

India-Nepal Power Pact**Why in News?**

- India and Nepal recently signed a long-term agreement for the export of power. The agreement was inked during the 7th meeting of the Nepal-India Joint Commission, highlighting the strengthening ties between the two nations.

What are the Key Takeaways From the 7th Meeting of the Nepal-India Joint Commission?

- **Power Export Agreement:** India and Nepal signed a bilateral agreement for the export of 10,000 MW of power in the next 10 years.
- **Cross-Border Transmission Lines Inauguration:** Three cross-border transmission lines were jointly inaugurated including the 132 kV Raxaul-Parwanipur, 132 kV Kushaha-Kataiya, and New Nautanwa-Mainahiya lines.
- **Renewable Energy Cooperation:** A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Nepal Electricity Authority and India's National Thermal Power Corporation Limited for cooperation in renewable energy.
- **Agreement for Satellite Service:** The Service Agreement for Munal Satellite developed by Nepal Academy of Science and Technology between Nepal Academy of Science and Technology and NewSpace India Limited was launched.
 - This satellite developed by Nepali students shall be launched on a gratis basis on an Indian launch rocket.

What are the Major Areas of Cooperation between India and Nepal?

- **About:**
 - India and Nepal, being immediate neighbours, enjoy special bonds of friendship and collaboration marked by an open border and strong people-to-people connections rooted in kinship and culture.
 - Nepal shares a border of over 1850 km with five Indian states – Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
 - The India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 forms the bedrock of the special relations that exist between India and Nepal.
- **Economic Cooperation:** India is Nepal's largest trade partner and the largest source of foreign investments, besides providing transit for almost the entire third country trade of Nepal.
 - India accounts for about two-third of Nepal's merchandise trade and about one-third of trade in services.
 - Recently, India and Nepal agreed to review the Treaty of Transit and the Treaty of Trade, proposed amendments to existing agreements, strategies for enhancing investment, the harmonization of standards and the synchronized development of trade infrastructure.
- **Defense Cooperation:** India has been aiding the modernization efforts of the Nepal Army through equipment supply and training provisions.
 - The joint military exercise, 'Surya Kiran,' at the battalion level, is conducted in both India and Nepal on a rotational basis. In 2023, it was held in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand.
- **Cultural Cooperation:**
 - The Embassy of India in Nepal, in collaboration with Lumbini Development Trust and Lumbini Buddhist University organized the inaugural India-Nepal Cultural Festival in Lumbini in December 2023.
 - The festival showcased the rich cultural heritage and traditions of India and Nepal, with a focus on Buddhism.
- **Water Sharing:** The Koshi Agreement (1954, revised in 1966) and Gandak Agreement (1959, revised in 1964) were the initial significant agreements fostering India-Nepal cooperation in the water resources sector.
 - Another pivotal pact, the Mahakali Treaty (1996), ensures the fair utilization of Mahakali River, waters for both countries.
- **Connectivity:** India is assisting Nepal by upgrading 10 roads in the Terai area, establishing cross-border rail links at Jogbani-Biratnagar and Jaynagar-Bardibas, and setting up Integrated Check Posts at key locations such as Birgunj, Biratnagar, Bhairahawa, and Nepalgunj.
 - Also, India exported about 2200 MUs of electricity to Nepal in 2021.



What are the Major Challenges to India Nepal Relations?

- **Boundary Dispute:** The boundary dispute has become a significant source of tension in recent India-Nepal relations, particularly concerning the Kalapani-Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh tri-junction area in western Nepal and the Susta area in southern Nepal.
- **China’s Rising Footprint:** China has provided financial and technical assistance to Nepal in areas such as infrastructure, industrialization, human resources, health, education, and water resources. Rising Nepal and China cooperation can undermine Nepal’s distinction of a buffer state between India and China.
 - Gorkhas, traditionally in the Indian Army, might join China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) due to concerns over India's new Agniveer scheme.

