16th February 2026: DSC

1. CJI's Office Received 8,630 Complaints Against Judges from 2016 to 2025: Minister

Source : The Hindu

1.1 Why is it in News?

1.1.1 Statement by Union Law Minister

The Union Law Minister informed the Lok Sabha that 8,360 complaints were filed against sitting judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts during 2016–2025, reflecting continued public engagement with judicial grievance mechanisms.
Annual complaints exceeded 1,000 in 2019 (1,037), 2022 (1,012), 2024 (1,170), and 2025 (1,102), coinciding with expansion of the CPGRAMS digital portal and heightened public awareness regarding judicial conduct.

1.2 Relevance

GS2 – Polity & Governance
Judicial independence versus accountability; Basic Structure doctrine.
In-house inquiry mechanism, impeachment process, requirement of credible oversight.
Transparency, grievance redress platforms (CPGRAMS), rule of law principles.

1.3 Practice Question

"Judicial independence must be balanced with judicial accountability." Examine this statement in light of India's complaint-handling mechanisms against judges.

1.4 Judicial Accountability in India

1.4.1 Security of Tenure

Judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts enjoy tenure protection under Articles 124 and 217, preventing arbitrary removal and ensuring independence from executive or legislative influence.
For instance, during politically sensitive decisions such as the NJAC case (2015), constitutional tenure safeguards insulated judges from retaliation.

1.4.2 Removal Process

Judges may be removed only through a special majority of Parliament, requiring majority of total membership and two-thirds of members present and voting, making removal extremely rare.
Example: The impeachment motion against Justice V. Ramaswami (1993) failed despite findings of misconduct, demonstrating political difficulty in removal.

1.5 What is the In-House Mechanism?

1.5.1 Nature and Origin

Established by the judiciary in 1999 following allegations against Justice V. Ramaswami, the in-house procedure allows internal inquiry without constitutional or statutory basis, relying on peer scrutiny by senior judges.

1.5.2 Who Examines Complaints?

Complaints against Supreme Court judges are considered by the Chief Justice of India and senior SC judges, whereas High Court complaints are handled by respective Chief Justices. Past instances show internal examination without invoking impeachment, indicating preference for internal corrective processes.

1.5.3 Confidentiality Feature

Proceedings remain confidential to protect judicial dignity and independence, though this limits public insight into corrective measures.
In contrast, the UK Judicial Conduct Investigations Office publishes annual disciplinary outcomes, enhancing transparency.

1.6 Data Trends (2016–2025)

1.6.1 Volume of Complaints

8,360 complaints over ten years average more than 800 annually, indicating sustained grievance reporting rather than sporadic spikes.
Year-wise figures: 729 (2016), 682 (2017), 717 (2018), 1,037 (2019), 518 (2020), 686 (2021), 1,012 (2022), 977 (2023), 1,170 (2024), 1,102 (2025).

1.6.2 Interpretation

The increase corresponds with digital access expansion, greater legal awareness, and media focus on judicial ethics, not necessarily proportional rise in proven misconduct.
Comparable global patterns show complaint volumes rising alongside transparency reforms, as seen in UK and Canada.

1.7 Governance & Institutional Dimensions

1.7.1 Judicial Independence versus Accountability

Judicial independence forms part of the Basic Structure (Kesavananda Bharati, 1973), ensuring courts can review executive and legislative actions without fear.
However, accountability strengthens legitimacy; absence of credible oversight may create perception of insulation from scrutiny.

1.7.2 Current Gap

No independent statutory authority handles judicial complaints; the framework relies on internal ethics mechanisms and rare impeachment proceedings, leaving limited tools for addressing mid-level misconduct.
Minor ethical lapses are often managed informally without graded disciplinary spectrum.

1.8 Legal & Reform Context

1.8.1 Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill, 2010

Proposed asset disclosure requirements and complaint scrutiny panels but lapsed amid concerns over potential misuse and threats to judicial independence.

