



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

9th August 2025



CONTEXT: This will be **PM Modi's first visit to China in over 7 years** — last attended SCO in Qingdao, 2018

Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, by year of accession



1996 – **Shanghai Five**

Security & Counter-terrorism
Trade & Investment
Energy & Transport
Culture & Education
Environmental Protection

Follow the Shanghai Spirit:

Mutual trust
Mutual benefit
Equality
Respect for cultural diversity
Pursuit of common development

Headquarters: *Beijing, China*
Official Languages Chinese, Russian

Council of Heads of State
Highest authority

Why SCO Matters?

Geopolitical Influence

Covers **40%** of global population & 20% of world GDP.
Acts as a counterbalance to **NATO**

Security & Anti-Terrorism

Conducts **joint military drills**
Focuses on **countering terrorism, separatism, extremism**

Economic Potential

Eurasian trade corridors
For **local currency settlements**

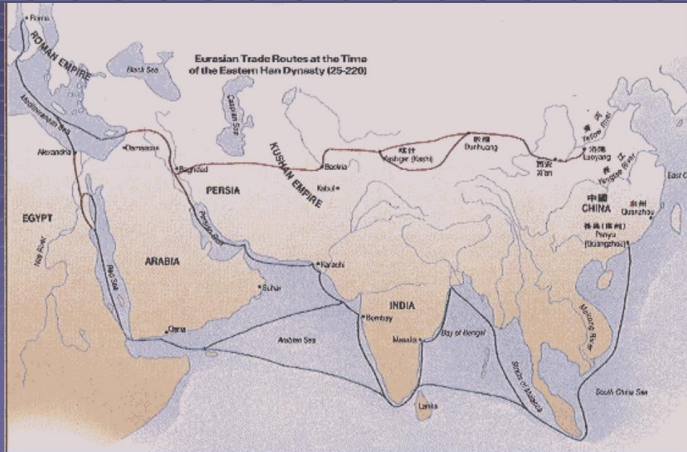
Connectivity & Infrastructure

Central Asia-South Asia links



CONTEXT: This will be **PM Modi's first visit to China in over 7 years** — last attended SCO in Qingdao, 2018

Eurasian Trade Routes



Plan to boost local currency settlement among SCO countries underway

De-dollarization creates fairer, more equal global trade, financial system: experts

By Chu Daye

Published: Sep 12, 2023 08:59 PM



India's Role in SCO

✓ Opportunities for India

- ✓ Counter-terrorism cooperation
- ✓ Energy security
- ✓ Economic ties with Eurasia
- ✓ Multilateral diplomacy

✗ Challenges for India

- ⚠ Balancing QUAD & SCO
- ⚠ Pakistan's presence
- ⚠ BRI disputes
- ⚠ Low trade with Central Asia

◆ India's Strategy

Push for **counter-terrorism measures**.
Promote **Chabahar Port**
Advocate **national currency trade**
Use SCO for **Central Asia outreach**.



PM to Attend SCO in China

CONTEXT: This will be **PM Modi's first visit to China in over 7 years** — last attended SCO in Qingdao, 2018

UPSC PYQ (M) 2025

India is one of the founding members of the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, a multimodal transportation corridor, which will connect:

- (a) India to Central Asia to Europe via Iran
- (b) India to Central Asia via China
- (c) India to South-East Asia through Bangladesh and Myanmar
- (d) India to Europe through Azerbaijan



PM Modi to Attend SCO *Tianjin Summit*

Recent India-China Context

⚠️ **Tensions**
(2020-2023)

Ladakh **border face-off** since May 2020
Galwan Valley clash (June 2020)

🔄 **Thaw**
(2024-2025)

Disengagement at Demchok & Depsang (2024)
Modi-Xi meeting at Kazan, Russia (Oct 2024)
revived dialogues

🏆 **Confidence-building**

Resumption of **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra**
Tourist visas for Chinese nationals resumed
Modalities under discussion for **direct flights**



Will Trump's Tariffs Cause Thaw
In India-China Relations?

MODI'S FIRST CHINA TRIP SINCE GALWAN



CONTEXT: This will be **PM Modi's first visit to China in over 7 years** — last attended SCO in Qingdao, 2018

Strategic Balancing in a *Multipolar World* 🌐

"Upholding the Shanghai Spirit: SCO on the Move"

- Shift from **West-dominated platforms**
- **Middle Power** Diplomacy
- **Trump's** policies
- **Russian** ties
- **Counterbalance China's** dominance
- **Belarus** Membership (*Potash*)
- Potential **oil & gas** agreements
- **RATS** (Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure)

Siasat.com

Netanyahu confirms India's use of Israeli weapons in Op Sindoor

12 hours ago



NDTV

Putin To Visit India This Year As Trump Targets Nations Over Russian Oil

1 day ago

Mains Practise Question

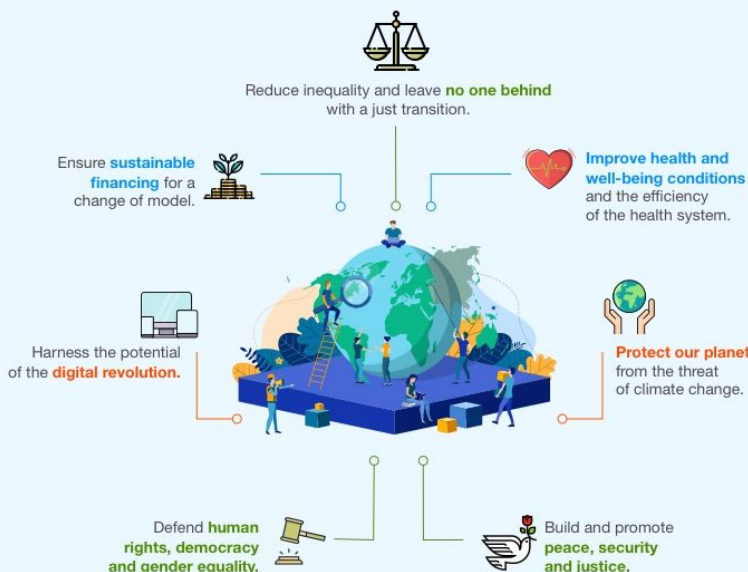
India's participation at SCO summit in China shows commitment to regional multilateralism despite bilateral tensions.

(15 Marks, 250 words)

PYQ. Critically examine the aims and objectives of SCO. What importance does it hold for India? (2021)

The main objectives of multilateralism today

The Joint Statement entitled *Together for stronger multilateralism*, launched in 2020 to mark the 75th anniversary of the UN aims to strengthen the multilateral system to address major global challenges.



9th August 2025

CONTEXT: This piece explores the contours of **industrial mishaps in the country** – a stark reminder of the grim realities of industrial safety.

Industrial Accidents in India

An **industrial accident** is any **unplanned** event in an industrial setup that results in injury, illness, death, or damage to property/environment.

Current Situation in India

Worker deaths in last 5 years	~6,500 (Lab Min + RTI)
Avg. deaths/day	~3 deaths
Major chemical accidents post-2020	130+ (CSE study, 2022)
Fatalities in these accidents	218+
Serious accidents in registered factories	1 every 2 days (DGFASLI)

State-level hotspots: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh

Fire & Explosion – 2023 Telangana Sigachi Industries blast

Toxic Chemical Release – e.g., Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984) Vizag LG Polymers leak (2020).

Mechanical/Structural Failures – crane collapse, boiler bursts

Mining Disasters – roof collapse, gas explosions

Construction Site Accidents – falls, equipment mishandling

Causes of Industrial Disasters

1. Regulatory Failures

- **No Fire NOC:** 70% SMEs operate without fire clearance.
- **Fake Safety Audits:** "Tick-box" inspections.
- **Weak Penalties:** ₹1L fine for fatalities (vs. ₹20Cr+ in EU).

2. Systemic Negligence

3. Corporate Apathy

- **Cost-cutting:** Safety = "Expense", not "Right".
- **Contract Labour Exploitation:** No PF/insurance.

4. Informal Sector Black Hole

5. Govt. policies

- UP has 12 inspectors for 50K factories
- **Compensation Delays** (Avg. 5+ years in courts)

Safety Violation

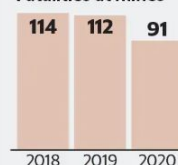
% Units Non-Compliant

No fire extinguishers	65%
Locked emergency exits	48%
No hazard training	72%
Non-functional gas sensors	55%

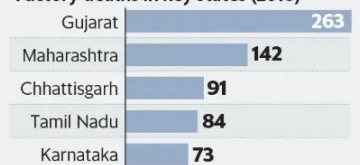
Occupational hazard

Out of the total industrial casualties, 5,629 were reported in factory settings, while 549 deaths were reported from mines.

Fatalities at mines



Factory deaths in key states (2018)



Factory deaths rose after declining in 2017



Source: Labour ministry



9th August 2025

CONTEXT: This piece explores the contours of **industrial mishaps in the country** – a stark reminder of the grim realities of industrial safety.

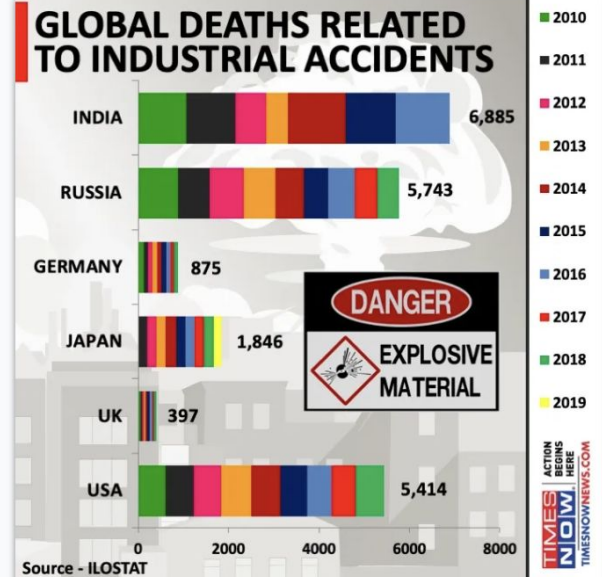
Human Cost of Indifference 💔

Economic cost → loss of breadwinner = into poverty.

Social cost → orphans, widows, migration stress.

Psychological trauma → survivors & families.

Intergenerational impact → children & health suffer.



Legal & Policy Framework in India ⚖️

Factories Act, 1948

Worker safety, health, working conditions

Explosives Act, 1884

Regulates explosives manufacturing & handling

Environment Protection Act, 1986

Post-Bhopal, environmental safeguards

Public Liability Insurance Act (1991)

Mandatory insurance for hazardous industries

Disaster Management Act, 2005

Preparedness & response framework

National Policy on Safety, Health & Environment at Workplace (2009)

Vision for accident-free workplaces

Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020

Consolidates safety laws (yet to be fully implemented)



CONTEXT: This piece explores the contours of **industrial mishaps in the country** – a stark reminder of the grim realities of industrial safety.

✓ Best Practices & Recommendations

A. Regulatory Strengthening

- Unified safety law (merge 15+ Acts).
- Independent Industrial Safety Regulator.

B. Monitoring & Enforcement

- Digital inspection systems.
- Surprise audits with penalties linked to turnover.

C. Risk Knowledge Base

- National Chemical Risk Database with GIS mapping.

D. Worker-Centric Measures

- Multilingual safety training & regular drills.
- PPE provision + health check-ups.

E. Technology & Innovation

- IoT gas leak sensors, AI predictive maintenance.
- Environmentally Sound Technologies (UNEP).

F. Incentives

- Subsidies/tax breaks for safety upgrades.

Mains Practise Question

"Industrial accidents in India are not acts of God but governance failures." Discuss.

(15 Marks, 250 words)

FLOUTING NORMS

➤ North Andhra Pradesh has around **2,900** small and major industrial units

➤ A majority of the pharma industries lack proper safety mechanisms

Only **60%** of the industrial units in north AP follow pre-scribed safety and maintenance norms

➤ The management in these units continue to operate with limited manpower, sub-standard quality material and absence of safety measures

➤ Accidents have also occurred in public sector units such as Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, HPCL-VR

➤ Two persons died and three others received burn injuries following a fire accident at an active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) unit at JNPC on May 2, 2016

➤ Officials claim political intervention delays prompt action against erring industries

➤ Two workers were charred beyond recognition and five suffered severe burn injuries when a reactor exploded due to high pressure in Sainor Life Sciences Pvt Ltd at JNPC, Parawada on September 28, 2016



9th August 2025

Syllabus: G.S. 2: Indian Constitution

Newspaper: Indian Express, **Page No. 8**



Revision of OBC *Creamy Layer* Income Limit

S.No	Creamy Layer	Non-creamy layer
1	Income- Above 8 lakh	Income- Below 8 lakh
2	Family income- Above 8 lakh (agriculture income will not include)	Family income- Below 8 lakh (agriculture income will not include)
3	In the case of any competitive exam, you are not eligible to take a relaxation	You enjoy the benefits including age relaxation and competitive exam
4	No requirement for any certificate	For reservation, you need to require to submit an OBC certificate

Economically advanced members of OBCs **excluded** from reservation benefits.

Concept introduced in *Indra Sawhney Case (1992)* – SC held that the advanced section of OBCs should be kept out of reservations.



Legal & Policy Background

1993	DoPT Order – Creamy layer limit to be revised every 3 years or earlier if required.
2004–2013	Gradual increases – ₹2.5 lakh → ₹4.5 lakh → ₹6 lakh.
2017	Raised from ₹6.5 lakh → ₹8 lakh per annum.
2024	No revision despite inflation and income growth trends.

Ensure reservation reaches the **socially and educationally backward**, not the already well-off.



Why Revision is Being Demanded?

Inflation Impact 📊	₹8 lakh in 2017 has far less purchasing power in 2025.
Income Growth 📈	Even lower-middle-income households now cross ₹8L.
Equity in Access ⚖️	More genuine needy OBC families are being excluded due to outdated limit.
Social Justice 🤝	Larger OBC segment needs state support to reach educational & social parity.



Committee's Key Observations

- Need to **widen coverage**
- Exclusion due to limit **deprives** a large segment of OBCs from:
 - Reservation in jobs
 - Reservation in educational institutions
 - Access to targeted welfare schemes
- **Pre-Matric Scholarship** Parental Income Limit to ₹5 lakh/year



9th August 2025

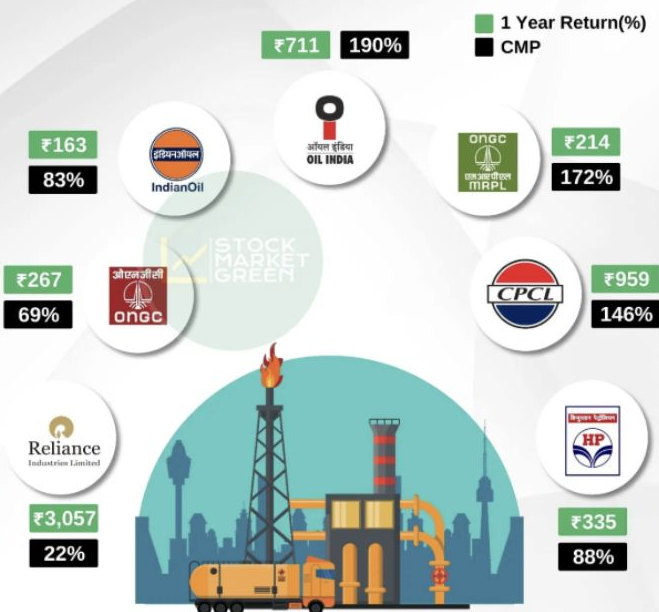
Syllabus: G.S. 3 : Energy

Newspaper: The Hindu, Page No. 10

Why LPG Price Matters?

OIL MARKETING

Image shows top performing oil marketing companies their 1 returns



India imports most of its LPG → **Saudi Contract Price**

International prices rise but retail prices in India are kept **artificially low**

Example:

International-linked price (Feb 2025): ₹1,028.50 per 14.2 kg cylinder (**Delhi**).

Actual selling price: ₹803 per cylinder.

Loss per cylinder = ₹225.50 (approx).

Under-recovery = Selling price fixed by govt < Cost price linked to international markets

FY25: 3 OMCs **lost ₹41,000+ crore**

How Does Govt Compensate OMCs?

Govt can:

- Give direct grants** (Example: ₹22,000 crore in 2022).
- Raise taxes elsewhere** and channel funds to OMCs.

In this case:

- April 2025: Govt **hiked excise duty** on petrol & diesel by ₹2/litre.

How the April Changes Worked

Excise duty ↑ by ₹2/litre on petrol & diesel

More govt revenue (~₹32,000 crore/year)

LPG price ↑ by ₹50 per cylinder

Slight relief to OMCs (but still selling below cost)

No pass-through of excise hike to consumers

Consumers protected from petrol/diesel hike

Govt channels extra excise money → OMCs

Covers part of LPG under-recovery



Syllabus: G.S. 3 : Energy
Newspaper: The Hindu, Page No. 10

Why This Is Important



For Economy:

- **Strategic** public sector
- **Fuel infra** boost

For Consumers:

- Keeps LPG affordable
- Avoids political backlash



Syllabus: G.S. 2: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population
Newspaper: The Hindu, **Page No. 11**

Multidisciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education



myGov
मेरी सरकार

A government statement said MERITE would work as a **Central Sector Scheme** with a total financial implication of **₹4,200 crore** to be spent in five years, between **2025-26 and 2029-30**, adding that **₹2,100 crore** will come as an external assistance from the World Bank in the form of a loan.

Key Objectives

- ✓ Boost **Employability**
- ✓ Promote **Research & Innovation**
- ✓ **Digital Transformation**
- ✓ **Gender Inclusion**
- ✓ **Multidisciplinary Learning**

MERITE SCHEME ELEVATING TECHNICAL EDUCATION ACROSS INDIA

- **Cabinet nod for MERITE Scheme in 275 technical institutions** comprising 175 engineering institutions & 100 polytechnics
- **Covers all States and UTs** with interventions aligned to NEP-2020

Institute Type (Excludes IITs/IIMs but involves their expertise)

Engineering Colleges	175	Curriculum modernization, research labs
Polytechnics	100	Skill labs, industry partnerships
Regulatory Bodies	AICTE, NBA	Quality assurance, accreditation

📌 MERITE Scheme Benefits At a Glance

For Students

- 🔧 **Industry Internships** – Mandatory hands-on training.
- 📖 **Updated Curriculum** – AI, IoT, sustainability integrated.
- 🌐 **Language Workshops** – English + regional languages.

For Institutions

- 💡 **Incubation Centers** – Support for startups.
- 🔬 **Research Hubs** – Govt-industry-academia collaboration.
- 💻 **Digital Governance** – ERP systems for admin efficiency.

For Faculty

- 👩 **Women Leadership Programs** – Training for future academic administrators.
- 🎓 **Faculty Development** – Global exposure, pedagogy training.

Cabinet Approves MERITE* Scheme

Major expected outcomes:

- 🧑 **Digitalization strategies** in participating States/ UTs
- 📄 **Development of guidelines** for multidisciplinary programs among technical courses
- 👥 **Increase in learning and employability skills** of students
- 🔬 **Strengthened research and innovation environment**



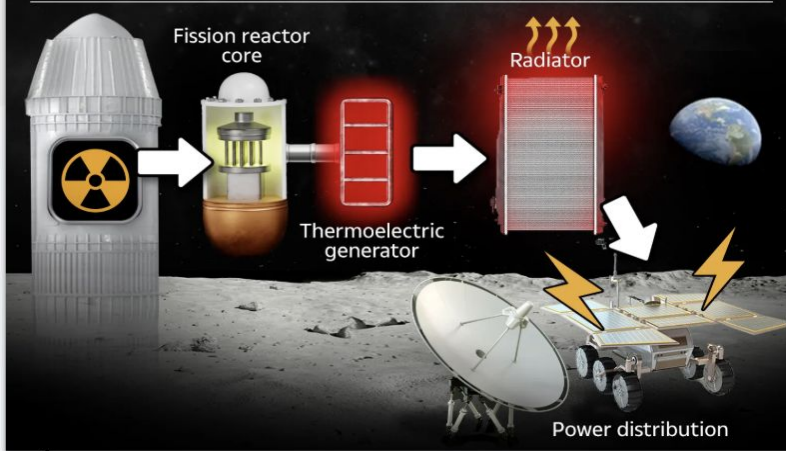
Syllabus: G.S. 3 : Space

Newspaper: Indian Express, Page No. 14

NASA's Plan to Put a Nuclear Reactor on the Moon!

POWER THE MOON

Nasa races to build a nuclear reactor to power future space missions



- Future **Human Missions**
- **Long-term** moon habitation
- Lunar night lasts ~14 Earth days

Fuel U-fuel rods (**low-enriched**)

Fission Reaction

Heat Heat drives a system to produce electricity

Output **100 kW** (~70–80 homes)

Heat Disposal Large **radiators** release excess heat into space (since no water/air on Moon to cool it)

Where Will It Go? Moon's **south pole**

- Water ice deposits
- Some sunlight

Space Race 2.0?

The U.S. and China Lead The Space Race 2.0

Distribution of investment in private space companies since 2014, by target country



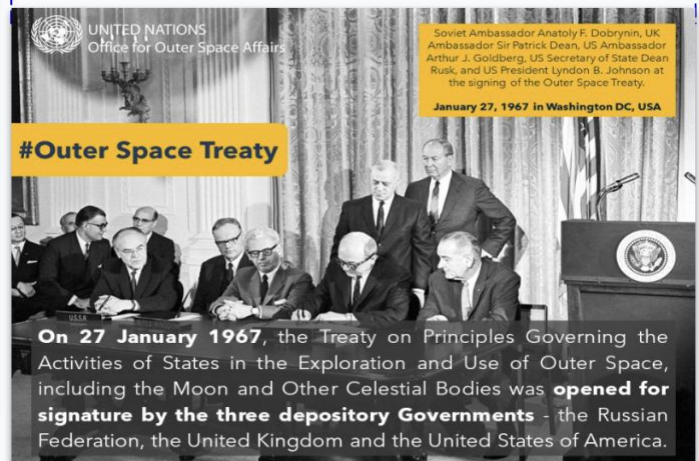
As of Nov 3, 2022
Source: Space Capital

statista

U.S., China, Russia all have plans for nuclear-powered lunar bases by 2030.

Whoever sets up first could:

- **Control prime resource zones**
- Establish **"keep-out zones"** under their control



Syllabus: G.S. 3 : Environmental pollution and degradation
Newspaper: The Hindu, Page No. 13

PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement Scheme

PM E-DRIVE SCHEME

The PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement Scheme is a Rs. 10,900 cr scheme for the promotion of electric mobility in the country.

The PM E-Drive Scheme will support 88,500 EV charging sites

The scheme proposes the installation of -

- 22,100 fast chargers for e-4 Ws
- 1800 fast chargers for e-buses
- 48,400 fast chargers for e-2W/3Ws

The outlay for EV PCS will be Rs.2,000 crore.



- ✓ Boost EV Adoption – e-2W, e-3W, e-buses, e-trucks, e-ambulances.
- ✓ Eliminate Range Anxiety – 72,000+ charging stations.
- ✓ Cut Carbon Emissions
- ✓ Digital Integration – **Unified EV Super App**

Charging Infra	₹2,000 Cr	72,000 stations
Demand Incentives	₹5,200 Cr	Direct subsidy via e-vouchers
E-Bus Sewa Scheme	₹3,700 Cr	10,000 electric buses

How Incentives Work?

- Buyers = Aadhaar-linked e-vouchers
- Subsidies = 15-30% of vehicle cost.

Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited nodal agency for charging infra + **Unified EV Super App**

Other aspects

Charging Infrastructure Plan

Deployment Strategy

- Urban Areas** – 50,000 stations (cities, malls, offices).
- Highways** – 22,000 stations (every 25 km on key routes).
- Types** – Fast (DC), Slow (AC), Battery Swap Stations.

Unified EV Super App (By BHEL)

- Real-time charger availability
- Slot booking & payments
- Trip planner for EVs

PM E-Bus Sewa Scheme

Ministry	MoHUA
Target	10,000 e-buses in 169 cities
Model	Public-Private Partnership

Travel With

PM-eBUS SEWA



10,000 e-Buses to be deployed in 169 cities

Cities with 3 lakh+ population to be covered

Support for 10 years

Priority to cities with no organised bus services

Direct Employment Generation of 45,000 - 55,000



Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):

1. The SCO was initially established as a security grouping known as the "Shanghai Five" in 1996 before expanding and adopting its present name in 2001.
2. India and Pakistan became full members of the SCO in 2017.
3. The SCO Secretariat is located in Beijing, China.
4. The SCO has a Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) headquartered in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1, 2 and 3 only
- c) 1, 2 and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: b

Q2. Regarding the "OBC Creamy Layer" concept in India, consider the following:

1. The concept of the creamy layer was first introduced by the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney case (1992).
2. Persons belonging to the creamy layer among OBCs are eligible for reservation benefits in education and public employment.
3. The income limit for determining the creamy layer status is notified by the Central Government and is subject to periodic revision.

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 the MERITE (Multidisciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education) scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It aims to enhance quality and access in technical education through multidisciplinary approaches in line with

the NEP 2020.

2. It is a centrally sponsored scheme implemented by the Ministry of Education.
3. It focuses only on Indian Institutes of Technology(IITs).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: a

Q4. Regarding the "PM eDrive" initiative, consider the following statements:

1. It is aimed at promoting the adoption of electric vehicles in public and private transport sectors.
2. The initiative focuses on setting up charging infrastructure and battery-swapping stations across the country.
3. It is implemented by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

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

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

Answer: b

Q5. Which of the following Acts/Policies in India were introduced as a direct response to major industrial or environmental disasters?

1. Environment Protection Act, 1986
2. Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
3. Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

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

Answer: b





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