Way Forward

- **Addressing Immediate Concerns:** Prioritize addressing immediate concerns related to the Agniveer Scheme, to build trust and goodwill.
 - Develop joint projects for the benefit of border regions, fostering a sense of shared development.
- **Diplomatic Dialogue:** Engage in sustained and open diplomatic discussions to address the boundary dispute and other contentious issues.
- **Track-II Diplomacy:** Encourage Track-II diplomacy involving non-governmental entities, academics, and civil society to provide a new shape to India Nepal Cooperation.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN)

Why in News?

- In continuation of its tribal outreach ahead of Lok Sabha elections, the government will release the first installment for pucca houses amounting to Rs 540 crore to one lakh beneficiaries under the PM-JANMAN.
- On this occasion, the PM will virtually interact with the beneficiaries of PM-JANMAN - the flagship central scheme launched in (Nov) 2023 for socio-economic welfare of particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs).

Background in which the PM-JANMAN was Launched

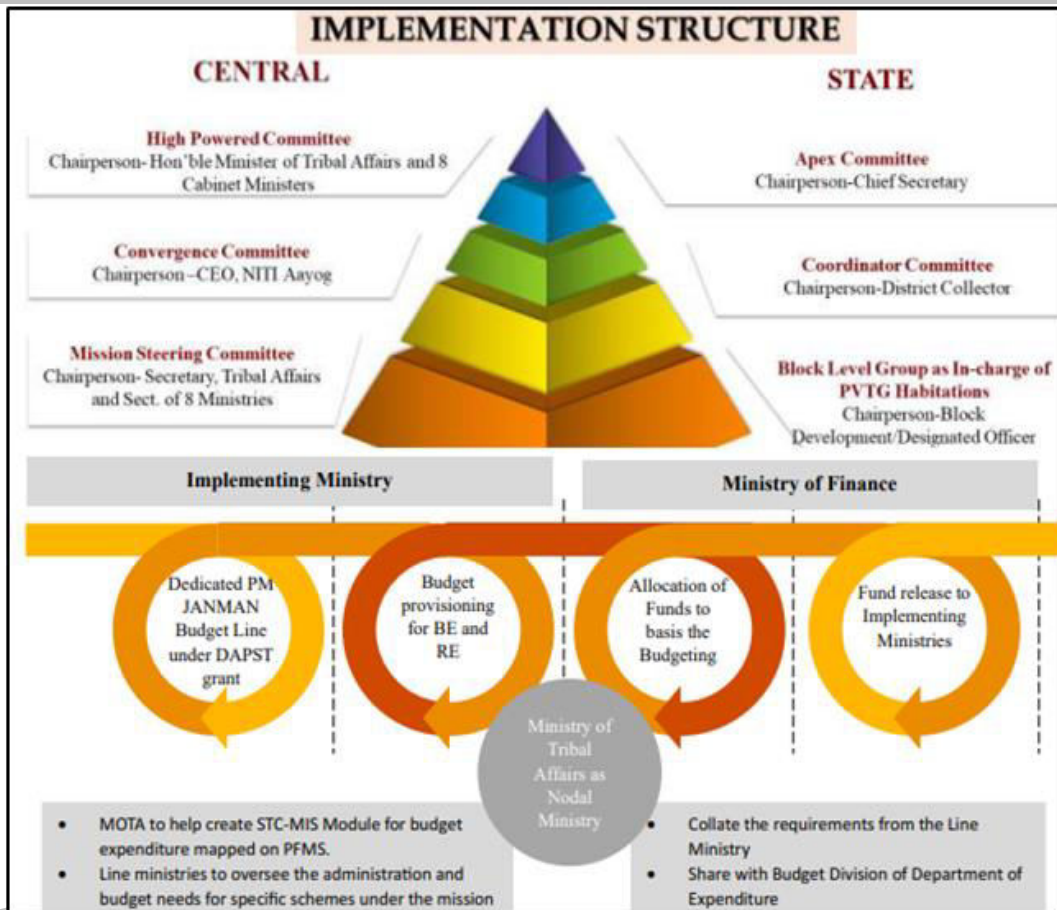
- India has a ST population of 10.45 crore as per 2011 census, out of which 75 communities located in 18 States and the UT of Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been categorised as PVTGs.
 - It was in 1960-61 that the Dhebar Commission identified disparities among Scheduled Tribes, leading to the creation of the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG) category.
 - In 2006, this category was renamed PVTGs - characterised by pre-agricultural lifestyles, low literacy, small or stagnant populations, and subsistence economies.
 - These PVTGs continue to face vulnerability in social, economic and educational fields.
- As announced in the Budget Speech 2023-24, to improve socio-economic conditions of the PVTGs, the PM PVTG of Development Mission will be launched.
- This will saturate PVTG households and habitations with basic facilities such as safe housing, clean drinking water and sanitation, improved access to education, health and nutrition, etc.
- An amount of Rs.15, 000 crore will be made available to implement the Mission in the next three years under the Development Action Plan for the Scheduled Tribes (DAPST).

