

Overhaul of Accreditation System in India

Why in the News?

- The Central government plans to overhaul the accreditation system for higher educational institutes by the end of the year, replacing the current practice of assigning a score and corresponding grade with a binary system.

About National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

- NAAC is an autonomous body established by the University Grants Commission (UGC).
- It was established in 1994 on the basis of recommendations made under the National Education Policy (1986).
- It is registered under the Karnataka Societies Registration Act of 1960, Karnataka Societies Registration Rules of 1961.
- Vision: To make quality the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives.
- Headquarters: Bengaluru

Objectives of NAAC

- To arrange for periodic assessment and accreditation of institutions of higher education or units thereof, or specific academic programmes or projects;
- To stimulate the academic environment for promotion of quality of teaching-learning and research in higher education institutions;
- To encourage self-evaluation, accountability, autonomy and innovations in higher education;
- To undertake quality-related research studies, consultancy and training programmes, and
- To collaborate with other stakeholders of higher education for quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance.

Meaning of Assessment & Accreditation

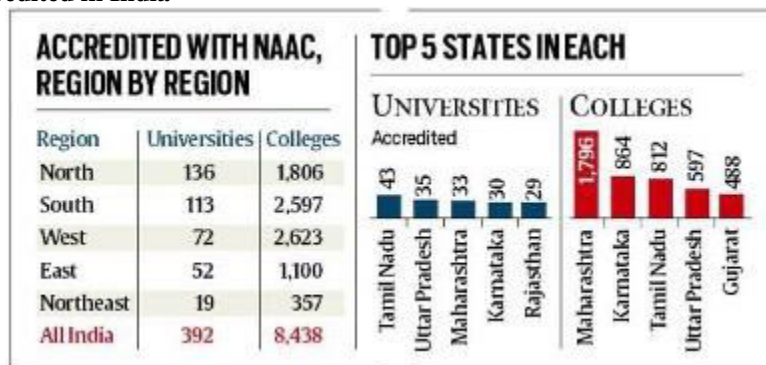
- Assessment is the performance evaluation of an institution or its units based on certain established criteria.
- Accreditation is the certification of quality for a fixed period, which in the case of NAAC is five years.
- The University Grants Commission (UGC) through a gazette notification in January 2013, has made it mandatory for Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) to undergo accreditation.

How Accreditation Process is Carried Out?

The process of Assessment and Accreditation broadly consists of:

- Online submission of Institutional Information for Quality Assessment (IIQA) and Self-Study Report (SSR).
- Data Validation and Verification (DVV) by NAAC.
- Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) by NAAC.
- Peer Team Visit.
- Institutional Grading.

Institutions Accredited in India



- There are 1,043 universities and 42,343 colleges listed on the portal of the All India Survey on Higher Education.
 - Out of these, 392 universities and 8,483 colleges are NAAC-accredited.
- Region-wise, the northern states have the highest number of accredited universities at 136, followed by the south (113), the west (72), the east (52) and the Northeast (19).
- Among the states, Maharashtra accounts for the highest number of accredited colleges at 1,796.
- Tamil Nadu has the most accredited universities (43).

Benefits of Being NAAC-Accredited

- Through a multi-layered process steered by the NAAC, a higher education institution gets to know whether it meets certain standards of quality set by the evaluator in terms of curriculum, faculty, infrastructure, research and financial well-being among others.
- Based on these parameters, the NAAC gives institutions grades ranging from A++ to C. If an institution is graded D, it means it is not accredited.
- Apart from recognition, being accredited also helps institutions attract capital as funding agencies look for objective data for performance funding.
- It helps an institution know its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities through an informed review process.
- NAAC accreditation helps students going for higher education abroad as many global higher education authorities insist on recognition and accreditation of the institution where the student has studied.
- Moreover, employers also look for reliable information on the quality of prospective recruits' education, and an NAAC grading helps.

