

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

25th February 2025



RTI Act & Issues



CONTEXT: The editorial highlights various issues with the RTI Act.

About Right to Information Act, 2005

"Practical regime of right to information for citizens to secure access to information under the control of public"

- Role of information
- Empowering the citizens

KEY PROVISIONS for basics

Sec. 4	"records duly catalogued and indexed"	
Sec. 6	Entitles a person to make a request in writing to the Central or State Public Information Officer	
Sec. 7	Requires Public Information Officer to either provide information or reject request within 30 days	
Sec. 19	Person not received a decision within 30 days or aggrieved, may appeal	
Sec 8	Exemptions: defence, national security, etc	

Exemption from Disclosure RTI Act 2005 Section 8(1)

- Information that would prejudicially affect the sovereignty, integrity, security, scientific or economic interest and relation with a foreign state
- Information received in confidence from a foreign government
- 5. Information which would lead to commission of an offence
- If information disclosure endangers life and physical safety of any person
- If it is likely to impede investigation and prosecution processes
- 11. If it is about a source of information or assistance given in confidence of law enforcement or security purposes
- Cabinet Papers including deliberations of Council of Ministers, Secretaries and other officers
- Information whose release is forbidden by a court or tribunal or disclosure which might constitute contempt of court
- Personal or private information , subject to larger public interest , to be decided by the Public Information Officer.
- Commercial and trade secrets, intellectual property etc. that would harm competitive position of third party . subject to public interest . to be decided by Competent Authority.
- Information available to a person in his fiduciary relationship . subject to public interest . to be decided by the Competent Authority.

Systemic Issues in Implementation



Appointments

- Vacancies (7/29) 2023-24
- 9 without CICs
- 9% ICs women

Inefficiency

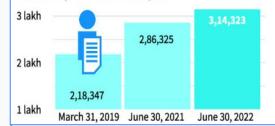
- ICs/SICs disposed fewer cases per year (under 2,500)
- No time limits
- Weak Penalties

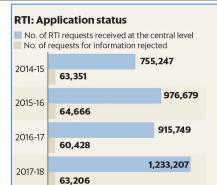
Government Sabotage

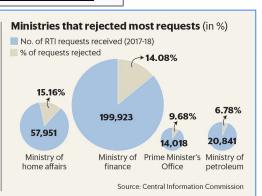
- Underfunding
- Gradual erosion

Rising backlogs

Data gathered by the Satark Nagrik Sangathan show that appeals and complaints pending with information commissions have steadily increased over the years







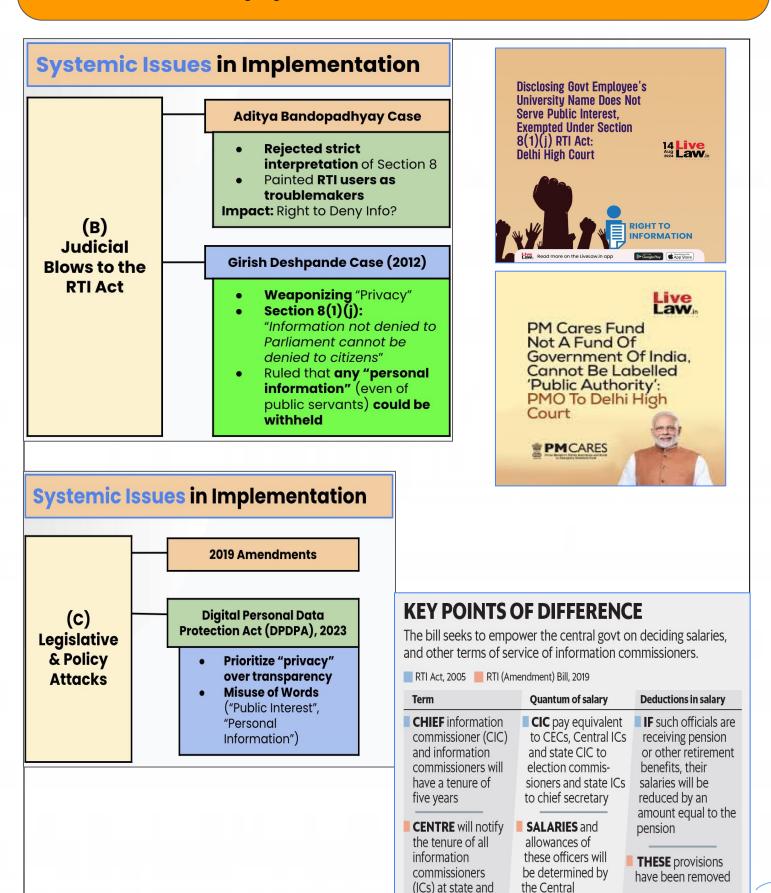


RTI Act & Issues



25th February 2025

CONTEXT: The editorial highlights various issues with the RTI Act.



central level

government

Source: PRS Legislative Research

RTI Act & Issues



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2nd ARC **National Coordination Committee Awareness campaigns Demand Accountability** Activists, not bureaucrats as ICs **Enforce penalties for officials** Way Legal Challenges Challenge judgments in Forward larger SC benches Highlight Article 19(1)(a) to counter restrictive laws like Separate chapter on "Protection of those **Recruitment** of seeking information adequate staff, under the (RTI) Act" Technology, etc

Mains Practise Question

Active involvement by citizens and the media is crucial to defend the true purpose of the RTI Act and protect the fundamental right to information. Comment. (15 Marks, 250 words)

UPSC PYQ (M) 2018

The Right to Information Act is not all about citizens' empowerment alone, it essentially redefines the concept of accountability."

Discuss.



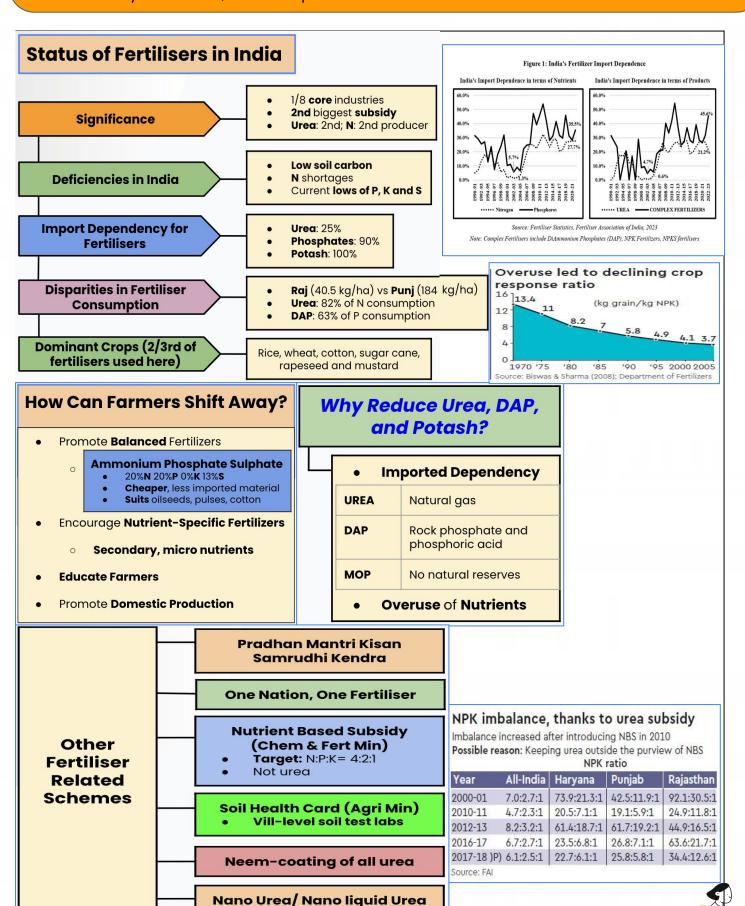


Strategy on fertilisers



25th February 2025

CONTEXT: Key strategy on fertilisers in India must deal with how Indian farmers can be weaned away from urea, DAP and potash.



Strategy on fertilisers



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UPSC PYQ (P) 2020

With reference to chemical fertilizers in India, consider the following statements:

- At present, the retail price of chemical fertilizers is market-driven and not administered by the Government.
- 2. Ammonia, which is an input of urea, is produced from natural gas.
- Sulphur, which is a raw material for phosphoric acid fertilizer, is a by-product of oil refineries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

UPSC PYQ (P) 2016

Why does the Government of India promote the use of 'Neem-coated Urea' in agriculture?

- (a) Release of Neem oil in the soil increases nitrogen fixation by the soil microorganisms.
- (b) Neem coating slows down the rate of dissolution of urea in the soil.
- (c) Nitrous oxide, which is a greenhouse gas, is not at all released into atmosphere by crop fields.
- (d) It is a combination of a weedicide and a fertilizer for particular crops.

Mains Practise Question

A shift towards balanced and efficient fertilisation will benefit farmers and the economy alike. Do you agree? Comment.

(15 Marks, 250 words)



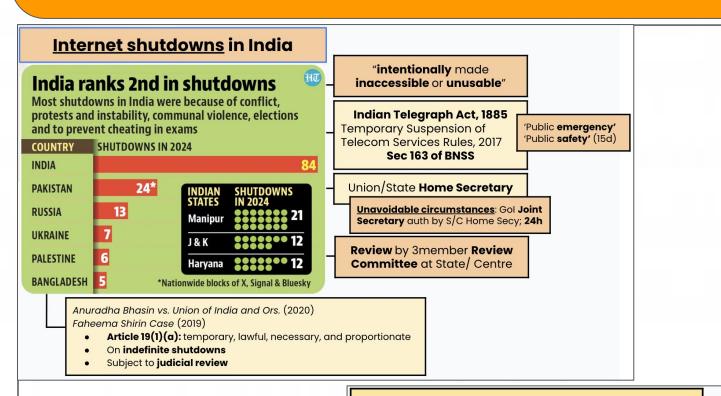
Internet shutdowns in India



25th February 2025

Syllabus: Indian Polity & Governance; **GS2:** Indian Constitution

Newspaper: The Hindu, Page No. 10



Fewer shutdowns happened in India in 2024 than in the previous year. "People in 16 States and [Union] Territories experienced a shutdown, with State Government officials in Manipur (21), Haryana (12), and Jammu & Kashmir (12) topping the list of offenders in India," the report said.

India did not impose the highest number of Internet shutdowns last year, with Myanmar seeing one additional disruption in 2024, according to a report by the advocacy body Access Now. However, the number of shutdowns imposed by the government in charge – the Union and State governments here – is still higher in India.

"Of the 84, 41 shutdowns were related to protests, and 23 were related to communal violence."

More shutdowns happened globally in 2024 than in any past year.

A particular focus of anti-shutdown advocates' ire has been examination-related shutdowns. India imposed five such shutdowns ahead of key exams in 2024. One was during the General Graduate Level Combined Competitive Examinations in Iharkhand, which took place for fiveand-a-half hours from September 22 morning through the afternoon.

Impact of Internet Shutdown

- Jan- June 2023: Loss of \$118 million in FDI
- Fundamental rights
- Critical services
- Human rights
- Disaster management
- Not-one-size-fits-all

What must be done? Recommendations of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology A necessary evil 'Public emergency' & 'public safety' MHA principle of proportionality DoT selectively restrict OTT, etc DoT and MHA study Clear communication



Internet shutdowns in India



Syllabus: Indian Polity & Governance; **GS2:** Indian Constitution

Newspaper: The Hindu, Page No. 10

UPSC PYQ (P) 2023

UPSC PYQ (P) 2019

UPSC PYQ (P) 2018

In essence, what does 'Due Process of Law' mean?

- a) The principle of natural justice
- b) The procedure established by law
- c) Fair application of Law
- d) Equality before law

In the context of polity, which one of the following would you accept as the most appropriate definition of liberty?

- a) Protection against the tyranny of political rulers
- b) Absence of restraint
- c) Opportunity to do whatever one likes
- d) Opportunity to develop oneself fully

Which of the following reflects the most appropriate relationship between law and liberty?

- a) If there are more laws, there is less Liberty
- b) If there are no laws there is no liberty
- c) If there is liberty, laws have to be made by people
- d) If laws are changed too often liberty is in danger



Emission intensity targets



<u>Syllabus</u>: Prelims: General issues on Environmental ecology, Biodiversity & climate change **GS 3:** Environmental pollution; **Newspaper**: Hindu **Page No. 12**

■ he Union government is expected to announce emissions intensity targets for nine industrial sectors by February-end – a crucial step to operationalise India's carbon trading scheme. Following this, these industries will have a year to put in place compliance measures to cut emissions, and trading in carbon credits is likely to begin by October 2026, Saurabh Diddi, Director, Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under the Union Ministry of Power, told The *Hindu* on the sidelines of a conclave here on India's carbon markets.

<u>PLAN</u>: Carbon credit trading scheme

Current Status of Carbon Trading

June 2023: **BEE** CCTS March 2024: List

Comparisons

- Global Models
 1 credit = 1 tonne of
 CO
- India: EFFICIENCY

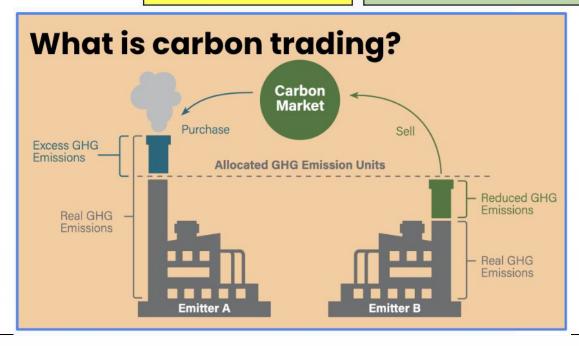
Definition of Emissions Intensity: amount of *GHG emitted per unit of output* or activity unit of activity. The nine sectors that must comply with emission intensity targets in India are iron and steel, aluminium, chlor-alkali, cement, fertilizers, pulp and paper, petrochemicals, petroleum refineries, and textiles.

Compliance (regulated)

• Eg: UN standards

Voluntary (unregulated)

• Eg: Verra, Gold Standard





Emission intensity targets



25th February 2025

<u>Syllabus</u>: Prelims: General issues on Environmental ecology, Biodiversity & climate change **GS 3:** Environmental pollution; **Newspaper**: Hindu **Page No. 12**

Reading further

Along with the compliance scheme (of emission intensity) there is also a market emerging of voluntary offsets. We are hoping that these offset markets can begin trading even this year, provided certain criteria are met," Mr. Diddi said.

Voluntary offsets refer to measures undertaken by private individuals, including afforestation, that can trap carbon dioxide as commercial projects. These too generate carbon credits and companies sell them, internationally as of now, to those that require them to meet the compliance regulations. As part of its climate commitments, India has said it will reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP at 45% of 2005 levels by 2030.

Reduction Goals

- 40% emission intensity reduction by 2027
- Remaining 60% by 2030
- 45% from 2005 levels by 2030 wrt Indian GDP

Carbon offset projects fall within one of two main categories: Avoidance / Reduction Removal / Sequestration Prevent or reduce the release of Remove carbon from carbon in the atmosphere the atmosphere Eg: Avoided deforestation Eg: Reforestation. preserving biomass direct air capture Importantly, these carbon offset projects may offer co-benefits which offer advantages that go beyond carbon reduction Biodiversity Educational Source: Second Nature (Sep 2020)

UPSC PYQ (P) 2024

Consider the following activities:

- Spreading finely ground basalt rock on farmlands extensively
- 2. Increasing the alkalinity of oceans by adding lime
- Capturing carbon dioxide released by various industries and pumping it into abandoned subterranean mines in the form of carbonated waters

How many of the above activities are often considered and discussed for carbon capture and sequestration?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

CO₂ storage in coal beds CO₂ storage in saline aquifer CO₂ storage in depleted oil and gas reservoirs CARBON CAPTURE AND STORAGE (CCS) Cement manufacturing plant CO₂ storage in saline aquifer CO₂ storage in depleted oil and gas reservoirs

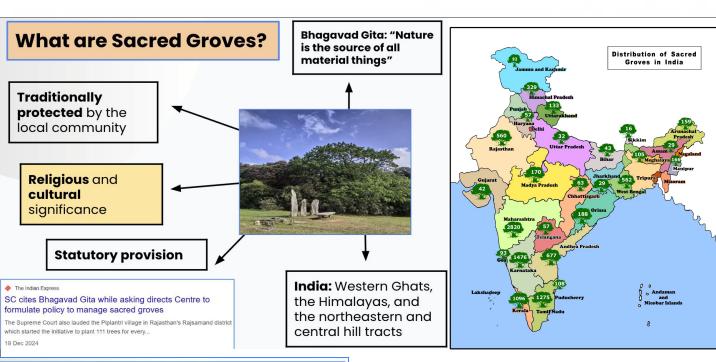


Sacred groves



25th February 2025

<u>Syllabus:</u> Prelims: General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity & climate change **GS Paper 3:** Conservation; **Newspaper**: Hindu **Page No. 4**



Matter of the news

Tribal families, which once inhabited the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Odisha, have alleged that their rights to continue their age-old rituals in the sacred forest groves have been denied following the translocation of a tigress from Maharashtra.

According to them, their villages in STR have been fenced off, now deemed part of the territory of Zeenat, who was translocated to Similipal to boost the genetic diversity of the reserve's big cat population.

"Even after our relocation, we continued to visit our sacred groves, abodes of our deities and sacred burial grounds, every year. It was a ritual to honour our sacred lands and ancestral and traditional worship practices which is integral to our community's very existence," said Mr. Pasa.





Sacred groves



25th February 2025

<u>Syllabus</u>: Prelims: General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity & climate change **GS Paper 3:** Conservation; **Newspaper**: Hindu **Page No. 4**

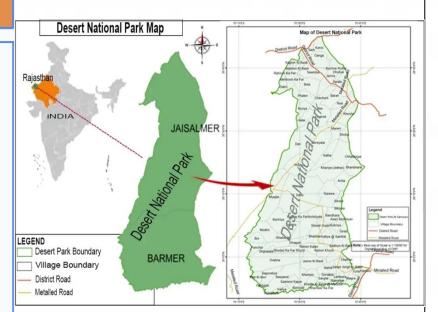
UPSC PYQ (P) 2021

With reference to India's Desert National Park, which of the following statements are correct?

- 1. It is spread over two districts.
- 2. There is no human habitation inside the Park.
- 3. It is one of the natural habitats of the Great Indian Bustard.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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



UPSC PYQ (P) 2023

Once the Central Government notifies an area as a 'Community Reserve'

- The Chief Wildlife Warden of the State becomes the governing authority of such forest
- 2. Hunting is not allowed in such area
- 3. People of such area are allowed to collect non-timber forest produce
- 4. People of such area are allowed traditional agricultural practices

How many of the above statements are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) Only three
- d) All Four

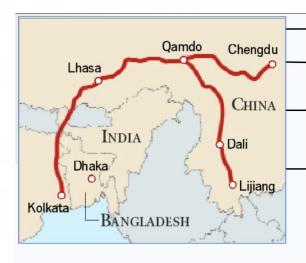
Region/State	Name of Sacred Groves
Himachal Pradesh	Devban
Karnataka	Devarakadu
Kerala	Kavu
Madhya Pradesh	Sarna
Rajasthan	Oran
Maharashtra	Devrai
Manipur	Umanglai
Meghalaya	Law Kyntang/Law Lyngdoh
Uttarakhand	Devan/Deobhumi
West Bengal	Gramthan
Andhra Pradesh	Pavithravana



Tea Horse Road



Syllabus: Prelims History of India Newspaper: Indian Express, Page No. 12



Trade in tea and horses

Major cities: Dali, Lijiang, Lhasa <u>Challenging terrain</u>

Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE)
Buddhist monk Yijing (635-713 CE) documented

Goods traded included From China to Tibet and India

 Sugar, textiles, rice noodles, tea, horses

From Tibet to China

 Horses, leather, gold, saffron, and medicinal herbs

Further details

dynasty (960-1279 CE) show.

Tea and horses

The main driver for this is believed to be the demand for tea among Tibetan nomads, living in cold and unforgiving conditions.

As an article in the *National Geographic* put it, "[Tea] was a hot beverage in a cold climate... A cup of yak butter tea — with its dis-

In fact, by the 10th century, official facilities were established along the border counties in China to control and supervise the trade trade. With the rise and fall of kingdoms, trade ebbed and flowed over the next few centuries.

For instance, tea was pressed together and packed into "bricks" — a form of packing that remains popular till date, and was akin to currency in medieval Tibet, scholars say. Meanwhile, sturdy Tibetan steeds became central to China's fights against nomadic tribes from Mongolia, the predecessors of the mighty Genghis Khan.

tinctive salty, slightly oily, sharp taste — provided a mini-meal for herders warming themselves over yak dung fires in a windswept hinterland."

At the same time, horses were a vital military resource as well as a means for transportation. But the central plains of China did not produce horses, meaning that they had to be imported from neighbour-

1912: End of Qing Dynasty
World War II

1949: Communist China and Mao's Policies

Lijiang: UNESCO World Heritage Site

Cultural Impact

- Chinese, Tibetan, Bai architecture
- Murals: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism



Circular economy

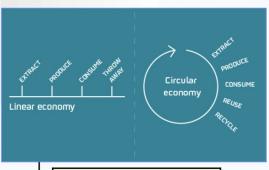


25th February 2025

<u>Syllabus</u>: Prelims: Current events of National & International importance;

Newspaper: The Hindu, Page No. 12

What is "circular economy"?



- 3Rs
- Closed-Loop Systems
- Product-as-a-Service

Aspect	Linear Economy (Traditional)	Circular Economy
Process	Take → Make → Use → Dispose	Reduce → Reuse → Recycle → Regenerate
Resource Use	Finite, depleting	Regenerative , sustainable
Waste	High, contributes to pollution	Minimal , designed out of the system
Example	Single-use	Refillable glass bottles

UPSC PYQ (P) 2022

UPSC PYQ (P) 2021

Which one of the following best describes the term "greenwashing"?

- a) Conveying a false impression that a company's products are eco-friendly and environmentally sound
- b) Non-inclusion of ecological/environmental costs in the Annual Financial Statements of a country
- c) Ignoring the disastrous ecological consequences while undertaking infrastructure development
- d) Making mandatory provisions for environmental costs in a government project/programme

The 'Common Carbon Metric', supported by UNEP, had been developed for

- (a) Assessing the carbon footprint of building operations around the world
- (b) Enabling commercial farming entities around the world to enter carbon emission trading
- (c) Enabling governments to assess the overall carbon footprint caused by their countries
- (d) Assessing the overall carbon footprint caused by the use of fossil fuels by the world in a unit time



Daily Quiz



25th February 2025

Q1. Regarding the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, consider the following statements:

- The RTI Act applies to both government and private entities performing public functions.
- 2. The Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) is appointed by the President of India.
- 3. The Act mandates that information must be provided within 45 days from the date of request.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: a

Q2. Regarding fertiliser use in India, consider the following statements:

- The Government of India provides subsidies on organic and chemical fertilizers to promote balanced nutrient management.
- The consumption of nitrogen-based fertilizers in India is higher than that of phosphorus and potassium-based fertilizers.
- 3. The Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) scheme applies to both urea and non-urea fertilizers.

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

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

Answer: b

Q3. Regarding Internet shutdowns in India, consider the following statements:

- Internet shutdowns in India are imposed under the authority of the Information Technology Act, of 2000.
- 2. The power to order an Internet shutdown rests exclusively with the Central Government.
- 3. India has recorded the highest number of Internet shutdowns in the world in recent years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: b

Q4. Regarding Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) consider the following statements:

- 1. CCS involves capturing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from sources like power plants and storing it underground to prevent its release into the atmosphere.
- 2. CCS can only be applied to coal-based power plants and is not suitable for industries like cement and steel production.
- 3. The effectiveness of CCS depends on the availability of suitable geological formations for long-term CO₂ storage.

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

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

Answer: b

Q5. Regarding Sacred Groves in India, consider the following statements:

- Sacred groves are forest patches traditionally protected by local communities due to their religious and cultural significance.
- 2. The Biodiversity Act, of 2002 provides legal recognition and protection to sacred groves in India.
- 3. Sacred groves are found only in the Himalayan and Western Ghats regions of 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: a





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