

### While leap years get an extra day, why are century years left out unless divisible by 400?

- A tropical year is time (365.242199 days) the earth takes to revolve around sun once. By having just 365 days in a calendar year, 0.242199 days are lost each year.
- To correct this error, **Julius Caesar introduced a four-year cycle**. First three years had 365 days each and fourth year had 366 days.
- This correction was later found to be an **overestimation of year by 11 minutes and 14 seconds**, amounting to 5.1204 days in 400 years.
- A course correction was brought about to drop three days in 400 years. As a result, century years are not leap years unless divisible by 400.

### Official Language:

- Constitution (**Article 343(1)**) provides that **Hindi is official language of the Union**.
- **English was originally meant to continue as official language for 15 years** from commencement of Constitution (till 1965). But, **Official Languages Act, 1963 provides for continued use of English**, in addition to Hindi, for all official purposes of Union without any time limit.
- Legislature of a State may adopt any one or more of the languages in use in State or Hindi as official language(s) for official purposes of that State.
- Constitution (**Article 351**) provides that **it shall be duty of Union to promote spread of Hindi language** so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all elements of composite culture of India.

### UN Peacekeeping missions:

- **UN Member States voluntarily provide military and police personnel** that are periodically required for each peacekeeping operation from their national forces.
- Peacekeepers **usually wear their countries' uniforms** and are identified as UN peacekeepers only by a **UN blue helmet or beret and a badge**.
- Officially, they are **allowed to use force at a tactical level, with the authorisation of the Security Council**, if acting in self-defence and defence of the mandate.
- **UN Security Council makes decisions about establishing, maintaining, or expanding** peacekeeping operations, while **all UN Member States are collectively tasked with financing them**.
- **Every member is legally obligated to pay their respective share under Article 17** of the Charter of United Nations. The United States (26.95%) and China (18.69%) pay the most, partly because they are part of the UNSC. **India's share is around 0.2088%**.
- **Peacekeeping soldiers are paid by their governments** according to their own national rank and salary scale.
- Countries volunteering uniformed personnel to peacekeeping operations **are reimbursed by the UN** at a standard rate, approved by the General Assembly.
- The **biggest contributor, Nepal, was at 6,114 while India stood fourth at 5,466** (currently deployed in nine of the 11 active peacekeeping missions).

### Herat Security Dialogue:

- It was **held in Madrid & organised by the Afghanistan Institute of Strategic Studies**, which is now based in London.

- Afghans-in-exile leaders and diplomats discussed Afghanistan's future.

### Tamal:

- **India's last imported warship** likely to be commissioned in June 2025.
- It is being **imported from Russia**.

**Pareidolia:** It is a psychological phenomenon where **people perceive familiar shapes in unrelated objects or data**. For example, **people might see faces in clouds, toast, or tree trunks**.

### Gharial:

- Ten gharials, a **critically endangered species**, released into Chambal River at **National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary**.
- Gharial is a species of *Gavialis gangeticus*—**long-snouted, fish-eating crocodilians**.
- Name 'gharial' comes from Hindi word *ghara*, meaning pot or vessel, referring to **bulbous snout tip of adult males**, which resembles an inverted pot.
- Males grow from 3-6 meters, and females 2.6-4.5 meters.
- Gharials **mate during November, December, and January**.
- **Sandbanks, sandbars, and islands are critical to their ecology**, serving as preferred sites for basking and nesting.
- From March to May, as river levels recede, female gharials climb onto exposed sandbanks and islands to nest communally, with many laying eggs in same area.
- Gharials are important for a river's ecosystem, as they **clean up carrion (decaying dead flesh of an animal)**.
- **Habitat:** Species is likely extinct in Myanmar and Bhutan, with only small, uncertain populations remaining in **Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh's upper Brahmaputra**. Today, species survives primarily in **five refuges: National Chambal Sanctuary (NCS), Katarniaghat Sanctuary, Chitwan National Park, Son River Sanctuary, and Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary**. Spanning three states, Chambal sanctuary protects a 435-km stretch of one of India's cleanest rivers.
- **Threats:** Historical threats included overhunting for skins, trophies, eggs, and traditional medicine. **Modern challenges—dam construction, irrigation canals, siltation, river course changes, embankments, sand-mining, pollution, and fishing—continue to devastate populations**. **Gill nets kill gharials of all sizes, even in protected areas**.

### Herath Poshte:

- **Herath, meaning 'Night of Hara (Shiva),'** is a grand three-week long festival for Kashmiri Pandits.
- Main worship, known as **'Vatuk Pooja,'** is conducted using a steel vessel (Kalash) filled with water and walnuts, symbolising four Vedas.
- Day following Shiva Chaturdashi is known as **'Salam,'** a unique tradition reflecting historical unity of Pandits and Muslims in Kashmir Valley.
- Throughout festival, **Kashmiri Pandits greet one another with phrase 'Herath Poshte,'** extending warm wishes.
- **National Conference on 'Sustainable Cooling and Doubling the Rate of Energy Efficiency Improvement,' held in New Delhi** on Feb. 21-22, 2025:
- It was **jointly organized by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) and Power Foundation of India (PFI)**, under Ministry of Power, Govt. of India.

- **Power Foundation of India** is a think-tank and a policy advocacy body in power sector, operating under Ministry of Power, Govt. of India.
- **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** was set up on March 1, 2002 under the provisions of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001 (statutory body) with the primary objective of reducing the energy intensity of the Indian economy. It works under Ministry of Power, Government of India.

**Startups, Women & Youth Advantage through eTransactions (SWAYATT) initiative Government e Marketplace (GeM):**

- Launched in February 2019, SWAYATT was conceptualised with a clear objective of increasing participation of women-led enterprises and youth in public procurement.
- Today it comprises “Startup Runway” and “Womaniya” storefronts for dedicated listings, ensuring wider visibility of startups, women entrepreneurs and youth among lakhs of pan-India government buyers

**PRACTICE MCQs**

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Hindi is an official language of the Union government.
2. English, in addition to Hindi, will be used as official language for all official purposes of Union without any time limit.
3. It shall be duty of the Union government to promote spread of Hindi language.

How many of the above are Constitutional provisions?

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

**Answer: B**

Q2. Consider the following statements about gharial:

1. They are critically endangered species.
2. They are endemic to rivers of India.
3. National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, spread over three states, is major habitat of gharials.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

**Answer: C**

Q3. SWAYATT initiative was launched by the government with the objective of –

- a) Increasing farmer’s income through remunerative prices for their produce.
- b) Empowering rural artisans through access to affordable credit.
- c) Realising the potential of sports sector in North East India.
- d) Increasing participation of women-led enterprises and youth in public procurement.

**Answer: D**

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Power Foundation of India is a think-tank and a policy advocacy body in power sector operating under Ministry of Power.
2. Bureau of Energy Efficiency is a statutory body operating under Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: A**

Q5. Which of the following statements is incorrect about UN Peacekeeping Missions?

- a) UN Security Council makes decisions about establishing, maintaining, or expanding peacekeeping operations.
- b) UN Member States voluntarily provide military and police personnel to Peacekeeping Missions.
- c) All UN Member States are collectively tasked with financing the Missions.
- d) At present, India is the biggest contributor in terms of personnel to Peacekeeping Missions.

**Answer: D**