News Summary

- The Central government plans to overhaul the accreditation system for higher educational institutes by the end of the year.
- The plan is to replace the current practice of assigning a score and corresponding grade with a binary system, where institutions will be declared either accredited or unaccredited without specific scores or grades.
- The NAAC announced that the proposed reforms in the current accreditation system, put forth by the committee headed by former ISRO chairman Dr. K Radhakrishnan, have been accepted by the Education Ministry.

Recommendations of the Dr. K. Radhakrishnan Committee

- The committee has recommended that the IITs should be brought under the ambit of NAAC.
 - Currently, IITs follow their internal systems for periodic peer evaluation and assessment of programmes.
- Binary Accreditation System:
 - Currently, NAAC follows an eight-point grading system under which institutes are rated A++, A+, A, B++, B+, B, C and D based on data submitted by institutes and their verification by expert teams during campus visits.
 - The committee has suggested that under the new system, institutes be certified as "Accredited" or "Not Accredited (for those who are far below the standards for accreditation)".
 - A separate category of "Awaiting Accreditation" will cover institutes which are "close to the threshold level" or accreditation.
- The committee has also proposed that the entire accreditation process be made less dependent on inspections by teams of experts by adopting the mechanism of "crowdsourcing".
 - The idea now is to get the inputs submitted by the institutes vetted by a "carefully chosen set of audience with diverse association with the concerned institutes".
 - This set of audience may include students (including PhD and postdoctoral scholars), faculty, staff, alumni, official visitors such as selection committee members, employers of the students, etc.
- National Accreditation Council (NAAC):
 - Lastly, the Radhakrishnan committee has proposed that instead of having separate bodies for accrediting institutes and courses, one overarching agency be set up.
 - The proposed National Accreditation Council (NAAC), envisaged by the NEP, should also subsume the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), which ranks higher education institutes.

How Will the New Accreditation System Work?

- At present, the NAAC assesses institutions and awards grades based on scores.
 - If a higher education institution gets a score between 3.51 and 4, it gets an A++ grade.
 - A score between 3.26 and 3.50 gets an A+ grade, and a score between 3.01 and 3.25 gets an A grade.
 - There are eight grades in total, including C for scores between 1.51 and 2, which means basic accreditation, and D for scores below 1.51, indicating unaccredited status.
- Under the proposed binary accreditation system, higher educational institutions will be given either:
 - "Accredited" tag or
 - "Not Accredited" tag
- The "Not Accredited" will be further divided into two sub-categories:

- “Awaiting Accreditation” for those institutes that nearly meet the requirements but need improvement, and
- “Not Accredited” for the ones that are far below the standards for accreditation.
- Another reform that NAAC announced was the implementation of the “Maturity-Based Graded Accreditation”, in addition to the binary system.
 - The former is for higher education institutions that have secured the “accredited” tag under the binary system and is for them to graduate “level one” to “level five”.
 - From level-one – an accredited institute – the plan is to incentivise improvement up to level-4 where an institution will become an “Institution of National Excellence”.
 - Further, the move to level-5 to get the tag of “Institution of Global Excellence for Multi-Disciplinary Research and Education”.
- With reference to IITs, it’s not clear if they will be mandated to participate once NAAC rolls out the binary accreditation.

DEFENCE & SECURITY

Crisis in Red Sea

Why in News?

- In the latest in a series of attacks on commercial vessels in the western Arabian Sea by the Houthi rebels, a Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker Marlin Luanda came under a missile attack.
 - The vessel had 22 Indian and one Bangladeshi crew members on board.
 - While the ship was learnt to have caught fire and reported damage, no casualty or injury was reported at the time.
- It prompted a quick response from the Indian Navy’s guided missile destroyer INS Visakhapatnam, which was deployed in the Gulf of Aden.

What is Red Sea?

