

Weekly Quiz Answers (17th-23rd July)

Ans1. B

Explanation:

- Gibbons, the smallest and fastest of all apes, live in tropical and subtropical forests in the south-eastern part of Asia.
- The hoolock gibbon, unique to India's northeast, is one of 20 species of gibbons on Earth.
- The estimated population of hoolock gibbons is 12,000.
- Like all apes, they are extremely intelligent, with distinct personalities and strong family bonds.
- Unfortunately, the current conservation status of gibbon species is alarming – all 20 species are at a high risk of extinction.
- Since 1900, gibbon distribution and populations have declined dramatically, with only small populations in tropical rainforests.
- The hoolock gibbon faces threats primarily from the felling of trees for infrastructure projects.
- GGN was founded with a vision to safeguard and conserve a key element of Asia's unique natural heritage – the singing gibbon and their habitats, by promoting participatory conservation policies, legislations, and actions.
- American naturalist R. Harlan was the first to describe the hoolock gibbon, characterized by their vigorous vocal displays, from Assam in 1834.
- Over the decades, zoologists thought the Northeast housed two species of the ape
- The eastern hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock leuconedys*) found in a specific region of Arunachal Pradesh.
- It lives in certain areas of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in India, as well as in parts of southern China and northeastern Myanmar.
- The western hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*) distributed elsewhere in the northeast.
- It is found in all the states of North-East India, but its range is limited to the area between the south of the Brahmaputra river and the east of the Dibang river. Outside of India, it can be found in eastern Bangladesh and north-west Myanmar.

Conservation Status

- ✓ International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List:
 - Western Hoolock Gibbon: Endangered
 - Eastern Hoolock Gibbon: Vulnerable
- ✓ Both the species are listed on **Schedule 1 of the Indian (Wildlife) Protection Act 1972.**

Ans2. C

Explanation:

Cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslip, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, frost and cold wave are now considered disasters under the SDRF.

Ans3. B

Explanation:

Context: Indian and Mongolian troops will take part in the 15th edition of a bilateral military exercise in Ulaanbaatar from July 17 to 31 aimed at exchanging best practices and developing interoperability, the Ministry of Defence said.

Key Highlights

- An Indian Army contingent comprising 43 personnel reached Ulaanbaatar on an Indian Air Force C-17 aircraft to take part in the exercise, “Nomadic Elephant-23”.
- “The **aim** of this exercise is to build positive military relations, bonhomie, camaraderie and friendship between the two Armies.
- The primary **theme** of the exercise will focus on counter-terrorism operations in mountainous terrain under United Nations mandate.
- “Nomadic Elephant” is an annual training exercise that is conducted alternatively in Mongolia and India. Soldiers of the Mongolian Armed Forces Unit 084 and the Indian Army's Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry Regiment will participate in the exercise.



Ans4. D

Explanation:

India has registered a significant decline of 9.89 percentage points in the number of multidimensionally poor, from 24.85% in 2015-16 to 14.96% in 2019-2021, says the “National multidimensional poverty index: a progress review, 2023”, which is released by NITI Aayog.

Ans5. C

Explanation:

Context: A 'foreign' cicada that is commonly found in several parts of South India has assumed an Indian identity.

Key Highlights

- The insect species has been named *Purana cheeveeda* (after its Malayalam name Cheeveedu).
 - Previously, it was mistaken for *Purana tigrina*, a species described in Malaysia in 1850.
- The Association for Advancement in Entomology has corrected the taxonomic identification error and excluded the Malaysian species from the South Indian cicada fauna.
- The researchers in Kerala observed differences in the structure of the male genitalia and operculum, leading to the discovery.



Purana cheeveeda

- The gradual disappearance of these cicadas, once a common sight in homesteads, could be an indicator of the deteriorating quality of soil and vegetation, according to their cautionary note.

What are Cicadas?

