

AGRICULTURE

❖ **The Centre-state tussle over the Open Market Sale Scheme**

CONTEXT: States have been looking at alternative ways of procuring wheat and rice in the aftermath of the Food Corporation of India's (FCI) quantity restrictions followed by the refusal to allow states to procure the two food grains through its Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS).

- The Congress government in Karnataka announced that being unable to procure enough rice in the market at a reasonable cost in time to meet the needs of its free food grain distribution scheme for BPL families- the **Anna Bhagya scheme**, it had decided to temporarily give cash to the beneficiaries in lieu of the promised five kg of free rice.
- Centre has made it clear that the reason for first restricting supplies per bidder and eventually excluding states for the OMSS was to curb inflation and regulate supply.

➤ **What is the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)?**

- Firstly, the procurement of food grains like wheat and paddy for the central pool happens in Rabi and Kharif marketing seasons by the FCI and State corporations according to procurement estimates finalised by the government of India before the seasons. These purchases happen as per the Minimum Support Price. From the central pool, the government has to set aside wheat and rice for the 80 crore beneficiaries of free foodgrains under the **National Food Security Act (NFSA)**, maintain a buffer stock, and have a marketable surplus.
- Under the Open Market Sale Scheme, the FCI from time to time sells surplus food grains from the central pool especially wheat and rice in the open market to traders, bulk consumers, retail chains and so on at pre-determined prices. The Corporation does this through e-auctions where open market bidders can buy specified quantities at the prices set at the start of a cycle and revised routinely. Usually, states are also allowed to procure food grains through the OMSS without participating in the auctions, for their needs beyond what they get from the central pool to distribute to NFSA beneficiaries.
- The idea is to activate the OMSS during the lean season, the time between harvests, to improve and regulate domestic supply and availability of the two grains and bring down their prices in the open market; essentially making the scheme a measure to curb food grain inflation.
- This year's OMSS was operationalised by the FCI in the month of January. According to the latest press release of the Food Ministry, six weekly e-auctions of wheat had been conducted by FCI till March 15, 2023. The total quantity of 33.7 LMT wheat was offloaded and the prices of Wheat came down by 19% due to this massive intervention in a span of 45 days.
- The next e-auction for wheat under OMSS is due to start on June 28 and the bidding for rice will commence on July 5. The FCI has kept a base price of wheat at the same level at ₹2,150 per 100 kg, while that for rice has been set at ₹3,100 per quintal.
- The sales have been fairly low during the last few years owing to harvests getting affected by weather conditions as well as lower surpluses when the government distributed additional free food grains under the Garib Kalyan Yojana in the pandemic years. The scheme started during the pandemic has now been merged under the NFSA.

➤ **How has the Centre revised the OMSS?**

- Recently, the Centre decided to restrict the quantity that a single bidder can purchase in a single bid under the OMSS. While the maximum quantity allowed earlier was 3,000 metric tonnes (MT) per bid for a buyer, it will now range from 10-100 metric tonnes (MT).
- The rationale given for the same by the Corporation is that the quantities have been reduced this time "to accommodate more small and marginal buyers and to ensure wider reach of the scheme". The objective behind the move is also to curb retail prices as allowing smaller bids should ideally break monopolies of bulk buyers, allowing more competitive bids by small buyers.
- Due to global supply chain shocks like the Russia-Ukraine conflict and hampered production at home, retail food inflation has risen sharply. In February this year, retail wheat inflation was up by 25.37% and only declined to 19.91% in March. As per official data, rice prices have increased by up to 10% in the last year at the mandi level, while by 8% in the last month.
- Another reason for the move is to meet the FCI's food security obligations. The Centre said that in recent years, production of agriculture crops was affected due to untimely rains, rise in temperature in the month of March and so on, making it incumbent upon the FCI to release its stocks "judicious manner under the OMSS (D)" so that the overall stock position is maintained at a comfortable level".