1.8.2 Law Commission Recommendation

The 214th Law Commission Report (2008) suggested creation of a National Judicial Council to examine complaints, balancing autonomy with accountability.

1.9 Comparative Perspective

1.9.1 International Models

UK: Judicial Conduct Investigations Office publishes annual disciplinary reports including warnings and removals.
USA: Judicial Councils address complaints under the Judicial Conduct and Disability Act with graded responses.

1.10 Key Challenges

Opacity: Confidential processes may create perception of secrecy despite intention to safeguard judicial dignity.
High Removal Threshold: Political nature of impeachment renders it impractical for most misconduct cases.
Frivolous Complaints Risk: Vexatious or politically motivated complaints may intimidate judges in sensitive cases.

1.11 Way Forward

Balanced Reform: Establish an independent yet judiciary-led complaints authority with statutory backing and structured inquiry.
Graded Penalties: Introduce advisories, reprimands, temporary work withdrawal, and mandatory disclosures as intermediate measures.
Transparency: Publish anonymised annual complaint summaries and broad outcomes to enhance public trust without sensationalism.

2. DGCA Fines Air India ₹1 Crore for Operating Aircraft on Expired Certificate

Source : The Hindu

2.1 Why is it in News?

The DGCA imposed a ₹1 crore fine on Air India for operating an Airbus A320 with an expired Airworthiness Review Certificate (ARC), categorised as a Level-I safety violation, the most serious compliance breach in aviation regulation.
The aircraft reportedly completed eight commercial sectors in November without valid ARC, raising concerns about airline compliance systems and regulatory oversight in a rapidly expanding aviation market.

2.2 Relevance

GS3 – Economy (Aviation), Science & Technology, Internal Security
Aviation safety governance, ICAO standards, Safety Management Systems.
Regulatory capacity amid market expansion; MRO ecosystem development.

2.3 Practice Question

Discuss the role of DGCA and ICAO frameworks in ensuring aviation safety in a rapidly growing aviation market like India. (250 Words)

2.4 Airworthiness Review Certificate (ARC)

2.4.1 Meaning and Purpose

ARC certifies that an aircraft meets prescribed maintenance standards and remains airworthy; without it, commercial operation is legally prohibited.
It is generally valid for one year and renewed after technical inspection and verification of maintenance records.

2.4.2 Importance

Ensures structural integrity, system reliability, and compliance with safety norms, safeguarding passenger safety and reducing liability exposure.
Globally, documentation lapses have led to fleet groundings, as seen in the Boeing 737 MAX crisis (2019).

2.5 Other Aviation Certificates

Certificate of Airworthiness (CoA): Issued upon aircraft registration and safety approval; ARC maintains continued validity.
Air Operator Certificate (AOC): Mandatory licence for commercial operations issued after evaluation of safety systems and crew training.
Pilot & Crew Licensing: Ensures qualification, medical fitness, and simulator training compliance.
Maintenance Release Certificate: Confirms maintenance completion before aircraft returns to service.

2.6 DGCA

2.6.1 Legal Status

DGCA operates under the Ministry of Civil Aviation with powers derived from the Aircraft Act, 1934 and Aircraft Rules, 1937.

2.6.2 Functions

Regulates air safety, certification, licensing, accident prevention, and airline audits.
Conducts inspections, surveillance, and may impose fines, suspend licences, or ground aircraft.

2.6.3 International Coordination

Works with ICAO to ensure global compliance.
India's ICAO Effective Implementation score exceeds 85%, above global average.

2.7 Aviation Safety Ecosystem

Safety Management System (SMS): ICAO-mandated framework for systematic risk identification and mitigation.
Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB): Independent body investigating accidents to identify root causes.
MRO Sector: Domestic maintenance ecosystem critical for sustaining airworthiness standards.

2.8 Key Issues

Compliance Culture: Rapid expansion may outpace compliance monitoring systems.
Regulatory Capacity: DGCA faces manpower and technical constraints relative to aviation growth.
Reputational Risk: Safety lapses may affect bilateral agreements, insurance premiums, and passenger trust.

