

State of affairs: On Joe Biden's second State of the Union address

United States President Joe Biden knows he must focus on both the U.S. economy and global challenges

In his second State of the Union address, U.S. President Joe Biden tried to **articulate** several messages under one big **theme** — his **administration** was **committed** to rebuilding America's economy while **standing up to** its challenges abroad. Much of the 72-minute speech was on the domestic **agenda**, particularly his economic **optimism**. The speech saw **self-appreciation**, ideas and **rhetoric** — he **took pride in** his economic policies, **emphasising** the low unemployment rate and **easing** inflation, repeated the **calls** for **taxing** the super rich and bringing down prices of **essential drugs**, promised not to **cut Social Security** and **Medicare** and declared that democracies have become stronger and **autocracies** weaker. While there was no major policy **shift**, the 80-year-old President repeated the phrase "finish the job", indicating that he needed more time to build on what he has already done — seen as a **pitch** for his re-election campaign. Mr. Biden also referred to Russia and China as **key** foreign policy challenges — the Ukraine **invasion** as "a test for America", and that America "will act to protect our country" if its **sovereignty is threatened**, an indirect reference to the balloon incident.

If Mr. Biden used the speech to **defend** his **legacy** and **lay** his **vision**, it also **laid bare** his administration's critical challenges. **To be sure**, the unemployment rate fell to the lowest level since 1969 — to 3.4% in January 2023 — and inflation continued to ease in the month. Still, **most Americans** (58% as in a recent survey), **burdened** by high energy prices and slow growth in wages, remain unhappy with his handling of the economy. The President may have plans for re-election, but only 37% **Democrats back** him. Mr. Biden will also face growing **resistance** to his policies from Congress in a **Republican**-controlled House. On foreign policy, the U.S. has **so far** stood **resolutely** behind Ukraine, but, as the war **grinds on**, there are rising questions about a possible **endgame**. A bigger **challenge** for Mr. Biden **is** how to handle **ties** with China at a time when the two superpowers **compete** for global **influence**. The balloon incident suggests that it is not an easy task. Half of Mr. Biden's first **term** is over. As the election season is **heating up**, time is running short and **his task is cut out** — he has to act more **decisively** on the economic **front** if he wants to build a fair order of competition and opportunities, work towards ending the war in Ukraine without **compromising** on America's **standing** in Europe, and put **in place** stronger **guardrails** in U.S.-China relations to **check** an **escalation** in **tensions** and **deterioration** in ties. [Practice Exercise]

- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where 'red' denotes 'subject' and 'blue' denotes 'verb'.

Vocabulary

1. **State of affairs** (phrase) –situation at particular time. स्थिति
2. **Address** (noun) –a formal speech that is given to an audience संबोधन
3. **Articulate** (verb) –Express, convey, communicate, speak out, put into words स्पष्ट करना
4. **Theme** (noun) –The subject matter of a conversation or discussion विषय
5. **Administration** (noun) – the management of public affairs; government प्रशासन
6. **Committed** (to) (adjective) – pledged or bound to a certain course or policy; dedicated. प्रतिबद्ध
7. **Stand up to** (phrase) – confront, resist, withstand सामना करना
8. **Agenda** (noun) –a list of items to be discussed at a formal meeting.
9. **Optimism** (noun) – Hopefulness, cheerfulness, buoyancy, positivity आशावाद
10. **Self-appreciation** (noun) – self esteem, self respect, dignity, self worth आत्म-प्रशंसा
11. **Rhetoric** (noun) –a way of speaking or writing that is intended to impress or influence people but is not always sincere लफ्फाजी, बयानबाजी
12. **Take pride in** (phrase) – to be proud of गर्व करना
13. **Emphasise** (verb) – stress, highlight, underline, accentuate, underscore ज़ोर देना
14. **Ease** (verb) – alleviate, relieve, comfort, mitigate, soothe; reduce, lessen कम करना
15. **Call** (for) (noun) – demand, Request, plea, appeal मांग
16. **Tax** (verb) – impose a tax on (someone or something) कर लगाना
17. **Essential** (adjective) – Vital, indispensable, important, crucial, critical, necessary आवश्यक
18. **Drug** (noun) – Medicine
19. **Cut** (verb) – Reduce, decrease, lessen, कम करना
20. **Social security** (noun) – a system of payments made by the government to people who are ill, poor, or who have no job
21. **Medicare** (noun) – a government service in the US for people who are 65 years old and older that pays for medical treatment.
22. **Autocracy** (noun) – a system of government by one person with absolute power. एकतंत्र

