



30 Days Revision Module Day 15 - May 2021 Current Affairs (UPSC Prelims 2021)

1) What is the following purpose of NASA's GRACE Mission?

- Mapping heat variation in Sun's outer layer
- Estimates of glacier loss and groundwater pumping
- Measuring climatic changes due to anthropogenic activities
- Mapping variations in the Earth's gravity

Answer : d

Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE) mission

- It was selected as the second mission under the NASA Earth System Science Pathfinder (ESSP) Program in May 1997.
- It is a joint partnership between the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the United States and Deutsche Forschungsanstalt für Luft und Raumfahrt (DLR) in Germany.
- It was aimed at accurately mapping variations in the Earth's gravity field over its 5-year lifetime.
- Its objective was to map the Earth's gravity fields by making accurate measurements of the distance between the two satellites, using GPS and a microwave ranging system.
- The gravity variations that GRACE were:
 - Changes due to surface and deep currents in the ocean;
 - Runoff and ground water storage on land masses;
 - Exchanges between ice sheets or glaciers and the oceans; and
 - Variations of mass within the Earth.

2) United States of America (USA) has recently approved a major solar energy project in California desert region. Which of the following deserts are **not** a part of California Deserts?

- Mojave Desert
- Sonoran Desert
- Colorado Desert
- Chihuahua Desert
- The Great Basin Desert

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- 2 and 4 only
- 3 and 5 only
- 1, 2 and 5 only
- None of the above

Answer : a

- The US government has approved a major solar energy project in the California desert that

will be capable of powering nearly 90,000 homes.

- The 550 million dollar **Crimson Solar Project** will be sited on 2,000 acres of federal land west of Blythe, California.

The California desert region comprises three distinctive deserts:

1. The Mojave Desert
2. The Colorado Desert
3. The Great Basin Desert

- The Mojave Desert, bounded by the Tehachapi Mountains to the northwest, the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains on the south, and eastward to California's borders with Arizona and Nevada.
- The Colorado Desert lies in the southeast corner of the state, between the Colorado River and the coastal ranges, and continues into Mexico and Arizona to the southeast.
- The Great Basin Desert lies immediately to the east of the Sierra Nevada range and extends east to Nevada.

3) Consider the following statements with respect to Post Devolution Revenue Deficit (PDRD) Grants

1. It is provided by the Union government to the States under Article 275 of the Constitution.
2. The eligibility of States to receive this grant will be decided by Finance Commission.
3. The grant will be calculated based on the gap between assessment of revenue and expenditure of the State.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer : d

Post Devolution Revenue Deficit (PDRD) Grants

- The grants are released as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission in monthly instalments to meet the gap in Revenue Accounts of the States post-devolution (of the divisible tax pool of the Centre).
- The 15th Finance Commission has recommended post devolution revenue deficit grants amounting to about Rs. 3 trillion over the five-year period ending FY26.
- The number of states qualifying for the revenue deficit grants decreases from 17 in FY22, the first year of the award period to 6 in FY26, the last year.
- Over the five-year period, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal are recommended to be provided with the deficit grants.
- The Ministry of Finance has accepted the recommendation.

Article 275 of the Constitution

- It provides for the payment of such sums as Parliament may by law provide as grants-in aid to such States as Parliament may determine to be in need of assistance.
- The grants are paid out of the Consolidated Fund of India in each year, and different sums may be fixed for different States.
- These grants are to be of the nature of capital and recurring sums as may be necessary.

- These aim to enable that State to meet the costs of such schemes of development as may be undertaken by it with the approval of the Government of India for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in that State or raising the level of administration of the Scheduled Areas there in to that of the administration of the rest of the areas of that State.
- Grants are primarily intended to correct Inter-State disparities in financial resources and to coordinate the maintenance and expansion of the welfare schemes of the State Governments on a uniform national level.

4) Which of the following organizations have released Conflict and Conservation Report?

