



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

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Criminalisation of politics in India



CONTEXT: Over 4,000 cases against sitting and former MPs and MLAs are pending trial across India.

About the News:

- **Senior Advocate Vijay Hansaria** has been **appointed as amicus curiae** in a PIL seeking expeditious disposal of criminal cases against MPs and MLAs.
- **Chief Ministers of 14 out of 28 States** have criminal cases pending against them.
 - **E.g.** Telangana, Kerala, West Bengal & Karnataka etc.
- **States/UTs with high pendency include-**
 - Uttar Pradesh (1,171), Kerala (543), Bihar (373), Maharashtra (364) and Odisha (330).

Reasons for Delay

- Designated courts are burdened with regular judicial work.
- Repeated adjournments.
- Non-appearance of accused persons.
- Delays in securing witnesses.
- Inadequate monitoring by High Courts.

Criminalisation of politics:

- refers to the **entry and participation** of persons with criminal backgrounds in the political and electoral process.
- These individuals then exploit their positions of power and influence to prioritize their personal agendas over the welfare of the nation and its people.
- **ADR-National Election Watch report, 2026:**
 - ◆ **31% of sitting Rajya Sabha MPs** have declared criminal cases against themselves, while **16% have declared serious criminal cases.**

Causes:

- **"Winnability" Factor: ADR, 2024 -**
 - success rate for candidates with criminal charges - **15.3%.**
 - candidates without any criminal cases **just 4.4%.**
- **Money and Muscle Power:** Criminals bring their own illicit resources, ensuring they can self-finance campaigns.
 - physical "muscle" to intimidate rivals and sway voters.

Case status

754

Cases pending for 5 to 10 yrs

562

Cases pending for 3 to 5 years

1,095

Cases pending for less than 3 years

700

Cases pending investigation

360

Cases have remained at that stage for more than three years without a chargesheet being filed



Criminalisation of politics in India



CONTEXT: Over 4,000 cases against sitting and former MPs and MLAs are pending trial across India.

- **Governance Deficit:**
 - Weak state institutions lead many voters to support strongmen – provide quick, extra-legal solutions by acting as **parallel power centres**.
- **Legal Loopholes:**
 - **Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951** – person sentenced to **two years or more of imprisonment** is disqualified from contesting elections and **remains ineligible for six years after completing the sentence**.
 - **Act does not disqualify candidates with pending criminal cases.**
- **Lack of adequate deterrence:**
 - **Poor conviction rate for MPs and MLAs**, coupled with trial delays, does not deter political parties from giving tickets to candidates with a criminal background.
- **Identity Politics:** Elections often prioritize caste/religion over criminal records.
- **Poor governance:** decisions may be guided by their own personal interests rather than the interests of their constituents.
- **Erodes the credibility of the democratic system:** more likely to engage in corrupt practices.
- **Cultivates culture of impunity:** where individuals believe they can commit crimes without facing consequences, which can lead to increased crime rates.
- **Hampers social development:** corruption and self-interest driving policymaking – preventing upliftment of disadvantaged groups.

- **Deterrent to Honest Candidates:** Clean individuals are often discouraged from entering politics due to the dominance of money and muscle power.

Steps Taken

- **Representation of People Act (RPA), 1951: Section 8 –**
 - Individuals convicted of heinous crimes or sentenced to two years or more face disqualification.
- **Constitution (130th Amendment) Bill, 2025:** Removal of a Minister if:
 - Accused of an offence punishable with **five or more years of imprisonment**
 - **Arrested and detained for 30 consecutive days.**
 - **Removal can be done by– President or Governor** upon the advice of the Prime Minister or Chief Minister respectively, or **automatically on the 31st consecutive day of detention.**
 - The **Prime Minister or a Chief Minister must resign after 30 consecutive days of detention**, failing which, he shall cease to hold office from the day thereafter.



Criminalisation of politics in India



CONTEXT: Over 4,000 cases against sitting and former MPs and MLAs are pending trial across India.

