

**ECONOMY**

❖ **What is the dispute about sugar subsidies at WTO?**

❖ **Context:** India is in negotiations with Brazil to resolve a long-standing dispute about sugar at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is also coordinating with the concerned departments to arrive at possible alternatives. The same approach has been adopted with other complainants in the dispute.

- Back in 2019, the South American nation had submitted a complaint against India alleging that the latter's according of sugar subsidies was inconsistent with global trade rules.

➤ **What is the Dispute and who all are involved?**

- In February 2019, Brazil, Australia and Guatemala sought consultations with India, concerned about domestic support measures to agricultural producers of sugarcane and sugar. They alleged that India for five years, from 2014-15 to 2018-19, provided domestic support in excess of the permissible 10% of the total value of production— thus, inconsistent with the norms laid out under the organisation's **Agreement on Agriculture**.
- The countries argued that the minimum prices of sugarcane and sugar, specifically fair and remunerative prices (FRP) alongside specific states enforcing higher minimum prices, incentivised Indian sugarcane farmers. This led to increased domestic production of sugarcane and sugar.
- It contended that with production exceeding domestic demand, and ensuing increases in sugar stocks, the government also intervened in the market with assistance programmes, thereby facilitating lowered prices for the commodity in the global market.
- The complainant also argued against India's mill-specific Minimum Indicative Export Quota (MIEQ) wherein sugar mills must export an allocated amount of sugar by the end of each season (October-September). It alleged that certain support measures were dependent on compliance with the MIEQ, or otherwise dependent on export performance. MIEQ allocates the minimum quantity of sugar which must be exported and distributes that quantity among individual sugar mills operating in India.
- **India is the second-largest producer of sugar in the world** behind Brazil, which also is the largest exporter.
- WTO constituted a panel to study the allegations in October 2019, which submitted its report in December 2021.

➤ **What did the WTO conclude?**

- The multilateral trade organisation held that India was acting inconsistently with its obligations under Article 7.2 (b) of the Agreements on Agriculture (AoA) as far the domestic support was concerned. This article stipulates that members cannot provide support in excess of the relevant de minimis standards.
- It held that the 'price support' would entail "assistance from a government or other official body in maintaining prices at a certain level regardless of supply or demand." In FRP, while the prices may appear to be paid by the mills, they are set by the government.
- The WTO asked India to withdraw its exports subsidies within 120 days from the circulation of the report. It also sought that the country withdraw the proscribed subsidies (as per the multilateral organisation's rules) meant for production assistance, buffer stock, marketing and transportation along with the duty-free import authorisation (DFIA) scheme.
- The report concluded that India was providing "lump sum assistance" for expenses emanating on account of sugar towards maximum admissible export quality or MAEQ (which works as a marketing assistance listing upper limit for exports) of sugar mills for the sugar season 2019-20. It broadly covered marketing including handling, quality upgradation, debagging and re-bagging and other processing costs.

➤ **What was India's defence?**

- Following the report in December 2021, the Indian government stated the panel had made "certain erroneous findings" about the schemes meant to support sugarcane producers and exports. It held the findings of the panel were "completely unacceptable to India", adding, "The panel's findings are unreasoned and not supported by the WTO rules. The panel has also evaded key issues which it was obliged to determine. Similarly, the panel's findings on alleged export subsidies undermine logic and rationale."
- It said that the measures in contention were within its obligations under the WTO agreements, and that there would be no impact on the country's existing policy measures in the sector.
- In its appeal, India held that the panel "grossly errs" in holding that the MAEQ were of the "same essence" as other alleged export subsidies. "India considers that the panel has cherry-picked a few

broad similarities while ignoring the differences between MAEQ and other alleged exports subsidy measures,”

- Further, it contended that FRP and state-advised prices do not constitute ‘applied administrative prices’, that is, prices for agricultural products determined by administrative actions of the government and not market forces. It was before the consultations that India had argued that market price support could only exist when the government or its agents pay or procure the product. Thus, it would be incorrect to conclude that India provided any market price support to sugarcane producers.

