

GS PAPER2- GOVERNANCE- ISSUES RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL SECTOR/SERVICES RELATING TO HEALTH**India's adoption of a new treatment for drug-resistant tuberculosis**

The article discusses India's adoption of a new treatment for drug-resistant tuberculosis. The new BPaLM regimen is shorter, more effective, and helps improve patient outcomes. It reflects India's strong commitment to eliminating tuberculosis ahead of the global target.

What is the new tuberculosis treatment in India?

1. India has introduced the BPaLM regimen for treating drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB).
2. This regimen uses four drugs: Bedaquiline, Pretomanid, Linezolid, and Moxifloxacin. It is more effective and shorter than traditional treatments, curing drug-resistant TB in just six months.

Why is this move important for India?

1. This change is crucial because an estimated 75,000 people in India have drug-resistant TB.
2. The shorter treatment duration, compared to the traditional 20 months, will help improve their quality of life and increase the chances of recovery.

How has India shown commitment to fighting TB?

1. India has shown strong political will to eliminate TB. It voluntarily set a target to eliminate TB by 2025, five years earlier than the global target.
2. India's TB incidence reduced by 16% from 2015 to 2022, which is faster than the global reduction rate.

What are some other measures India has taken?

1. India has adopted rapid molecular testing to diagnose drug-resistant TB. This led to better detection and higher treatment success rates.
2. Financial, nutritional, and societal support through the Ni-kshay Mitra scheme has also been beneficial. India's mortality rate from TB reduced by 18% from 2015 to 2022.

GS PAPER2- GOVERNANCE- ISSUES RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL SECTOR/SERVICES RELATING TO HEALTH**Issues with Drug Regulation in India**

The article critiques the Indian government's drug regulation reforms. It argues that policies on drug recalls, distribution practices, and confusing brand names have failed to become legally binding and are poorly implemented. Historical reports and court rulings highlight persistent issues and ineffective reforms.

What Are the Key Issues with Drug Regulation in India?

1. **Drug Recalls:** Guidelines for recalling drugs are not legally enforceable. Despite being identified as necessary since 1976, there is no legal consequence for not adhering to these guidelines.
2. **Distribution Practices:** The guidelines for how drugs should be stored and transported are not mandatory. A 2013 proposal to adopt World Health Organization standards for drug distribution was considered too difficult to implement across India's numerous retail outlets.
3. **Confusing Drug Names:** Efforts to prevent pharmaceutical companies from using similar brand names for different drugs have been ineffective. A legal rule introduced requires companies to declare that their brand names are distinct, but this self-regulation is flawed and doesn't address public health concerns.

What Historical Context and Legal Precedents Exist?

1. **Drug Recalls (1976):** The Drugs Consultative Committee flagged the absence of drug recall guidelines when state drug controllers noticed banned drugs were still being sold in other states.
2. **Storage Standards (1974):** The Supreme Court, in *Swantraj & Ors vs State Of Maharashtra*, recognized the need for proper standards in drug storage, especially during transit, to prevent drug degradation.
3. **Brand Name Confusion (2001):** The Supreme Court, in *Cadila Healthcare Limited vs Cadila Pharmaceuticals Limited*, highlighted the issue of confusing drug brand names and its impact on public health.
4. **Parliamentary Standing Committee Report (2012):** The 59th report of the PSC further emphasized the need for drug recall guidelines, proper drug storage standards, and regulations on confusing brand names, creating pressure for reform, but these issues remain unresolved.

What Actions Have Been Taken?

1. **Drug Recall Guidelines:** Introduced in 2012, 2017, and again in 2023 by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), but they lack legal enforceability. The Ministry of Health has not made them binding, despite being flagged since 1976.
2. **Distribution Practices:** In 2013, the World Health Organization's good distribution practices were discussed but not implemented due to concerns over feasibility. The proposal was revisited in 2019 after poor storage conditions were found in New Delhi, but no binding law followed.