What is the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN)?

- The Union Cabinet during November 2023 approved PM JANMAN with total outlay of Rs.24, 104 crore (Central Share: Rs.15, 336 crore and State Share: Rs.8, 768 crore) to be implemented during FY 2023-24 to 2025-26.
- The PM-JANMAN (comprising Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes) to focus on 11 critical interventions through 9 Ministries including Ministry of Tribal Affairs which are as follows:

S.No.	Activity	No. of Beneficiary / Targets	Cost norms
1	Provision of pucca houses	4.90 lakh	Rs 2.39 lakhs /house
2	Connecting roads	8000 KM	Rs 1.00 Cr/Km
3a	Piped Water Supply	All PVTG habitations including 4.90 lakhs HHs to be constructed under the mission	As per schematic norms
3b	Community water supply	2500 Villages/ habitations with population of less than 20 HHs	As per actual cost arrived
4	Mobile Medical Units with medicine cost	1000 (10/district)	Rs 33.88 lakhs/MMU
5a	Construction of hostels	500	Rs 2.75 Cr/hostel
5b	Vocational education & skilling	60 Aspirational PVTG blocks	Rs 50 lakhs/block
6	Construction of Anganwadi Centers	2500	Rs 12 lakhs/AWC
7	Construction of Multipurpose Centers (MPC)	1000	Rs 60 lakhs/MPC Provision of ANM and Anganwadi worker in each MPC
8a	Energization of HHs (Last mile connectivity)	57000 HHs	Rs 22,500/HH
8b	Provision of 0.3 KW solar off-grid system	100000 HHs	Rs 50,000/HH or as per actual cost
9	Solar lighting in streets & MPCs	1500 units	Rs 1,00,000/unit
10	Setting up of VDVks	500	Rs 15 lakhs/VDVK
11	Installation of mobile towers	3000 villages	As per schematic norms cost

- Other than the interventions mentioned above, the following intervention of other Ministries will be part of Mission:
 - The Ministry of Ayush will set up Ayush Wellness Centre as per existing norms and Ayush facilities will be extended to PVTG habitations through Mobile Medical Units.
 - The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship will facilitate skill and vocational training in PVTG habitations, multipurpose centres and hostels as per the suitable skills of these communities.
- Implementation structure:



News Summary Regarding the Implementation of the PM-JANMAN

- In the two months since the launch of the scheme on November 15, the government has sanctioned projects worth over Rs 4,700 crore through nine ministries under the PM-JANMAN package.
- In order to reach out to every household, more than 7,000 camps were organised in PVTG habitations of all 188 districts, to
 - Facilitate their Aadhaar cards, Jan Dhan accounts, Ayushman Bharat cards, and
 - Enable registration for different schemes under the mission.
- Under the PM-JANMAN mission,
 - The government has already sanctioned the building of 1,207-km roads in PVTG habitations;
 - Approved schemes to connect all left out PVTG households to the PM Jal Jeevan Mission; and
 - Sanctioned 916 anganwadi centres, 816 of which are expected to be operational by the end of this month.

PRELIM FACTS

1. Instrument Landing System

- Thick mist which hampers flight operations, necessitating the reliance on instruments like the “Instrument Landing System” (ILS) to navigate through the obscured surroundings.