➤ **Current Scenario:**

- Concerns about the WTO ruling may potentially spiral on two fronts— agricultural subsidies in the broader ecosystem and potential uncertainty about its prices in lieu of expected lower production.
- India is not considering sugar exports until at least the first half of the next season. It learnt that this was because the government was worried that El Nino weather pattern could reduce rainfall and dent production.
- India, the world’s second-largest exporter of sugar, had allowed exports of 6.1 million tonnes for the ongoing season. With the quota exhausted, it is presently not exporting sugar.
- Industry body Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) lowered its production estimates to 32.8 million tonnes for the ongoing sugar season, owing to an output drop in Maharashtra and a marginal increase in Uttar Pradesh. Annual domestic consumption is pegged at 27.5 million tonnes.
- For comparison, India had exported 11 million tonnes in the year-ago period. The production stood at 35.9 million tonnes. All this translates to potential grounds for price uncertainty domestically and outside; especially since more demand for sugar rises during summer for producing aerated beverages and ice creams.
- As for the proceedings in the WTO, bilateral consultations are the first step to resolve a dispute. If the sides are unable to resolve the matter through consultation, either can approach the dispute settlement panel. The latter files a report which can be challenged before an Appellate Body. However, the body is unable to review cases at present given ongoing vacancies, emerging from differences among member countries in appointing members.

➤ **About Fair and remunerative price (FRP):**

- Fair and remunerative price (FRP) is the minimum price at which rate sugarcane is to be purchased by sugar mills from farmers.
- The FRP is fixed by Union government (Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)) on the basis of recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
- Rules: The ‘FRP’ of sugarcane is determined under Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966.
- Methodology: Recommended FRP is arrived at by taking into account various factors (cost of production, demand-supply situation, domestic & international prices, inter-crop price parity etc.
- Benefits: FRP assures margins to farmers, irrespective of whether sugar mills generate a profit or not.
- This will be uniformly applicable all over the country. Besides FRP, some states such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, UP and TN announce a State Advised Price, which is generally higher than the FRP.

➤ **About Agreement on Agriculture (AoA):**

- The Agriculture Agreement (AoA) is a World Trade Organisation treaty aimed at lowering agricultural support and subsidies provided by countries to domestic producers. This agreement focuses on countries lowering agricultural support and subsidies to native producers. Within the WTO, it is one of the most contentious agreements.
- The Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) is a World Trade Organisation (WTO) treaty that was negotiated during the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and ratified in Marrakesh, Morocco, in 1994. In 1995, the AoA came into operation.
- The AoA’s main goal is to get rid of so-called "trade-distorting" agricultural subsidies.
- The Agreement’s primary objective is to reform agricultural policy principles and disciplines, as well as to eliminate agricultural trade distortions caused by agricultural protectionism and domestic assistance.

**GOVERNMENT POLICY**

❖ **Reservation for transgender community: What the demand for ‘horizontal’ reservation is**

❖ **Context:** In response to a clarification requested by the Bombay High Court, the Maharashtra government said that it will be difficult to provide “additional reservations” to transgender persons in education and public employment, given the reservation that exists so far for various communities in India.

- Considering the extent of vertical and horizontal reservations which are already provided, providing additional reservations for transgender persons seems difficult. The issue is pending before the Supreme Court, Said Maharashtra Government.