23. **Shift** (noun) – change, alteration, adjustment, adaptation, amendment
परिवर्तन/बदलाव
24. **Pitch** (noun) – a speech or act that attempts to persuade someone
25. **Key** (adjective) – main, crucial, essential, prime, major, important, significant प्रमुख
26. **Invasion** (noun) – attack, incursion, offensive, assailing आक्रमण
27. **Sovereignty** (noun) – autonomy, independence, self-government, self-rule, home rule संप्रभुता
28. **Threaten** (verb) – endanger, jeopardize, menace, intimidate, imperil खतरे में डालना
29. **Defend** (verb) – Protect, guard, preserve, shield, secure बचाव करना
30. **Legacy** (noun) – something that is a part of your history or that remains from an earlier time
31. **Lay** (verb) – Place, put, set, put down रखना
32. **Vision** (noun) – Dream, apparition, idea, hallucination, visualization, concept दृष्टि
33. **Lay bare** (phrase) – Reveal, explain, show, expose, display, uncover उजागर करना, भेद खोलना
34. **To be sure** (phrase) – Certainly, ensure, make sure निश्चित रूप से
35. **Democrats** (noun) – (in the US) a member of the Democratic Party.
36. **Back** (verb) – support, endorse, sanction, approve of समर्थन करना
37. **Resistance** (noun) – opposition, fight, battle, stand, struggle, confrontation प्रतिरोध, विरोध
38. **Republican** (adjective) – relating to or supporting the Republican party in the US
39. **So far** (phrase) – thus far अभी तक
40. **Resolutely** (adverb) – Determinedly, doggedly, decisively, stubbornly, definitely पूरी तरह से/ सख्ती से
41. **Grind on** (phrasal verb) – Drag on, go on and on, continue, carry on, go on, keep going जारी रहना
42. **Endgame** (noun) – the final stage of a process or contest
43. **Ties** (noun) – connection, relations, link, bond, association संबंध
44. **Compete** (verb) – contest, contend, vie, strive, participate प्रतिस्पर्धा करना
45. **Influence** (noun) – Power, sway, authority, weight, control बोलबाला, प्रभाव
46. **Term** (noun) – period, time, duration, stint कार्यकाल
47. **Heat up** (phrasal verb) – become more exciting, dangerous, or serious.

48. **Have one's task cut out** (phrase) – have a difficult job to do
49. **Decisively** (adverb) – Conclusively, definitively, finally निर्णायक रूप से
50. **Front** (noun) – a particular area of activity मोर्चा
51. **Compromise** (verb) – to settle a dispute by agreeing to accept less than what was originally wanted समझौता करना
52. **Standing** (noun) – status, position, reputation, rank स्थिति, प्रतिष्ठा
53. **In place** (phrase) – established स्थापित
54. **Guardrail** (noun) – Safety barrier, A protective railing
55. **Check** (verb) – halt, stop, bar, obstruct, hamper, impede, inhibit, रोकना
56. **Escalation** (noun) – increase, acceleration वृद्धि
57. **Tension** (noun) – strained relations, strain, unease तनाव
58. **Deterioration** (noun) – decline, decay, degradation, worsening, degeneration गिरावट

Practice Exercise

Direction (Q1 – Q3): Select the best express synonym of the given words

[Editorial page]

1. **ARTICULATE**

- A. Sticky
- B. Convey
- C. Undue
- D. Adequate

2. **DETERIORATION**

- A. Room
- B. Degeneration
- C. Staunch
- D. Stability

3. **LAY BARE**

- A. Reveal
- B. Cite
- C. Proximate
- D. Reassurance

4. **Idioms & Phrase**

Sorry I'm late, Fred was ***in a bind*** and needed me to drive him home.