Steps Taken – Judicial

Pronouncements

- **UOI v. ADR, 2002:** SC held that **every candidate, contesting an election** to the Parliament, State Legislatures or Municipal Corporation, **must declare their criminal records, financial records and educational qualifications** along with **their nomination paper**.
 - voters have a **fundamental right to know** under **Article 19(1)(a)**.
- **Lily Thomas v. Union of India (2013):** SC mandated **immediate disqualification of MPs and MLAs** convicted and sentenced to two years or more.
 - **struck down Section 8(4)** of the RPA, 1951 as **unconstitutional**.
 - **Earlier Section 8(4):** Allowed sitting legislators to continue in office for **3 months after conviction** and thereafter **until their appeal was decided**.
- **Manoj Narula v. Union of India (2014):** SC – **Prime Minister has the constitutional discretion to appoint ministers**, persons facing serious criminal charges should **ideally not be included in the Council of Ministers**.
- **Public Interest Foundation v. Union of India, 2019:** political parties to disclose the criminal antecedents of their candidates on their websites and publish the information in widely circulated newspapers and electronic media.

Way Forward

- **State funding of elections for recognized political parties:** *Dinesh Goswami Committee (1990) & Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998)*
 - By providing **essential campaign materials (voter slips, fuel, media time)** at the state's expense, parties would be less dependent on the "black money".
- **Speedy Justice:**
 - **2017:** SC – setting up of **12 special courts in 10 States/UTs** for speedy trials. & **2023:** SC directed **Chief Justices of all High Courts** to suo motu monitor early disposal of cases.
 - Introduce "micro-monitoring" of individual delayed cases.
- **Legal reforms: 2nd ARC – amending section 8 of RPA**
 - to **immediately disqualify** individuals facing trial for serious offenses,
 - where charges have been **framed six months before the election**.
- **Financial and Transparency Reforms:** Political parties should be brought under the RTI Act, 2005.
- **Enhancing Voter Awareness:** about the backgrounds of their candidates.



Criminalisation of politics in India



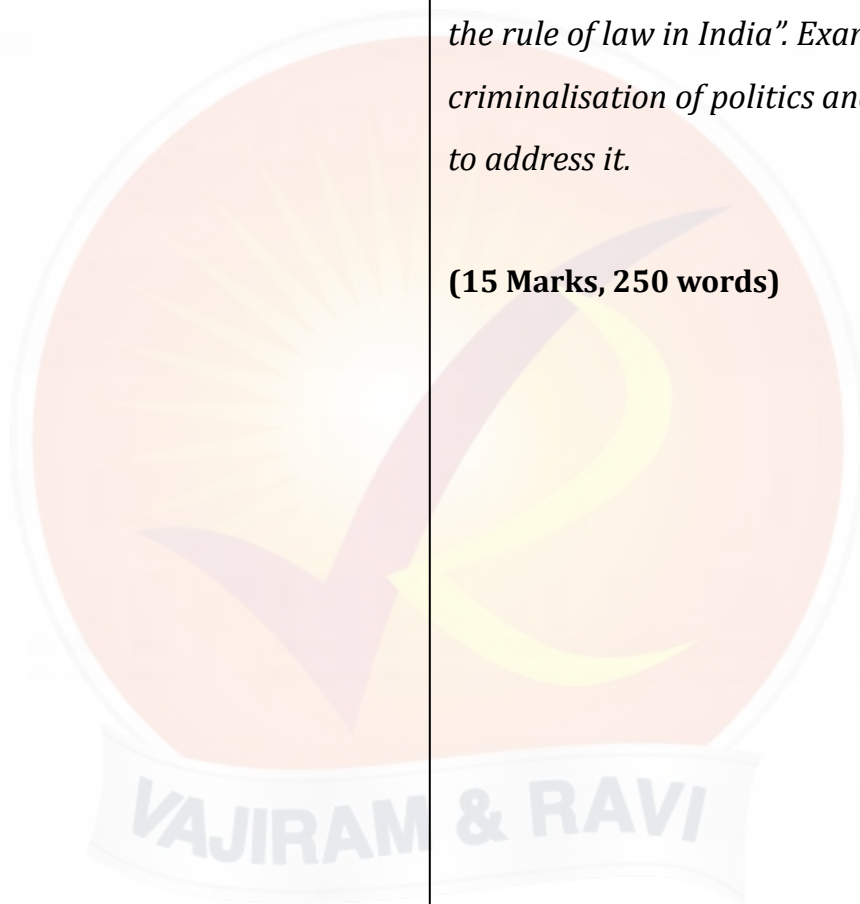
CONTEXT: Over 4,000 cases against sitting and former MPs and MLAs are pending trial across India.