- **What have the courts said on reservation for the transgender community?**
  - In the National Legal Services Authority of India (NALSA) v Union of India (2014) case, the Supreme Court ruled that transgender persons have a right to reservation, owing to the fact that they “are a socially and educationally backward class”.
  - With regards to reservation, the judgment noted: “We direct the Centre and the State Governments to take steps to treat them [transgender persons] as socially and educationally backward classes of citizens and extend all kinds of reservation in cases of admission in educational institutions and for public appointments.”
  - The NALSA judgment entitles trans persons to reservations on constitutional grounds. It does not, however, mention the nature of reservations – whether they are to be vertical or horizontal.
- **What are horizontal reservations?**
  - In India, historically oppressed and disadvantaged communities have a right to affirmative action policies. Reservation in education and employment can be divided into two broad categories, namely, vertical and horizontal.
  - Vertical reservations are provisions aimed at addressing social asymmetry arising out of caste hierarchy, and in the case of OBCs, social and educational “backwardness”. These include reservations for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC).
  - Horizontal reservation, on the other hand, cuts across all vertical groups to provide affirmative policies for disadvantaged groups within categories. For example, disabled persons are guaranteed horizontal reservation in all the aforementioned vertical categories, general and reserved (vertical) alike, by the Central government.
  - States like Uttarakhand and Bihar have also rolled out policies that guarantee horizontal reservation for women. This means that a woman who belongs to the SC category should be able to avail reservation based on both caste and gender. The horizontal model ensures this. This is exactly what transgender persons are fighting for, as well.
- **What is the demand for horizontal reservation?**
  - It has to do with the need for mandating provisions for a community that has been marginalised for long in society and recognising the different aspects making up their social identity.
  - A study conducted by the National Human Rights Commission revealed that in 2017, only 6 percent of transgender people were formally employed. Informal work that a significant portion of the community currently engages in, like begging and sex work, have been criminalised in India under various Acts and laws. But trans persons are often employed in such work for reasons related to both ritual and survival.
  - In this regard, the NALSA verdict has largely been interpreted as directing reservations for transgender people in the OBC category. This perhaps stems from the bench identifying the community as “a socially and educationally backward class”. So far, no implementation has happened even to that end.
  - Additionally, activists from the community say that this will come at a loss for Dalit, Bahujan and Adivasi transgender persons, as they will have to make a choice between availing reservation either based on caste and tribal identity or gender identity.
- **What has happened so far on horizontal reservations?**
  - Since the NALSA judgment, there has been no direction from the Central government on delivering on the right to reservation for trans persons.
  - In 2015, Rajya Sabha DMK MP Tiruchi Siva presented the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill. Prepared with inputs from the trans community, this Private Member’s Bill, in line with the NALSA judgment, had provisions for reservation for trans persons — in the public and private sector. After being passed in the Rajya Sabha, the Bill was rejected in the Lok Sabha. Instead, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 was introduced by the Centre. It had no provision for reservations.
  - In 2018, a parliamentary standing committee under the Ministry of Social Justice was set up. The committee, again in line with the NALSA judgment, recommended reservations for transgender persons. Yet, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 did not have any mention of reservation — vertical or horizontal.
  - Alternatively, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, included in its purview the right of disabled persons to accrue horizontal reservation. Since this Act has been implemented, horizontal reservation for disabled people is now ensured under the Central government.
  - In 2015, the Tamil Nadu government decided to categorise “transgender or eunuch (thirunangai or aravani)”, that is, only transwomen under the Most Backward Classes (MBC) category. After Sangama

v State of Karnataka, Karnataka became the first and only state to offer one per cent horizontal reservation to transgender persons in 2021. In April this year, transgender persons were included in the OBC category in Madhya Pradesh.

- Transgender persons have filed several petitions of late in the Delhi HC, Madras HC, Rajasthan HC, etc., asking for horizontal reservation in education and jobs.

### PRELIMS

#### 1. Durand Cup

➤ **In News:** The Chief of the Army Staff flagged off the “Trophy Tour” of the 132nd edition of Durand Cup, India's oldest football tournament

➤ **About Durand Cup:**

- Durand Cup is Asia's oldest and the world's third oldest football tournament, in which top Indian football clubs from across the country participate.
- It is organised by the Indian Armed Forces.
- The inaugural edition took place in Shimla in 1888, when it started off as an Army Cup, open only to the British Indian Army troops in India, but soon opened up to civilian teams as well.
- The winning team walks away with three trophies, i.e:
  - ✓ the Durand Cup (a rolling trophy and the original prize),
  - ✓ the Shimla Trophy (also a rolling trophy and first given by the residents of Shimla in 1904) and
  - ✓ the President's Cup (for permanent keep and first presented by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, India's first President, in 1956).
- The 132nd edition of the tournament will witness participation of 24 teams including teams from Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.
- The foreign teams are taking part in the tournament after a gap of 27 years.
- The tournament is open to all club teams and conducted by the Durand Football Tournament Society (DFTS) under the aegis of All India Football Federation (AIFF).

#### 2. National Sickle Cell Anemia Eradication Mission

➤ **In News:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the National Sickle Cell Anemia Eradication Mission 2047 in Lalpur village of Madhya Pradesh.

➤ **About National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission:**

- It was announced as part of the Union Budget 2023.
- Vision: Eliminate sickle cell disease (SCD) as a public health problem in India before 2047.
- The overall aim is to enable access to affordable and quality health care to all SCD patients, and to lower the prevalence through awareness, change of practices and screening interventions.
- The mission will entail awareness creation, universal screening of seven crore people in the 0-40 years age group in affected tribal areas and counselling through collaborative efforts of central ministries and state governments.
- Initially, the focus shall be on 17 states with higher prevalence of SCD viz., Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar and Uttarakhand.