➤ **Why has the FCI discontinued the sale of grains under OMSS to states?**

- First, the Centre had decided earlier this month to reduce the quantity a particular bidder can purchase under the OMSS, but on June 13, in a notification sent to the States on June, it stopped the sale of rice

and wheat from the Central pool under the OMSS to state governments, also disallowing private bidders to sell their OMSS supplies to state governments.

- The Centre has explained the discontinuation of OMMS grains to the states by giving the same rationale. “In order to ensure that the inflationary trends are kept under control while ensuring adequate stock levels in the Central pool it has been decided to exclude State governments from the ambit of OMSS(D), as per the revised Policy.
- According to FCI Director the centre was already meeting its obligations to distribute grains to 80 crore marginalised beneficiaries under the NFSA, and also had an obligation to the 60 crore common consumers who are affected by retail prices. “State governments are going to give the foodgrains to the same beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana or they would be using the foodgrains for State schemes where identified beneficiaries are there.”

➤ **About The Food Corporation of India (FCI):**

- The Food Corporation of India was set up in 1965 under the Food Corporation’s Act of 1964.
- FCI is a statutory body and Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- FCI was set up to fulfill the objectives of the National Food Policy:
 - ✓ Effective price support operations for safeguarding the interests of the farmers.
 - ✓ Distribution of food grains throughout the country for the public distribution system.
 - ✓ Maintaining a satisfactory level of operational and buffer stocks of food grains to ensure National Food Security
- Since its inception, FCI has played a significant role in India’s success in transforming crisis management-oriented food security into a stable security system.
- In its service to the nation, FCI has played a significant role in India’s success in transforming crisis management-oriented food security into a stable security system.
- FCI has its Headquarters in New Delhi with five Zonal Offices, twenty-five Regional Offices, and 170 District Offices under its control.

ECONOMY

❖ **IMF’s view on cryptocurrency in Latin America**

❖ **CONTEXT:** the International Monetary Fund (IMF) issued a statement on the use of cryptocurrency in the Latin America and Caribbean market, and about the rising interest in blockchain-based central bank digital currencies (CBDCs).

- The global monetary authority ended its statement noting that a ban on crypto “may not be effective in the long run” in the region. This has raised eyebrows due to the international organisation’s change in stance on crypto in the LatAm market.
- Earlier, IMF had said that rapid growth and increasing adoption of crypto assets pose financial stability challenges as these are extremely volatile.
- This was highlighted in the chapter titled The Crypto Ecosystem and Financial Stability Challenges published in Global Financial Stability Report 2021.

➤ **Why is Latin America’s crypto economy so significant?**

- Countries like Argentina, Chile, and Columbia have experienced devaluation of their currency against the U.S. dollar.
- To preserve the value of their savings, some residents have explored converting their funds to U.S. dollars. However, there are legal restrictions controlling this.
- Others have chosen to convert their assets to stablecoins - cryptocurrencies designed to reflect the value of fiat currencies such as the U.S dollar.
- A number of central banks in the Latin American market are also considering CBDCs, meaning that more people could soon be exposed to blockchain-based infrastructure.

➤ **Why does El Salvador stand out among crypto economies?**

- El Salvador is the first country in the world to adopt Bitcoin - the largest cryptocurrency by market capitalisation - as its legal tender. The country with a population of 6.5 million adopted Bitcoin on September 7, 2021.
- El Salvador uses a digital wallet known as Chivo to regulate users’ crypto transactions. However, there have been complaints about the wallet causing funds to disappear and enabling identity fraud.

➤ **How did the IMF react to El Salvador’s Bitcoin adoption?**

- The IMF said it was against El Salvador’s move, citing fiscal risks and consumer protection issues. According to its statement, IMF’s executive directors “urged the authorities to narrow the scope of the Bitcoin law by removing Bitcoin’s legal tender status.” They were further concerned by Bukele’s Bitcoin-backed bonds idea.