- A. Make progress, especially when this is slow or difficult
- B. If a situation or feeling boils over, people cannot control their anger and start to fight or argue
- C. To happen or become known to happen in a particular way
- D. In a particularly difficult or awkward situation

5. **Direction: Two statements are given below, which are jumbled in any random order. These statements will form a coherent and meaningful paragraph, when arranged in the correct sequence. Arrange the sentences in the right order and answer the questions that follow.**

- (i) India's agriculture sector is all set (A)/ high production record this year (B)/ to create an all-time (C)/
 - (ii) According to the Second Advance Estimates of (D)/ Production of Foodgrains for 2021-22, (E)/ released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare last week, (F)/ India's total foodgrains production will cross 316 million tonnes. (G)/
- A. ABC, EFDG
 - B. DGFE, BAC
 - C. BAC, FDEG
 - D. FDGE, CBA
 - E. None of the above

Direction (Q6 – Q9): Read the given sentences to find out whether there is any grammatical error in them

- 6. The college (A)/ is running a computer course (B)/ since 2007. (C)/ No Error (D).
- 7. Rina doesn't usually (A)/ wear jewellery but yesterday (B)/ she wore ring. (C)/ No Error. (D)

8. Neither Ramu nor Raju (A)/ has done (B)/ their work properly. (C)/No Error. (D)
9. With a good line and length, (A)/ the spinners were able (B)/ to peg the batsmen down. (C)/ No Error. (D)
10. **Find out the misspelt word**
 - A. Repercussion
 - B. Enthusiasm
 - C. Prudent
 - D. Burgeoning

Direction: Read the passage given below and answer the following questions.

(The Hindu Editorial: A planet in crisis – Dec 21, 2022)

A month after the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) in Egypt, diplomatic retinue went into a _____(a)_____ huddle again to save the planet — in Montreal, Canada, this time, and as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). While both these conferences can trace their origins to the Rio summit of 1992, the CBD does not get anywhere near the media attention COP commands. There are no world leaders and heads of state making _____(b)_____ commitments because the CBD largely continues to be framed as an ‘environmentalist’ concern, much like what COP used to be, until the forces of capitalism managed to reimagine the idea of a planet being inexorably slow-cooked in greenhouse gases to one that may yet be saved by renewable energy sources — and at the very least — make some entrepreneurs rich.

Unlike cyclones and melting glaciers that have become visual aids to bring home the climate crisis _____ by invisible gases, _____ loss continues to be largely invisible despite its _____ being extremely visible. Based on current trends, the UN reckons, an estimated 34,000 plant and 5,200 animal species, including one in eight of the world’s bird species, face extinction. About 30% of breeds of main farm animal species are currently at high risk of extinction. Forests are home to much of the known terrestrial biodiversity, but about 45% of the earth’s original forests are gone, cleared mostly during the past century. Yet, because much of this extinction is not finely accounted for as the rise in per capita carbon emissions or temperature swings, it fails to evoke the urgency it deserves. In this light, India’s _____c_____, i.e., of not wanting hard targets on proposals such as reducing the use of pesticides, given that their effects on impacting biodiversity are documented, and conserving 30% of land and sea, seems anachronistic particularly when it sees itself as a champion of conservation and living in harmony with nature. While India, **adopting(A)/** a negotiating tack from climate conferences, has **argued(B)/** that different nations have differing levels of responsibility towards biodiversity conservation (which requires richer nations to be more **dead (C)/** funders of global conservation efforts), it is well known that such demands are a **generous (D)/** end unless countries agree to definite targets. What cannot be measured, as the _____d_____ goes, cannot be understood or addressed. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the CBD, **(A)/** have described the negotiations as one that should result in a “Paris moment for nature”; **(B)/** while this was not quite what happened, countries have agreed on preparing concrete road maps by 2024 and the richer ones, **(C)/** committing \$30 billion an annum by 2030. But seeing tangible outcomes is a long time away. **(D)/**

Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate combinations of words

11. A month after the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) in Egypt, diplomatic retinue went into a _____ huddle again to save the planet — in Montreal, Canada, this time, and as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Fill the most appropriate option in (a)

- (i) Steep
- (ii) Dominant
- (iii) Contentious
- (iv) Brazen

A. Only (i) B. Only (ii) C. Only (iii) D. Both (ii) and (iv) E. None of the above

12. There are no world leaders and heads of state making _____ commitments because the CBD largely continues to be framed as an 'environmentalist' concern.