Title	Description
About	• Insects that belong to the order Hemiptera and the superfamily Cicadoidea. • Also called true bugs, have mouthparts used for piercing and sucking and have two pairs of wings. • Large eyes, transparent wings and loud calls that are produced by special organs called tymbals.
Habitat	• Most cicadas are canopy dwellers and are found in natural forests with large trees; found in every continent except Antarctica. • The generic diversity of cicadas in India and Bangladesh ranks the highest in the world, followed by China.
Life Cycle & Dietary Pattern	• Mostly herbivorous and feed on plant sap. • Complex life cycles: involve long periods of underground development and short periods of adult emergence.
Threats	• Human development activities reduce the number of trees that cicadas depend on for feeding and reproduction. • Climate change may disrupt the timing and synchronization of cicada emergence. • Pesticides, herbicides and fungicides contaminate the soil and water and affect the health and survival of cicadas and their host plants.
Significance	Cicadas are important for biodiversity because they provide food for many predators, pollinate flowers, aerate the soil, recycle nutrients and indicate environmental health.

Ans6. C

Explanation:

Centre bans export of non-basmati white rice to control price rise in India. The ban was announced by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade under the Union Commerce Ministry through a notification.

- The ban is effective immediately, and exemptions will be granted only if certain conditions are met.
 - Exemptions will be given if the loading of non-basmati rice on the ship had commenced before the notification or if the shipping bill was filed and vessels had already berthed or arrived and anchored in Indian ports.
- The decision was taken to ensure sufficient availability of non-basmati white rice in the domestic market and to control the price rise.
- Non-basmati rice was previously exported under the category 'Free with export duty of 20%.'
- The retail prices of non-basmati white rice have increased by 11.5% over a year and 3% over the past month, leading to the ban.
- Last year, an export duty of 20% was imposed on non-basmati white rice to lower the price and maintain availability in the domestic market.

- Despite the imposition of the export duty, the export of this variety increased significantly in the following years.
- The increase in exports can be attributed to various factors, including high international prices, geopolitical scenarios, El Nino sentiments, and extreme climatic conditions in other rice-producing countries.

Ans7. D

Explanation:

Context: Portal launched to report violation of ban on e-cigarettes.

Key Highlight

- E-cigarettes, despite being banned by the Union government in 2019, are still being sold on e-commerce sites, even to children below 18, according to experts in tobacco control.
- To address this issue, the Health Ministry has launched an online portal, www.violation-reporting.in, to facilitate the reporting of violations under the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage, and Advertisement) Act (PECA).
- The portal **aims** to enable faster action against reported violations of the ban on e-cigarettes, as stated by the government.
- The ban on electronic cigarettes was introduced to protect the younger generation from a new form of toxic addiction, and the online portal is seen as a positive step towards strict enforcement and effective implementation of the ban.
- The Health Ministry had previously cautioned all States and Union Territories about the weak implementation of PECA, which led to the easy availability of e-cigarettes through various channels, including online, retail, convenient stores, stationery shops, and near educational institutions.
- The States were directed to review the compliance of PECA and issue necessary instructions for effective implementation through special drives and random checking.

What is E-Cigarette?

E-cigarettes are electronic devices powered by batteries, which function by heating a liquid to produce an aerosol that users inhale and exhale. The liquid used in e-cigarettes usually consists of nicotine, propylene glycol, glycerin, flavorings, and various other chemicals.

