



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

26th July 2026



CONTEXT: Protests over the Ken-Betwa project.

- Core Idea & Rationale
- National River Linking Project

Historical background

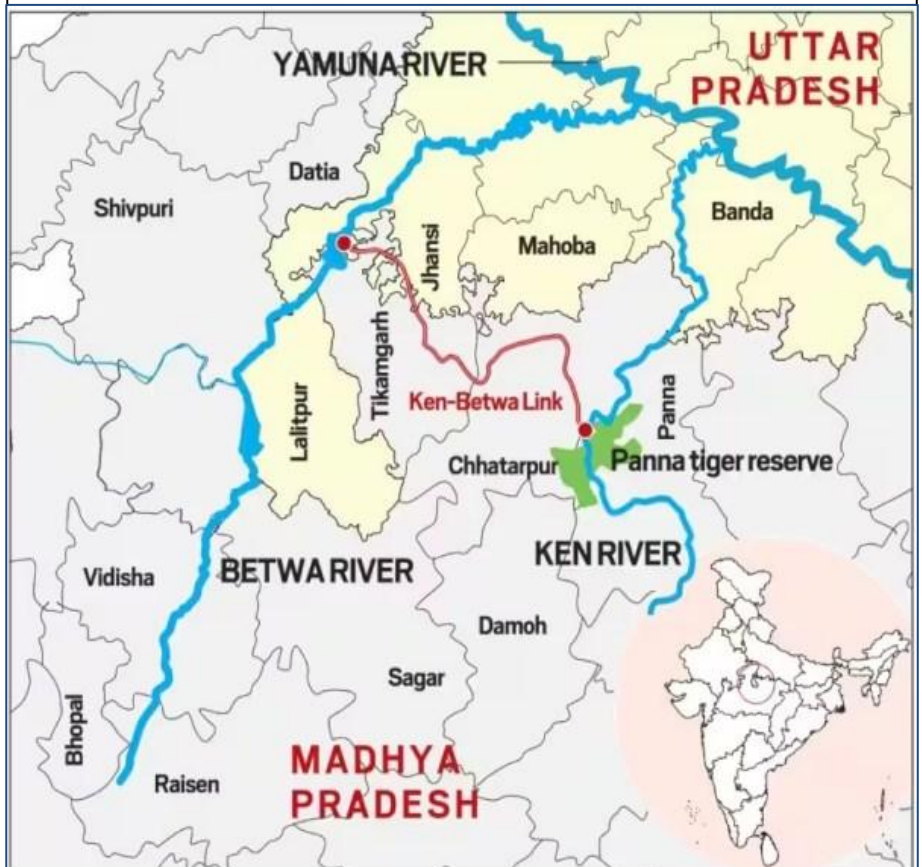
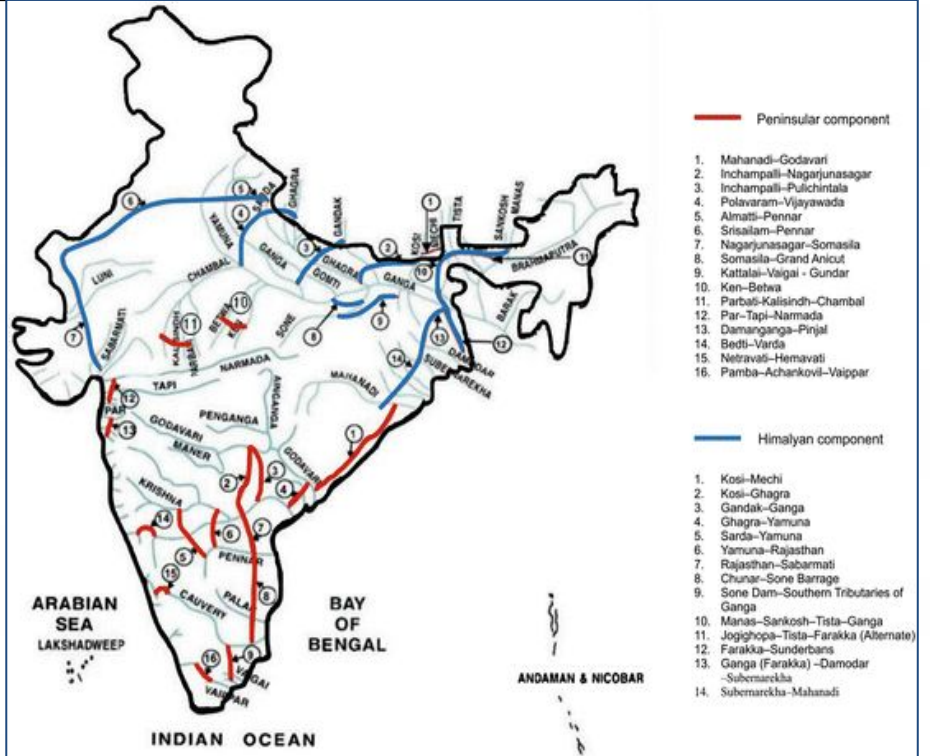
- 1919: Sir Arthur Cotton
- 1960: KL Rao
- 1980: NPP formulated
- 1982: National Water Development Agency established
- 2002: SC directed govt - plan by 2003; implement by 2016
- 2014: Cabinet approved Ken-Betwa
- 2015: implementation in segments
 - Godavari-Krishna in AP
- 2019: work on Ken-Betwa begun
 - First major project under NRLP