2.9 Way Forward

Digital Compliance: Automated expiry alerts, AI-based maintenance tracking, integrated compliance dashboards.
Strengthening DGCA: Enhanced staffing, technical capacity, predictive audits.
Safety Culture: Encourage voluntary reporting through "just culture" aligned with ICAO norms.

3. How Terrorist and Hate Groups Use Gaming Platforms to Recruit Children

Source : The Indian Express

3.1 Why is it in News?

Recent investigations and UN-linked studies indicate that extremist and hate groups increasingly exploit gaming platforms such as Roblox, Discord, and multiplayer chat environments to target minors, raising concerns regarding child safety and internal security.
Research suggests that online radicalisation has intensified, with extremist ecosystems using gaming communities, encrypted chats, and youth isolation to cultivate early ideological influence among children.

3.2 Relevance

GS3 – Internal Security & Cybersecurity
Online radicalisation pathways, lone-wolf threats, platform governance challenges.
UAPA, IT Rules, POCSO framework, encrypted digital ecosystems.

3.3 Practice Question

Examine how online ecosystems, including gaming platforms, are transforming radicalisation pathways among youth. Suggest a prevention-oriented strategy. (250 Words)

3.4 What is Online Radicalisation?

3.4.1 Definition

Online radicalisation refers to the gradual exposure of individuals, particularly youth, to extremist ideologies through digital platforms, normalising hate narratives, violence, or anti-state propaganda.
It often begins with memes, humour, or casual gaming interactions before shifting to private messaging, ideological grooming, and closed extremist communities.

3.5 Why Children Are Vulnerable?

3.5.1 Psychological Factors

Adolescents often seek identity, belonging, and validation; recruiters exploit these needs by offering community, recognition, and a perceived "cause," especially among socially isolated youth.

UN research links vulnerability to loneliness, marginalisation, and absence of offline support systems rather than ideology alone.

3.6 Misuse of Gaming Platforms

3.6.1 Communication Tools

Multiplayer games enable real-time text and voice communication as well as private servers, allowing recruiters to gradually build trust and shift conversations to encrypted applications.

3.6.2 Gamification of Extremism

Certain gaming environments simulate conflict scenarios; extremist actors misuse such platforms to normalise narratives of violent "heroism," occasionally recreating real-world attacks symbolically within digital maps.

3.6.3 Community Migration

Recruiters frequently transition children from open gaming chats to platforms such as Discord or Telegram, where monitoring is weaker and ideological grooming intensifies.

3.7 Global Evidence & Trends

3.7.1 Data Indicators

UN-linked counter-terror research notes a significant increase in online investigations since 2021, with gaming spaces emerging as recurring vectors of influence.

3.7.2 Case Patterns

Security agencies in several countries report teenage suspects in terrorism-related cases, with online radical networks often preceding real-world intent.

3.8 Legal & Regulatory Framework

3.8.1 UAPA (1967)

India's principal anti-terror legislation criminalises recruitment, propaganda, and material support to terrorist organisations, including digital facilitation.

3.8.2 IT Act, 2000 & Rules

Provides authority for takedown of unlawful content and mandates due diligence obligations for intermediaries, including social media and gaming platforms.

3.8.3 POCSO & Child Protection Laws

Protect minors from online exploitation and grooming, relevant when radicalisation processes target children.

3.9 Governance & Cybersecurity Dimensions

3.9.1 Platform Responsibility

Technology companies deploy AI moderation tools, parental controls, and reporting mechanisms; however, encryption and platform scale complicate effective oversight.

3.9.2 Digital Literacy Gap

Limited awareness among parents and educators regarding gaming ecosystems hampers early detection of grooming or extremist content.

3.10 Security Implications

3.10.1 Internal Security

Digital radicalisation may translate into lone-actor violence, hate crimes, or support networks, challenging traditional intelligence frameworks.

3.10.2 Social Cohesion

Propagation of extremist narratives undermines social harmony and democratic values, aligning with strategic objectives of extremist propaganda.