3. **Confusing Brand Names:** In 2019, after a court ruling, the Ministry of Health introduced a rule requiring pharmaceutical companies to self-certify brand name uniqueness. However, this rule has proven ineffective in addressing public health concerns.

How Effective Have These Measures Been?

1. The measures have been criticized as ineffective and lacking legal force.
2. A report from the Parliamentary Standing Committee in 2012 and subsequent actions have not resulted in substantial improvements.
3. The bureaucracy's reluctance to implement stringent regulations continues to hinder progress.

Way Forward

1. To break the cycle of ineffective policymaking, direct intervention from the Prime Minister's Office may be necessary.
2. Continuous stakeholder consultations have delayed essential reforms, highlighting a leadership gap within the Ministry of Health.
3. Stronger, decisive action at the highest level is needed to implement binding regulations on drug recalls, distribution practices, and brand name clarity.
4. Ensuring accountability and cutting through bureaucratic delays could lead to more effective and enforceable policies that prioritize public health.

GS PAPER-3- ACHIEVEMENTS OF INDIANS IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY; INDIGENIZATION OF TECHNOLOGY AND DEVELOPING NEW TECHNOLOGY

ANRF: Aimed at Enhancing Research in India's Universities

The article discusses the launch of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) to boost research in India's universities. It aims to bridge gaps in infrastructure, promote collaboration with industry, and streamline funding for research, following global models like the US National Science Foundation.

What is the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)?

1. The ANRF was established under the ANRF Act, 2023 to improve research across India's universities and colleges.
2. It aims to fund, coordinate, and promote research, focusing on underfunded state universities, where 95% of students study but research capabilities are often lacking.
3. With a budget of Rs 50,000 crore over five years, the government will contribute Rs 14,000 crore, and the rest will come from industry and philanthropists.
4. The foundation follows the model of the US National Science Foundation, promoting industry-academia collaboration.
5. The initiative aligns with the National Education Policy 2020 and complements India's goal of becoming a knowledge-driven society.

What challenges does the ANRF address?

Bureaucratic Delays: ANRF will reduce delays in fund disbursement by cutting down bureaucratic hurdles, often caused by General Financial Rules (GFR).

Duplication in R&D: By coordinating research across sectors such as defence, agriculture, and health, ANRF will eliminate inefficiencies and duplication of efforts.

Industry-Academia Collaboration: Following the US model, ANRF will promote industry partnerships to drive research that aligns with market needs and fosters innovation.

What additional support does ANRF provide?

1. ANRF focuses on supporting **lower Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs)**, where capital needs are lower, failure rates higher, and students contribute to long-term projects.
2. The government's Rs 1 lakh-crore corpus for **higher TRL** research in **Focused Research Organisations (FROs)** and **deep-tech startups** complements ANRF's efforts, covering the entire research spectrum from basic to advanced development.

What is the long-term goal of ANRF?

ANRF aims to transform India into a knowledge-driven economy. By improving research infrastructure and collaboration, it hopes to promote sustainable development and innovation across sectors.

GS PAPER III-ECONOMY

54th GST Council

The 54th GST Council met under the Chairpersonship of the Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs in New Delhi.

Key Highlights of 54th GST Council

- **Cancer Drugs:** The GST rate on cancer drugs namely, **Trastuzumab Deruxtecan, Osimertinib and Durvalumab** to be reduced from **12% to 5%**.

- **Metal Scrap: Reverse Charge Mechanism (RCM)** to be introduced on **supply of metal scrap**
- Exemption: GST Council recommends to **exempt supply of research and development services by a Government Entity**; or a **research association, university, college or other institution** notified u/s 35 of Income Tax Act using government or private grants.
- GST Council also recommends **formation of a Group of Ministers (GoM) to study the future of compensation cess**
- **Compensation Cess: States are guaranteed compensation for any revenue shortfall below 14% growth (base year 2015-16) for the first five years ending 2022.**
- GST compensation is paid out of **Compensation Cess every two months** by the Centre to states.
- **Life and Health Insurance:** The Council has set up a Group of Ministers (GoM) to thoroughly review GST issues concerning life and health insurance.
- **Launch Of B2C E-Invoicing Pilot:** One of the most notable decisions from the 54th GST Council meeting was the launch of a pilot for B2C e-invoicing.