Models

- IG Canal Project
- California State Water Project
- Grand Canal, China
- Chao Phraya River Diversion Project, Thailand

Advantages

- Hydrological Imbalance
- Inland navigation
- Irrigation
- Power generation
- Water supply
- Flood control
- Employment Generation

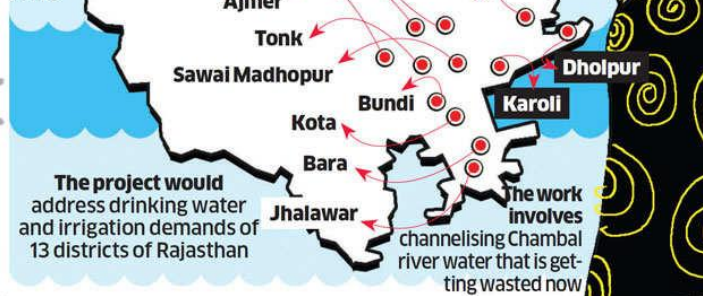


CONTEXT: Protests over the Ken-Betwa project.

Hydropolitics in Desert State

Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project is all set to get Union Cabinet approval within this month

The ₹40,451-crore project will be done in 3 phases and is proposed to be completed in seven years



BENEFITS FOR EASTERN RAJASTHAN

Challenges

- Ecological
 - Climate Change Impact
 - Environmental cost
 - Change in River Course
 - Impact on River Ecosystem/Wetlands/Forest/Agriculture
- Human Cost
 - Displacement
 - Interstate Conflicts
- Legal
 - Constitutional Issues
 - Disputes
 - Land Acquisition
- Economic
 - Financial burden
 - Non viability of Large hydropower projects
 - Delayed returns
- Political challenge
 - Consensus
- International cost

Suggestions

- Effective utilisation of existing resources

- Groundwater management
- Virtual water
- National Waterways Project

Ken-Betwa project

- ₹44k crore
- First of 30 proposed under NPP
- Ken to Betwa via Daudhan and 221-km canal
- 103 MW hydro + 27 MW solar
- Drought-prone Bundelkhand
 - drinking water to ~4.4 mn in MP
 - >2 mn in UP

Tribal demands

- 14 villages in Chhatarpur; 8 villages in Panna displacement
- Each adult as individual beneficiary (not per family) for ₹12.5 lakh rehabilitation package
- Eligibility cut-off date: Feb 16, 2024 to present date
- Majhgaon and Runjh irrigation projects
 - rehabilitation and compensation on par with Ken-Betwa package
- Irregularities in survey and selection process
- Irregularities in GS proceedings

Environmental concerns

- Large part inside Panna TR
- Jal Shakti Ministry: ~17,101 trees for felling
 - 12,404 trees within Reserve Forest
- May hurt tiger reintroduction programme
- Endangered vultures, mahseer fish, gharials
- Hydrological data of the 2 basins not released

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

River Interlinking is envisaged as a long-term solution to India's water scarcity and regional imbalances, but it also raises significant environmental, social, economic, and federal concerns. Examine the advantages and challenges of the National River Interlinking Programme.