- UN- Environment Program (UNEP)
- World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- Wild Life Conservation Society (WCS)

Answer : c

Conflict and Conservation Report

- It is released by International Union for Conservation of nature (IUCN).
- It focuses on the complex relationships between nature and armed conflict.
- Objective of the report helps us to bring the importance of nature conservation into mainstream political and economic decision making.
- Major threats posed by the conflict are as follows:

- Direct killing of wildlife for food
- Degradation of ecosystems
- Disruption of conservation efforts

- Key highlights of the report are as follows:

- Armed conflicts were particularly prevalent in some of the world's more bio-diverse regions
- Conflicts were less frequent within the boundaries of natural reserves and other protected areas
- Degradation of nature was associated with increased risk of conflict

5) Which of the following statement(s) is/ are correct with respect to Social Stock Exchange (SSE)

- It aims to help social and voluntary organizations which work for social causes to raise capital as equity or debt or a unit of mutual fund.
- It works under Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- Only Not for Profit Organization (NPO) will be eligible to tap the SSE in India.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- 1 only
- 1 and 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only

Answer : b

- Recently a technical group on social stock exchanges (SSEs), constituted by SEBI has recommended that political and religious organisations, trade organisations as well as corporate foundations should not be allowed to raise funds through SSEs.
- Corporate foundations, political or religious organizations/ activities, professional or trade associations, infrastructure and housing companies (except affordable housing) will not be permitted on SSE.

- These recommendations were issued by the committee setup under the chairmanship of Harsh Bhanwala, former chairman of NABARD.
- The technical group report said both For Profit Enterprise (FPE) and Not for Profit Organisation (NPO) will be eligible to tap the SSE if they are able to show their primary goals are social intent and impact.

Social Stock Exchange (SSE)

- Social enterprise can be defined as a non-loss; non-dividend paying company created and designed to address a social problem.
- It provides new and cheaper sources of financing for social welfare projects, while showcasing India's independence from foreign aid.
- SSE already exists in countries such as Singapore, UK, and Canada among others.
- These countries allow firms operating in sectors such as health, environment and transportation to raise risk capital.

6) Consider the following statements with respect to Article 311

1. It puts certain restrictions on the absolute power of the President or Governor for dismissal, removal or reduction in rank of an officer.
2. The protective safeguards given under Article 311 are applicable to both civil servants and defence personnel.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : a

Article 311

- Article 311 (1) says that no government employee either of an all India service or a state government shall be dismissed or removed by an authority subordinate to the one that appointed him/her.
- Article 311 (2) says that no civil servant shall be dismissed or removed or reduced in rank except after an inquiry in which s/he has been informed of the charges and given a reasonable opportunity of being heard in respect of those charges.
- People Protected under Article 311 are the members of

1. Civil service of the Union,
2. All India Service, and
3. Civil service of any State,
4. People who hold a civil post under the Union or any State.

- The protective safeguards given under Article 311 are applicable only to civil servants, i.e. public officers, and they are not available to defence personnel.
- According to Article 310, except for the provisions provided by the Constitution, a civil servant of the Union works at the pleasure of the President and a civil servant under a State works at the pleasure of the Governor of that State (English doctrine of Pleasure), but this power of the Government is not absolute.
- Article 311 puts certain restrictions on the absolute power of the President or Governor for dismissal, removal or reduction in rank of an officer.

7) Which of the following statement(s) is/ are correct with respect to *White Fungus*

1. It can be caused by the unsterile use of oxygen cylinders or the overuse of steroids.
2. It predominantly attacks body parts such as lungs, skin, nail, brain, kidney, mouth etc.
3. The treatment requires surgeries and expensive injections.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1 only

Answer : a

White Fungus Infections

- It is a fungal infection where there is formation of whitish membranes or discharge caused by candida group of organisms.
- It is a fungal infection called candidiasis, it can be caused by the unsterile use of oxygen cylinders or the overuse of steroids.
- The symptoms are whitish patches in the oral cavity, white discharge, skin lesions and symptoms of pneumonia of cough, chest pain and low oxygen level.
- The Anti-fungal drugs can be used to treat patients infected with White Fungus.
- Candidiasis can be treated with fluconazole or itraconazole orally.
- The tropical applications will be required for infections in the oral cavity or genitourinary regions.
- It can be prevented by proper sanitisation of ventilators/oxygen cylinders and also, by taking accurate care of the medical types of equipment that are used on the patients.
- It is more likely to infect people with low immunity, it can also be caused if people come in contact with water or unsanitary environment containing the moulds.
- The disease isn't contagious but a person is said to be vulnerable to the infection since these moulds can be easily inhaled by a patient.
- The fungus can further spread to vital organs and cause complications.
- White fungus is curable with commonly available medicines and does not need expensive injections unlike in the case of mucormycosis.
- The people with low immunity, comorbidities, diabetes, cancer or those using steroids regularly are at a higher risk of getting infected with the white fungus.