What is Reverse Charge Mechanism?

- **Typically:** The **supplier of goods or services** pays the tax on supply.
- **Under the reverse charge mechanism:** The **recipient of goods or services** becomes liable to pay the tax, i.e., the chargeability gets reversed.
- **Objectives:**
 - To **widen the scope of levy of tax** on various **unorganised sectors**;
 - To **exempt specific classes** of suppliers of goods/services
 - To **tax the import of services**

About GST Council

- **About:** It is a **constitutional body** formed under **Article 279A(1)**, enacted by the **101st Constitutional Amendment Act**.
- **Recommendations:** According to **Article 279A(4)**, the **GST Council recommends the GST rates** for the Union and the States.
- **Composition of GST Council (Article 279A(2)):** The GST Council brings together **representatives from the Centre and the States** to oversee the **nationwide implementation of GST**. Its membership includes:
 - **Chairperson:** Union Finance Minister
 - **Member:** Union Minister of State in charge of Revenue or finance
 - **Members nominated by each State Government**, typically in charge of finance or taxation
 - **Vice-Chairperson elected** from among the **Council members** (Article 279A(3))
- **Decision Making Process:** The GST rates are **jointly determined by the states and the central government** during GST Council meetings.
 - The GST Council requires **at least half of its total members to be present to conduct a meeting**.
 - Decisions are made based on a **majority of no less than three-fourths of the weighted votes of members present and voting**.
 - The **central government's vote carries a weight of one-third of the total votes cast**, while **all states collectively hold the remaining two-thirds weightage**.

PRELIM FACTS

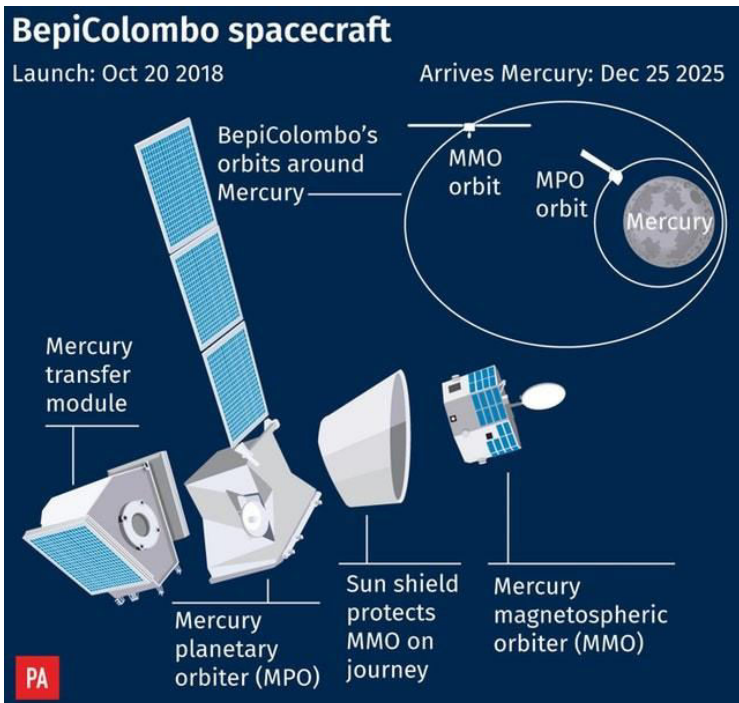
1. BepiColombo

BepiColombo made its closest flyby of Mercury, capturing detailed black-and-white images of the planet's cratered surface.