Up in smoke

Wednesday's move follows an advisory by the government in 2018 to all States to consider banning e-cigarettes

- e-cigarettes are brought from China and other countries and are not manufactured in India. They are also available online

- WHO too urged member countries to take appropriate steps. It does not endorse e-cigarettes as cessation aids

- 16 States & one Union Territory have already banned them. The Indian Council of Medical Research, in a recent paper, had recommended a complete ban on them



- They are marketed as being safer than conventional cigarettes but this is false. Available literature suggests that they may act as gateway products to induce non-smokers to nicotine-use

Reason for Banning e-cigarettes

The Health ministry provided several reasons to justify the ban on e-cigarettes, including:

- Threat to country's tobacco control efforts.
- Hindrance in achieving targets under Sustainable Development Goals, National Monitoring Framework for Prevention and Control of non-communicable diseases, and National Health Policy, 2017.
- Concerns for the overall public health of youth and pregnant women.
- Addictive nature of nicotine.
- Insufficient scientific evidence for the use of e-cigarettes as effective tobacco cessation aids.
- Safety concerns regarding flavours combined with nicotine.
- The government also cited Article 47 of the Indian Constitution to support the e-cigarette ban, which emphasizes the State's duty to improve public health and raise the standard of living of its people.
- Additionally, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) warned against the growing use of e-cigarettes, citing studies showing adverse effects such as DNA damage, carcinogenicity, toxicity at the cellular, molecular, and immunological levels, as well as respiratory, cardiovascular, neurological disorders, and negative impacts on foetal development and pregnancy.

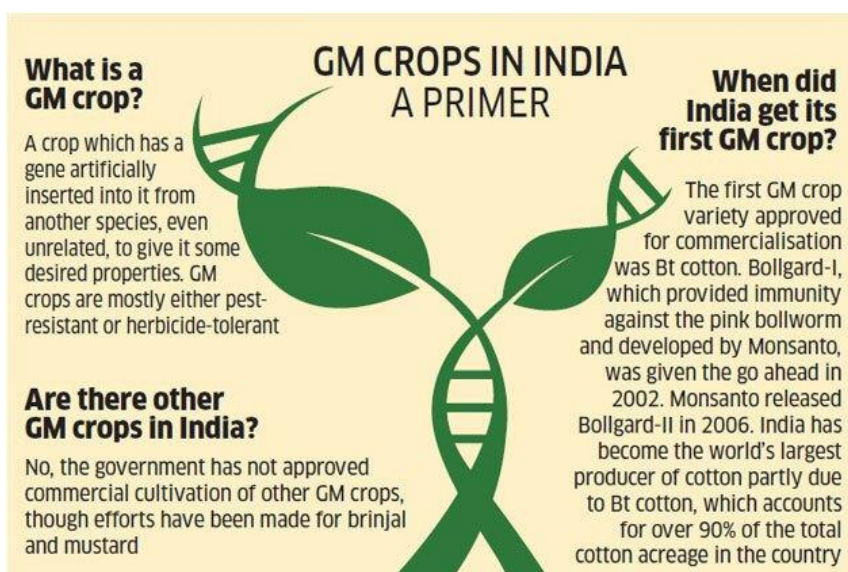
Ans8. B

Explanation:

Context: Rather than engaging with constitutional issues involving public health, environmental protection and agricultural livelihoods, the government is disregarding facts and logic before the Supreme Court. A determined battle by environmentalists in the Supreme Court of India against Delhi University's genetically modified (GM) herbicide-tolerant (HT) mustard is all that stands between GM food and Indian farmers and consumers.

Key Highlights

- GM crops are quite different from conventional varieties and hybrids, such as those developed by farmers, agricultural research institutions and companies.
- Biotechnologists insert select genes at a random location in the DNA of a plant to develop a GM crop. The insertion makes a GM crop express traits that it ordinarily would not.
 - For instance, GM mustard has been altered to withstand the broad-spectrum plant-killer or herbicide glufosinate.



What is a GM crop?
A crop which has a gene artificially inserted into it from another species, even unrelated, to give it some desired properties. GM crops are mostly either pest-resistant or herbicide-tolerant

**GM CROPS IN INDIA
A PRIMER**

When did India get its first GM crop?
The first GM crop variety approved for commercialisation was Bt cotton. Bollgard-I, which provided immunity against the pink bollworm and developed by Monsanto, was given the go ahead in 2002. Monsanto released Bollgard-II in 2006. India has become the world's largest producer of cotton partly due to Bt cotton, which accounts for over 90% of the total cotton acreage in the country

Are there other GM crops in India?
No, the government has not approved commercial cultivation of other GM crops, though efforts have been made for brinjal and mustard

- This makes it easier to develop hybrid mustard seeds for higher yields. And farmers growing GM mustard can spray the herbicide to kill all plants except the mustard.

