.
 - Fears of another banking crisis in recent months have led investors to sell out of riskier assets such as commodities with oil prices falling to near \$70 per barrel from a peak of \$139 in March 2022.
 - A global recession could lead to lower oil prices.
 - Oil prices also recently came under pressure from concerns about U.S. debt ceiling negotiations, though fears of a debt default by the world's biggest oil consumer have abated since a bipartisan deal was sealed last week.
- ❖ **Punishing speculators**
 - The planned cuts will also punish oil short sellers betting on oil price declines.
 - In 2020, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman warned traders against betting heavily in the oil market, saying that those who gamble on the oil price would be "ouching like hell".
- ❖ **US output rising**
 - U.S. crude oil production is set to rise by 5.1% to 12.53 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2023 and by 1.3% to 12.69 million bpd in 2024, according to government forecasts.
 - This compares with around 10 million bpd as recently as 2018.
 - Meanwhile, Saudi's energy ministry said the country's output, the biggest chunk of OPEC+ production, would drop to 9 million barrels per day (bpd) in July from around 10 million bpd in May, in its biggest reduction in years.
 - Saudi output is set to rebound to around 10 million bpd from August, unless market conditions prompt the kingdom to extend cuts.
 - **Russia, the world's third-biggest oil producer**, is targeting production of around 9.5 million bpd until the end of the year and 9.3 million bpd next year.
- ❖ **Tensions with Washington**
 - Additional cuts from OPEC+ could drive tensions with leading consuming nations that are trying to fight inflation.
 - Washington called OPEC+'s action in April inadvisable.
 - The West has repeatedly criticised OPEC for manipulating prices and siding with Russia despite the war in Ukraine.
 - The United States is considering passing legislation **known as NOPEC**, which would allow the seizure of OPEC's assets on U.S. territory if market collusion is proven.
 - OPEC+ has criticised the International Energy Agency, the West's energy watchdog for which the United States is the biggest financial donor, for advocating oil stocks releases last year. The IEA had argued these were necessary to bring down prices given concerns that sanctions would disrupt Russian supply.
 - The IEA's predictions of price strength never materialised, prompting OPEC+ sources to say it was politically driven and designed to help boost U.S. President Joe Biden's ratings.
 - The United States, which released most stocks, said it would buy back some oil in 2023, but later ruled that out.
 - OPEC observers also say the group needs nominal oil prices to be higher because money printing by the West in recent years has lowered the value of the U.S. dollar, the currency in which oil is traded.

- **About OPEC+:**
 - It is a group of 23 oil-exporting countries which meets regularly to decide how much crude oil to sell on the world market.
 - These nations aim to work together on adjusting crude oil production to bring stability to the oil market.
 - At the core of this group are the 13 members of OPEC (the Organization of the Oil Exporting Countries), which are mainly Middle Eastern and African countries.
 - **Members:** It comprises **13 OPEC countries plus Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Russia, Mexico, Malaysia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Oman.**
- **What is the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC):**
 - It is a permanent intergovernmental organization of oil-exporting countries.
 - Its Mission is to coordinate and unify the petroleum policies of its Member Countries.
 - Ensure the stabilization of oil prices in the international oil markets, with a view to eliminating harmful and unnecessary fluctuations.
 - **Formation:** It was established in 1960 by the five founding members Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.
 - Currently, it has 13 members, including Algeria, Angola, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, Nigeria, and the United Arab Emirates
 - **Headquarters:** Vienna, Austria.