This flyby provided the first clear view of Mercury's south pole and its unique crater structures, like the peak ring basins. The spacecraft, launched in 2018, will begin orbiting Mercury in 2026, with the mission aimed at studying the planet's composition, geology, and magnetic field. Despite delays, scientists are excited about the mission's potential to uncover Mercury's many mysteries.

About BepiColombo:

BepiColombo is a joint mission by the European Space Agency (ESA) and Japan's JAXA to study Mercury. Launched on October 20, 2018, it's named after Italian scientist Giuseppe "Bepi" Colombo. The spacecraft has two components: ESA's Mercury Planetary Orbiter (MPO) to study Mercury's surface and composition, and JAXA's Mercury Magnetospheric Orbiter (MMO) to investigate its magnetic field. The mission aims to explore Mercury's geological history, magnetic field, exosphere, and test principles of general relativity.



2. Right to Protest

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud ordered the protesting doctors to resume work soon.

About Right to Protest

- Right to Protest is **not an explicit right** under the Fundamental rights, it can be derived from the Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression under Article 19.
 - **Article 19(1)(a):** Freedom of Speech and Expression
 - **Article 19(1)(b):** Right to Assemble Peacefully and Without Arms
 - **Article 19(1)(c):** Freedom to Form Associations or Unions
- **Article 21** : Right to protest was an integral part of speech and an essential aspect of the right to live guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- **Reasonable Restrictions:** Mentioned under Article 19(2) and 19(3) on the following grounds
 - In the interests of the sovereignty & integrity of India,
 - The security of the State,
 - Friendly relations with foreign States,
 - Violation of Public order,
 - Decency or morality or in relation to Contempt of court, defamation or incitement of an offence
- **Legal Right:** The **Right to Strike** in India is a significant aspect of labour rights, but **it is not an absolute or fundamental right**.
 - Instead, it is a legal right that is subject to various conditions and restrictions as outlined by the laws and judicial interpretations in the country.

Judiciary on Right to Protest

- **In Ramlila Maidan Incident v. Home Secretary, Union Of India & Ors. (2012):** The Supreme Court stated, "Citizens have a fundamental right to assembly and peaceful protest which cannot be taken away by an arbitrary or executive or legislative action".
- **Shaheen Bagh Protests(2019):** Recently, while hearing the plea regarding the Shaheen Bagh Protests in 2019, it upheld the right to peaceful protest against the law but also clarified that public ways and public spaces cannot be occupied and that too indefinitely.

3. Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan)

India's first 'teal carbon' study, conducted at Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan, focuses on using freshwater wetlands to address climate adaptation and resilience challenges.

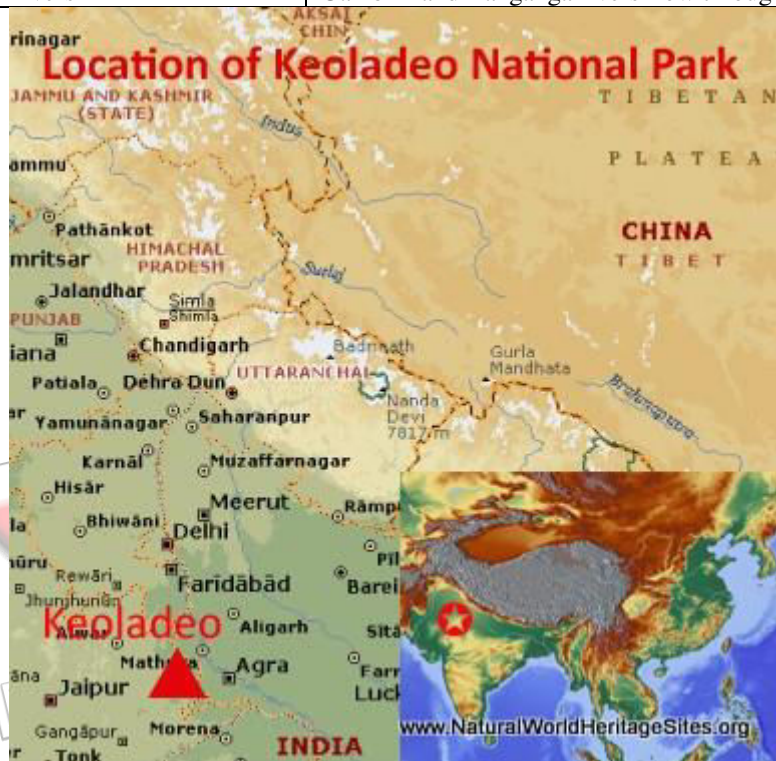
About Teal carbon:

It refers to carbon stored in non-tidal freshwater wetlands, including vegetation, microbial biomass, and organic matter. The study highlights the potential of wetlands in regulating greenhouse gases and mitigating climate change, while

calling for urgent conservation efforts. Led by the Central University of Rajasthan, the study emphasizes reducing methane emissions and developing biochar for effective wetland conservation.

About Keoladeo National Park:

Key Points	Details
Location	Bharatpur, Rajasthan
Significance	UNESCO World Heritage Site; Important bird-watching area
Ramsar Recognition	First Ramsar Site of India (1981) alongside Chilika Lake
Montreux Record Status	Currently listed, along with Loktak Lake (Manipur)
Bird Diversity	Home to over 365 bird species, including rare and threatened species like the Siberian crane
Migratory Birds	Attracts species from the northern hemisphere for breeding
Fauna	Jackals, Sambar, Nilgai, wild cats, hyenas, wild boar, porcupine, mongoose
Flora	Tropical dry deciduous forest with Acacia nilotica and dry grassland
Rivers	Gambhir and Banganga rivers flow through the park



4. Silicon Carbide (SiC)

India’s first silicon carbide manufacturing facility will be established in Odisha with an investment of Rs 620 crore by RIR Power Electronics Limited, a leader in semiconductor power electronics.

About Silicon Carbide (SiC) (also known as carborundum)

It is a hard, synthetic crystalline compound of silicon and carbon. It has excellent thermal conductivity, mechanical strength, and resistance to wear and oxidation. SiC is used in semiconductor devices, mechanical seals, structural ceramics, heat exchangers, optical mirrors, and ballistic armor.

5. Over 100 malnourished children found among Sahariya Tribe

In Rajasthan’s Baran district, over 100 malnourished Sahariya children were found in the Shahabad-Kishanganj area. A recent survey identified 172 cases of malnutrition, prompting the admission of affected children to government-run Malnourishment Treatment Centres (MTCs).

About Sahariya Tribe:

Aspect	Details
Tribe Name	Sahariya (also known as Seher, Sair, Sawar, Saor, Sahara, etc.)
Location	Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh
Historical Origin	Trace their origins to the days of the Ramayana and even earlier
Vulnerability	Among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups in India
Settlement	Reside in separate areas called 'Seharana' within villages; typically clusters of houses made of stone boulders or mud
Caste System	Strong ties to the caste system, with members of the same caste living in close proximity
Religion Practice	Hinduism
Language	Speak a dialect influenced by Hindi and Brij Bhasha
Cultural Practice	Known for the Saharia Swang dance performed during Holi, featuring male performers in female attire, accompanied by dhol, nagari, and matki
Economic Activities	Dependent on forest products, agriculture, and daily wage labor; skilled in making catechu from khair trees

6.Delay in Census: Govt Dissolves Standing Committee on Statistics

The government has dissolved the 14-member Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS), which was overseeing statistical surveys, amid concerns about the delay in conducting the national census. The committee, led by former Chief Statistician Pronab Sen, had previously raised issues over delays in both the economic and population censuses. The last census was conducted in 2011, with the next due in 2021.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) stated that the committee's work overlapped with that of the newly formed Steering Committee for National Sample Surveys, leading to its dissolution.