About Instrument Landing System:

- It is a ground-based radio navigation system that provides pilots with accurate information about their aircraft's position and alignment with the runway.
- It comprises two main components, the localiser, and the glide slope,
 - The localizer ensures lateral alignment, guiding the aircraft along the correct azimuth toward the runway centerline.
 - Simultaneously, the glide slope provides vertical guidance, aiding pilots in maintaining the proper descent angle for a safe landing.
- It guides pilots along both horizontal and vertical axes, aiding them in maintaining the correct approach path during low-visibility conditions.

- With the help of ILS systems, pilots are able to understand how their aircraft is positioned with respect to an airport runway without needing to physically see it.
- This system warns pilots in case their jets are not flying to meet the runway's centreline.
- It will also warn pilots in case their jets are too low or too high and thus, at the risk of undershooting or overshooting the runway.
- Both of these tasks performed by the Instrument Landing System are crucial in ensuring landing in cases where the pilots aren't able to see the runway clearly.
- In addition to ILS, modern aircraft are equipped with advanced avionics and autopilot systems that enhance precision during foggy landings.
- These systems, often coupled with radar altimeters, help maintain a stable descent and ensure the aircraft follows the designated glide path with minimal reliance on external visibility.
- It is a standard International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) precision landing aid that is used to provide accurate azimuth (angular measurement in a spherical coordinate system) and descent guidance signals for guidance to flight for landing on the runway under adverse weather conditions.

2. Windfall Tax

- India cut its windfall tax on petroleum crude to 1,700 rupees (\$20.53) a tonne from 2,300 rupees a tonne, according to a recent government notification.

About Windfall Tax:

- What is it? It is a tax levied by governments against certain industries when economic conditions allow those industries to experience significantly above-average profits.
- The term “windfall” refers to an unexpected rise in profits, and the tax on windfall gains is known as the windfall tax.
- When is it imposed?
 - When the government notices a sudden increase in an industry's revenue, they impose this tax.
 - However, these revenues cannot be linked to anything the company actively pursues, such as its business strategy or expansion.
 - Rather, it is related to a one-off external event for which the business is not responsible.
 - Consequently, a Windfall Tax is imposed on an industry's profits when it experiences a sharp increase in revenue due to unrelated external events.
 - A recent example is the sudden rise in the profits of the oil and gas industries due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
 - The unexpected windfalls are taxed by the government over and above the normal tax rates.
- The most common industries that fall target to windfall gains tax include oil, gas, and mining.
- Purpose:
 - Redistribution of unexpected gains when high prices benefit producers at the expense of consumers;
 - To fund social welfare schemes;
 - As a supplementary revenue stream for the government;
 - As a way for the Government to narrow the country's widening trade deficit.

3. Farsi Language

- The External Affairs Minister recently announced that the Government of India has decided to include Farsi (Persian) as one of the nine classical languages in India under the New Education Policy.

About Farsi Language:

- Farsi, also known as Persian Language, is the most widely spoken member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian languages, a subfamily of the Indo-European languages.
- It is the official language of Iran, and two varieties of Persian known as Dari and Tajik are official languages in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, respectively.
- Significant populations of Farsi speakers can be found in other Persian Gulf countries (Bahrain, Iraq, Oman, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates), as well as large communities in the US.
- It has about 62 million native speakers, ranking it among the world's 20 most widely spoken first languages.
- Farsi in Iran is written in a variety of the Arabic script called Perso-Arabic, which has some innovations to account for Persian phonological differences. This script came into use in Persia after the Islamic conquest in the seventh century.

- Its relatives are the languages of northern India and, more distantly, the major European languages including English.

Key Facts about Classical Languages in India:

- Criteria evolved by Government of India to determine declaration of a language as a Classical language is as under: -
 - High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years;
 - A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers;
 - The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community;
 - The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.
- Currently, six languages enjoy the 'Classical' status: Tamil (declared in 2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).
- The benefits it provides once a language is notified as a Classical language:
 - Two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in classical Indian languages.
 - A Centre of Excellence for studies in Classical Languages is set up.
 - The University Grants Commission is requested to create, to start with at least in the Central Universities, a certain number of Professional Chairs for the Classical Languages so declared."