ECONOMY

- ❖ **RBI monetary policy: Why is the central bank likely to go for an extended pause?**
- **Context:** The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India will begin a three-day meeting on June 6, to discuss the second bi-monthly monetary policy for fiscal 2023-24. The decision of the panel will be announced by Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das on June 8.
- Most economists and analysts expect the RBI to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent, drawing comfort from the gradual easing of inflation. It is expected that the six-member panel will keep the policy stance as 'withdrawal of accommodation'.
- **Why will RBI pause?**
 - In the April policy, the MPC members, in a surprise move, unanimously decided to pause RBI's rate hike cycle. The pause in **repo rate (the rate at which RBI lends money to banks to meet their short-term funding needs)** in April was for the first time since the RBI started its rate hike cycle in May 2022 to check inflation. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, however, stated that it was a pause and not a pivot, a line that he has reiterated subsequently.
 - Since the April policy, consumer price index-based inflation (CPI), or retail inflation, has eased further. It declined to an 18-month low of 4.7 per cent in April from 5.7 per cent in March, remaining under the RBI's comfort zone of 2-6 per cent for two consecutive months. The RBI is mandated to keep CPI at 4 per cent with a band of +/- 2 per cent.
 - Also, India's gross domestic product (GDP) expanded at 6.1 per cent January-March 2023 quarter, in turn pushing up the growth estimate for the full year 2022-23 to 7.2 per cent. With ease in inflation and strong GDP growth, the RBI is likely to maintain the status quo in the June policy.
 - Trends for May suggest inflation could ease further, close to 4 per cent year-on-year, helped by base effects, as core and non-core segments soften. Consequently, average Apr-Jun 2023 inflation is expected to undershoot the RBI's forecast by 50-60bp. A combination of softening inflation and robust recovery is likely to see the MPC lean towards a pause at this juncture.
 - Analysts said that RBI's decision to leave the repo rate unchanged will also factor in the possible pause by the US Federal Reserve in its meeting scheduled later this month. Mixed signals from the US (labour market, manufacturing activity), has raised the probability (70 per cent) of Fed entering wait and watch mode by opting for a pause in June 2023.
- **What are the chances that the RBI will change its policy stance?**
 - RBI is likely to remain focused on its stance of 'withdrawal of accommodation' as liquidity conditions have turned surplus.
 - The liquidity condition in the banking system has improved because of the deposit of Rs 2000 banknotes which were withdrawn from circulation last month, higher government spending and the RBI's intervention in the forex market. On June 2, the net liquidity surplus in the banking system stood at Rs 2.37 lakh crore, RBI data showed.
- **Will GDP and inflation projections be revised?**
 - In April policy, the RBI estimated real GDP growth for FY2024 at 6.5 per cent. It projected CPI inflation to be at 5.2 per cent for FY2024.

- While the RBI is unlikely to revise its real GDP growth forecast, it could revise the inflation projection downward. With CPI inflation tracking 50 bps (basis points) below RBI's CPI inflation forecast of 5.1 per cent average for April-June 2023, there is scope for the central bank to revise the FY24 forecast downward to 5 per cent, from 5.2 per cent currently.
- **What will happen to lending, deposit rates in case of a pause by RBI?**
 - If RBI keeps the policy rate unchanged in the June policy, then all external benchmark lending rates (EBLR) linked to the repo rate will not rise. It will provide some relief to borrowers as their equated monthly instalments (EMIs) will not increase.
 - Notably, EBLRs – 81 per cent of are linked to the benchmark repo rate – now dominate the mix of outstanding floating rate loans, with the share rising to 48.3 per cent by December 2022, whilst those based on MCLR (marginal cost of fund-based lending rate) eased to 46 per cent.
 - Banks will also not increase fixed deposit rates in case of a pause. The decision to hold deposit rates at the current levels will be driven by surplus liquidity in the banking system due to improvement in low-cost current account and savings account (CASA) balance following the deposit of Rs 2000 banknotes. Also, lower credit demand at the beginning of the fiscal year will ease pressure on deposit rates.