“A fundamental prerequisite for ensuring the rule of law prevails over the rule of muscle”

Mains Practise Question

“Criminalisation of politics undermines the principles of democracy, good governance and the rule of law in India”. Examine the causes of criminalisation of politics and suggest measures to address it.

(15 Marks, 250 words)



From Self-Identification to State Determination



CONTEXT: The Union Government assured the SC that transgender identity cards issued before the enactment of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026 will remain valid.

About Transgenders

Census 2011 – 4.87 lakhs persons in India who opted for “other” in gender category.

Challenges:

→ Weak Legal Implementation:

Transgender Persons Act, 2019

- ◆ **By 2023** – over 3,000 applications for identity cards were pending beyond the mandated “30-day period”.

→ Social Stigma and Exclusion:

- ◆ “Vicious cycle of despair” – lack of acceptance from family

→ Hurdles in Education:

- ◆ **Low Literacy Rate:** 2011 Census of 56.1% < national average of 74.04%.
- ◆ **High Dropout Rates:** Kerala – 58% dropped out of school
- ◆ **Lack of Inclusive Policies:**
 - **Maharashtra** – Transgender cell in college

→ Barriers to Economic Empowerment:

- ◆ **ILO, 2022:** 48% unemployment rate among transgender.
- ◆ **Financial exclusion:** 2024 circular – to have “**Joint bank accounts**”.

→ Health-Care Challenges:

- ◆ **High Costs: Gender-affirming treatments** (Rs 2 –5 lakh)
- ◆ **Lack of Specialized Care** – NALSA – 27% are denied treatment
- ◆ **Inadequate Mental Health Support**

Steps Taken:

→ **Election Commission (2009):** “Others” option in voter forms.

→ NALSA v. Union of India, 2014:

- ◆ recognized transgender individuals as a “third gender”.

→ Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019:

- ◆ **Right to Self-Identification**
- ◆ **Prohibition of Discrimination**
- ◆ **Institutional Mechanism:** National Council for Transgender Persons, 2020:
 - under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
 - **five representatives** of transgender community, representatives of **NHRC and NCW**, representatives of **State Governments and UTs** and experts representing **NGOs**.



From Self-Identification to State Determination



CONTEXT: The Union Government assured the SC that transgender identity cards issued before the enactment of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026 will remain valid.

→ Offences and Penalties:

- ◆ 6 months to 2 years of imprisonment

→ SMILE Scheme (2022) – Central Sector Scheme

- ◆ Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
- ◆ comprehensive rehabilitation and empowerment of transgender persons and other marginalised communities in India.
- ◆ **Skill Development and Employment, scholarships & Medical Health**
- ◆ **Garima Greh centres** and healthcare coverage under **Ayushman Bharat TG Plus** (₹5 lakh per person per year).

→ Transgender Protection Cells:

- ◆ **Every State** is required to setup Transgender Protection cells to **monitor cases of offences against transgender persons** and to ensure timely registration, investigation and prosecution of such offences.

→ National Portal Integration:

- ◆ to issue certificates and ID cards to eligible Transgender persons.
- ◆ applicant can apply for the TG certificate.

Transgender's Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026

Salient Provisions:

- ◆ **Shift in Approach of Identification:**
District Magistrate will issue the certificate after examining the recommendation of a **designated medical board**.
- ◆ **Introduction of Medical Certification:**
Medical board (headed by a Chief Medical Officer (CMO) or Deputy CMO) to assist authorities in verifying transgender identity.
- ◆ **Restricted the Definition of person considered as Transgender**
- ◆ **Stricter Penal Provisions**
- ◆ **Changes in Legal Documentation**

Significance:

- Reduced ambiguities in transgender identification
- More Precise Targeting of Benefits
- Stronger Legal Safeguards
- Protection of Bodily Integrity



From Self-Identification to State Determination



CONTEXT: The Union Government assured the SC that transgender identity cards issued before the enactment of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026 will remain valid.

Challenges:

→ Rejection of Self-Identification Principle

- ◆ NALSA Judgement (2014)

→ Clinical Gatekeeping

→ Burden of Proof and Institutional Barriers

→ Violation of privacy

→ Exclusion of Gender Fluidity

→ Lack of Consultation

→ Way Ahead:

◆ Restoring Self-Identification:

Align with NALSA judgement

◆ Strengthening Legal Protection and Implementation

◆ Promote Cultural Change

- “I Am Also Human” by by Humsafar Trust.