- About:
 - Red Sea is narrow strip of water extending south-eastward from Suez, Egypt, to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.
 - Bab-el-Mandeb Strait connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Arabian Sea via the Red Sea and the Suez Canal.
 - Basically, it is a narrow inland sea between the Arabian Peninsula and Africa.
 - The Red Sea separates the coasts of Egypt, Sudan, and Eritrea from those of Saudi Arabia and Yemen.
 - The Gulf of Aqaba, a northeastern extension of the sea, reaches southern Israel and southwestern Jordan.
- Significance
 - The Red Sea contains some of the world’s hottest and saltiest seawater.
 - It is one of the most heavily travelled waterways in the world, carrying maritime traffic between Europe and Asia.
- Significance for India
 - Freight rates for Indian shipments headed to Europe and Africa could surge as much as 25-30 per cent if there is disruption along this route.
 - For India, the Red Sea trade route is the shortest trade route for ships moving from Asia to Europe.
 - India is heavily reliant on the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait for its crude oil, LNG imports and trade with parts of West Asia, Africa, and Europe.
 - This route is vital for 30 per cent of global container traffic.

Who are Houthis?

- About
 - The Houthis are a Shiite Muslim sect and political and military organization that emerged in Yemen (which is predominantly Sunni) in the 1990s.
 - Named after the Houthi tribe, they are Zaydi Shias.
 - Zayadism is a sub-sect of Shia Islam and it believes in following the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad’s family, as the political leader of the state.
 - The Houthis are also known as Ansar Allah, which translates to "Supporters of God".
- Involvement in civil war of Yemen
 - The Houthis are one side of the Yemeni civil war that has raged for nearly a decade.
 - Yemen’s civil war began in 2014 when Houthi insurgents took control of Yemen’s capital and largest city, Sana’a.

- By early 2015, Saudi Arabia, along with other Gulf States and with U.S. support, was launching airstrikes against the Houthis, who are backed by Iran.
- A ceasefire was finally signed in 2022. It lapsed after six months but the warring parties haven't returned to full-scale conflict.
- Houthis attacking Red Sea ships
 - The Iran-backed Houthi rebels of Yemen have been attacking ships in the Red Sea in response to Israel's military campaign in Gaza.
 - The Houthis support Hamas, and vowed on November 19 to target vessels they believe are heading to and from Israel.

Trouble in Red Sea and Impact on India

- Trouble in Red Sea
 - Attacks on cargo ships in the Red Sea since November 2023 by the Houthi militia of Yemen have increased.
 - It has turned the quickest marine route linking Asia with Europe through the Suez Canal unsafe.
 - It has forced freighters to take a longer transit around the Cape of Good Hope in Africa's southern tip, making shipments both dearer and longer to deliver.
- Status
 - Almost 90% of western hemisphere cargo, both inbound or shipped from India, that used to go through the Red Sea is now getting re-routed through the Cape of Good Hope.
 - The remaining 10% of Indian import or export cargo is either not moving or using a transit facility.
 - Container Corporation of India said that about 25% of its containers are being held back by Indian exporters as everybody is hoping the situation will normalise shortly.
- Impact on India
 - Besides the extra time taken on account of the longer route, the developments could make imports costlier and call for better inventory management.
 - The Red Sea crisis could come in the way of any plans to reduce pump prices of petrol and diesel.
 - Freight rates for impacted routes have increased.
 - War risk premiums in the Red Sea have been partially contributing to the freight-rate increases for the relevant routes.
 - Commodities are the worst affected whether it be chemicals, plastic, petrochemicals, because margins are not there to absorb the hike in freight.

PRELIM FACTS

1. Market Access Initiative (MAI) Scheme

- Ahead of the interim Budget 2024, exporters have urged the government to allocate funds worth \$3.88 billion for the Market Access Initiative (MAI) scheme.