Fill the most appropriate option in (b)

- (i) Palatable
- (ii) Legitimate
- (iii) Contrarian
- (iv) Grandiloquent

A. Only (i) B. Only (ii) C. Only (iv) D. Both (ii) and (iv) E. None of the above

13. In this light, India's _____, i.e., of not wanting hard targets on proposals such as reducing the use of pesticides, given that their effects on impacting biodiversity are documented, and conserving 30% of land and sea, seems anachronistic particularly when it sees itself as a champion of conservation and living in harmony with nature.

Fill the most appropriate option in (c)

- (i) Wanting
- (ii) Stance
- (iii) Counterpart
- (iv) End

A. Only (i) B. Only (ii) C. Only (iii) D. Both (i) and (ii) E. None of the above

14. What cannot be measured, as the _____ goes, cannot be understood or addressed.

Fill the most appropriate option in (d)

- (i) Misdeed
- (ii) Adage
- (iii) Observation
- (iv) Tenement

A. Only (ii) B. Only (iv) C. Only (iii) D. Both (iii) and (ii) E. None of the above

15. **The following sentence may or may not contain an error in one of its parts. Identify the part containing the error. If the sentence is correct, select 'No error' as your answers.**

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the CBD,(A)/ have described the negotiations as one that should result in a “Paris moment for nature”;(B)/ while this was not quite what happened, countries have agreed on preparing concrete road maps by 2024 and the richer ones,(C)/ committing \$30 billion an annum by 2030. But seeing tangible outcomes is a long time away.(D)/

- A. (A)
- B. (B)
- C. (C)
- D. (D)
- E. No Error

16. **Directions: In the question below, a sentence is given with three blanks, that indicate that some parts are missing. Identify the correct pair of words that fit in the sentence to make it grammatically and contextually correct.**

Unlike cyclones and melting glaciers that have become visual aids to bring home the climate crisis _____ by invisible gases, _____ loss continues to be largely invisible despite its _____ being extremely visible.

- 1. Infructuous
- 2. Wrought
- 3. Chunk
- 4. Biodiversity
- 5. Victims

- A. 241 B.321 C.154 D.245

17. Given below is a word, followed by three sentence that consist of that word. Identify the sentence (S) that best express (es) the meaning of the word. Choose option 5 ‘None of the above’ if the word is not suitable in any of the sentence

EXTINCTION

- (i) Some people predict the **extinction** of family life as we know it today.
- (ii) Two approaches have been implemented to generate spectral **extinction** functions for cone pigments.
- (iii) Thus, there is a qualitative difference between the **extinction** of language contact with respect to at least one point: the past participles.

- A. Only (i)
- B. Only (ii)
- C. Only (iii)
- D. (i), (ii)
- E. (ii), (iii)

18. **In the following question, a sentence is given with four words marked as (A), (B), (C), and (D). These words may or may not be placed in the correct order. Four options with different arrangements of these have been provided. Mark the option with the correct arrangement as the answer. If no rearrangement is required, mark option (5) as your answer.**

While India, **adopting(A)/** a negotiating tack from climate conferences, has **argued(B)/** that different nations have differing levels of responsibility towards biodiversity conservation (which requires richer nations to be more **dead (C)/** funders of global conservation efforts), it is well known that such demands are a **generous (D)/** end unless countries agree to definite targets

- A. A – D
- B. B – A
- C. C – D
- D. A – C
- E. No arrangement

19. In the following question, two statements and five connectors are given. Only one of the connectors from those given can be used to combine the given two statements into one sentence without changing the meaning. Choose that connector as your answer.

- (i) Indian delegation was certain
 - (ii) the oil agencies would not sanction them
- A. That
 - B. Whether
 - C. Yet
 - D. Still
 - E. None of these

20. Fill the appropriate preposition in the given blanks

Don't trifle _____ the feelings of the poor.