3.11 Way Forward

Prevention-Centric Approach: Invest in digital literacy, critical thinking education, and parental awareness to enhance youth resilience.
Technology–Policy Collaboration: Strengthen cooperation between governments and platforms while safeguarding privacy and free expression norms.
Community-Based Counter Narratives: Encourage positive digital communities and credible voices to counter extremist messaging.

4. India is Set to Get Two New Telescopes and Upgrade One in Ladakh: A Game-Changer for Astronomy

Source : The Indian Express

4.1 Why is it in News?

The Union Budget 2026 approved two major telescopes — the National Large Solar Telescope (NLST) and the National Large Optical–Near Infrared Telescope (NLOT) — along with upgradation of the Himalayan Chandra Telescope (HCT), signalling significant investment in astronomy infrastructure.
Ladakh's Hanle Dark Sky Reserve, notified in 2022, offers high-altitude and low-light conditions that make it globally competitive for precision astronomy, strengthening India's scientific leadership and research capacity.

4.2 Relevance

GS3 – Science & Technology
Observational astronomy, space weather studies, exoplanet research.
Large-scale scientific infrastructure, R&D ecosystem, multi-messenger astronomy.

4.3 Practice Question

How can large scientific infrastructure projects such as next-generation telescopes contribute to strategic autonomy and innovation ecosystems? (250 Words)

4.4 Working of Astronomical Telescopes

4.4.1 Electromagnetic Spectrum Principle

Telescopes collect electromagnetic radiation across optical, infrared, radio, and X-ray wavelengths; different wavelengths reveal distinct cosmic phenomena.
Because the atmosphere absorbs certain wavelengths, a combination of ground-based and space-based observatories is required.

4.4.2 Importance of Aperture

Larger apertures gather more light and provide higher resolution, enabling detection of faint and distant objects such as exoplanets and early galaxies.
Ten-metre-class telescopes can observe objects billions of light-years away.

4.5 National Large Solar Telescope (NLST)

4.5.1 Technical Features

A two-metre aperture solar telescope at Merak near Pangong Tso, operating in visible and near-infrared bands, designed to study solar surface and chromospheric activity.

4.5.2 Scientific Significance

Enables research on solar magnetism, sunspots, flares, and coronal mass ejections affecting satellites, GPS systems, and power grids.
Enhances preparedness for space-weather disruptions.

4.5.3 Strategic Value

Will become India's third solar observatory after Kodaikanal and Udaipur, complementing ISRO's Aditya-L1 mission.
Strengthens national heliophysics capability.

4.6 National Large Optical–Near Infrared Telescope (NLOT)

4.6.1 Technical Scale

A 13.7-metre segmented mirror telescope with 90 hexagonal segments, positioning India among nations hosting the world's largest optical–IR telescopes.

4.6.2 Site Advantage

Hanle's altitude above 4,000 metres, dry climate, minimal light pollution, and 250–300 clear nights annually reduce atmospheric distortion.

4.6.3 Scientific Impact

Facilitates research in exoplanets, galaxy evolution, supernovae, and early-universe signals.
Infrared capability allows observation of dust-obscured regions and distant redshifted galaxies.

4.6.4 Global Positioning

India's participation in Thirty Meter Telescope collaboration and mirror-segment supply enhances global scientific standing.

4.7 Upgraded Himalayan Chandra Telescope (HCT)

4.7.1 Upgrade Features

Expansion from two metres to 3.7-metre segmented mirror improves sensitivity and resolution in optical–infrared astronomy.

4.7.2 Scientific Role

Strengthens transient astronomy capabilities including supernovae and gamma-ray bursts.
Complements LIGO-India and Square Kilometre Array initiatives.

4.8 Institutional & Policy Dimensions

Science & Technology Policy: Aligns with National Education Policy's research emphasis and objective of increasing GERD beyond 0.7% of GDP.
Global South Leadership: Provides advanced regional research facilities, reducing dependence on limited Western telescope access.