CONTEXT: Allegations of targeting Basic Structure of the Constitution

The Basic Structure Doctrine: A History

1951

Shankari Prasad v. Union of India

Parliament's power of amending the Constitution under Article 368 held to include the power to amend Part III containing the Fundamental Rights.



1965

Sajjan Singh v. State of Rajasthan

Parliamentary supremacy & its power to amend any part of the Constitution upheld again. Importantly, Mudholkar and Hidayatullah JJ dissents.



1967

Golaknath v. State of Punjab

In a complete reversal, the court rules that Fundamental Rights could not be amended by Parliament, unless another constituent assembly is formed.



1971

24th Constitutional Amendment

Articles 368 and Article 13 modified to allow Parliament to unilaterally amend Fundamental Rights, overturning the Golaknath ruling.



1973

Keshavananda Bharti v. State of Kerala

Court rules all parts of the Constitution, including Fundamental Rights, can be amended keeping its 'basic structure' intact.



1975

39th Constitutional Amendment

Election of president, vice president, prime minister and speaker placed beyond the scope of judicial review, in the backdrop of the Emergency.



1975

Indira Gandhi v. Raj Narain

Applying the 'basic structure' doctrine for the first time, the court strikes down the Amendment. Free & fair elections held to be part of basic structure.



1976

42nd Constitutional Amendment

Constitutional amendments protected against being called in question by any court. Parliament's constituent power to amend declared as limitless.



1980

Minerva Mills v. Union of India

Modifications rejected by the court, which clarified that Parliament's power to amend the constitution is limited by the Constitution itself.



Examples of Basic Features

- Kesavananda v. State of Kerala, AIR 1973 SC 1461
 - Supremacy of the Constitution
 - Sovereign, Democratic, Republican Structure
 - Article 50
 - balance between Part III and IV
- Indira v. Rajnarain, AIR 1975 SC 2299
 - Rule of law
 - Principle of Separation of Power
 - Parliamentary System of Government
 - Principle of Free and Fair Elections
- Minerva, Mills v. Union of India, AIR 1980 SC 1789
 - Federalism
 - Secularism
 - Freedom & dignity of the individual

Effect on Related Doctrines

Doctrine of Legislative Overruling

- Parliament's tool to nullify judicial pronouncements
 - 1st Amendment
 - 24th Amendment
 - SC/ST Amendment Act
- Impediment by BSD

Doctrine of Constitutional Morality

- Both judicially created, open-ended
- Twinning
- Cotermious application
 - Navtej Singh Johar vs UoI
 - Manoj Narula vs UoI: norms & RoL
 - NCT of Delhi vs UoI



CONTEXT: Allegations of targeting Basic Structure of the Constitution

Significance of Basic Structure

- Supremacy of Constitution
- Preserve ideals of founding fathers
- "North Star" for guidance
- Prevent totalitarianism
- Article 368: No express limitation on Parliament
- Fundamental Principles
 - Judicial Independence & JR
 - Fundamental Rights
 - Democratic principles
- Responsibly applied by judiciary

Criticism of Basic Structure

- No constitutional basis
- Vague & Ambiguous
- Subjectivity
- Anti-Democratic & Counter-majoritarian
- Violates Separation of Powers
- Judicial overreach
- Legislative Inefficacy/ Govt of Judges

Prelims PYQ

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The Constitution of India defines its 'basic structure' in terms of federalism, secularism, fundamental rights and democracy.
2. The Constitution of India provides for 'judicial review' to safeguard the citizens' liberties and to preserve the ideals on which the Constitution is based.