About Market Access Initiative (MAI) Scheme:

- It is an export promotion scheme envisaged to act as a catalyst to promote India's exports on a sustained basis.
- The scheme is formulated on focus product-focus country approach to evolve specific markets and specific products through market studies and surveys.
- Assistance would be provided to Export Promotion Organizations/Trade Promotion Organizations/National Level Institutions/ Research Institutions/Universities/Laboratories, Exporters etc., for the enhancement of exports through accessing new markets or through increasing their share in the existing markets.
- Under the Scheme, the level of assistance for each eligible activities has been fixed.
- The following activities will be eligible for financial assistance under the Scheme:
 - Marketing Projects Abroad
 - Capacity Building
 - Support for Statutory Compliances
 - Studies
 - Project Development
 - Developing Foreign Trade Facilitation web Portal
 - To support Cottage and handicrafts units
- Eligible Agencies: Departments of Central Government and Organisation of Central/State Governments including
 - Indian Missions abroad
 - Export Promotion Councils
 - Registered trade promotion Organisation
 - Commodity Boards
 - Apex Trade Bodies recognized under Foreign Trade Policy of Govt of India
 - Recognized Industrial & Artisan Clusters

- Individual Exporters (only for statutory compliance etc.)
- National Level Institutions (e.g. Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), National Institute of design (NIDs), NIFT etc.)/ Research Institutions/Universities/ Recognized laboratories, etc.
- The funding for each project will be on cost-sharing basis with the sharing pattern ranging from 65% to 50% at the minimum.
- It is administered by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, through the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).

2. Singchung Bugun Village community Reserve

- Arunachal Pradesh, at the recently held Republic Day parade, showcased its Singchung Bugun Village Community Reserve, a 17-square-kilometre biodiversity hotspot.

About Singchung Bugun Village Community Reserve:

- It is a 17-square-kilometre biodiversity hotspot located in Arunachal Pradesh, around 40 km from the famous Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary.
- The reserve was created in 2017 to protect biodiversity in the region.
- It is home to critically endangered species such as the passerine bird Bugun Liocichla (*Liocichla bugunorum*), which is named after the Buguns community.
 - It was one of the first bird species to be discovered in India since the country's independence in 1947, and it lives only on the Buguns' community lands.
 - The Buguns are an indigenous community with a population of about 2,000 people, spread across 12 villages that are dotted outside the forests of Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary.

What is a Community Reserve?

- Conservation reserves and community reserves in India are terms denoting protected areas of India which typically act as buffer zones, connectors, and migration corridors between established national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and reserved and protected forests in India.
- Such areas are designated as conservation reserves if they are uninhabited and completely owned by the Government of India but used for subsistence by communities, and community reserves if part of the land is privately owned.
- These protected area categories were first introduced in the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act of 2002, an amendment to the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) of 1972.
- These categories were added because of reduced protection in and around existing or proposed protected areas due to private ownership of land, and land use.
- The provisions of the WLPA apply to an area once it has been declared a community reserve.

3. Quantum Computing

- Researchers have unveiled a novel approach that integrates quantum computing with the study of living organisms.

About Quantum Computing:

- It is an area of computer science focused on the development of technologies based on the principles of quantum theory.
- Quantum theory explains the behaviour of energy and material at the atomic and subatomic levels.
- It is based on the principles of the superposition of matter and quantum entanglement and uses a different computation method from the traditional one.
- Quantum computers have the capability to sift through huge numbers of possibilities and extract potential solutions to complex problems and challenges.
- How does it work?
 - Where classical computers store information as bits with either 0s or 1s, quantum computers use qubits.
 - While classical bits always represent either one or zero, a qubit can be in a superposition of one and zero simultaneously until its state is measured.
 - In addition, the states of multiple qubits can be entangled, meaning that they are linked quantum mechanically to each other.
 - Qubits can be made by manipulating atoms, electrically charged atoms called ions, or electrons, or by Nano-engineering so-called artificial atoms, such as circuits of superconducting qubits, using a printing method called lithography.

What is Superposition and Entanglement?