➤ **About Sickle Cell Anaemia:**

- It is an inherited blood disorder.
- It affects hemoglobin, the molecule in red blood cells that delivers oxygen to cells throughout the body.
- People with this disease have atypical hemoglobin molecules called hemoglobin S, which can distort red blood cells into a sickle, or crescent, shape.
- These sickle cells also become rigid and sticky, which can slow or block blood flow.
- The cause of Sickle cell disease is a defective gene, called a sickle cell gene.
- A person will be born with sickle cell disease only if two genes are inherited—one from the mother and one from the father.
- Symptoms:
  - ✓ Early stage: Extreme tiredness or fussiness from anemia, painfully swollen hands and feet, and jaundice.
  - ✓ Later stage: Severe pain, anemia, organ damage, and infections.
- The only cure for this disease is bone marrow or stem cell transplantation. However, there are treatments that can help relieve symptoms, lessen complications, and prolong life.

#### 3. Halogens

➤ **In News:** 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.

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- Key findings of the report:
  - Oceans, along with absorbing carbon dioxide and moderating the climate, also cool the planet by releasing short-lived halogens such as chlorine, bromine and iodine.
  - The short-lived halogens from the ocean reduce warming by depleting ozone.
  - They increase methane's lifetime in the atmosphere by destroying hydroxyl radicals (OH).
  - They have increased the global methane burden by 14 per cent and 9 per cent for pre-industrial and present-day conditions.
  - Halogens increase the levels of water vapour, a greenhouse gas in the atmosphere.
  - The emission of halogen from the ocean is not the same across the world.
  - Over continents, the emissions are small, while it is bigger in polar regions and some places with higher ozone levels.
- Key facts about Halogens:
  - The term Halogen in Greek means salt-producing because it reacts with many metals to produce salts.
  - They are a group of elements located in Group 17 of the periodic table, which includes fluorine (F), chlorine (Cl), bromine (Br), iodine (I), and astatine (At).
  - In 1826, Swedish chemist Jons Berzelius coined the term halogen for the entire group of elements.
  - Unlike metals, they exist in all three different states of matter in their standard state.
  - For example, fluorine is found naturally as a gas, bromine as a liquid, and the larger iodine is found naturally as a solid.
  - Reactivity: Halogens are the most reactive nonmetals on the periodic table and are powerful oxidising agents.

#### 4. **Sea lion**

- **In News:** Recently, hundreds of sea lions are found dead or sick on California beaches due to toxic offshore algae blooms.

- **About Sea lion:**

- ✓ It is a marine mammal that belongs to the family Otariidae.
- ✓ These are known for their semi-aquatic lifestyle, spending a significant amount of time both on land and in the water.
- **Appearance:**
  - ✓ They have a streamlined body with a large head and a long, flexible neck.
  - ✓ They typically have a brown or tan coat, and adult males develop a thick mane of hair around their necks.
- **Habitat:**
  - ✓ They inhabit rocky shorelines, islands, and sandy beaches.
  - ✓ They can be found in various regions, including the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, and parts of the Indian Ocean.
- **Diet:** Sea lions are carnivorous and primarily feed on fish, such as herring, anchovies, sardines, and squid.
- Currently, there are six subspecies of sea lions: Australian sea lions, California sea lions, Galapagos sea lions, New Zealand sea lions, South American sea lions, and Steller sea lions.

- **What is an algal bloom?**

- It is a rapid and excessive growth of algae in aquatic environments.
- It can occur in both freshwater and marine ecosystems and is typically caused by a combination of factors such as nutrient availability, temperature, light, and water conditions.
- It causes the production of a neurotoxin called domoic acid.
- These can also proliferate because of human causes such as climate change and an excess of nitrates washed out to sea.

#### 5. **Critical Minerals**

- **In News:** 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.

- **About Critical Minerals:**

- It is a metallic or non-metallic element that has two characteristics.
- It is essential for the functioning of our modern technologies, economies or national security and There is a risk that its supply chains could be disrupted.
- The 'criticality' of minerals changes with time as supply and society's needs shift.
- Applications:
  - ✓ They are used to manufacture advanced technologies, including mobile phones, computers, fibre-optic cables, semiconductors, banknotes, and defence, aerospace and medical applications.