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

Mains PYQs

- Starting from inventing the 'basic structure' doctrine, the judiciary has played a highly proactive role in ensuring that India develops into a thriving democracy. In light of the statement, evaluate the role played by judicial activism in achieving the ideals of democracy. **(2014)**
- Judicial Legislation is antithetical to the doctrine of separation of powers as envisaged in the Indian Constitution. In this context justify the filing of large number of public interest petitions praying for issuing guidelines to executive authorities. **(2020)**

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

The Doctrine of Basic Structure, touted as a judicial safeguard against majoritarian excesses, remains debated regarding its legitimacy. Discuss the evolution of the doctrine, its contemporary significance, and the criticisms it faces.



Newspaper: Indian Express, Page No. 1

Cockroaches won... Democracy won! Students' struggle has borne fruit'
COCKROACH JANTA PARTY

'For BJP workers, country, youth, students more important than any post'
AMIT SHAH, UNION HOME MINISTER

Jantar Mantar is heard, Pradhan is out

Democracy Instapolitics: 2 months old, born online from a CJI jibe, CJP mobilised Gen Z to change a law — and a minister

Significance of Dissent

- Freedom of Speech & Expression
- Preamble
- Citizens as watchdogs
- Feedback to the government
- Representative democracy
- Majoritarianism as an antithesis of democracy
- Necessary voice to oppressed and marginalised
- Can always use force to suppress a violent protest
- Cornerstone of a constitutional democracy
- Tagore

Examples of Dissent

- Judicial Dissent
- Political Protests
- Religious Dissent
- People's movements
 - Anti-Vietnam war protests in US (1968)
 - Velvet Revolution and the Romanian Revolution (both 1989)

Why are mega data centre projects facing stiff resistance?

EXPLAINER

Paul Nicosdemus
Snehal Mutha

This week, people in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra took to the streets to oppose the proposed mega data centre projects in the States.

In A.P., after the government allotted about 601 acres of land across three locations in Visakhapatnam and Anakapalli district, Raiden Infotech India Pvt. Ltd. — a Google company — began developing a 1GW AI data centre hub, with Adani Infra/Adani-Comnet as the notified development partner.

In Maharashtra, residents of Thane have been opposing Amazon's proposed hyperscale data centre project. The ₹7,203.29 crore project spread over 53.73 acres is under construction across

the villages of Balkum Pada and Majiwada in Thane.

Reasons for opposition
Citizens' groups in Visakhapatnam have opposed the Andhra project, highlighting concerns over the strain on resources such as water and power, as well as its environmental impact. The project is coming up at three locations — Adavaram-Mudasarlava, Tarhavad, and Rambilli.

Campaigners also cited that the Super El Niño-like weather pattern has put strain on water resources across the State.

In Thane, people have cited sketchy details, discrepancies in water usage data, lack of consultation with locals as reasons to rally against the project.

Residents represented by the citizen group 'Wake-up Thane' have demanded clarity on the water usage and a public hearing. It has sought the



Citizen groups hold a protest against proposed data centre projects in and around Visakhapatnam, along Beach Road on July 19. (V. N. N. N.)

establishment of baseline noise and air quality measurements, and a clarity on the actual benefit to locals.

The opposition from citizens was not to technology or investment but to a project that offered little in return for its costs, said Sohan Hatangadi, a campaigner in Visakhapatnam. He cited limited permanent employment and limited ancillary industry, even as the city provides

land and incentives.

President of Green Visakh, Raja Rama Mohan Roy, said the project risked the "reckless exploitation of nature". He said the Kambalakonda Eco-Forest, and the surroundings of the Rambilli Wildlife Sanctuary faced a threat, along with the Mudasarlova reservoir, a source of drinking water for the city.

In Thane, activists are against "unplanned deve-

lopment". "We cannot have the data centre in residential area, which are already suffering water shortage, load shedding, and other issues," Sadhana Pradhan, convenor of Wake-up Thane said.