4.9 Economic & Strategic Spillovers

Technology & Industry: Promotes high-precision optics manufacturing, sensors, and control systems.
Soft Power: Scientific collaborations enhance diplomatic and academic partnerships.

4.10 Environmental Dimension

Hanle Dark Sky Reserve conserves nocturnal ecology and supports astro-tourism alongside scientific research.

4.11 Challenges

High capital and maintenance costs associated with large-scale telescopes.
Harsh climatic and logistical conditions in Ladakh may affect construction timelines.

4.12 Way Forward

Ensure stable funding, international partnerships, and integration with universities.
Encourage citizen science and astro-tourism to build public engagement.

5. No-Confidence Motion Against the Lok Sabha Speaker: Process for Removal

Source : The Indian Express

5.1 Why is it in News?

Opposition parties have initiated a removal (no-confidence) motion against the Lok Sabha Speaker, reviving discussion on constitutional safeguards, neutrality of the Chair, and procedural requirements for removal.
Such motions are rare in parliamentary history; previous attempts in 1954, 1966, and 1987 did not succeed, underscoring the high institutional threshold for removal.

5.2 Relevance

GS2 – Polity
Articles 93–94, Rules 200–203 of Lok Sabha, effective majority.
Neutrality of the Chair, Money Bill certification, anti-defection adjudication.
Parliamentary conventions versus codified rules.

5.3 Practice Question

Critically analyse the constitutional design governing removal of the Lok Sabha Speaker. Does it adequately safeguard neutrality while ensuring accountability? (250 Words)

5.4 Office of the Lok Sabha Speaker

5.4.1 Constitutional Status

Article 93 mandates election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker, making the office constitutionally indispensable.
Article 94 provides for resignation, vacation, and removal, ensuring continuity of presiding authority.

5.4.2 Role & Significance

The Speaker presides over debates, maintains order, certifies Money Bills under Article 110, and decides disqualification under the Tenth Schedule.
Money Bill certification in legislations such as the Aadhaar Act illustrates the constitutional weight of the office.

5.5 Removal Provision

5.5.1 Constitutional Basis

Under Article 94(c), the Speaker may be removed by a resolution passed by a majority of all the then members of the Lok Sabha, i.e., an effective majority.

5.5.2 Notice Requirement

A written notice must be submitted with at least 14 days' advance intimation, preventing abrupt or impulsive action.

5.5.3 Support Threshold

The motion is taken up only if at least 50 Members rise in support, filtering frivolous attempts before formal debate.

5.5.4 Discussion & Voting

If admitted, the resolution must be scheduled within 10 days. Debate remains confined to stated charges; mover's speech is time-limited.
The Speaker may participate and vote in the first instance but cannot exercise a casting vote in case of tie.

5.5.5 Continuity Clause

Even upon dissolution of the Lok Sabha, the Speaker continues in office until just before the first meeting of the newly constituted House.

5.6 Historical Context

Past motions in 1954 (G.V. Mavalankar), 1966 (Hukam Singh), and 1987 (Balram Jakhar) did not result in removal, reflecting strong convention of institutional protection.

5.7 Governance & Constitutional Dimensions

Doctrine of Neutrality: Westminster model expects the Speaker to function above party lines; in the UK, party affiliation is relinquished.
High Threshold: Effective majority requirement protects stability and shields the Chair from frequent political disruption.

5.8 Key Issues

Politicisation Risk: Frequent motions may weaken institutional authority.
Perception of Bias: Controversies regarding debate time, opposition recognition, or Money Bill certification can trigger removal attempts.

5.9 Way Forward

Reinforce conventions of neutrality through inter-party consultation.
Consider evolving norms for distancing from party roles upon election.

6. India Assumes Command of Multinational Training Task Force CTF-154

Source : The Indian Express

6.1 Why is it in News?

The Indian Navy assumed command of Combined Task Force (CTF)-154 under the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) headquartered in Bahrain, marking India's first leadership of this training-focused multinational formation.
The development highlights India's expanding role as a security partner committed to a rules-based maritime order across strategic sea lanes in the Western Indian Ocean and Middle East.