- This is why IMF's latest blog post on crypto and CBDC use in Latin America and the Caribbean came as a surprise to many. The post said that while a few countries have completely banned crypto assets given their risks, this approach may not be effective in the long run. It called for regulation of cryptocurrency and recording crypto transactions for transparency.

➤ **About Cryptocurrency :**

- Cryptocurrencies are digital or virtual currencies in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of their units and verify the transfer of funds.
- These currencies operate independently of a central bank.

➤ **What is central bank digital currency (CBDC)?**

- CBDCs are digital currencies issued by central banks. Their value is linked to the issuing country's official currency.
- In other words, CBDCs are the legal tender issued by a central bank in a digital form. **The digital rupee (e-Rupee)** is the digital currency launched by Reserve Bank of India.
- It is the same as a fiat currency and is exchangeable one-to-one with the fiat currency, only its form is different.
- CBDCs are similar to—but not the same as—stablecoins. Stablecoins are a specific type of private, stabilized cryptocurrency pegged to another currency, commodity, or financial instrument with the goal of maintaining a relatively stable value over time.

➤ **What is the difference between cryptocurrency and CBDCs?**

- Cryptocurrencies and CBDCs are both blockchain-based digital currencies. But while cryptocurrencies are generally run by private companies or individuals, a CBDC is controlled and tracked by a country's central bank and corresponds to that country's fiat currency.
- Bitcoin's price may vary by hundreds or even thousands of dollars in a short period of time, and its founder is a mystery. On the other hand, a CBDC such as the eNaira, issued by the Central Bank of Nigeria, would (ideally) be worth as much as its physical counterpart.
- While investors often buy large quantities of Bitcoin or other cryptocurrencies and hold them in the hope of making a profit, this doesn't make sense in the case of CBDCs as they are not meant to be investment vehicles.
- China's government, meanwhile, has energetically promoted its digital renminbi (e-RMB). Transactions with its CBDC crossed \$13.9 billion last year. However, China also banned crypto mining and unregulated virtual assets in the country, prompting a large section of the mining population to flee to other countries.
- The Bahamas in the Caribbean was one of the first countries to officially introduce its Sand Dollar CBDC.
- ✓ On June 22, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) issued a statement on the use of cryptocurrency in the Latin America and Caribbean market, and about the rising interest in blockchain-based central bank digital currencies (CBDCs).
- ✓ Countries like Argentina, Chile, and Columbia have experienced devaluation of their currency against the U.S. dollar. To preserve the value of their savings, some residents have explored converting their funds to U.S. dollars. However, there are legal restrictions controlling this.
- ✓ China's government, meanwhile, has energetically promoted its digital renminbi (e-RMB). Transactions with its CBDC crossed \$13.9 billion last year. However, China also banned crypto mining and unregulated virtual assets in the country, prompting a large section of the mining population to flee to other countries.

POLITY

❖ **Tamil Nadu Governor Dismisses Minister V Senhil Balaji From the Council of Ministers**

CONTEXT: Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi's decision dismissing arrested minister V Senthil Balaji tests the constitutional limitations on the role of the Governor and pushes the Raj Bhavan into uncharted political territory.

- Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi "dismissed" minister V Senthil Balaji from the council of ministers "with immediate effect". Hours after dismissing jailed minister, the Governor put a hold to the decision, after Union Home Ministry's advice. Balaji was arrested earlier this month by the Enforcement Directorate for an alleged job scam in 2015. He is currently in a judicial custody.
- Governor's Reason for Dismissing the Minister –
 - ✓ Continuation V Senthil Balaji in the Council of Ministers will adversely impact the due process of law including fair investigation that may eventually lead to breakdown of the Constitutional machinery in the State.