- ✓ Many are used in low-emission technologies, such as electric vehicles, wind turbines, solar panels, and rechargeable batteries.
  - ✓ Some are also crucial for common products, such as stainless steel and electronics.
  - Examples: antimony, beryllium, bismuth, cobalt, copper, gallium, germanium, lithium, vanadium etc.
  - Top Producers: Chile, Indonesia, Congo, China, Australia and South Africa.
- **What is the Mineral Security Partnership?**
- It is an ambitious new initiative to bolster critical mineral supply chains, announced by the United States (US) and key partner countries in June 2022.
  - The goal of the alliance is to ensure that critical minerals are produced, processed, and recycled in a manner that supports the ability of countries to realise the full economic development benefit of their geological endowments.
  - The focus of the grouping would be on the supply chains of minerals such as Cobalt, Nickel, Lithium and also the 17 “rare earth” minerals.
  - India was recently inducted into the Mineral Security Partnership (MSP).

### ANSWER WRITING

**Indian monsoon is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors. Elaborate. Also, discuss its impact on Indian agriculture.**

The seasonal reversal in the wind direction during a year is called a monsoon. Indian climate is a monsoon type of climate which accounts for over 70% of India's annual rainfall. The total cultivated area in India is around 140 million hectares, of which about 60% is rain-fed indicating that a significant portion of agricultural land relies on the monsoon for water supply.

Factors influencing Indian Monsoon:

- El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO): El Niño events, characterized by the warming of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean, tend to weaken the Indian monsoon. Conversely, La Niña events, characterized by cooler Pacific Ocean temperatures, enhance the monsoon.
- Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD): The IOD refers to the temperature anomaly between the western and eastern parts of the Indian Ocean. A positive IOD phase, with warmer waters in the west, typically strengthens the monsoon, while a negative IOD phase can weaken it.
- Climate change: Climate change is affecting the timing of the monsoon onset and withdrawal. The delayed or early arrival of the monsoon can disrupt agricultural planning, affecting crop sowing and harvest schedules. Example: According to IPCC's 6th report 6% decline in summer monsoon rainfall (1951-2015)
- Himalayas and Western Ghats: These mountain ranges act as physical barriers to the monsoon winds, forcing them to rise and cool. The rising air results in condensation and heavy rainfall over the plains of India. The Western Ghats also aid in capturing moisture-laden winds, leading to significant rainfall along the western coast.
- Land Use and Land Cover Changes: Changes in land use, such as deforestation or urbanization, can affect the microclimate of the region, thus impacting the monsoon.
- Atmospheric Circulation Patterns: The large-scale atmospheric circulation, including the presence of high-pressure systems, such as the subtropical ridge, and the movement of pressure systems like the Tibetan High, influence the monsoon.
- Solar Radiation: Variations in the intensity and distribution of solar radiation due to sunspots and coronal holes influence the mixing ratios of cloud and rain water thus causing monsoon variability.

Impact on Indian Agriculture:

- Crop Yield and Productivity: Adequate and well-distributed monsoon rainfall is crucial for crop growth. Insufficient rainfall or untimely rainfall can lead to reduced crop yields and lower agricultural productivity, affecting food production and farmer incomes.
- Water Availability: The monsoon replenishes water bodies such as rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, ensuring water availability for irrigation during the non-monsoon months. Inadequate monsoon rainfall can result in water scarcity, affecting irrigation and crop irrigation schedules. Example: Rayalaseema droughts in Andhra Pradesh state.
- Crop Selection: Farmers need to choose crops that are suitable for the prevailing monsoon conditions. Variability in the monsoon can influence crop selection, with farmers opting for drought-resistant or flood-tolerant crops based on rainfall patterns. It also causes delays in the sowing of Kharif crops. Example: Punjab-Haryana belt.
- Irrigation Planning: Unpredictable monsoons can disrupt irrigation planning, as farmers may need to adjust their irrigation practices based on the availability of monsoon rainfall. Insufficient rainfall may require additional irrigation, leading to increased costs for farmers. Example: According to IPCC's 6th report 1.3% increase in areas affected by drought.

- **Food Security:** Fluctuations in monsoon rainfall can impact food production and, consequently, food security. Poor monsoons can lead to crop failures, reduced availability of food, and increased food prices, affecting the overall food security of the country.