Standing Committee on Economic Statistics (SCES)

Established: 2019 by MoSPI

Nature: Temporary committee for addressing critical statistical issues

Funding: Government of India (via MoSPI)

Objectives:

Advise on survey methodology (sampling, design, instruments)

Finalize survey tabulation plans

Steering Committee for National Sample Surveys (NSS)

Established: July 2023

Objective: Oversee survey-related matters of NSSO, based on NSC recommendations.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. How does the digital divide in Indian villages affect the success of e-governance initiatives? Suggest strategies to ensure effective implementation of digital governance in rural areas.

Bridging the digital divide in villages is essential for India's inclusive development, as it impacts 900 million rural citizens living in over 600,000 villages. By enhancing access to technology, financial services, and infrastructure, rural India can achieve economic growth and uplift underserved regions, ensuring socio-economic equality across the country.

Digital Divide in Indian villages affecting the success of e-governance initiatives:

- **High Costs of Infrastructure Development:** Establishing digital infrastructure in remote villages requires significant investment, with low returns deterring private sector involvement, thus limiting the reach of e-governance initiatives like online service delivery.
For example: The **BharatNet project** faces delays in several states due to **high costs** and challenging terrain, slowing down access to e-governance services.
- **Lack of Digital Literacy:** Many rural citizens are digitally illiterate, limiting their ability to use government e-services effectively and restricting their participation in digital governance and access to public services.
For example: Programs like **Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA)** have struggled to bridge the digital literacy gap in rural areas, reducing the adoption of e-governance platforms.
- **Inconsistent Internet Connectivity:** Even when infrastructure is present, poor internet connectivity often disrupts the delivery of online governance services, making it difficult for citizens to access essential services like health and education.
For instance: Low bandwidth in villages under the **Digital India** initiative affects the functionality of e-governance platforms, hindering services like **Aadhaar verification** and **digital payments**.

- **Trust Deficit in Digital Services:** Rural populations often show a lack of trust in digital platforms, preferring traditional cash-based systems over e-governance solutions, which limits the **reach** and **effectiveness** of these initiatives.
For instance: The **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** has faced difficulties in reaching farmers due to scepticism about digital claims processes.
- **Limited Customization of E-Governance Services:** E-governance services are often force-fitted from urban models, making them less relevant to the specific needs of rural populations. This disconnect hampers the adoption of digital governance.
For instance: Basic services like **digital banking** under **PMJDY** do not cater to the seasonal income patterns of rural farmers, reducing the scheme's relevance.

Way Ahead:

- **Enhancing Digital Literacy:** Comprehensive **digital literacy programs** should be implemented to empower rural citizens to use digital tools effectively.
For example: The **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)** needs to be scaled up to cover all rural households.
- **Reducing Internet Costs:** Efforts should be made to **subsidise internet costs** in rural areas to make digital services more accessible to low-income households.
For example: Offering special data plans for rural areas can boost usage of digital platforms.
- **Customising Financial Products:** Developing **rural-specific financial products** such as microloans and flexible savings schemes can enhance adoption of digital financial services.
For example: **Micro-credit** schemes tailored to rural consumption patterns could improve economic empowerment in villages.
- **Strengthening Digital Platforms for Agriculture:** Developing **AI-based digital platforms** for agriculture, such as crop management and insurance services, will boost productivity and financial inclusion.
For example: The **e-NAM platform** has digitally connected farmers to markets, enhancing their incomes.
- **Capacity Building for Financial Accessibility:** Building capacity among local touchpoints like self-help groups (SHGs) and **farmer producer organisations (FPOs)** can help rural citizens access financial products like credit and insurance.
For example: **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)** supports SHGs to offer micro-finance, expanding financial inclusion in rural regions.
- **Combining AI with Human Intelligence:** By integrating **artificial intelligence (AI)** with local networks, rural populations can benefit from personalised services and solutions designed for their specific needs.
For example: **AI-based fintech platforms** are now helping small farmers access **crop insurance** and digital financial services, enhancing rural livelihoods.
- **Leveraging Local Trust Networks:** Local retailers and **business correspondents (BCs)** can act as a nerve centre for digital accessibility by offering services like **microcredit** and **insurance** to rural populations.
For example: The **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** uses BCs to facilitate banking services for the unbanked rural population, ensuring financial inclusion.