- ✓ The Raj Bhavan said the minister is facing serious criminal proceedings in a number of cases of corruption including taking cash for jobs and money laundering.
- ✓ Further, the Governor's office said some more criminal cases against him (Balaji) under Prevention of Corruption Act and the Indian Penal Code are being investigated by the State Police.
- **Governor's Role in Parliamentary System:**
 - The position, role, powers, and conditions of office of the Governor are described in Articles 153-161 of the Constitution.
 - The Governor is the chief executive head of the state. But, like the President, he is a nominal executive head (titular or constitutional head).
 - Being the head of the state's executive power, he acts on the advice of the council of ministers, barring some matters. The council of ministers, in turn, are responsible to the state legislature.
 - Being appointed by the President, the Governor acts as a vital link between the Union and the state governments.
 - The Governor appoints the Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers.
- **Does a Governor have the power to remove a Minister?**
 - Article 164(1) says state "Ministers shall hold office during the pleasure of the Governor".
 - However, as per the constitutional experts the Governor cannot remove a minister in their own capacity without obtaining the sanction of the Chief Minister or consulting with the latter.
 - If a Governor removes a minister in their own capacity, that will result in 'parallel governance'.
 - Only when the Chief Minister allows it, then the Governor is empowered to remove the minister.
- **Important Judgements w.r.t. appointment/removal of Council of Ministers:**
 - **Shamsher Singh & Anr vs State Of Punjab (1974) –**
 - ✓ The Supreme Court held that the President and Governor shall exercise their formal constitutional powers only upon and in accordance with the advice of their Ministers except in a few well known exceptional situations.
 - ✓ The Court also added that even in case of the Prime Minister/Chief Minister cease to command majority in the House OR the government loses majority but refuses to quit office OR for "the dissolution of the House where an appeal to the country is necessitous" –
 - ✓ The Head of the State (President/Governor) should avoid getting involved in politics and must be advised by his Prime Minister (Chief Minister) who will eventually take the responsibility for the step.
 - **Nabam Rebia And Etc. vs Deputy Speaker And Ors (2016) –**
 - ✓ The Supreme Court cited the observations of B R Ambedkar – "The Governor under the Constitution has no function which he can discharge by himself; no functions at all. While he has no functions, he has certain duties to perform, and I think the House will do well to bear in mind this distinction."

PRELIMS

1. **National Research Foundation (NRF)**

- **IN NEWS:** The Union Cabinet cleared the introduction of a Bill in Parliament to enable the setting-up of the NRF, which is modelled on the lines of the hugely successful National Science Foundation of the United States. The NRF is estimated to have an initial budget of Rs 50,000 crore over a five-year period between 2023 and 2028.
- **Highlights of the Bill:** It will establish NRF and repeal the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) – subsuming it into the NRF.
 - SERB is a statutory body under the Department of Science and Technology (DST) established in 2009 (by the SERB Act, 2008).
 - It was set up for promoting basic research in science and engineering and to provide financial assistance to scientists, academic institutions, R&D laboratories, S&T start-ups, etc.
- **About National Research Foundation (NRF)**
 - NRF will be established as an apex body at a total estimated cost of ₹50,000 crores from 2023-28 (the government will contribute ₹10,000 crores and ~₹36,000 crores are expected to come from the private sector as investments).
 - It was recommended by National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
 - Governed by:
 - ✓ A Governing Board: The PM will be the ex-officio President of the Board and the Union Minister of S&T and Union Minister of Education will be the ex-officio Vice-Presidents. It will also consist of eminent researchers and professionals across disciplines.
 - ✓ An Executive Council: Chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.