- They are two features of quantum physics on which quantum computing is based.
- They empower quantum computers to handle operations at speeds exponentially higher than conventional computers and with much less energy consumption.
- Superposition:
 - A qubit places the quantum information that it contains into a state of superposition.
 - This refers to a combination of all possible configurations of the qubit.
 - Groups of qubits in superposition can create complex, multidimensional computational spaces.
 - Complex problems can be represented in new ways in these spaces.

- Entanglement:
 - Pairs of qubits can be made to become entangled.
 - This means that the two qubits then exist in a single state.
 - In such a state, changing one qubit directly affects the other in a manner that's predictable.
 - Quantum algorithms are designed to take advantage of this relationship to solve complex problems.
 - While doubling the number of bits in a classical computer doubles its processing power, adding qubits results in an exponential upswing in computing power and ability.

4. Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR)

- More than 300 vultures were recorded in the recently completed synchronous vulture survey in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR).

About Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR):

- Location:
 - It is located in the Nilgiri Mountains of the Western Ghats.
 - It encompasses parts of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka.
- It was the first biosphere reserve in India, established in 1986.
- The total area of the reserve is 5,520 sq. km. It is the largest protected forest area in India.
- The Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Wyanaad Wildlife Sanctuary, Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Mukurthi National Park, and Silent Valley are the protected areas present within this reserve.
- Vegetation: It harbours a wide spectrum of ecosystem types, such as tropical evergreen forests, montane sholas and grasslands, semi-evergreen forests, moist deciduous forests, dry deciduous forests, and thorn forests.
- Climate: The annual rainfall of the reserve ranges from 500 mm to 7000 mm, with temperatures ranging from 0°C during the winter to 41°C during the summer.
- Tribal Population: Tribal groups like the Todas, Kotas, Irullas, Kurumbas, Paniyas, Adiyans, Edanadan Chettis, Cholanaickens, Allar, Malayan, etc., are native to the reserve.
- It is India's first biosphere reserve under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme.
- Flora:
 - About 3,300 species of flowering plants can be seen here. Of the 3,300 species, 132 are endemic to the NBR.
 - Some of the plants entirely restricted to the NBR include species of Adenoon, Calacanthus, Baeolepis, Frerea, Jarodina, Wagatea, Poeciloneuron, etc.
- Fauna:
 - It includes the largest known population of two endangered animal species, namely the Nilgiri Tahr and the Lion-tailed macaque and the largest South Indian population of elephant, tiger, gaur, sambar, and chital.

5. Armado

- The new Mahindra Armado recently made its first appearance at the Republic Day Parade.

About Armado:

- It is India's first Armoured Light Specialist Vehicle (ALSV).
- It is a fully indigenous vehicle designed and built by the Mahindra Defence Systems (MDS) for the Indian armed forces.
- It can be used in counter-terrorist and special forces operations. It can also be used by quick reaction teams, as a reconnaissance vehicle and for patrolling the borders.
- Features:
 - It has a seating capacity of six passengers, including the driver, and can be configured to seat up to eight.
 - Above the standard 1,000 kg load capacity, the ALSV can carry another 400 kg.
 - It gets ballistic protection up to the B7 level and STANAG level-2. This means that its armour offers protection against armour-piercing rifles.
 - Also, the ALSV gets protection on all sides (front, side and rear) from ballistics and explosives.
 - Powering the 4-wheeler is a 3.2-litre multi-fuel diesel engine that generates 216 hp of maximum power.
 - Armado takes just 12 seconds to accelerate from 0 to 60 kmph, and runs at a speed of more than 120 kmph.
 - It also gets a self-cleaning-type exhaust scavenging and air filtration system for extreme dusty climate, like deserts.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Effective management of India's border with neighbouring countries is the sine qua non for the eradication of terrorism, organized crime, cross-border insurgency, and other internal security issues faced by India. Discuss.

India's land borders exceed 15,000 km which is shared with seven countries like China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, including a small segment with Afghanistan (106 km) in northern Jammu and Kashmir

(J&K). It has a coastline that is 7,683 km long, and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that is over two million square km in size.