LAW & POLICY

- ❖ **The reasons Law Commission gave while recommending a stronger sedition law**
- **Context:** Nearly a year after the Supreme Court stayed the operation of the sedition law, the Law Commission of India has recommended that the provision be retained with procedural safeguards and enhanced jail term.
- **What exactly has the Commission said?**
 - The 88-page report by the present or the 22nd Law Commission of India, headed by former Karnataka High Court Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, stated that the Commission had received a reference from the Ministry of Home Affairs in March 2016, for a study of the usage of the sedition law and suggest amendments, if any.
 - The Commission, however, took up this reference in November 2022, a few months after the Supreme Court bench, headed by then Chief Justice of India N V Ramana, stayed the penal provision in May 2022. By ruling that “it will be appropriate not to continue” with the offence of sedition till the government reviewed the provision, the Supreme Court while testing the constitutionality of Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code had raised the bar for the government to invoke the provision.
 - Although the court did not explicitly stay the provision – no criminal law in force has ever been stayed by the court – it virtually stalled the operation of the provision.
 - In its order, the Court, referring to the government's affidavit, recorded that “in view of the above, it is clear that the Union of India agrees with the prima facie opinion expressed by this Court that the rigours of Section 124A of IPC is not in tune with the current social milieu, and was intended for a time when this country was under the colonial regime.”
- **What is the sedition law?**
 - **Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code** penalises a crime against the state. It defines the crime as bringing “**into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government established by law in India.**”
 - In 1962, the Supreme Court in ‘**Kedarnath Singh v State of Bihar**’ upheld the constitutional validity of IPC Section 124A. However, the court attempted to restrict its scope for misuse. The court held that unless accompanied by an incitement or call for violence, criticism of the government cannot be labelled sedition.
- **What has the Law Commission recommended now?**
 - The Commission recommended three changes to the law on sedition.
 - The first is to include the ratio of the Kedar Nath ruling into the provision by adding the words “**with a tendency to incite violence or cause public disorder.**” The report also defines tendency to incite violence as a “**mere inclination to incite violence or cause public disorder rather than proof of actual violence or imminent threat to violence.**”
 - Second, the report suggests enhancing the imprisonment for sedition to “remove an oddity.” One of the criticisms against the provision is that it leaves judges with wide discretion on sentencing. Section 124A has a jail term of up to three years or life imprisonment. The **42nd Law Commission** report, in 1971, had noted this to be very “odd” since it would mean either imprisonment for life or imprisonment up to three years only, but nothing in between, with the minimum punishment being only fine. The Law Commission has now proposed **enhancing the jail term up to seven years or life imprisonment.**
 - **Third, to prevent misuse of the law,** the report suggested including a procedural safeguard that no FIR shall be registered for sedition “unless a police officer, not below the rank of Inspector, conducts a

preliminary inquiry and on the basis of the report made by the said police officer the Central Government or the State Government, as the case may be, grants permission for registering a First Information Report”.

➤ **What are the reasons given to retain the law?**

- The Law Commission, in its report, dealt with some of the criticism of the sedition law and also discussed a few reasons to retain the law:
- **To safeguard the unity and integrity of India:** The report cited threats to India’s internal security, including Maoist extremism, militancy and ethnic conflict in the north-east, terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and secessionist activities in other parts of the country, like Punjab. These, the Commission said, necessitate retaining the law on sedition. The Commission also justified criminalising sedition, saying **it is a reasonable restriction under Article 19(2) of the Constitution** (which deals with restrictions on the right to freedom of speech, assembly, etc. under Article 19(1)).
- **Realities differ in every jurisdiction:** Another argument made in favour of repealing the law of sedition in India is that while we continue to have the colonial law on our books, it was abolished through the Coroners and Justice Act, of 2009 in Britain. However, the Law panel said that “it is evident that even in some of the most advanced democracies are on the world, mere cosmetic changes have been affected in the law of sedition, without taking away the core substance of the offence.”
- The report also said that courts of competitive jurisdictions like the US, the UK, etc. had their own history, geography, population, diversity, laws, etc which are not compatible with Indian circumstances. Despite this, what some of these countries are actually doing is that they have merged their sedition law with counter-terror legislation.
- **Existence of counter-terror legislations:** One of the arguments made in favour of repealing the law on sedition is that there are several counter-terror legislations that could adequately take care of threats against the state. Where anti-terror legislations can be invoked for acts that threaten national security, sedition is frequently invoked to punish political speech or actions. However, the Law Commission simply states that the existence of anti-terror legislations does not by “implication cover all elements of the offence and envisaged under Section 124A of IPC.”
- Further, in the absence of a provision like capital Section 124A of IPC, any expression that incites violence against the government, would invariably be tried under the special laws and counter terror legislation, which contain much more stringent provisions to deal with the accused.
- **Sedition being a colonial legacy:** The Commission also refuted the argument that the sedition law must be repealed since it is an arcane law that has an imprint of colonial legacy and is a law which was used by the British against Indian freedom fighters. Last year, the Supreme Court had also made the observation that the provision may be outdated for a democratic republic.
- It is often said that the offence of sedition is a colonial legacy based on the era in which it was enacted, especially given its history of usage against India’s freedom fighters. However, going by that virtue, the entire framework of the Indian legal system is a colonial legacy. The police force and the idea of an all India civil service are also temporal remnants of the British era. Merely ascribing the term ‘colonial’ to a law or institution does not by itself, ascribe it to an idea of anachronism. The colonial origins of the Lord by themselves normatively neutral,” the report stated.

