

Answers

1) A

So far, the cultivation of saffron – the most expensive spice – in India has been limited to a few areas in Jammu and Kashmir such as Pampore, Budgam, Srinagar and Kishtwar districts. The Ministry of Science and Technology, through the Department of Science and Technology (DST), is now looking at extending its cultivation to some states in the Northeast.

The North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR), an autonomous body under the Department of Science and Technology, supported a pilot project to explore the feasibility of growing saffron in the northeast region of the country with same quality and in higher quantity.

The project has yielded successful results in Yangyang village of South Sikkim, which produced its first crop of saffron this September. The matching of climatic and geographical conditions between Pampore (Kashmir) and Yangyang (Sikkim) led to the successful sample farming of saffron in Yangyang.

Kashmiri Saffron was given GI Tag recently in July 2020.

The Kashmiri saffron crop sees both declines in its production as well as shrinking of the land under cultivation despite efforts taken through National Mission on Saffron.

Saffron Conditions

- Saffron needs to remain underground for about 45 days at sub-zero temperatures.
- It also requires adequate rain, especially once sown in August.
- The pH level of the soil was a particularly important factor.

2) C

A recent study has found that nearly 28 per cent of particles collected from the air samples from a research station in the Himalaya-Tibetan Plateau were tarballs. The data revealed that a dense array of active fire spots — corresponding to large-scale wheat-residue burning on the Indo-Gangetic Plain — occurred along the pathways of air masses that reached the Himalayan research station during sampling.

Tarballs

Tarballs are formed from brown carbon, emitted during the burning of biomass or fossil fuels.

Black Carbon (BC) is emitted mainly by high-temperature combustion processes (diesel engines, etc.) whereas Brown Carbon (BrC), emitted mainly by biomass combustion. Tarballs are small light-absorbing, carbonaceous particles that deposit on snow and ice. The percentage of the tarballs increased on days of higher levels of pollution and could contribute to hastening of glacial melt and global warming, the study said.

3) C

The Central Government launched National Clean Air Program (NCAP) as a long-term, time-bound, national level strategy to tackle the air pollution problem across the country in a comprehensive manner with targets to achieve 20% to 30% reduction in Particulate Matter concentrations by 2024 keeping 2017 as the base year for the comparison of concentration. Under NCAP, 122 non-attainment cities have been identified across the country based on the Air Quality data from 2014-2018.

The city specific action plans have been prepared which, inter-alia; include measures for strengthening the monitoring network, reducing vehicular/industrial emissions, increasing public awareness etc.

Implementation of the city specific action plans are regularly monitored by Committees at Central and State level namely Steering Committee, Monitoring Committee and Implementation Committee

4) D

5) B

Statement 1 is incorrect. International Financial Services Centers Authority (IFSCA) is a statutory unified regulatory body under the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.

Statement 2 is correct. The IFSCA is a unified authority for the development and regulation of financial products, financial services and financial institutions in the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in India.

6) C

Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) had recently extended the Operation Greens Scheme from Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP) to all fruits & vegetables (TOTAL) for a period of six months on pilot basis as part of Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. The objective of intervention is to protect the growers of fruits and vegetables from making

distress sale due to lockdown and reduce the post – harvest losses. Ministry provides subsidy at 50 % of the cost of the following two components: Transportation of eligible crops from surplus production cluster to consumption centre; and/or Hiring of appropriate storage facilities for eligible crops (for maximum period of 3 months).

7) A

The India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2020 jointly organized by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI). The IMC 2020, fourth edition of the event is scheduled for 8th -10th December, and will be held virtually this year given the ongoing pandemic. This year IMC's theme is going to be – "Inclusive Innovation – Smart | Secure | Sustainable". COAI was constituted in 1995 as a registered, non-governmental society.