Various issues faced along the borders

- **India-China Border:** India and China have a long-standing border dispute along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Chinese military frequently trespass into the Indian territory and this has led to multiple military standoffs and clashes along the border, including the Doklam standoff in 2017 and the Galwan Valley clash in 2020.
- **Indo-Pakistan Border:** Border dispute and difficult terrain has resulted in poor infrastructure. This has made cross border terrorism and illicit activities like arms and drugs trafficking and fake currency racket by state and non-state actors in Pakistan due to the porous border possible. Failure of intelligence has also led to terrorist attacks like Pulwama attack of 2019 in Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Indo - Bangladesh Border:** The major issues faced are illegal migration from Bangladesh due to porous borders. Trans-border crimes like smuggling of cattle and human trafficking takes place along the Indo-Bangladesh border.
- **Indo - Nepal Border:** There is border dispute especially along Kalapani and Susta region because of shifting of Himalayan rivers. The Indo-Nepal border is open and it provides easy access to terrorists and insurgents and leads to smuggling of counterfeit currency, drug trafficking, etc due to open borders.
- **Indo-Myanmar Border:** Rugged terrain makes overall development of the area difficult. Indo- Myanmar border is porous which helps insurgents in finding safe haven in Myanmar. Drug trafficking is also rampant due to the vicinity of golden triangle area.
- **Indo-Bhutan Border:** Movement of insurgents groups like NDFB, ULFA members after carrying out extortions, killings, blasts, into Bhutan due to porous border.
- **Challenges along Coastal and Island region:** Use of sea by terrorists to carry out attacks due to poor maritime security. For Eg: Mumbai blast of 1993, 26/11 attack by Pakistan's state and non-state actors. Another problem is that of Maritime piracy and use of uninhabited islands by terrorists' groups for smuggling arms, narcotics, etc.

Importance of Effective border management:

- **Counterterrorism:** Effective border controls prevent the infiltration of terrorists and restrict the movement of arms and explosives.
- **Limit Organized Crime:** Tight border security curtails illegal activities such as drug and human trafficking, smuggling, and illicit trade.
- **Suppress Cross-border Insurgency:** A well-managed border deters insurgents from gaining foothold, resources, or support from external sources.
- **Preserve Sovereignty:** Maintaining clear and secure borders upholds national sovereignty and ensures territorial integrity.
- **Regulate Migration:** Effective management facilitates legal migration while preventing illegal entries, thus ensuring demographic stability.

Steps for effective border management:

- **Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS):** Effective implementation of CIBMS is required along all border areas to improve situational awareness at different levels of hierarchy to facilitate prompt and quick response to emerging situations along the India-Pakistan Border (IPB) and India-Bangladesh Border (IBB).
- **Border Electronically Dominated QRT Interception Technique (BOLD-QIT):** It will monitor unfenced riverine areas of Brahmaputra and its tributaries, thus reducing problems of illegal migration and smuggling from Bangladesh.
- **Increasing surveillance at border:** Day and night surveillance cameras and intrusion detection system, giving feed to security forces control room who send Quick Reaction Teams to thwart any illegal activity. Surveillance through unmanned aerial vehicles along difficult terrain can be an option.
- **Creating infrastructure along the borders:** For the effective management and quick response along the borders, ramping up of projects for the development of border infrastructure such as Border Fence, Border Roads, Border Floodlights, Border Out Posts (BOPs), etc is necessary. For this government is implementing Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM) Scheme which comprises of projects aimed at infrastructure development of India's international borders,
- **Role of artificial intelligence in border management:** AI-based software processes the data collected by these devices to identify potential threats and alert border patrol agents in real-time. Cameras powered by AI can scan a large number of people and can detect any suspicious activity.