◆ Enhanced Livelihood

Opportunities:

- Karnataka’s 1% job reservation in government services.

◆ Provide Holistic Healthcare

Access:

- Standardise Gender Reassignment Surgery

Mains Practise Question

“The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2026 marks a shift from self-identification towards greater state involvement in determining gender identity. Critically examine its implications for the rights, dignity and social inclusion of transgender persons in India.”

(15 Marks, 250 words)



Newspaper: The Indian Express **Page:** 12

Context: *Maharashtra Food and Drug*

Administration issued notices to **Bollywood actors** Shah Rukh Khan and cricketer Ajinkya Rahane **over advertisements for Vimal Elaichi** as it amounts to **surrogate advertising for Vimal Pan Masala**.

Relevance: marks the **first instance of the regulator examining surrogate advertising**.

- **Central Consumer Protection Authority** had notified the **"Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements"** in 2022.
- **The Guidelines define "surrogate advertisement" as:**
 - "an advertisement for goods, product or service, whose advertising is otherwise prohibited or restricted by law, by circumventing such prohibition or restriction and portraying it to be an advertisement for other goods, product or service, the advertising of which is not prohibited or restricted by law."

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SYLLABUS: Prelims: Science

Newspaper : The Indian express; Page No : 12

Context: NASA has invited the ISRO to join its ambitious Moon Base programme. The programme aims to establish a **permanent human outpost near the Moon's South Pole**.

- **Reason** – two major space powers, **Russia and China, are not part of the group**, gives credence to this argument.

PHASE ONE (NOW-2029): Focus will be on gaining reliable access to the lunar surface and building a deeper understanding of the environment. Robotic missions will explore the lunar South Pole, demonstrate new technologies, and gather the knowledge needed to guide future development.

PHASE TWO (2029-2032): NASA will begin deploying the first infrastructure needed to support long-term operations on the Moon. Early power systems, cargo transportation, logistics, and communications capabilities will expand humanity's footprint and enable increasingly complex missions.

PHASE THREE (2032 AND BEYOND): NASA will begin assembling a permanent lunar outpost where astronauts can live and work for extended periods. Habitats, power systems, communications, transportation, and other critical capabilities will support an enduring human presence. SOURCE: NASA

Why NASA invited ISRO?

- NASA is in no position, and *does not want, to execute this entirely on its own*.
- Its **budget has been slashed significantly** under the Donald Trump administration, while **most of its hardware production** is now happening in the private sector.
- **70 countries** that have signed on to the **Artemis Accords** have, shown a willingness to join such a collaboration – **Japan, India, South Korea, and Israel**.

About Artemis Accords:

- Established in **2020 by NASA** – unique grouping of countries interested in **exploration of outer space**.
- A **set of principles and good practices** that countries agree to follow while carrying out their space activities.
- **India became the 27th signatory in 2023**.
- **Concerns** – increasingly being seen as a **US-led camp** seeking to write its own rules for space exploration and use of extraterrestrial resources, subtly bypassing international multilateral arrangements.

Why India is likely to join?

- ISRO has its **own plans for human spaceflight missions**, setting up a space station, and **even landing humans on the Moon**.
 - **E.g.** plan for setting up the **Bharat Antariksh Station – by 2035**.
- **Joining the Moon Base programme** offers the opportunity for it **to gain valuable experience** in planning and executing complex missions like these, and leapfrog in technology development.
- ISRO has demonstrated its capabilities in executing such missions on its own as well, but that **would require time and huge amounts of money**.

Concerns for India:

- **Technology dependence:** India must avoid becoming overly dependent on the US space ecosystem.
- To ensure that it **does not lose sight of its own targets and objectives** while collaborating with the US.