4. One Vehicle, One FASTag Initiative

- Recently, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has launched the 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative.

About 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative:

- The National Highways Authority of India suggested tagging users to complete the Know Your Customer (KYC) process by the end of January 31 to avoid deactivation.
- The move aims to enhance the efficiency of the Electronic Toll Collection system and provide seamless movement at the Toll Plazas.
- The new arrangement Of 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' has also been introduced to discourage user behaviour of using single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle.
- The initiative had been taken after the recent reports of multiple FASTags being issued for a particular vehicle and FASTags being issued without KYC in violation of RBI's mandate.

Key points about FASTags:

- It is a device that employs Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for making toll payments directly while the vehicle is in motion.
- It is a RFID passive tag used for making toll payments directly from the customers linked prepaid or savings/current account.
- It is affixed on the windscreen of the vehicle and enables the customer to drive through toll plazas, without stopping for any toll payments.
- The toll fare is directly deducted from the linked account of the customer.
- It is also vehicle specific and once it is affixed to a vehicle, it cannot be transferred to another vehicle.
- FASTag can be purchased from any of the National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC) Member Banks.
- If a FASTag is linked to the prepaid account, then it needs to be recharged/ topped-up as per the usage of the customer.

5. Exercise Ayutthaya

- Recently, the maiden Bilateral Maritime Exercise -Ayutthaya' between the Indian Navy (IN) and Royal Thai Navy (RTN) was conducted.

About Exercise Ayutthaya:

- The India-Thailand Bilateral Exercise is being named as 'Ex-Ayutthaya', which literally translates to 'The Invincible One' or 'Unconquerable'.
- It symbolises the significance of two of the oldest cities Ayodhya in India and Ayutthaya in Thailand, the historic legacies, rich cultural ties and shared historical narratives dating back to several centuries.

- Indigenously built Indian Naval ships Kulish and IN LCU 56 participated in the inaugural edition of the exercise.
- With the institution of a Bilateral Exercise, both navies have taken a step towards strengthening operational synergy and progressively increasing the exercise complexity.
- During the maiden edition of the exercise, participating units from both navies conducted surface and anti-air exercises including weapon firing, seamanship evolutions and tactical manoeuvres.
- The 36th edition of India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (Indo-Thai CORPAT) was also conducted along with the maiden bilateral exercise.
- Maritime Patrol Aircraft from both navies participated in the Sea Phase of the exercise.
- As part of Government of India's vision of SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region), the Indian Navy has been proactively engaging with countries in the Indian Ocean Region towards enhancing regional maritime security.
- The Indian Navy and Royal Thai Navy have maintained a close and friendly relationship which has strengthened over the years.

ANSWER WRITING**Highlight the challenges faced by the Production Linked Incentive Scheme that need to be addressed to harness its full potential.**

In 2020, the Government of India launched the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for promoting domestic manufacturing, import substitution and the Make in India initiative. Initially launched for 3 sectors, later, it was extended to 14 sectors in 2021 due to the success and promotion of local production across categories.

Objectives of Production linked incentive scheme:

- Production Linked Incentives (PLI) scheme is an initiative under the flagship Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.
 - To promote exports and make India an integral part of the global supply chain.
 - To promote the competitiveness of Indian Industries like the automotive industry, steel industry, textile industry, and pharmaceuticals industry.
 - To promote investments and manufacturing in sectors like white goods, Telecom, solar panels etc.

Potential of PLI scheme:

- Empowering Domestic Manufacturing: By augmenting the domestic manufacturing capacity and competence, the scheme aims at creating more jobs, attracting greater investments, reducing imports, and making India a global manufacturing hub.
- Addressing Manufacturing Challenges: PLI is often touted as the panacea to India's domestic manufacturing problems. Scholars believe that the PLI can significantly restructure India's domestic manufacturing, push its share in the GDP to 25 per cent, and foster seamless upgradation of domestic firms into regional and global production networks.