Conclusion

Madhukar Gupta Committee has given its recommendations broadly on the issues of threats and border protection, assessment of force level, deployment on the border, infrastructure and technology issues for protection of border and administrative issues. A strong collaborative initiative is required with Ministry of Home Affairs and the Defence ministry as well as involving other defence ministries from the neighbouring states.

MCQs

- With reference to 'Changpa' community of India, consider the following statements:
 - They live mainly in the State of Uttarakhand.
 - They rear the Pashmina goats that yield a fine wool.
 - They are kept in the category of Scheduled Tribes.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 and 3 only**
 - 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3
- With the present state of development, Artificial Intelligence can effectively do which of the following?
 - Bring down electricity consumption in industrial units
 - Create meaningful short stories and songs
 - Disease diagnosis
 - Text-to-Speech Conversion
 - Wireless transmission of electrical energy
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 - 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
 - 1, 3 and 4 only**
 - 2, 4 and 5 only
 - 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
- Recently, scientists observed the merger of giant 'blackholes' billions of light-years away from the Earth. What is the significance of this observation?
 - 'Higgs boson particles' were detected.
 - 'Gravitational waves' were detected.**
 - Possibility of intergalactic space travel through 'wormhole' was confirmed.
 - It enabled the scientists to understand 'singularity'
- Consider the following statements with respect to 'INSAT-3DR':
 - The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) uses INSAT-3DR satellite data for weather forecasting and monitoring purposes.
 - It is an advanced meteorological satellite of India configured with an imaging System and an Atmospheric Sounder.
 - The colouration of images from the RGB (Red, Green, Blue) imager on the INSAT 3D satellite relies on Solar Reflectance and Brightness Temperature.
 How many of the above statements are correct?
 - Only one
 - Only two
 - All three**
 - None
- With reference to the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Act 2023, consider the following statements:
 - It seeks to reduce the pressure on wild medicinal plants by encouraging cultivation of medicinal plants.
 - The Act mandates AYUSH practitioners to pay Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) fees.
 - The term 'Ayush practitioner' is not clearly defined in the Act.
 Which of the statements given above are correct?
 - 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1 and 3 only**
 - 1, 2 and 3
- The FAO accords the status of 'Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS)' to traditional agricultural systems. What is the overall goal of this initiative? (2016)
 - To provide modern technology, training in modern farming methods and financial support to local communities of identified GIAHS so as to greatly enhance their agricultural productivity.
 - To identify and safeguard eco-friendly traditional farm practices and their associated landscapes, agricultural biodiversity and knowledge systems of the local communities.
 - To provide Geographical Indication status to all the varieties of agricultural produce in such identified GIAHS.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 2 only**
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3
- The 'Vertical devolution' of tax revenue in India refers to:
 - Sharing of tax revenue between the Central and State governments**
 - Allocation of tax burden across different income brackets
 - Efficiency of tax collection across different regions
 - Taxes on the corporation based on their profits
- With reference to the 'Alliance for Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality', consider the following statements:
 - It has been launched by India.
 - The alliance emphasizes adopting global best practices, sharing knowledge, and making investments in women's health, education, and enterprises.
 - The World Economic Forum (WEF) is the network partner for the alliance.
 How many of the statements given above are correct?
 - Only one
 - Only two
 - All three**
 - None
- The main objective of the World Trade Organization's (WTO's) Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) is to:
 - Eliminate all agricultural subsidies and trade barriers
 - Reduce trade distortions in the agricultural sector**
 - Promote sustainable agricultural practices
 - Ensure food security for all WTO members
- Consider the following statements:
 - Icebergs are formed by calving, or splitting glaciers and are made of fresh water.
 - The unseen portion of an iceberg, submerged below the waterline, is typically smaller and less dense than the above-water portion.
 - To qualify as an iceberg, the ice must have a height exceeding 16 feet above sea level, a thickness between 98-164 feet, and cover an area of at least 5,382 square feet.
 - The salinity (salt content) of an iceberg is lower than seawater.
 How many of the statements given above are correct?
 - Only one
 - Only two
 - Only three**
 - All four