PRELIM FACTS

1. **World Environment Day**

➤ **In News:** World Environment Day is being celebrated across the globe on June 5 every year.

➤ **About World Environment Day:**

- It is observed on the 5th of June every year since 1973 as part of the United Nations Environment Programme to build awareness to save life on planet Earth.
- The event has been led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) since its inception in 1973.
- The theme of this year's World Environment Day will focus on solutions to plastic pollution under the campaign #BeatPlasticPollution.
- This year’s event is hosted by Côte d’Ivoire in partnership with the Netherlands.

➤ **Key facts about United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):**

- It is the leading global authority on the environment.
- Mission: To inspire, inform, and enable nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.
- It is driving transformational change by drilling down on the root causes of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss and pollution.
- Headquarters: Nairobi, Kenya.

- Reports published by UNEP: Emission Gap Report, Global Environment Outlook, Frontiers, Invest into Healthy Planet.

2. Grand Order of the Chain of the Yellow Star

➤ **In News:** President Droupadi Murmu has been conferred with Suriname's highest civilian award (Grand Order of the Chain of the Yellow Star) by President Chandrikapersad Santokhi to honour the deep-rooted bilateral ties.

- Ms. Murmu arrived in Suriname on Sunday, June 4, 2023, on a three-day State visit - her first since assuming office in July last year.
- President also visited 'Marinetrap' where she witnessed the simulation and welcoming of the arrival of the First Indians in Suriname. She also inaugurated the simulated village at Independence Square.

➤ **About Suriname:**

- Suriname is a country in northern South America.
- It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the north, French Guiana to the east, Guyana to the west, and Brazil to the south. At just under 165,000 square kilometers (64,000 square miles), it is the smallest sovereign state in South America.
- **Capital:** Paramaribo
- **Currency:** Surinamese Dollar



3. Foot rot disease

➤ **In News:** Recently, several farmers raised the concern over "foot rot" disease in the saplings of the Basmati variety of paddy in the nurseries.

➤ **About Foot rot disease:**

- It is also known as Bakanae Disease.
- It is a soil and seed-borne deadly fungus which is seen only in the Basmati variety of paddy.
- It is caused by 'Fusarium verticillioides' fungi.
- The infected saplings turn pale yellow and become elongated and later, the saplings start drying and usually die.
- Symptoms sometimes appear after transplantation and the infected plants first grow way taller than the normal plants and die after a few days.

➤ **Key Facts about Basmati Rice:**

- India is known for its Basmati rice, with the **produce from seven States — Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand** — earmarked for Geographical Indication.
- It is known for its mouthfeel, aroma, and length of the grain when cooked and tasted, has a market abroad and brings about ₹30,000 crores in foreign exchange every year.

4. National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)

➤ **In News:** The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) recently alerted states about smaller outbreaks for five diseases—typhoid, malaria, dengue, scrub typhus and hepatitis A.

➤ **About National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC):**

- It is an institute under the Indian Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), formerly National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) had its origin as Central Malaria Bureau, established at Kasauli (Himachal Pradesh) in 1909 and following expansion was renamed in 1927 as the Malaria Survey of India.
- The organization was shifted to Delhi in 1938 and called as the Malaria Institute of India (MII).
- In view of the drastic reduction achieved in the incidence of malaria under National Malaria Eradication Programme (NMEP), Government of India decided to reorganize and expand the activities of the institute to cover other communicable diseases.
- Thus in 1963 the erstwhile MII was renamed as National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) to shoulder these additional responsibilities.
- In year 2009, NICD transforms into National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) with a larger mandate of controlling emerging and re-emerging diseases.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- It functions as the nodal agency in the country for disease surveillance facilitating prevention and control of communicable diseases. In coordination with the State Governments, NCDC has the capacity and capability for disease surveillance, outbreak investigation, and rapid response to contain and combat outbreaks.