Black Fungus

- It is caused by a group of moulds known as mucormycetes present naturally in the environment.
- It mainly affects people who are on medication for health problems that reduces their ability to fight environmental pathogens.
- It is treated with antifungals and mucormycosis may eventually require surgery.

8) Consider the following statements with respect to Sudano Sahelian Zone (SSZ)

1. It is one of the Safe Climatic Spaces (SCS) on earth where production of food crops and livestock is high.
2. This region is the wealthiest region in African continent due to abundant natural resources.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : d

Sudano Sahelian Zone (SSZ)

- Safe Climatic Space is defined as the areas where 95 per cent of global food crop production takes place due to favourable weather conditions, temperature, rainfall, etc.
- Sudano Sahelian Zone (SSZ), one of the poorest in the world, is characterised by fluctuating rainfall and droughts.
- The region lies outside the safe climatic space (SCS).
- The semi-arid SSZ is located between the Sharan dessert and the humid Guinean zone and stretches from the Atlantic coast to the red sea coast.
- It comprises 16 countries in Africa and are more vulnerable to climate change.
- The associated risks have pushed food crop as well as livestock production outside safe climatic space (SCS), in turn jeopardising food security in the region, a new study has warned.

9) Consider the following statements with respect to Judicial Recusal

1. It is the act of abstaining from legal proceeding due to a conflict of interest of the presiding court official or administrative officer.
2. Grounds for recusal includes if a judge is biased in favour of one party, or against another, or that a reasonable objective observer would think he might be.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are **not correct**?

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

Answer : d

Judicial Disqualification or Recusal

- Judicial disqualification, referred to as recusal, is the act of abstaining from participation in an official action such as a legal proceeding due to a conflict of interest of the presiding court official or administrative officer.
- Grounds for Recusal includes:
 1. The judge is biased in favour of one party, or against another, or that a reasonable objective observer would think he might be.
 2. Interest in the subject matter, or relationship with someone who is interested in it.
 3. Background or experience, such as the judge's prior work as a lawyer.
 4. Personal knowledge about the parties or the facts of the case.
 5. Ex parte communications with lawyers or non-lawyers
- There are no definite rules on recusals by Judges, However in taking oath of office, judges, both of the Supreme Court and of the high courts, promise to perform their duties, to deliver justice, "without fear or favour, affection or ill-will".

10) Which of the statements given below regarding GST Council is **not correct**?

- a. One-half of the total number of members of GSTC form quorum in meetings of GSTC
- b. Decision in GSTC are taken by a majority of not less than three-fourth of weighted votes cast
- c. Centre has one-third weightage of the total votes cast and all the states taken together have two-third of weightage of the total votes cast

d. None of the above

Answer : d

GST Council

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is governed by the GST Council.
- Article 279 (1) of the amended Indian Constitution states that the GST Council has to be constituted by the President within 60 days of the commencement of the Article 279A.
- According to the article, GST Council will be a joint forum for the Centre and the States.
- GST Council is an apex member committee to modify, reconcile or to procure any law or regulation based on the context of goods and services tax in India.
- The GST Council dictates tax rate, tax exemption, the due date of forms, tax laws, and tax deadlines, keeping in mind special rates and provisions for some states.

It consists of the following members:

1. The Union Finance Minister, (the Chairperson)
2. As a member, the Union Minister of State will be in charge of Revenue of Finance
3. The Minister in charge of finance or taxation or any other Minister nominated by each State government, as members.

Forum

- One-half of the total number of members of GSTC form quorum in meetings of GSTC.
- Decision in GSTC are taken by a majority of not less than three-fourth of weighted votes cast.
- Centre has one-third weightage of the total votes cast and all the states taken together have two-third of weightage of the total votes cast.
- All decisions taken by the GST Council has been arrived at through consensus. The option of exercising a vote has not been resorted to till date.

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