Section 79 of the IT Act



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Polity

Newspaper : The Indian Express; Page No : 01

About Section 69A of IT Act

- Allows the government to **issue content-blocking orders** to online intermediaries such as ISPs, telecom service providers, search engines, online marketplaces, etc.
- Section requires the information or content being blocked to be deemed a **threat to India's national security, sovereignty, or public order**.
- Any such request for blocking access **must be based on reasons given in writing**.
- **Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009:**
 - **Rule 8:** Provides for an ordinary procedure **involving prior notice and an opportunity of hearing** before blocking.
 - **Rule 9:** Permits immediate interim blocking **without a pre-decisional hearing in emergencies** where delay is unacceptable.
- **Shreya Singhal vs. Union of India, 2015:**
 - SC upheld the **constitutional validity of Section 69A**, noting that it contains adequate **procedural safeguards**:
 - requirement to **record reasons in writing** and the provision of a **review committee** to oversee the blocking orders.

- **Section 79:** Grants safe harbour protection to intermediaries, shielding them from liability for user-generated content.
- **Section 79(3)(b):**
 - **Removes safe harbour protection** if an intermediary fails to block/remove unlawful content **upon government notification**.
- IT Ministry notified amendments to the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021:**
 - requiring content to be removed within **2–3 hours, as opposed to the previous 24–36 hours**.
- **Meta integrated its API with the Sahyog portal**, allowing content flagged through government directions to be **automatically taken down without separate human review** – eliminates the room for review or contest government takedown directives before complying.
- An API that executes takedowns automatically has no knowledge of the order; **nobody at Meta checks** whether it **comes from an authorised officer or the reasons for the order**.



Section 79 of the IT Act



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Polity

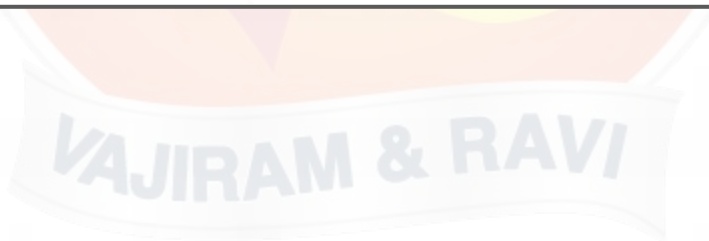
Newspaper : The Indian Express; Page No : 01

About Sahayog Portal

- It is an **online platform** launched in **October 2024** to help remove illegal content from the internet quickly.
- It **allows government agencies** to send takedown notices directly to social media platforms and other online intermediaries.
- It operates under **Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act, 2000**, giving it legal backing.
- It ensures that intermediaries act fast while retaining safe harbour protections.
- **Nodal Ministry: Union Home Ministry**

Features of Sahayog Portal

- **Centralised Communication:** Connects government agencies, state/UT nodal officers, and 65 online intermediaries in a single platform.
- **Automated Takedown Notices:** Sends quick, documented notices to intermediaries for prompt removal of unlawful content.
- **Legal Backing:** Operates under Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act, 2000, ensuring legal enforcement and consequences for non-compliance.



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Science

Newspaper : The Hindu; Page No : 09

Context: Recently, **India-based defence start-up D-Propulse** had successfully demonstrated a **rotating detonation engine** at a DRDO facility in Hyderabad.

About Rotating detonation engine:

- Engine design that promises to **use fuel more efficiently** than conventional rocket engines.
- **The efficiency figure:** Going by physics alone, RDEs offer around **10% to 25% more** thermodynamic efficiency than conventional combustors.
- There are no models known to be ready for commercial or military use.
- **Deflagration v/s Detonation:**
 - **Deflagration - Regular engine,** the *combustion chamber* holds the fuel-air mixture. When a **flame is introduced** in the chamber like from a spark plug it travels through the mixture **at less than the speed of sound**.
 - **Detonation -** When the **flame travels through the mixture at more than the speed of sound**, it imposes a shock wave on the mixture and heats it up, triggering rapid combustion behind it.

Why a detonation engine produces combustion products at a higher pressure?

- When the flame passes through the mixture as a detonation, the **combustion happens at constant volume**.
- Detonation **compresses the unburned mixture with a shock wave** immediately before combustion, and the **mixture doesn't have enough time to expand under these 'forces'**.
 - **Regular engine - combustion happens at constant pressure:**

- mixture is free to expand as it heats up instead of being confined under pressure.

- **Detonation engine** - more of the fuel's chemical energy is converted into pressure rather than being shed as heat.
- **Pulsed detonation engine** -
 - simple type - has a **long tube** as the **combustion chamber**, to allow the detonation to pass through the whole mixture.
 - Those gases expand towards the open end of the tube, where they exit at a high speed.