ANSWER WRITING**Q. Highlighting the significance of Nepal in India's Neighbourhood First policy, discuss the key challenges and opportunities in India-Nepal trade relations.**

India and Nepal share a longstanding bilateral relationship based on geographic, historical, cultural, and economic ties. The unwavering commitment to the principles of peaceful coexistence, sovereign equality, and understanding of each other's aspirations and sensitivities has been the firm foundation on which our bilateral relations have grown further.

Significance of Nepal in India's Neighbourhood First Policy:

- Strategic - Acts as a buffer state between India and China.
- Cultural - Historical, cultural, and religious ties with India can be seen in the large number of religious pilgrims visiting Nepal.
- Economic - Open border with India facilitating trade and commerce. Vast potential for Indian Investment in Infrastructure and Energy.
- Geopolitical - Nepal is a member of SAARC, an important regional body in Indian sub-continent.
- Security - Counter-terrorism cooperation between India and Nepal is crucial for regional security

Nepal's importance in India's Neighbourhood First Policy cannot be overstated, and strengthening bilateral ties between the two requires understanding the challenges to this relationship:

Challenges in India-Nepal relations:

- Border Disputes: Nepal has a longstanding border dispute with India, with both countries claiming the Kalapani region.
- Trade Imbalance: Nepal has a huge trade deficit with India, with Nepal importing more from India than it exports.
- Water Resources Management: The management of shared river systems, such as the Kosi and Gandak rivers, has been a source of contention between India and Nepal. The construction of dams and hydropower projects by either country can impact downstream water flow and raise concerns over water sharing.
- Transit Issues: Nepal has sought alternative transit routes, diversifying its trade options and reducing its dependence on India.
- Political Interference: Nepal has accused India of meddling in its internal affairs, while India has expressed concerns over anti-Indian sentiments and political movements in Nepal.
- Power Asymmetry: Nepal perceives India as having a dominant role and influence in its internal affairs. The power asymmetry has occasionally led to resentment and a desire for greater autonomy in Nepal's decision-making processes.
- Cultural and Social differences: Controversies over the screening of Indian movies in Nepal or cultural festivals have caused friction in the past.
- Economic Cooperation: Challenges remain in translating agreements and projects into tangible outcomes. Delays in the implementation of development projects, such as the Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project, have strained bilateral economic ties.
- Citizenship and Migration: The 2015 promulgation of Nepal's new constitution, which altered the provisions regarding naturalized citizenship, led to concerns among the Madhesi community, many of whom have close ties with India.
- Energy Cooperation: While there is potential for greater energy cooperation, including hydropower projects, issues such as project delays, cost-sharing, and environmental concerns have hindered progress in this area.
- Cross-border Crime: The porous India-Nepal border poses challenges in curbing cross-border crime, such as the smuggling of narcotics, arms, and counterfeit currency.
- Regional Power Dynamics: China's growing influence in Nepal adds another layer of complexity to India-Nepal relations. Nepal's pro-china tilt has raised concerns in India regarding strategic encirclement.

Opportunities in India-Nepal relations:

- Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges: Initiatives like the Ramayana Circuit and Buddhist Circuit encourage tourists to visit pilgrimage sites and historical landmarks.
- Economic Cooperation and Trade: It can open up opportunities for investment, job creation, and economic growth. The implementation of the India-Nepal Bilateral Trade Treaty and initiatives such as the Nepal-India Joint Business Forum promote trade ties.
- Infrastructure Development: Initiatives such as the Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project and the development of road and rail networks offer opportunities for collaboration.
- Energy Cooperation: It can address Nepal's energy deficit and provide opportunities for clean energy generation. Projects like the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project and the Arun III Hydropower Project exemplify this potential.

- **Connectivity and Transit Routes:** It can facilitate trade, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges. Projects such as the construction of the Integrated Check Posts and the Nepal-India Raxaul-Kathmandu Railway Line aim to improve connectivity.
- **Education and Skill Development:** Scholarships and exchange programs, such as the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program, facilitate knowledge-sharing and capacity building.
- **Disaster Management and Relief Cooperation:** India's assistance during the 2015 Nepal earthquake showcased the potential for collaboration in this area.
- **Water Resources Management:** Collaborative management of shared river systems, and sharing of hydrological data can lead to sustainable water resource utilization.
- **Health Cooperation:** The establishment of the Nepal Bharat Maitri Polytechnic Institute is an example of such cooperation.
- **Cross-Border Investment and Joint Ventures:** Indian investments in sectors such as banking, telecommunications, and manufacturing in Nepal illustrate this potential.
- **Security Cooperation:** Intelligence sharing, joint training exercises, and border security cooperation contribute to combating common security threats and enhancing regional stability.
- **Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power:** It can foster mutual understanding and strengthen bilateral relations. Events like the Festival of India in Nepal and cultural exchanges showcase the rich cultural heritage of both countries.
- **Regional Integration:** India and Nepal can collaborate to promote regional integration through organizations like SAARC and BIMSTEC.
- **Climate Change and Environmental Cooperation:** Joint initiatives for sustainable development, renewable energy promotion, and climate resilience projects can provide opportunities for cooperation.

As India's immediate neighbour, Nepal holds immense significance for India, particularly in the context of China's growing influence in the region. Maintaining a strong and cooperative relationship with Nepal is crucial for India's national interests, regional stability, and socio-economic development.

MCQs

1. Recently, Naturalists opined that Climate change and human intervention threaten the Myristica swamps of Kerala. With reference to the Myristica swamps, consider the following statements:
 1. In India these are mainly found in the Western Ghats region.
 2. These forests are characterized by trees with large protruding roots jutting out of waterlogged soil which remains inundated throughout the year.
 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. Recently, the Union government of India permitted the import of pet coke for making graphite anode material for lithium-ion batteries. With reference to the Petroleum Coke, consider the following statements:
 1. It is a final carbon-rich solid material and residual waste material extracted from oil refining.
 2. It releases toxic gases like carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, mercury, arsenic, chromium, nickel, and hydrogen chloride after burning.
 3. It is widely used by power stations and several manufacturing industries including cement, steel and textile plants in India.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 Only
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) **1, 2 and 3**
3. What is Kudumbashree Mission, which is recently in news?
 - a) An ecological movement aimed at protecting trees and forests slated for government-backed logging by govt of Andhra Pradesh.
 - b) A social movement against British atrocities in the 18th and 19th centuries of the British Colonial Period.
 - c) **A poverty eradication and women empowerment programme implemented by the Government of Kerala.**
 - d) It is the world's largest land titling and slum upgrading program of Odisha.
4. With reference to the Foot rot disease, consider the following statements:
 1. It is a bacterial disease which affects only the Basamati variety of paddy in India.
 2. The infected saplings turn pale yellow and grow way taller than normal plants.

- 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. Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary, which was recently seen in the news is located in which of the following state?
a) Rajasthan
b) Assam
c) Tamil Nadu
d) Himachal Pradesh
6. Recently Researchers have developed a smart bandage which can help treat chronic wounds. With reference to the smart bandage, consider the following statements:
1. It is a soft stretchable polymer that helps the bandage to maintain contact with the skin.
2. It consists of Biosensors which determine the wound status by tracking the chemical composition of the exudates.
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. Consider the following statements regarding National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC):
1. It is the nodal agency in the country for disease surveillance, facilitating prevention and control of communicable diseases.
2. It functions under the administrative control of the Indian Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
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. The Law Commission of India recently recommended against enlarging the period of limitation provided under Articles 64, 65, 111, or 112 of the Limitation Act, 1963, which encapsulates the law on adverse possession. Consider the following statements regarding Adverse Possession:
1. It is a legal concept that allows a person who has unlawfully occupied someone else's land for a certain period of time to claim legal ownership of that land.
2. The law of Adverse Possession in India is governed by the principle of The Limitation Law of 1963.
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 respect to reserve bank of India's (RBI) monetary policy
1. RBI has responsibility to maintain the inflation target within the bandwidth of 4+/-2 percentage of consumer price index.
2. In case of failure to maintain the target for any three consecutive quarters, RBI have to send report to central government.
Select the correct answer using the code given below
a) 1 only b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. Which of the following countries are a part of Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries plus (OPEC+)
1. Mexico
2. Oman
3. Russia
4. Bahrain
Select the correct answer using the code given below
a) 1, 2 and 3 only b) 1 and 3 only
c) 2 and 4 only **d) 1, 2, 3 and 4**