Challenges faced by the Production linked Incentive Scheme (PLI):

- Value Addition vs. Assembly Issue: PLI incentives based on sales, not value addition, promotes assembly over actual manufacturing. (E.g., seen in Mobile and Allied Component Manufacturing)
- Ambiguities in Scheme Design: Lack of clarity in awarding incentives may lead to corruption and malfeasance.
- Unintended Consequences: Expanding PLI to labour-intensive sectors may create a dependency on subsidies. Removing them later could be challenging, leading to inefficiencies.
- Bias towards Larger Firms: Disbursement suggests favouring bigger companies, neglecting the significant contribution of MSMEs to India's manufacturing.
- Lack of Sector-Specific Understanding: PLI doesn't address unique needs of different sectors. For instance, container manufacturing faces distinct challenges due to high costs and a small market.
- One-Size-Fits-All Approach: Treating all sectors equally hinders success. For example, technology-intensive industries like pharmaceuticals require more resources for R&D compared to textiles.
- WTO Limitations: WTO rules limit India's ability to link PLI subsidies to domestic value addition, potentially restricting the growth of domestic industries.

Conclusion

PLI scheme has seen major success in the Mobile and allied Component Manufacturing sector, with the largest mobile phone production and export between 2021 and 2023. To integrate India into global supply

chains and make it a manufacturing hub, certain reforms are also needed, like focusing on supply chain co-location, increasing the efficiency of domestic manufacturing, infrastructure development and pushing for labour-intensive sectors to ensure long-term sustainability.

MCQs

1. With reference to the Chabahar port, consider the following statements:
 1. It is located on the Gulf of Oman and is the only oceanic port of Iran.
 2. It provides India with direct sea access to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
 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, India held the maiden Bilateral Maritime Exercise 'Ex-Ayutthaya', with which of the following countries?

(a) Sri Lanka (b) **Thailand**
(c) Malaysia (d) UAE
3. Consider the following statements regarding Zero Trust Authentication (ZTA).
 1. Zero Trust Authentication (ZTA) is a security framework that requires users to be authenticated and authorized before being granted access to applications and data.
 2. It includes two-factor authentication with options like facial recognition or biometrics.
 3. Here the log-in and log-out times are recorded and monitored.
 How many of the above statements is/are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two
(c) **All three** (d) None
4. Consider the following reports:
 1. Global Gender Gap Report
 2. Global Inequality Crisis Report
 3. Global Competitiveness Report
 4. Global Financial Stability Report
 which of the above are published and or released by the World Economic Forum (WEF)?

(a) **1 and 3 only**
(b) 1, 2 and 3 only
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
5. Consider the following statements.
 1. People with blood disorders like thalassemia, haemophilia, and sickle cell disease are eligible for job reservations in government roles under the Persons with Disabilities category.
 2. As per rules regarding Reservations for disabled people, 4% reservation in government jobs is available for people with disabilities.
 3. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act includes Intellectual disability and Mental illnesses as benchmark disabilities.
6. India has "special and privileged strategic partnership" with which of the following countries?

(a) **Russia** (b) Israel
(c) Japan (d) USA
7. With reference to the Light-emitting diodes (LEDs), which of the following statements is/are correct?
 1. LEDs have lower energy efficiency than fluorescent lamps.
 2. LEDs have a longer Lifespan than fluorescent lamps.
 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
8. With reference to the Foreign portfolio investment (FPI), which of the following statements is/are correct?
 1. It does not provide the investor with direct ownership of a company's assets.
 2. FPI holdings include exchange traded funds only.
 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
9. Consider the following statements regarding the FASTag:
 1. It employs Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to enable automatic toll payments.
 2. RFID is a method of wireless communication involving electromagnetic waves.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) **Both 1 and 2** (d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. Consider the following Indicators:
 1. Health
 2. Education
 3. GDP growth rate
 How many of the above are used for preparing multidimensional poverty index?

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