Rotating detonation -

- makes the **detonation a continuous process**. Instead of the detonation passing through a long tube, it is made to **flow in a circle**.
- **Annular shape**, i.e. two concentric cylinders with a **narrow ring-shaped gap** between them, called the **annulus**.
- **The wave:** One or more detonation waves race through the annulus while injection continues.
- **The timing requirement:** Fuel is injected into the annulus just ahead of the detonation wave, so the wave always meets fresh mixture.
- **The exhaust:** The wave consumes the fresh fuel and air mixture and expels the products through the nozzle along its axis.
- **The rate:** As long as fuel keeps arriving at the right time and in the right condition, the detonation can keep going even at **thousands of times per second**.
- **The output:** By Newton's third law the momentum of the expelled gases produces an equal and opposite momentum on the engine, which is what generates thrust.



No state can blockade traditional elephant routes



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Environment
Newspaper : The Hindu; **Page No : 4**

- **Article 51 A(g):** To protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have **compassion for living creatures.**
- **Benefits of Elephant Corridors: Genetic diversity:** It helps elephants to *intermingle and breed* with elephants outside their gene pool.

About Asian Elephant:

- largest terrestrial mammals & keystone species.
- **Matriarchal** - meaning they live in female-led groups.
- The elephant's **gestation period is 18 to 22 months**, and the calf is nursed for 2 to 4 years.
- **Three subspecies of Asian elephant:** Indian, Sumatran, and Sri Lankan.
- **Conservation status:**
 - **IUCN:** Endangered: **CITES:** Appendix I : **WPA:** Schedule I
- *India is home to 60% of the Asian elephant population.*
- **States with highest elephant population:** 1st Karnataka (25%) > 2nd Assam > 3rd Kerala
- India declared the **elephant as a national heritage animal** - role as ecosystem engineers.

Project RE-HAB:

- Reducing Elephant-Human Attacks using **"Bee - fences"**.
- It is an initiative by the **Khadi and Village Industries Commission.**



Q1. Consider the following assertion:

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026 is expected to lead to "More Precise Targeting of Benefits" for the transgender community.

Which of the following statements provides the most logical basis for the above assertion?

1. It restricts the definition of a person considered transgender.
2. It introduces a standardised medical certification process to reduce ambiguities in identification.
3. It mandates universal basic income for all individuals applying for a certificate, bypassing the need for verification.

Select the answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: b

Q2. Identify the instrument of space governance based on the following information:

1. It was established in 2020 by a national space agency rather than through an intergovernmental treaty conference.
2. It is a set of principles and good practices for countries conducting space activities.
3. India became its 27th signatory in 2023.
4. The absence of Russia and China from it gives credence to the "US-led camp" argument.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) The Outer Space Treaty
- b) The Moon Agreement, 1979
- c) The Artemis Accords
- d) The International Space Station Intergovernmental Agreement

Answer: c

Q3. Which of the following statements regarding the Sahayog Portal is NOT correct?

- a) It was launched in October 2024 to help remove illegal content from the internet quickly.
- b) It operates under Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000, giving it legal backing for blocking websites.

c) It connects government agencies, state/UT nodal officers, and 65 online intermediaries.

d) Its nodal ministry is the Union Home Ministry.

Answer: b

Q4. 'X', addressing a seminar on propulsion, argued that since both deflagration and detonation involve the combustion of a fuel-air mixture, they are physically identical processes, differing only in the amount of fuel used. 'Y' pointed out that the fundamental difference lies in the propagation mechanism: deflagration is subsonic and driven by heat transfer, while detonation is supersonic and driven by a shock wave.

Based on the above information, select the correct conclusion.

- a) 'X' is correct because the chemical reaction is the same, so the physical process is identical.
- b) The view of 'Y' that the propagation mechanism differs is not correct.
- c) The views of both 'X' and 'Y' are correct.
- d) The view of only 'Y' is correct.

Answer: d

Q5. With reference to the Asian Elephant, consider the following details:

List I	List II	List III
IUCN Status	Red List	Critically Endangered
CITES Listing	International Trade	Appendix II
WPA Schedule	Domestic Protection	Schedule I

In how many of the above rows are ALL the details correctly matched?

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

Answer: a





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