- NRF will seed, grow and promote R&D and foster a culture of research and innovation throughout India's universities, colleges, research institutions and R&D laboratories.
 - ✓ By prioritising research funding and ensuring that scientific research was conducted and funded equitably with greater participation from the private sector.
 - ✓ By forging collaborations among the industry, academia, and government departments and research institutions and creating an interface mechanism for their participation and contribution.
 - ✓ By creating a policy framework and putting in place regulatory processes that can encourage collaboration and increased spending by the industry on R&D.
- The core objective of the NRF would be to **sharply increase the funding** available to scientific research in the country, both from **government and private sources**.
 - ✓ **India's spending** on research and development has **remained below 0.7 per cent** of its GDP, when even countries like Egypt or Brazil spend more.
 - ✓ Advanced competitors, like the **United States, China, Israel, Japan or South Korea**, spend anywhere between **2 to 5 per cent** of their respective GDPs on scientific research.
 - ✓ The **estimated allocation of Rs 50,000 crore** over a five-year period for the NRF **does not form any substantial increase** in the current spending.

2. Debrigarh wildlife sanctuary

➤ **IN NEWS:** Debrigarh, a wildlife sanctuary in Odisha's Bargarh district, has been made completely free from any human settlement following one of the country's largest 'peaceful' relocations of forest-dwellers.

- As many as 400 families have moved out their villages after a series of consultations. In a State where permanent human settlements are common even within wildlife sanctuaries, Debrigarh now stands out as an exception alongside Nalabana Bird Sanctuary in Chilika Lake.
- As per the State Forest and Environment department, Debrigarh Sanctuary, which is proposed to be a tiger reserve, has high prey base (46 animals per sq. km). It boasts of having 82 leopards and one Royal Bengal Tiger, besides wild animals such as Bison, Leopard, Sambar, wild boar, spotted deer, wild dog, porcupine and Nilgai. The sanctuary is home to more than 40 species of mammals, 234 species of birds, 41 species of reptiles, 12 species of amphibians, 65 species of fishes and 85 species of butterflies.
- The sanctuary is flanked by **Hirakud Reservoir which is a Ramsar Site** and International Bird Area.

3. Chandrayaan-3

➤ **IN NEWS:** INDIA'S THIRD lunar mission Chandrayaan-3 will be launched from the country's only spaceport Sriharikota on July 13 at 2.30 pm. The spacecraft will travel just over a month and likely land on the surface of the moon around August 23. T

- The landing site for the integrated Vikram lander and Pragyan rover will remain the same as the previous mission: near the south pole of the moon at 70 degrees latitude. If successful, Chandrayaan-3 will become the first mission to soft land near the southern pole of the moon.
- The landing site for the integrated Vikram lander and Pragyan rover will remain the same as the previous mission: near the south pole of the moon at 70 degrees latitude. If successful, Chandrayaan-3 will become the first mission to soft land near the southern pole of the moon. The site was selected as it has several craters that remain permanently in shadows, increasing the chances of examining water ice.
- Chandrayaan 1, which also carried NASA payloads, was instrumental in confirming the presence of water and hydroxyl (OH) molecules on the moon.
- The mission will also make India the **fourth country in the world to achieve soft landing on the moon** after the US, Russia and China.

4. Aspartame

➤ **IN NEWS:** The artificial sweetener called aspartame, found in many soft drinks, is set to be declared carcinogenic by the World Health Organisation's (WHO) cancer research unit.

➤ About Aspartame:

- It is the world's most commonly used low-calorie artificial sweetener, which is approximately 200 times sweeter than sucrose (common sugar)
- It was discovered by James M. Schlatter, a chemist, in 1965 and was introduced to replace sucrose.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved aspartame for use in some dry foods in 1981 and for carbonated beverages in 1983.
- It is made up of two amino acids: aspartic acid and phenylalanine, which are naturally occurring amino acids in many protein-rich foods.
- In the body, aspartame is metabolised into its constituent components, aspartic acid, phenylalanine, and a small amount of methanol.-

- It is used worldwide as a sugar substitute in thousands of foods and drinks, including cereals, sugar-free chewing gum, low-calorie fruit juices and diet sodas.
- Around 100 countries around the world, including India, permit the use of aspartame.