The group plans to file a petition with the National Green Tribunal after the government response. It had held a meeting with the Thane municipal commissioner and representatives of Amazon. "We are disappointed as they had no answers to basic question of what will be the source of the water required for cooling," Ms. Pradhan said.

Concerns over water

A more pressing constraint for Visakhapatnam was inadequate storage capacity, a concern that engineers had flagged internally. D. Murali Krishna, Executive Engineer, Water Supply, of the Greater Visakhapat-

nam Municipal Corporation said. He said roughly 1,000 to 2,000 acres are needed to be set aside for reservoirs, and that around 5,000 million cubic feet of storage could sustain the city for nearly six months.

Meanwhile, the Thane project will require 422 MW power and backup of 193 generators. Wakeup Thane group said that Amazon and the Thane corporation have given two different figures on water usage. While Amazon claimed 125 kilolitres a day per day usage, the corporation announced that it will provide 12 million litres a day of recycled sewage water.

Jaatin Kothare, a resident in Balkum, said that the city is already "short of 40 MLD water". "So how you going to fulfil the water requirements of the data centre?" he asked.

Small US businesses mount 1st challenge to Sec 301 tariffs

Ravi Dutta Mishra
New Delhi, July 25

A DAY after the US imposed fresh tariffs on 60 countries including 10% duty on India, two US small businesses — spice importer Burlap & Barrel, and watch retailer Collective Horology LLC have filed a case against United States

• RISING IN DISSSENT

SPICE IMPORTER Burlap & Barrel, and watch retailer Collective Horology LLC have filed a case against United States Trade Representative (USTR)

United States commerce... It is not a freestanding authorisation to tax substantially all imports from substantially all trading partners at rates selected to replicate the invalidated IEEPA tariff regime rather than to eliminate ident-

Why are there protests over the Ken-Betwa project?

Why does the project aim to do? How many villages and families are likely to be affected by it?

What are the concerns of the tribal people regarding rehabilitation and compensation? Why has the project raised concerns among conservationists?

selection process and claim that several people who have no connection with the villages or have moved years ago have been included in the rehabilitation plan, while many genuine residents have been left out.



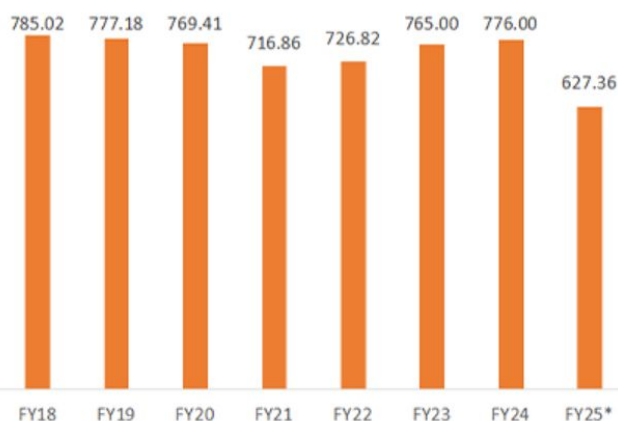
Syllabus: Prelims: Economic and Social Development

Newspaper: The Hindu, **Page No.** 6

Facts

- 2nd Producer
- 97% in Assam, WB, TN, Kerala
- 10% of Global Exports
- 19% of Global Consumption

India Tea exports (US\$ million)



Source: Tea Board of India, Ministry of Commerce, and Industry.
*- Until December 2024

Growth Conditions

- Temperature– 16–32
- Rainfall– 15–300 cm
- Relative humidity ~ 80% mostly, >40 %
- Not frost prone
- Acidic Soil (PH ~ 5.0) with good drainage

Challenges

- Climate Impact
 - Excessive Rainfall
 - Drought
 - Frost Damage
 - Melting of Glaciers
 - Weather-driven Drop in Production
- Rise in Tea Prices
- Ban on Pesticides
- Export Decline
- Stagnant Internal Consumption
- Small scale growers
- Pending Subsidies from Tea Board
- Loss of Premium Quality