GM crops in India, the debate

India has seen a robust debate on GM crops in the last two decades. Environmentalists, scientists, politicians, farmers, consumers and the higher judiciary have asked probing questions about the safety, efficacy and even the very necessity of GM food.

Many have been alarmed by the experience with Bt cotton, the first and only GM crop approved in the country. Long-term research suggests that Bt cotton has provided only fleeting benefits to farmers, while enormously increasing their costs of cultivation and risk. On the other hand, some seed companies have profited handsomely from the expensive GM seeds.

Ans9. D

Explanation:

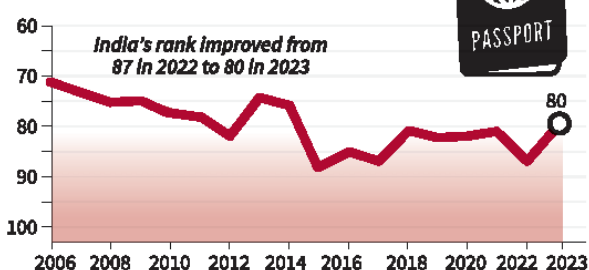
Context: India climbs seven points to 80 on Passport Index; Singapore at top position.

Key Highlights

- India has climbed seven places on the Henley Passport Index, 2023, reaching the 80th rank from 87 last years, with no change in the number of countries allowing visa-free access to Indian passport holders.
- The Henley Passport Index ranks all world passports based on the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa. It includes 199 passports and 227 travel destinations.
- The index is published by Henley and Partners.
- In 2014, India ranked 76 with 52 countries allowing visa-free access, but its performance has been fluctuating over the years.
- Japan, previously at the top position on the index for five years, dropped to third place. Singapore replaced Japan and is now the most powerful passport in the world, offering visa-free access to 192 travel destinations out of 227.
- Germany, Italy, and Spain share the second place. Third place is occupied by Japan, Austria, Finland, France, Luxembourg, South Korea, and Sweden.
- The U.K. moved up two places to fourth place, while the U.S. dropped two places to the eighth spot, continuing its decline over the past decade.
- Henley & Partners also introduced the Henley Openness Index, which measures how many nations a country allows visa-free access to. India was ranked 94 out of 97 ranks, allowing visa-free access to only four countries.
- The bottom four countries on the Openness Index, scoring zero for not permitting visa-free access to any passport, are Afghanistan, North Korea, Papua New Guinea, and Turkmenistan.

Slight uptick

A look at India's ranking over the years, according to the Henley Passport Index



Ans10. D

Explanation:

What are the key drivers of food insecurity?

The report notes the following reasons as being responsible: slowing down, thanks to lockdowns, economic downturns, and other pandemic-related disruptions in 2020 that led to job losses and reduced incomes for many people; the Ukraine war; governmental policies that may not be entirely favourable; and increasing urbanisation that drives changes through the agrifood systems. The report's comparison of food insecurity among rural, peri-urban and urban populations reveals that global food insecurity is lower in urban areas.