India's journey to bridge the digital divide in its villages requires a concerted effort to provide affordable internet, financial inclusion, and tailored digital services. By leveraging local networks and technology, India can fuel inclusive development and bring socio-economic growth to its vast rural population, ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital revolution.

MCQ

1. With respect to 'GST Council' consider the following statements:
 1. It is a constitutional body formed under Article 279A(1), enacted by the 101st Constitutional Amendment Act.
 2. The GST Council requires at least ten percent of its total members to be present to conduct a meeting.
 3. Decisions are made based on a majority of no less than two-third of the weighted votes of members present and voting.
 Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?
 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3
2. Which of the following Statements are correct with regard to 'Swiss Peace Process'?
 1. The Swiss Peace Process is a diplomatic effort aimed at resolving the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine (Hamas).
 2. It includes a series of international summits and meetings hosted in Switzerland, known for its neutrality and diplomatic mediation capabilities.

3. India has taken a proactive stance regarding the Swiss Peace Process and has endorsed the Joint Communiqué from the Bürgenstock Summit. Select the answer using the code given below?
- 1 only
 - 2 only**
 - 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3 all
3. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to 'Indotestudo elongata' Tortoise or Sal Forest Tortoise?
- It is Critically Endangered.
 - It is protected under Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972.
 - It is widely distributed over eastern as well as northern India and Southeast Asia.
- Select the answer using the code given below?
- 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1 and 3 only**
 - 1, 2 and 3 all
4. Consider the following statements:
- The Census Act of 1948 mandates that the Census in India be conducted every ten years.
 - In India, the Census is carried out using direct data collection techniques such as household surveys and enumerations.
 - A register-based Census uses data collected from administrative registers maintained by government agencies.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only**
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3
5. With reference to District Agro-Meteorology Units (DAMUs), consider the following statements:
- DAMUs are setup to provide weather information specifically for agriculture.
 - The DAMUs are located in meteorological observatories to enhance the collection of weather-specific data.
 - The advice by the DAMUs is sent out twice a week for free in local languages.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- Only one
 - Only two**
 - All three
 - None
6. Consider the following statements regarding the Sahariya tribe:
- The Sahariya tribe traces its origins back to the period of the Ramayana.
 - They primarily speak a dialect influenced by Hindi and Brij Bhasha.
 - The Sahariya tribe practices Buddhism as their primary religion.
- How many of the above statements is/are correct?
- Only one
 - Only two**
 - All three
 - None
7. India's first 'teal carbon' study was conducted in which of the following national parks?
- Kaziranga National Park
 - Sundarbans National Park
 - Keoladeo National Park**
 - Jim Corbett National Park
8. Consider the following statements regarding the Standing Committee on Economic Statistics (SCES):
- SCES was established by the Ministry of Finance.
 - The committee focuses primarily on advising survey methodology and finalizing survey tabulation plans.
 - SCES is a permanent committee tasked with providing oversight on economic statistics.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 2 only**
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 1, 2, and 3
9. The BepiColombo mission is a joint collaboration between which two space agencies?
- NASA and ESA
 - Roscosmos and JAXA
 - ISRO and NASA
 - ESA and JAXA**
10. Consider the following statements regarding Keoladeo National Park:
- It is located in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
 - Keoladeo National Park was declared the first Ramsar Site in India along with Vembanad Lake.
 - The Gambhir and Banganga rivers flow through the park, supporting its ecosystem.
- How many of the above statements is/are correct?
- Only one
 - Only two**
 - All three
 - None