- A. Of
- B. With
- C. Upon
- D. To

Answers

1. B 2.B 3.A 4. D 5. E 6.B 7. C 8.C 9.C 10.B 11. C
 12. C 13.B 14. A 15. B 16.D 17.D 18. C 19.A 20.B **[Practice Exercise]**

Explanations

- Articulate** (verb) – Express, convey, communicate, speak out, put into words स्पष्ट करना
 - Sticky** (adjective) – Involving problems; difficult or awkward; slow to change
 - Undue** (adjective) – excessive, extreme, disproportionate, inordinate अनुचित
 - Adequate** (Adjective) – sufficient, enough, ample, requisite, apposite पर्याप्त
- Deterioration** (noun) – decline, decay, degradation, worsening, degeneration गिरावट
 - Room** (noun) – scope, capacity, margin, occasion, opportunity, chance गुंजाइश
 - Staunch** (verb) – restrain, control, contain, stop, restrict रोकना/नियंत्रित करना
 - Stability** (noun) – Constancy, steadiness, firmness, permanency स्थिरता
- Lay bare** (phrase) – Reveal, explain, show, expose, display, uncover उजागर करना, भेद खोलना
 - Cite** (verb) – refer to, make reference to, mention, point to, adduce हवाला देना
 - Proximate** (adjective) – nearly, close, near निकटवर्ती
 - Reassurance** (noun) – comfort, solace, assurance, support आश्वासन
- Be in a bind** (phrase) – In a particularly difficult or awkward situation कठिन स्थिति में
- ACB, DEFG**
 India's agriculture sector is all set to create an all-time high production record this year. According to the Second Advance Estimates of Production of Foodgrains for 2021-22, released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare last week, India's total foodgrains production will cross 316 million tonnes.
- (B) 'is' के बदले 'has been' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि Part (C) में 'since 2007' प्रयोग है जिससे पता चलता है कि काम past में शुरू हुआ और अब तक जारी है और किसी भी ऐसे कार्य के लिए जो past में शुरू हुए और अब तक जारी है Present Perfect Continuous Tense का प्रयोग होता है; जैसे-
 - She has been living here since 2010.
 - 'is' will be replaced with 'has been' because 'since 2007' is used in Part (C) which shows that the work started in the past and continues till now and for any such act The Present Perfect Continuous Tense is used, which began in the past and continues to this day; like-
 - She has been living here since 2010.
- (C) 'ring' के पहले Article 'a' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि 'ring' एक Singular Countable Noun है।
 - Article 'a' will be used before 'ring' because 'ring' is a Singular Countable Noun.

8. (C) 'their' के बदले 'his' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि यदि दो Subjects यदि Neither.... nor, Either....or, Not only..... but also, या 'or' जुड़े हो तो Assertive Sentence में Verb तथा Possessive बाद वाले Subject के अनुसार होता है; जैसे-
- Neither Ram nor Sita has done her work.
 - Either you or they have done their work.
- 'his' will be used instead of 'their' because if two subjects neither.... nor, Either....or, Not only..... but also, or 'or' are attached, then in Assertive Sentence, Verb and Possessive are according to the latter Subject; like-
 - Neither Ram nor Sita has done her work.
 - Either you or they have done their work.
9. (C) 'down' के बदले 'back' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि 'peg somebody back' का अर्थ होता है 'किसी को खेल जीतने से रोकना'।
- 'back' will be used instead of 'down' because 'peg somebody back' means 'to prevent someone from winning the game'.
10. **Enthusiasm** (noun) – Eagerness, interest, fervor, zeal, zest, keenness, excitement उत्साह
11. **Contentious** (adjective) – controversial, quarrelsome, combative, disputatious, argumentative विवादपूर्ण
- Steep** (adjective) – very big बहुत बड़ा
 - Dominant** (adjective) – authoritative, most influential, most powerful प्रमुख, प्रभावी
 - Brazen** (adjective) – bold and without shame. बेशर्म
12. **Grandiloquent** (adjective) – pompous or extravagant in language, manner ; wordy, verbose आडंबरपूर्ण
- Palatable** (adjective) – pleasant, acceptable, satisfactory सुखद, रुचिकर
 - Legitimate** (adjective) – legal, lawful, valid, rightful, legitimize वैध, उचित
 - Contrarian** (adjective) – opposing or rejecting popular opinion विपरीत/ विरोधाभासी
13. **Stance** (noun) – attitude, stand, point of view, viewpoint, opinion, way of thinking रुख
- Wanting** (noun) – an act of desiring something to do इच्छा
 - Counterpart** (noun) – equivalent, opposite number, peer, equal समकक्ष
 - End** (noun) – Purpose, aim, objective, goal, intention उद्देश्य
14. **Adage** (noun) – saying, maxim, proverb कहावत
- Misdeed** (noun) – wrongdoing, crime, offence, misconduct कुकर्म/ दुष्कर्म
 - Observation** (noun) – comment, remark, statement टिप्पणी