Tea Board of India

- Section 4 of the Tea Act, 1953
- Ministry of Commerce
- Regulates tea producers, manufacturers, exporters, tea brokers, auction organisers, warehouse keepers
- Market surveys, tracks consumer behaviour, information to importers and exporters
- HO: Kolkata

Suggestions

- Benchmark prices with Grading
- E-commerce integration
- Focus on Premium Teas
- Palm Oil as Complementary Crop
- Diversifying Export Destinations
- R&D



Syllabus: Prelims: Current Events of National and International Importance
Newspaper: Indian Express, **Page No. 2**

Sarnath

- near Varanasi
- Buddhist pilgrimage site
 - Gautama Buddha first sermon: Dhammachakkapavattana
- Other names: Rishipatana, Mrigadava, Mrigadaya
- Other pilgrimage sites in Buddhism
 - Lumbini: birth
 - Bodh Gaya: enlightenment
 - Kushinagar: death
- Ashes of Buddha in stupas at these locations
- Architecture: evolution from Mauryan to Kushan, Gupta, Gahadavala periods
- Excavation
 - First scientific excavation by Sir Alexander Cunningham in 1834–36
 - Ashokan Lion Capital and pillar base in 1904–05 by Friedrich Oscar Oertel

Patronage

- Ashoka promoted Buddhism after Kalinga War
- Kushans, Guptas, Harshavardhana
 - restored structures post Huna invasions
- Guptas added artistic features to Dhamek Stupa
 - stone-carved floral designs
- 11th-century raid by Mahmud of Ghazni
 - restored by Mahipala of Pala dynasty
- Last major monument, Dharmachakra Jina Vihara
 - 11th century
 - by Kumaradevi, wife of Govindachandra of Gahadavala dynasty

Monument groups

Group A

- Chaukhandi Stupa
 - 5th century AD
 - octagonal tower on top: added in 1588 by Govardhan, son of Raja Todarmal

Group B

- Dhamek Stupa
 - 500 CE
 - exact spot of Buddha's first sermon
- Dharmarajika Stupa
 - by Mauryan Emperor Ashoka
 - 3rd century BCE
- Ashokan Pillar
 - Bearing Ashoka's edict
 - Originally crowned by Lion Capital
- Ancient monasteries, temples, and votive stupas



Syllabus: Prelims: Current Events of National and International Importance
Newspaper: The Hindu, **Page No.** 15

Pickaxe Mountain

- "Kuh-e Kolang Gaz La"
 - in Zagros Range
 - Isfahan Province
- Underground Nuclear Facility
- >100 m beneath hard granite
- production and assembly of advanced centrifuges
- Mountain's hard granite structure: strong natural protection
 - Even bunker buster bombs

Zagros Mountains

- Border areas of eastern Turkey & northern Iraq to Strait of Hormuz
- forms western boundary of Iranian Plateau
- 1,600 km + >240 km wide
- Belt of folded mountains
- Collision of African Plate with Eurasian Plate
- Oldest rocks: Precambrian Period
- Limestone and shale from Mesozoic Era and Paleogene Period
- Highest Peak: Mount Dena
- Flora: Persian oak forests, Aleppo oak, Lebanon oak, pistachio, almond, hawthorn, nettle tree, pear
- Fauna: Persian leopard, Syrian brown bear, bezoar ibex, striped hyena, Persian squirrel

The locals call it Kuh-e Kolang Gaz La. Recent satellite images showed a flurry of activity around the formation, including the movement of vehicles, and entrances to what appear to be tunnels. What is

Arabia finally collided with Eurasia, in the last 66 million years.

The tectonic activity generated large quantities of calc-alkaline magma and thick lava flows and the attendant accumulations of volcanic breccia and ash deposits. Thus, much of the bedrock exposed in the Karkas Range consists of volcanic rocks such as andesite and rhyolite together with pyroclastic deposits and younger sedimentary units.