6.2 Relevance

GS2 – International Relations
Maritime diplomacy, coalition leadership, SAGAR framework.

GS3 – Security
Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), piracy, trafficking, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA).

6.3 Practice Question

Assess how multinational maritime task forces strengthen collective security in the Indian Ocean Region. What underlies India's strategic calculus? (250 Words)

6.4 Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)

6.4.1 Nature & Scope

CMF is the largest multinational naval partnership, comprising nearly 46–47 nations, operating across extensive international waters.
It focuses on maritime stability, security, and freedom of navigation.

6.4.2 Geostrategic Significance

Covers critical chokepoints including Strait of Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandeb, vital for global energy flows and container trade.
A substantial share of global trade and oil supply transits these routes.

6.5 CTF-154

6.5.1 Mandate

Established in 2023, CTF-154 concentrates on training and capacity building rather than active patrols.

6.5.2 Operational Model

Provides ashore and afloat training on maritime law, interdiction, search and rescue, and leadership, enabling participation by smaller littoral states.

6.6 India's Strategic Significance

Diplomatic Credibility: Leadership reflects trust in India's operational competence and neutrality.
Capacity Building: Expands India's transition from net security provider to structured training partner.

6.7 Security & Economic Gains

Secured SLOCs reduce insurance costs and safeguard energy imports.
Interoperability improves joint response to piracy and trafficking.

6.8 Challenges

Balancing geopolitical sensitivities amid major power competition.
Ensuring sustained training resources and institutional continuity.

6.9 Way Forward

Enhance training modules on MDA and SAR.
Integrate satellite AIS and data fusion through IFC-IOR.
Combine security initiatives with HADR exercises.

7. When Giants Get Trapped: Kerala's Fishers Save the World's Largest Fish

Source : Down to Earth

7.1 Why is it in News?

Three whale sharks were rescued and released in January 2026 near Thiruvananthapuram with support from Wildlife Trust of India, marking a rare multi-rescue event.
Kerala fishers have now assisted in rescuing 54 whale sharks, reflecting behavioural change from accidental harm to conservation engagement.

7.2 Relevance

GS3 – Environment & Biodiversity
IUCN Endangered status, Schedule I protection, CITES and CMS frameworks.
Bycatch mitigation, sustainable fisheries, Blue Economy approach.

7.3 Practice Question

Evaluate community-led conservation models in reducing bycatch and protecting marine megafauna. What policy support is necessary? (250 Words)

7.4 Whale Shark

7.4.1 Species Characteristics

Rhincodon typus is the largest fish globally, reaching up to 20 metres, feeding mainly on plankton as a filter feeder.
Classified as Endangered due to fishing, bycatch, and vessel strikes.

7.4.2 Identification

Each individual has unique white-spot patterns enabling tracking through photographic databases.

7.5 Causes of Entanglement

Traditional shore-seine nets form extensive barriers in shallow waters, inadvertently trapping large megafauna.
Bycatch remains a major global threat to marine biodiversity.

7.6 Conservation Framework

Schedule I protection under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
Listed under CITES Appendix II and recognised under CMS for migratory conservation.

7.7 Community Conservation Model

WTI–Kerala Forest Department initiative provides training and compensation for net damage, encouraging reporting and rescue.
Gujarat's long-term programme demonstrated behavioural transformation through cultural reframing.

7.8 Ecological Significance

As filter feeders, whale sharks regulate plankton populations and support marine food webs.
Their presence indicates productive marine ecosystems.

7.9 Governance Dimensions

Aligns with Blue Economy vision and participatory conservation principles under CBD and SDG 14.

7.10 Challenges

Economic loss from net damage discourages reporting without compensation.
Limited awareness and under-reporting persist in some regions.
Climate change may alter plankton availability and migration routes.

7.11 Way Forward

Expand compensation schemes and insurance for bycatch losses.
Promote bycatch-reducing gear and early-warning networks.
Strengthen citizen science and tracking initiatives for research support.