- **Tenement** (noun) – apartment, residence, dwelling, apartment house किराये का घर, लगान पर दी हुई भूमि

15. 'have' के बदले 'has' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि वाक्य का Subject ' Elizabeth Maruma Mrema ' है जिसके लिए Verb Singular प्रयोग होगा ।

16. (D) 245

- **Wrought** (verb) – Past participle of Work; Act, do, perform, effect, produce, bring about घटित करना
- **Biodiversity** (noun) – The variety of life in the world or in a particular habitat or ecosystem. जैव विविधता
- **Victim** (noun) – An unfortunate person who suffers from some adverse circumstance पीड़ित
- **Chunk** (noun) – a significant amount of something. अंश, भाग, हिस्सा
- **Infructuous** (adjective) – pointless or unnecessary. निष्फल

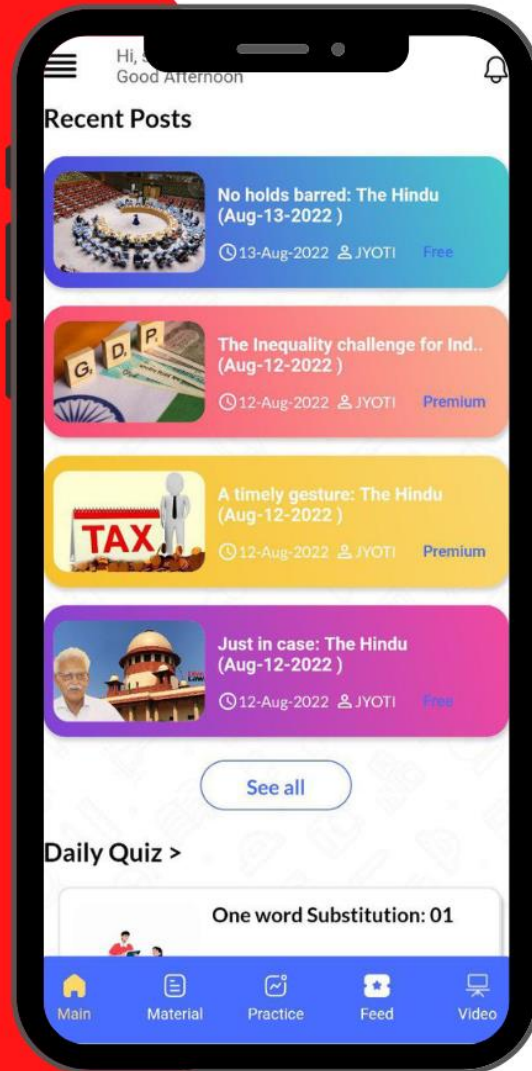
17. **Extinction** (noun) – extermination, destruction, elimination, eradication, annihilation विलुप्त

According to the given options only (i) AND (ii) are contextually correct.

Because the (iii) sentence is not giving any meaning and correct sentences should be like

Thus, there is a qualitative difference between the outcome of language contact with respect to at least one point: the past participles.

18. While India, adopting a negotiating tack from climate conferences, has argued that different nations have differing levels of responsibility towards biodiversity conservation (which requires richer nations to be more generous funders of global conservation efforts), it is well known that such demands are a dead end unless countries agree to definite targets.
19. Indian delegation was certain **that** the oil agencies would not sanction them



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