Pickaxe Mountain is part of the Karkas Range, or Reshteh Kuh-e Karkas. It extends for more than 100 km in a northwest-southeast 'diagonal' between the cities of Kashan and Ardestan and is named for its highest summit, Mount Karkas, which rises to about 3.9 km above sea level in the midst of an arid plateau. The Range is part of the Urumieh-Dokhtar magmatic belt, and its mountains hold evidence of millions of years of volcanic activity and tectonic deformation. Specifically, the Urumieh-Dokhtar belt developed as the Neo-Tethyan Ocean subducted beneath the Iranian continental margin before

But as much as volcanic rocks complicate an excavation, they could complicate a bombing as well. Intact andesite, dacite, rhyolite, and basalt often require more energy than many sedimentary rocks to fracture. And while natural fractures sound like flaws, they can scatter stress waves by splitting the energy up among many discontinuous formations.



Syllabus: Prelims: Indian Polity and Governance

Newspaper: The Hindu, **Page No.** 12

IRDAI

- IRDAI Act 1999
- Overall supervision and development of insurance sector
- autonomous authority under Ministry of Finance
- Head Office: Hyderabad
- Entities regulated
 - LICs: public + private
 - GICs
 - Re-Insurance Companies
 - Agency Channel
 - Intermediaries: Corporate Agents, Brokers, Third-party Administrators, Surveyors and Loss Assessors
- Composition
 - Chairman, 5 full-time, 4 part-time
 - All appointed by GoI

Goals

- safeguard interest of policyholders by fair business conduct and settlement of claims within time
- Developing and nurturing insurance industry
- transparency, fairness, honest practice
- Facilitating financial prudence of insurers through solvency and stability checks
- regulate premium charges and policy terms for preventing unaffordability
- registering and/or licensing insurance, reinsurance companies, intermediaries
- sets eligibility criteria, qualifications, capital requirements for licenses

Responsibilities

- Efficiently conducting insurance business and protecting the interests of policyholders
 - assigning of policy
 - nomination by policyholders
 - settlement of claims
 - Other T&C of contracts
- Approving product terms and conditions
- Regulating investment of funds by insurance cos and maintaining a margin of solvency
- Specifying financial reporting norms
- CoC, qualifications, and training for intermediary or insurance agents
- Inspections, calling for information, investigations, audit
- Coverage in rural areas + vulnerable sections



Q1. With reference to the National River Linking Project (NRLP), consider the following statements:

1. The National Water Development Agency (NWDA) was established to undertake studies related to river interlinking.
2. The Ken–Betwa Link Project is the first major river interlinking project to be taken up under the National River Linking Project.
3. The National Perspective Plan (NPP) for river interlinking was formulated after the establishment of the National Water Development Agency.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: a

Q2. Regarding tea cultivation in India, consider the following statements:

1. Tea grows best in acidic soils with good drainage and is susceptible to frost.
2. Excessive rainfall, prolonged drought and rising temperatures can adversely affect both the quantity and quality of tea production.
3. India is the world's second-largest producer of tea and accounts for about one-tenth of global tea exports.
4. Tea cultivation is concentrated mainly in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) Only Three
- d) All Four

Answer: d

Q3. With reference to Sarnath, consider the following statements:

1. It is the place where Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermon after attaining enlightenment.
2. It is also known by the names Rishipatana and Mrigadava.
3. The Ashokan Lion Capital, India's National Emblem, was discovered during excavations led by Sir Alexander Cunningham.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All Three
- d) None

Answer: b

Q4. With reference to the Pickaxe Mountain (Kuh-e Kolang Gaz La), recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It is located in the Zagros Mountain Range in Iran's Isfahan Province.
2. It houses an underground nuclear facility built deep beneath hard granite rock for the production and assembly of advanced centrifuges.
3. The hard granite mountain provides substantial natural protection, making the facility highly resistant even to bunker-buster bombs.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: d

Q5. With reference to the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), consider the following statements:

1. IRDAI is a statutory body established under the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999.
2. It functions as an autonomous regulatory authority under the Ministry of Finance.
3. It regulates insurance companies as well as insurance intermediaries operating in India.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: d





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