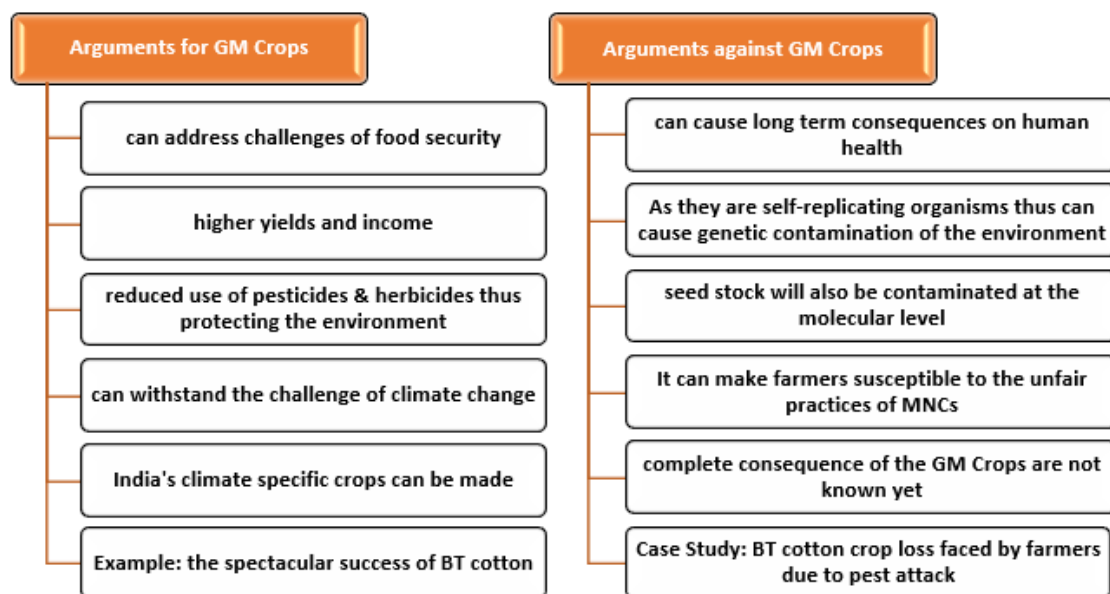
Ans11. B

Explanation:

The bottom four countries on the Openness Index/ Henley Passport Index, scoring zero for not permitting visa-free access to any passport, are Afghanistan, North Korea, Papua New Guinea, and Turkmenistan.

Ans12. A

Explanation:



Ans13. D

Explanation:

James Webb Space Telescope

- Webb has revealed the existence of the earliest-known galaxies and black holes.
- It has observed large and mature but remarkably compact galaxies teeming with stars that had formed within a few hundred million years of the Big Bang event.
- The orbiting observatory was designed to be more sensitive than the Hubble space telescope. Webb looks at the universe mainly in the infrared, while Hubble has examined it primarily at optical and ultraviolet wavelengths.

Ans14. A

Explanation:

Sr. No.	Name of the Vulture Species	IUCN status	Pictorial Representation
1.	Oriental White-backed Vulture (Gyps Bengalensis)	Critically Endangered	
2.	Slender-billed Vulture (Gyps Tenuirostris)	Critically Endangered	
3.	Long-billed Vulture (Gyps Indicus)	Critically Endangered	
4.	Egyptian Vulture (Neophron Percnopterus)	Endangered	
5.	Red-Headed Vulture (Sarcogyps Calvus)	Critically Endangered	
6.	Indian Griffon Vulture (Gyps Fulvus)	Least Concerned	
7.	Himalayan Griffon (Gyps Himalayensis)	Near Threatened	
8.	Cinereous Vulture (Aegypius Monachus)	Near Threatened	
9.	Bearded Vulture or Lammergeier (Gypaetus Barbatus)	Near Threatened	

Ans15. B

Explanation:

State Disaster Response Fund

- SDRF has been constituted under Section 48 (1) (a) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- It was constituted based on the recommendations of the 13th Finance Commission.
- It is the primary fund available with the State governments for responses to notified disasters to meet expenditure for providing immediate relief.
- It is audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) every year.
- Contribution:
 - The Centre contributes 75% of the SDRF allocation for general category States and Union Territories and 90% for special category States and Union Territories (northeastern States, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir).
- The annual Central contribution is released in two equal installments as per the recommendation of the Finance Commission.