5. Just Energy Transition Partnership (JET-P)

➤ **IN NEWS:** Recently, Senegal signed the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JET-P) deal.

➤ **About Just Energy Transition Partnership (JET-P):**

- It is a mechanism for multilateral financing by developed countries to support an energy transition in developing countries.
- It aims to reduce emissions in the energy sector and accelerate the coal phase-out.
- Transition describes the gradual movement towards lower carbon technologies, while 'Just' qualifies that this transition will not negatively impact society, jobs and livelihoods.
- It was launched at the COP26 in Glasgow with the support of the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), France, Germany, and the European Union (EU).
- Senegal has become the fourth country after South Africa, Indonesia and Vietnam to sign the JET-P deal, with the International Partners Group comprising France, Germany, the European Union, the United Kingdom and Canada.
- India refused to give its consent, saying that coal cannot be singled out as a polluting fuel and that energy transition talks need to take place on equal terms.

ANSWER WRITING

The US-India relationship is often described as a "defining relationship" of the 21st century and is founded on shared democratic values. In this context, discuss the Indo-US relationship from an economic and strategic perspective.

Rooted in shared democratic values and common interests, India and the US share a multifaceted relationship and are hailed as a "defining relationship" of the 21st century. The strong bipartisan support is evident in the invitation extended to Prime Minister Modi by both chambers of the US Congress. This invitation grants him the privilege of addressing a joint meeting of Congress for the second time, a distinction previously bestowed to Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela and Benjamin Netanyahu.

Economic relation:

1. **Trade and Investment:** Bilateral trade has expanded exponentially, reaching nearly \$191 billion making the US India's largest trading partner. For the US, India is the ninth largest trading partner.
2. **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** American companies have invested around \$60 billion in India in sectors ranging from manufacturing to telecommunications and consumer goods to aerospace. And Indian companies have put in more than \$40 billion in sectors such as IT, pharmaceuticals, and green energy. E.g.- Air India announced the purchase of more than 200 Boeing aircraft.
3. **Technology and Innovation:** Cooperation in sectors such as information technology, biotechnology, space exploration, and clean energy has expanded rapidly, bolstered by joint research projects, academic exchanges, and private-sector partnerships. E.g.- Patent licensing agreements between Indian and US Pharma.

Strategic relation:

1. **QUAD:** A four-country grouping, which has Australia and Japan alongside India and the US, was repurposed in 2017, primarily as a counter to China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean region, and as a forum for redoubling focus on the Indo-Pacific region.
2. **I2U2:** India, Israel, the US and the United Arab Emirates, are focused on joint investments and new initiatives in water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security.
3. **US-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies:** taken up by India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and his US counterpart Jake Sullivan.
4. **Supply Chain Resilience:** Partnership on the Semiconductor supply chain to make it more resilient through private sector cooperation. It creates the possibility of India getting aligned for a more central role in the global electronics supply chain. E.g.- the 'Chip 4' alliance initiative of the US with three other top semiconductor makers, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea.
5. **Defence Collaboration:**
 - ✓ War exercises: Tiger Triumph, Vajra Prahar, Yudh Abhyas, Cope India, and Malabar Exercise
 - ✓ Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) aim to foster co-development and co-production efforts.
 - ✓ Foundational agreements like GSOMIA, LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA enhance military information, logistics exchange, compatibility, and security between the two countries.