16th February 2026: Daily MCQs

Q1. With reference to judicial accountability in India, consider the following statements:

1. Judges of the Supreme Court can be removed by a simple majority of members present and voting in Parliament.
2. The in-house mechanism for examining complaints against judges has no explicit constitutional backing.
3. Judicial independence has been recognised as part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution.

How many of the above statements are correct?
A) Only one
B) Only two
C) All three
D) None

Answer: B

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 — Incorrect**
  Removal requires a **special majority** (majority of total membership + two-thirds of members present and voting), not a simple majority.
- **Statement 2 — Correct**
  The in-house mechanism (1999) is an internal judicial procedure and does **not have constitutional or statutory basis**.
- **Statement 3 — Correct**
  In *Kesavananda Bharati (1973)*, judicial independence was recognised as part of the **Basic Structure doctrine**.

Correct statements: 2 and 3.

Q2. Consider the following regarding the Airworthiness Review Certificate (ARC):

1. ARC certifies that an aircraft remains compliant with maintenance and safety standards.
2. ARC is valid for five years once issued.
3. Without a valid ARC, commercial operation of an aircraft is legally prohibited.

Which of the statements given above are correct?
A) 1 and 3 only
B) 1 only
C) 2 and 3 only
D) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 — Correct**
  ARC confirms continued airworthiness compliance.
- **Statement 2 — Incorrect**
  ARC is generally valid for **one year**, not five years.
- **Statement 3 — Correct**
  Operating without ARC violates aviation regulations and renders commercial operation unlawful.

Correct: 1 and 3.

Q3. With reference to removal of the Lok Sabha Speaker, consider the following:

1. The Speaker can be removed by an effective majority of the Lok Sabha.
2. The Speaker cannot participate in the debate on his or her removal.
3. Even after dissolution of the Lok Sabha, the Speaker continues in office until the new House meets.

Which of the above statements are correct?
A) 1 and 3 only
B) 1 only
C) 2 and 3 only
D) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 — Correct**
  Removal requires an **effective majority** (majority of all the then members).
- **Statement 2 — Incorrect**
  The Speaker **can participate** in the debate and vote in the first instance but cannot use a casting vote.
- **Statement 3 — Correct**
  The Speaker continues in office even after dissolution until just before the first sitting of the new Lok Sabha.

Correct: 1 and 3.

Q4. Consider the following statements about whale shark conservation in India:

1. Whale shark is protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
2. Whale shark is listed under CITES Appendix I, completely banning international trade.
3. Community-based compensation mechanisms have been used to reduce bycatch-related killings.

Which of the statements given above are correct?
A) 1 and 3 only
B) 1 only
C) 2 and 3 only
D) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 — Correct**
  Whale shark has **Schedule I protection**, the highest level.
- **Statement 2 — Incorrect**
  It is listed under **CITES Appendix II**, not Appendix I. Appendix II regulates trade, not complete prohibition.
- **Statement 3 — Correct**
  Kerala and Gujarat initiatives include compensation for net damage to encourage rescue and reporting.

Correct: 1 and 3.

Q5. With reference to India's upcoming telescopes in Ladakh, consider the following:

1. The National Large Solar Telescope (NLST) will primarily study solar magnetic activity and space weather.
2. The National Large Optical–Near Infrared Telescope (NLOT) will have a segmented mirror design.
3. Hanle Dark Sky Reserve's high altitude reduces atmospheric distortion, improving observational accuracy.

How many of the above statements are correct?
A) Only one
B) Only two
C) All three
D) None

Answer: C

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 — Correct**
  NLST is focused on solar physics, including magnetism, flares, and coronal mass ejections.
- **Statement 2 — Correct**
  NLOT is a **13.7-metre segmented mirror telescope**.

- **Statement 3 — Correct**
  Hanle's high altitude, dry climate, and low light pollution reduce atmospheric interference, enhancing resolution.

All three statements are correct.

Mains: Critically analyse the constitutional design for removal of the Lok Sabha Speaker. Does it adequately protect neutrality while ensuring accountability? (250 Words)