8) A

9) C

The Jharkhand government has recently convened a special session and passed a resolution to send the Centre a letter to recognise Sarna religion and include it as a separate code in the Census of 2021. The followers of Sarna faith believe pray to nature. The holy grail of the faith is "Jal, Jungle, Zameen" and its followers pray to the trees and hills while believing in protecting the forest areas. Jharkhand has 32 tribal groups of which eight are from Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

10) C

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recently launches Food Coalition to lift food access, sustainable agri-food systems.

Food Coalition

A "network of networks", the Food Coalition is a voluntary multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral alliance set up to support innovative initiatives to ensure global food access increase the resilience of agri-food systems and put them on a more sustainable course. It aims to face COVID19 pandemic together to avoid the health crisis becoming into a food crisis.

Proposed by Italy and led by FAO, the global alliance aims to help countries get back on track to achieve the UN-mandated Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, especially the ones on ending hunger and poverty. More than 30 countries have already expressed interest in joining the coalition.

11) C

12) B

13) C

14) D

The Department of Telecom had recently eased the rules registration, submission of bank guarantee and other norms for other service providers (OSP) in the business process outsourcing (BPO) and information technology-enabled services (ITes).

The new rules do away with the registration requirement for OSPs, with such BPOs that are engaged OSPs are companies or firms which provide services such as telemarketing, telebanking or telemedicine for various companies, banks or hospital chains.

15) D

The East Asia Summit is a unique Leaders-led forum of 18 countries of the Asia-Pacific region formed to further the objectives of regional peace, security and prosperity. Established in 2005, EAS allows the principal players in the Asia-Pacific region to discuss issues of common interest and concern, in an open and transparent manner, at the highest level. The membership of EAS consists of ten ASEAN Member States (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam), Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and the USA. EAS is an initiative of ASEAN and is based on the premise of the centrality of ASEAN.

16) D

Karnataka Biodiversity Board has recently recommended the Union government to grant Geographical Indication (GI) tag to Kari Ishad, a variety of mango grown in Ankola taluk of Uttara Kannada.

The Gajani Kagga paddy cultivated in Kumta taluk in the same district, and the Rajamudi variety of paddy grown in Hassan district.

The board had also recommended that the wildlife board declare Mundige Kere, a waterbody in Sonda village of Sirsi taluk in Uttara Kannada, a bird sanctuary as it is home to "Bellakki", a water bird.

17) C

Assessment of climate change over the Indian region: A report of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) discusses the impact of human-induced global climate change on the Indian subcontinent and regional monsoon, the adjoining Indian Ocean and the Himalayas.

18) C

Populations of seals and penguins could be in grave danger if an iceberg, which has been drifting for more than three years in the Southern Ocean near Antarctica, hits a British island territory in the area.

The iceberg, named 'A68a', separated from the Larsen C ice shelf on the Antarctic Peninsula in 2017. A68a was about 400 kilometers away from the coast of the British island territory of South Georgia, according to the British Antarctic Survey.

South Georgia of Antarctica was often referred as a graveyard for Antarctica's greatest icebergs.

19) C

Sulphur is essential in the structural and enzymatic components in plants. Sulphur is a key component of some essential amino acids and is needed for protein synthesis. Chlorophyll synthesis also requires Sulphur. Sulphur is part of an enzyme required for nitrogen uptake and lack of it can severely hamper nitrogen metabolism. Together with nitrogen, Sulphur enables the formations of amino acids needed for protein synthesis. Statement 2 is correct. Soil organic matter is the primary source of plant-available $\text{SO}_4\text{-S}$ in surface soil. High Sulphur deposition in soils contributes to their acidification. Soil bacteria change the sulfur to sulfuric acid, lowering the soil pH. Adverse effects of Sulphur contamination of soils are shown by the fall in pH, an increase of phytotoxic aluminium concentration.

20) C

It is a specialized body equipped with the necessary expertise to handle environmental disputes involving multi-disciplinary issues. The Tribunal is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but is guided by principles of natural justice. Any person seeking relief and compensation for environmental damage involving subjects in the legislations mentioned in Schedule I of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 may approach the Tribunal.