Challenges in the bilateral relations:

- **Withdrawal of Generalized System of Preferences:** The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) provided special privileges to India, allowing duty-free exports of goods like textiles and engineering products to the US market. However, the US has withdrawn these benefits, impacting Indian exports.
 - ✓ **Minerals Security Partnership (MSP):** India is not a party to MSP, a US-led partnership to secure supply chains of critical minerals that are aimed at reducing dependency on China.
 - ✓ **Crude oil from Russia:** At 1.96 million bpd, Russian crude accounted for almost 42 per cent of India's total oil imports in May 2023, beating the cumulative import volumes from at least the next five major suppliers, like Iraq and Saudi Arabia, as per the Vortexa data.
 - ✓ **Visa Delays and H1B Visas:** The US has imposed restrictions on H1B visas, which affects Indian professionals seeking work opportunities in the US. There is now a cap on the number of H1B visas issued, creating limitations for Indians moving to the US for employment.
 - ✓ **Significant export controls on India** inhibit the free transfer of technology. Eg- Import of Dual-use goods which can have civilian as well as military applications
- **Data localization move of India:** The US, is home to major data giants like Google and Facebook that gather significant amounts of data from Indian consumers. India's plan to implement data localization rules, requiring data to be stored within the country, is being opposed by the US.
- **IPR:** US has accused India of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) violations and has placed India on the "Priority Watch List."

The US-India relationship holds immense potential not only in advancing their respective national interests but also in shaping global governance, promoting peace, and addressing shared challenges. Continued commitment to strengthening this partnership will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on the trajectory of the 21st-century geopolitical landscape.

MCQs

1. A five-colour silk imperial edict, dating back to Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), was recently found in north China's Hebei Province. With reference to Qing Dynasty, consider the following statements:
 1. It was the final imperial dynasty in China.
 2. It was preceded by the Han-led Ming Dynasty and followed by the Republic of China era.
 3. Their cultural attitudes were strongly progressive and liberal.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two**
- c) All three
- d) None

2. An expert committee set up by the Central Government recently identified 30 minerals as critical to India, including lithium and vanadium, which are largely used in the manufacturing of batteries. Consider the following statements regarding Critical Minerals:
 1. It is a metallic or non-metallic element essential for the functioning of modern technologies.
 2. China and India are the top producers of Critical Minerals in the world.

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

3. Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Generation, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth (PM-PRANAM) scheme. With reference to the PM-PRANAM scheme, consider the following statements:
 1. It aims to reduce the use of chemical fertilisers in India.
 2. It is funded by the Global Environment Facility.
 3. The grants given to the states can be used to create assets related to the technological adoption of alternate fertilisers.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two**
- c) All three
- d) None of the Above

4. With reference to the Zero First Information Reports (FIR), consider the following statements:
 1. It refers to an FIR that is registered irrespective of the area where the offence is committed.
 2. It was recommended by the Justice Verma Committee.

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. Global Environment Facility, which was recently seen in the news provides financial assistance to which of the following international environmental convention?
a) **Minamata Convention on Mercury**
b) Stockholm Convention on Living modified organism
c) Vienna Convention on Ozone
d) None of the Above
6. With reference to the aspartame, consider the following statements:
1. It is made up of aspartic acid and phenylalanine.
2. It is a low-calorie artificial sweetener which is used in many foods and drinks.
3. It is not permitted for use in Indian Food and beverage Industries.
How many of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) Only one
b) **Only two**
c) All three
d) None of the Above
7. Consider the following statements regarding Just Energy Transition Partnership (JET-P) deal:
1. It aims to reduce emissions in the energy sector and accelerate the coal phase-out.
2. India has signed this partnership agreement in the COP26 which was held in Glasgow.
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. Euclid Space Telescope, which was recently seen in the news is developed by which of the following space agency?
a) NASA
b) **European Space Agency**
c) ISRO
d) China National Space Administration (CNSA)
9. The recently published report of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology said that halogens' contributions to cooling the environment could increase to 18-31 per cent by 2100. With reference to the Halogens, consider the following statements:
1. These are the most reactive nonmetals on the periodic table.
2. They exist in all three different states of matter in their standard state.
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. With reference to Neutrinos, consider the following statements:
1. They are tiny subatomic particles having no electrical charge.
2. They are one of the most common particles in the universe.
3. They interact with all the four fundamental forces in the universe.
How many of the statements given above are correct?
a) Only one
b) **Only two**
c) All three
d) None