Way forward to minimize its impacts on Indian agriculture

- **Diversification of Agriculture:** Promote crop diversification by encouraging farmers to cultivate a variety of crops suitable for different weather conditions. This reduces dependence on a single crop and helps mitigate the risks associated with unpredictable monsoons. Example: Rainbow Revolution suggested by M. S. Swaminathan.
- **Water Management and Conservation:** Implement efficient water management techniques, such as rainwater harvesting, construction of reservoirs and ponds, and improved irrigation practices. These measures help conserve water during periods of excess rainfall and ensure its availability during dry spells. Example: Ahar Pyne systems of Bihar.
- **Enhance Forecasting and Early Warning Systems:** Invest in advanced weather forecasting technologies and strengthen early warning systems. Timely and accurate information about monsoon patterns and extreme weather events can help farmers, communities, and authorities make informed decisions and take appropriate measures. Example: IFLOWS of Mumbai.
- **Improve Irrigation Infrastructure:** Upgrade and expand irrigation infrastructure, including canal networks, drip irrigation, and sprinkler systems. Reliable irrigation facilities reduce dependence on monsoon rainfall and provide farmers with better control over water resources. Example: PM Krishi Sinchayi Yojana
- **Climate-Resilient Farming Practices:** Promote the adoption of climate-resilient farming practices, such as conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and the use of drought-tolerant or flood-resistant crop varieties. These practices enhance the resilience of agricultural systems to withstand the impacts of unpredictable monsoons.

Additionally, investing in research and development to understand the changing patterns of monsoons, supporting sustainable land management practices, and fostering community-based adaptation initiatives can further contribute to minimizing the impacts of unpredictable monsoons.

### MCQs

1. Consider the following statements regarding Durand Cup.

1. The inaugural edition took place in Shimla in 1888
2. It is organised by the Indian Armed Forces.
3. The winning team walks away with three trophies

How many statements given above are correct?

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

2. Consider the following statements:

Statement-I: The current account deficit (CAD) narrowed to 0.2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the fourth quarter of fiscal 2022-2023, from 2 per cent in the preceding quarter.

Statement-II: The decline in CAD was mainly on account of a moderation in the trade deficit, coupled with robust services exports.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

**a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I**

- b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
- c) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct
- d) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect

3. Consider the following statements:

1. El Salvador is the first country in the world to adopt Bitcoin – the largest cryptocurrency by market capitalization – as its legal tender.
2. Cryptocurrencies and central bank digital currencies are both blockchain-based digital currencies

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) **Neither 1 nor 2**

4. Consider the following statements about PEN Printer Prize 2023.

1. The recipient of the PEN Pinter Prize 2023 is Michael Rosen.
2. The prize is given to a writer from the UK, Ireland, and the Commonwealth who is committed to fearless exposition of truth about contemporary life.

3. The Award is named in honour and memory of English writer Harold Pinter  
Select the correct statements using the code below
- 1 and 2 only
  - 2 and 3 only
  - 1 and 3 only
  - 1, 2 and 3**
5. Which of the following statements is/are correct about 'Reservation In India'?
- In the National Legal Services Authority of India (NALSA) v Union of India (2014) case, the Supreme Court ruled that transgender persons have a right to reservation.
  - Vertical reservations are aimed at addressing social asymmetry arising out of caste hierarchy.
  - Horizontal reservation cuts across all vertical groups to provide affirmative policies for disadvantaged groups within categories.
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- Only one
  - Only two
  - All three**
  - None of the above
6. According to a recent report, new additions to the unicorn list declined sharply in 2023, indicating a slowdown in the Indian startup ecosystem. With reference to Startup Ecosystem, consider the following statements:
- A Unicorn refers to a privately held startup company with a value of over \$10 billion.
  - The valuation of unicorns is largely based on their growth potential, as perceived by investors.
  - Cheetahs are those start-ups that have the potential to go Unicorn in 2 years.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- Only one**
  - Only two
  - All three
  - None
7. Consider the following statements regarding Sickle Cell Anaemia:
- It is a contagious viral disease.
  - It affects hemoglobin, the molecule in red blood cells that delivers oxygen to cells.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
  - 2 only**
  - Both 1 and 2
  - Neither 1 nor 2
8. The Election Commission of India recently announced the schedule for the election on 10 Rajya Sabha seats in Goa, Gujarat and West Bengal. Consider the following statements regarding Elections to the Rajya Sabha:
- It is held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote.
  - The voting at such election is done by secret ballot.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only**
  - 2 only
  - Both 1 and 2
  - Neither 1 nor 2
9. With reference to the Unnat Takniki Pradarshan Kendra (UTPRERAK), consider the following statements:
- It is the key reference and resource institution on industrial energy-efficient technologies.
  - It has been set up by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 Only
  - 2 Only
  - Both 1 and 2**
  - Neither 1 nor 2
10. CHAMPIONS Portal, which was recently seen in the news is launched by which Union Ministry?
- Ministry of Education
  - Ministry of Textiles
  - Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
  - Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises**