



# Civils Cafe

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## IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR PRELIMS VOL 15

- 17+ 1 INITIATIVE
- TIGRAY- ETHIOPIA FAMINE
- DRONE RULES 2021
- NATIONAL ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANY LIMITED
- GM RUBBER
- ARGOSTEMMA QUARANTENA
- NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE COMPLEX, LOTHAL
- STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE WORLD REPORT 2021

SCAN TO EXPLORE





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**IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS**  
**FOR PRELIMS VOL - 15**  
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## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 1) 17+ 1 INITIATIVE

**IN NEWS:** - Lithuania quit China's 17+1 cooperation forum with central and eastern Europe, by calling it "divisive", now it is 16+1.

### ABOUT 17+1 INITIATIVE

- The 17+1 initiative is a China-led format founded in 2012 in Budapest with an aim to expand cooperation between Beijing and the Central and Eastern European (CEE) member countries, with investments and trade for the development of the CEE region.
- The framework also focuses on infrastructure projects such as bridges, motorways, railway lines and modernisation of ports in the member states.
- The initiative includes twelve EU member states and five Balkan states — Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.
- The platform is largely seen as an extension of China's flagship Belt and Road initiative (BRI).

### BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

- It is a developmental strategy and framework, unveiled by China in 2013. It comprises the SREB (Silk Road Economic Belt) and MSR (Maritime Silk Road), respectively.
- It runs through the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa.

### PRACTICE QUESTION

Consider the following statements

1. India is a member of 17+1 initiative
2. It was founded in 2012 in Budapest

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 or 2

**Answer: - b**

## **2) TIGRAY- ETHIOPIA FAMINE**

**IN NEWS:** - The hundreds of thousands in Tigray, Ethiopia are facing famine, and millions more are at risk.

### **ABOUT TIGRAY CRISIS**

- The Tigray War is an ongoing armed conflict that began in November 2020 in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia.
- The war has spawned massacres, gang rapes and the widespread expulsion of people from their homes, and the United States has declared “ethnic cleansing” in western Tigray.
- Now, on top of those atrocities, Tigrayans face another urgent problem: hunger and starvation.

### **TIGRAY**

- Tigray is Ethiopia's northernmost region.
- Bordering Eritrea, it is home to most of the country's estimated 7 million ethnic Tigrayans.
- The ethnic group, which accounts for about 6% of Ethiopia's population, have had an outsized influence in national affairs.



## INTERNAL SECURITY

### 3) DRONE RULES 2021

**IN NEWS:** - The Ministry of Civil Aviation in August 2021, notified the Drone Rules 2021. These rules were released just 6 months after the previous draft of regulations on drones, the Unmanned Aircraft System Rules, 2021 (UAS Rules), released in March 2021

#### **ABOUT DRONE RULES 2021**

**AIM:** - To create a “digital sky platform” as a business-friendly single-window online system for procuring various approvals.

#### **PROVISIONS**

- No flight permission required upto 400 feet in green zones and upto 200 feet in the area between 8 and 12 km from the airport perimeter.
- No pilot licence required for micro drones (for non-commercial use), nano drone and for R&D organisations.

- No restriction on drone operations by foreign-owned companies registered in India.
- Import of drones and drone components to be regulated by DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade).
- No security clearance required before any registration or licence issuance.
- No requirement of certificate of airworthiness, unique identification number, prior permission and remote pilot licence for R&D entities.
- Coverage of drones under Drone Rules, 2021 increased from 300 kg to 500 kg. This will cover drone taxis also.
- Issuance of Certificate of Airworthiness delegated to Quality Council of India and certification entities authorised by it.
- Manufacturer may generate their drone's unique identification number on the digital sky platform through the self-certification route.
- Maximum penalty under Drone Rules, 2021 reduced to INR 1 lakh. This shall, however, not apply to penalties in respect of violation of other laws.
- Drone corridors will be developed for cargo deliveries.
- Drone promotion council to be set up to facilitate a business-friendly regulatory regime.

## **DRONE**

Drone” means an aircraft that can operate autonomously or can be operated remotely without a pilot on board

## **PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

With reference to Drone Rules 2021, consider the following statements

1. Foreign owned companies can operate drones in India.
2. Import of drones and drone components to be regulated by Directorate General of Foreign Trade.

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 1 and 2 only
- d. Neither 1 or 2

**Answer: - c**

## ECONOMY

### **4) NATIONAL ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANY LIMITED**

**IN NEWS:** - The National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL) was incorporated in July 2021 as a 'bad bank' to help dispose of the stressed assets of the commercial banks.

### **ABOUT NATIONAL ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANY LIMITED**

- The National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd or NARCL is the name of the asset reconstruction company incorporated to take over and dispose of the stressed assets of commercial banks.
- Stressed assets of commercial banks worth Rs 2 lakh crore have been identified to be taken up in the first phase by the NARCL.
- NARCL will be starting with a total capital of Rs 6,000 crore.
- In October 2021, NARCL received the RBI's license to enable it to commence operations as a 'bad bank'.
- Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have a 51% ownership of NARCL.
- Banks will aggregate and consolidate stressed assets with NARCL for resolution.
- Another entity — India Debt Resolution Company Ltd (IDRCL), which has also been set up — will then try to sell the stressed assets in the market.

- The NARCL-IDRCL structure is the new bad bank.
- The NARCL will first purchase bad loans from banks. It will pay 15% of the agreed price in cash and the remaining 85% will be in the form of “Security Receipts”.
- When the assets are sold, with the help of IDRCL, the commercial banks will be paid back the rest.
- If the bad bank is unable to sell the bad loan, or has to sell it at a loss, then the government guarantee will be invoked and the difference between what the commercial bank was supposed to get and what the bad bank was able to raise will be paid from the Rs 30,600 crore that has been provided by the government

#### **DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NARCL AND ARC**

- The proposed bad bank will have a public sector character since the idea is mooted by the government and majority ownership is likely to rest with state-owned banks.
- At present, ARCs typically seek a steep discount on loans. With the proposed bad bank being set up, the valuation issue is unlikely to come up since this is a government initiative.
- The government-backed ARC will have deep pockets to buy out big accounts and thus free up banks from carrying these accounts on their books.

#### **ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANIES**

- It is a specialized financial institution that buys the Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) from banks and financial institutions so that they can clean up their balance sheets. This helps banks to concentrate on normal banking activities.
- The asset reconstruction companies or ARCs are registered under the RBI.



**PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

Consider the following statements regarding National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL)

1. RBI has a 51% ownership of NARCL.
2. NARCL will be starting with a total capital of Rs 6,000 crore.
3. The NARCL-IDRCL structure is the new bad bank.

Which among the above statements are correct?

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

**Answer: - b**

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY****GM RUBBER**

**IN NEWS:** - A Rubber Board research farm on the outskirts of Guwahati now sports the world's first genetically modified (GM) rubber plant tailored for the climatic conditions in the Northeast

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**ABOUT GM RUBBER**

- The GM rubber has additional copies of the gene MnSOD, or manganese-containing superoxide dismutase, inserted in the plant, which is expected to tide over the severe cold conditions during winter in the northeast.
- The MnSOD gene has the ability to protect plants from the adverse effects of severe environmental stresses such as cold and drought.

- The plant was developed at the Kerala-based Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII).
- The MnSOD gene has the ability to protect plants from the adverse effects of severe environmental stresses such as cold and drought.
- Laboratory studies conducted at the RRII showed the GM rubber plants overexpressed the MnSOD gene as expected, offering protection to the cells.
- The plant is thus expected to establish well and grow fast in the region.
- There was no risk of genes flowing from the GM rubber into any other native species, a concern often raised by environmental groups against GM plants in general

### **NEED FOR GM RUBBER**

Natural rubber is a native of warm humid Amazon forests and is not naturally suited for the colder conditions in the Northeast, which is one of the largest producers of rubber in India. Growth of young rubber plants remains suspended during the winter months, which are also characterised by progressive drying of the soil. This is the reason for the long maturity period of this crop in the region.

### **PRACTICE QUESTION**

With reference to GM Rubber, consider the following statements

1. The plant was developed at the Department of Science and Technology
2. The GM rubber has additional copies of the gene MnSOD, or manganese-containing superoxide dismutase
3. The MnSOD gene has the ability to protect plants from severe environmental stresses such as cold and drought

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only

- c. 1 and 3 only  
 d. 1, 2 and 3 only

**Answer: - b**

## ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

### 5) ARGOSTEMMA QUARANTENA

**IN NEWS:** -A new plant species belonging to the coffee family spotted in the scenic Wagamon hills in Kerala has been named Argostemma quarantena

#### **ABOUT ARGOSTEMMA QUARANTENA**

- A delicate herbaceous species from the family Rubiaceae,
- It is a new plant species belonging to the coffee family.
- It grows to a height of 3-7cm and is characterised by striking white flowers.
- It has been named Argostemma quarantena to commemorate the millions who have died in the pandemic.
- The species has been classified Data Deficient (DD) under IUCN standards

### 6) PROJECT ELEPHANT

**IN NEWS:** - According to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), a total of 186 elephants were killed after being hit by trains across India between 2009-10 and 2020-21. Assam accounted for the highest number of elephant casualties on railway tracks (62), followed by West Bengal (57), and Odisha (27).

#### **ABOUT PROJECT ELEPHANT**

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)
- It was launched in 1992 to provide financial and technical support to wildlife management efforts by states for their free ranging populations of wild Asian Elephants.

- The Project is being mainly implemented in 16 States / UTs , viz. Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal.
- **Objectives:** To protect elephants, their habitat & corridors; To address issues of man-animal conflict; Welfare of captive elephants.

### PRACTICE QUESTION

With reference to Project Elephant, consider the following statements

1. It is a Central Sector Scheme
2. It is implemented in all states of India
3. It was launched in 1992 to provide financial and technical support to wildlife management efforts by states for their free ranging populations of wild Asian Elephants

Which among the above statements are **not correct**?

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

**Answer: - a**

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### INDIAN POLITY

#### 7) COMMISSION TO EXAMINE THE SUB CATEGORISATION OF OBCS

**IN NEWS:** - The Union Cabinet has approved a six-month extension to the commission appointed to examine sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs), up to 31st January 2022.

**ABOUT COMMISSION TO EXAMINE THE SUB CATEGORISATION OF OBCS**

- Also called Rohini Commission, constituted under Article 340 of the Constitution with the approval of the President on 2nd October 2017.
- It had been constituted to complete the task of sub-categorising 5000-odd castes in the central OBC list so as to ensure more equitable distribution of opportunities in central government jobs and educational institutions.
- In 2015, the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) had recommended that OBCs should be categorised into extremely backward classes, more backward classes and backward classes.
- NCBC has the authority to examine complaints and welfare measures regarding socially and educationally backward classes.
- The Rohini commission proposed to divide OBCs into four subcategories numbered 1, 2, 3 and 4 and split the 27% into 2, 6, 9 and 10%, respectively.
- It also recommended complete digitisation of all OBC records and a standardised system of issuing OBC certificates.

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

1. The Rohini Commission was constituted under Article 340 of the Constitution
2. The Rohini commission proposed to divide OBCs into four subcategories
3. It also recommended complete digitisation of all OBC records and a standardised system of issuing OBC certificates.

Which among the above statements are correct?

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

**Answer: - d**

## MISCELLANEOUS

### **8) NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE COMPLEX, LOTHAL**

**IN NEWS:** - Ministry of Culture (MoC) and Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for 'Cooperation in Development of National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)' at Lothal, Gujarat.

#### **ABOUT NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE COMPLEX**

- It would be developed as an international tourist destination, where the maritime heritage of India from ancient to modern times would be showcased.
- The idea is to create an edutainment (education with entertainment) approach for this destination that would be of great interest for the visitors.
- It is going to cover an area of 400 acres, with structures such as Heritage Theme Park, National Maritime Heritage Museum, Lighthouse Museum, Maritime Institute, eco-resorts, and more.
- There will also be many pavilions where all coastal states in India and union territories can showcase their artifacts and maritime heritage.
- The unique feature of NMHC is the recreation of ancient Lothal city, which is one of the prominent cities of the ancient Indus valley civilization.

#### **ABOUT LOTHAL**

- Lothal was one of the southernmost cities of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization located in Gujarat.

- Lothal had the world's earliest known dock, which connected the city to an ancient course of the Sabarmati River on the trade route between Harappan cities in Sindh and the peninsula of Saurashtra.
- Lothal was a vital and thriving trade Centre in ancient times, with its trade of beads, gems, and valuable ornaments reaching the far corners of West Asia and Africa.
- The Lothal site has been nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and its application is pending on the tentative list of UNESCOS

### **9) STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE WORLD REPORT 2021**

**IN NEWS:** - An FAO report titled 'The State of Food Security Nutrition in the World 2021 (SOFI)' has studied the impact of Covid-19 pandemic-induced income loss on food intake and malnutrition.

### **ABOUT STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE WORLD REPORT 2021**

- The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World is an annual flagship report jointly prepared by Food and Agriculture Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Children's Fund, World Food Programme and World Health Organization.
- The Objective of the report is to inform on progress towards ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and to provide in depth analysis on key challenges for achieving this goal in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The FAO report has quoted a study done in 63 low- and middle-income countries covering a population of 3.5 billion on changes in the income of people. It has extrapolated its impact on choice of diets.

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

Consider the following statements

1. The State of Food Security Nutrition in the World report is prepared by the FAO alone
2. It is a biennial report

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 or 2

**Answer: - d**



**MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

→ **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM)**

- Aims at mobilizing about 9-10 crore rural poor households into Self Help Groups (SHGs) in a phased manner and provide them long-term support such that they diversify their livelihoods, improve their incomes and quality of life.

**Salient Features of NRLM**

- Its beneficiaries are: Small and Marginal Farmers, Poor Women in Rural Households, Poor Rural population involved in other works than Agriculture.
- It will involve other schemes like Roshni Centers, National Rural Economic Transformation Project, Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana, etc.



- Minimum one woman from each identified rural poor family will be brought under the Self-Help Group (SHG) network within a given time framework.
- Revolving Fund (RF) and Community Investment Fund (CIF) are granted to the poor and their institutions for strengthening them.
- It also promotes financial literacy among the poor.
- Promotes the existing livelihood of the poor in farm and non-farm sectors, and also builds skills for the job market outside.

### → Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana

- It is centrally sponsored scheme
- DDU-GKY is a part of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), tasked with the dual objectives of adding diversity to the incomes of rural poor families and cater to the career aspirations of rural youth.
- It supports the social and economic programs of the government such as Digital India, Make in India, Smart Cities, Start-up India and Stand-up India, as part of the Skill India campaign.
- Greater emphasis on projects for poor rural youth in Jammu and Kashmir (**HIMAYAT**),
- The North-East region and 27 Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) districts (**ROSHINI**)
- Beneficiaries
  - Rural Youth: 15 – 35 Yrs
  - SC/ST/Women/PVTG/PWD: upto 45 Yrs

### → Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana

- The main objective of the scheme is to construct all-weather roads connecting all the unconnected habitations.

- The places eligible for this scheme were the unconnected habitations, in the core network, consisting of a designated population size of above 500 in the plain areas, above 250 in Deserts, Tribal Areas, the Himalayan States and the North Eastern States. This was as per the data of the 2011 census and was selected with a motive to uplift the socio-economic condition of the population in rural areas.
- An Unconnected Habitation is a place which has a population of a designated size which is located at a distance of at least 500 meters or more from a connected habitation or an all-weather road.
- The core network is the minimal network of routes that is necessary to provide, to all the eligible habitations, basic access to all the essential social and economic services. This is done through at least a single all-weather connectivity of road.



### → **Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana**

- Under the Yojana, Members of Parliament (MPs) are responsible for developing the socio-economic and physical infrastructure of three villages each by 2019, and a total of eight villages each by 2024.
- The MPs would be free to identify a suitable Gram Panchayat for developing Adarsh Gram, other than his/her own village or that of his/her spouse.
- Process
  - Lok Sabha MP: Chooses a Gram Panchayat (GP) from within his/her constituency.
  - Rajya Sabha MP: Chooses a GP from the rural area of a district of his/her choice in the State from which he/she is elected.

- Nominated MP: Chooses a GP from the rural area of any district in the country.
- The MPs engage with the community, facilitate the Village Development Plan and mobilize the necessary resources particularly from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and philanthropies.
- MPs also fill up critical gaps in the plan using the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) funds.

### → **Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin**

- PMAY-G was established in line with the government’s commitment to deliver by 2022 “Housing in all rural areas” (except Chandigarh and Delhi).
- Under this initiative, certain financial assistance is provided to all the houseless people or people living in dilapidated houses to construct pucca homes.
- The selection of the beneficiaries under this scheme is made through a 3-step validation process consisting of Gram Sabha, Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011, and geo-tagging.
- The scheme does not choose the beneficiaries among the BPL (below poverty line) households. The selection is preferably made using the housing deprivation parameters of Socio-Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC), which are further verified by the Gram Sabha.

### → **Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission**

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme

- It follows the vision of "Development of a cluster of villages that preserve and nurture the essence of rural community life with focus on equity and inclusiveness without compromising with the facilities perceived to be essentially urban in nature, thus creating a cluster of "Rurban Villages".
- **Rurban cluster'**
  - It would be a cluster of geographically contiguous villages with a population of about 25000 to 50000 in plain and coastal areas and a population of 5000 to 15000 in desert, hilly or tribal areas.
- There are 2 categories of clusters: Non-Tribal and Tribal.
- Rurban clusters are identified across the country's rural areas showing increasing signs of urbanization - i.e., increase in population density, high levels of non-farm employment, presence of growing economic activities and other socioeconomic parameters.
- SPMRM growth clusters are playing a role in reducing urban migration

→ **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**

- MGNREGA provides a legal guarantee for 100 days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage.
- For regions affected by natural calamity or drought, 150 days of work will be provided.


- Results in creation of productive assets of prescribed quality and durability.
- The central Government bears 100% of the cost in case of unskilled labour. While it bears 75% of the cost in case of semi-skilled and skilled labour.
- One third of the total beneficiary should be women.
- There should be a mandatory social audit in not more than 6 months.
- Total permissible work is 261 and 161 among these are related with agriculture
- The employment will be provided within a radius of 5 km.
- The Government has launched a new geospatial planning portal, 'Yuktdhara', that will help in facilitating new MGNREGA assets using remote sensing and geographic information system-based data

### → **National Social Assistance Programme**

- NSAP is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the GoI that provides financial assistance to the elderly, widows and persons with disabilities in the form of social pensions.
- The scheme represents a significant step towards the fulfillment of the Directive Principles in Article 41.
- Article 41 of the Constitution of India directs the State to provide public assistance to its citizens in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement.
- For getting benefits under NSAP the applicant must belong to a Below Poverty Line (BPL) family.
- NSAP comprises of five schemes, namely –
  - Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)

- Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS)
- Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS)
- National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) and
- Annapurna

**Little support** | The National Social Assistance Programme is applicable to elders, widows and the physically challenged. **Here is a low-down:**



<p><b>Pension:</b> ₹200-₹500 a month for senior citizens in BPL households</p> <p><b>Widow Pension Scheme:</b> ₹300-₹500 a month for widows aged over 40 in BPL households</p> <p><b>Disability pension:</b> ₹300 per month for persons aged 18-79 with severe or multiple disabilities in BPL households</p>	<p><b>Family benefit:</b> ₹20,000 upon the death of a breadwinner aged 18-59 in BPL households</p> <p><b>Annapurna Scheme:</b> 10 kg of food grains per month for senior citizens who are not receiving any pension</p>
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- **SAMBAL Mobile Application:** It is a citizen-centric mobile application that provides (i) Information on NSAP schemes along with State top-ups (ii) Enrolment of new applicants, tracking of application, sanction and disbursement status.

### → Climate Resilience Information System and Planning (CRISP-M) tool

- CRISP-M is a web and mobile phone-based Geographic Information System (GIS) aided tool that has been designed to help communities make climate-smart decisions.
- The tool will help integrate climate information in the GIS-based planning and implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

- This tool will be used in seven states where the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Government of UK and Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India are jointly working towards climate resilience.
- The states are Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Rajasthan.
- GIS is a system that captures, stores, checks and displays data related to positions on Earth's surface.



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**STRATEGY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICES  
EXAMINATION 2023**

