

Present imperfect: on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's latest report and India

Irrespective of what the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom says, India must **review** its rights record

For the fourth **consecutive** year, the government has **expressed outrage** and rejected the recommendations of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's (USCIRF) latest report, calling it "**biased** and **motivated**". In its report released on Monday, the independent **congressional** body has **called for** India to be **designated** a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) for its "**worsening**" record on religious freedoms. The report has targeted the Indian government for "promoting and **enforcing** religiously **discriminatory** policies", naming laws that **deal with conversion, interfaith relationships**, wearing the hijab and cow **slaughter**, as well as the Citizenship (**Amendment**) Act and the National Register of Citizens. **All of these**, it **alleges**, **have impacted** minorities including Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Dalits, and Adivasis (**indigenous** peoples and Scheduled Tribes) negatively. The USCIRF has also **catalogued** acts of violence and the **vilification** of minorities and **criticised** the "**suppression** of critical voices" by **intimidation** that includes **surveillance**, **demolition** of property, **detentions** and the targeting of NGOs through laws **curtailing** foreign donations. It has criticised the U.S. State Department for not having designated India as a CPC, and has **called for sanctions** on Indian government agencies and officials. In the only such sanction **imposed** on India, the U.S. had, in 2005, **revoked** Prime Minister Narendra Modi's U.S. visa after a USCIRF recommendation on the 2002 Gujarat **riots**. In its response, the External Affairs Ministry has told the USCIRF to "**desist**" from such reports and to "develop a better understanding of India.... "

The government's **stern** reaction is understandable, and is **in line with** its response to such reports over the last two **decades**, since the USCIRF began to publish its **findings**. **The process** the USCIRF follows **is non-inclusive**, and **the fact** that it does not study the **state** of religious freedoms inside the U.S., **suggests** a double standard. **Moreover**, its recommendations **hold no sway** within India, and are meant only for the U.S. government to **deliberate** on, and accept or dismiss. Either way, there is little need for or **utility** to New Delhi's public responses, which make it **sound defensive** and do not actually repair the reputational damage to India as a **secular**, inclusive and **pluralistic** democracy. **Given** the detailed and **pointed accusations**, however, the Centre may well consider an internal review of its conduct and the direction it hopes to lead India in, on issues such as religious freedoms and rights. **Eventually**, any government's duty is not in achieving a perfect score in a survey **run abroad**, but rather in **burnishing** its record of delivering justice, equality and security to its citizens **back home**.

- **Utility** (noun) – Usefulness, helpfulness, value, efficacy, effectiveness, convenience, उपयोगिता
- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where 'red' denotes 'subject' and 'blue' denotes 'verb'.

[Practice Exercise]

Vocabulary

1. **Irrespective of** (phrase) – regardless of, despite, notwithstanding, no matter के बावजूद
2. **Review** (noun) – evaluation, assessment, appraisal, examination समीक्षा
3. **Consecutive** (adjective) – successive, sequential, continuous लगातार
4. **Express** (verb) – convey, communicate, articulate व्यक्त करना
5. **Outrage** (noun) – indignation, fury, anger आक्रोश
6. **Biased** (adjective) – prejudiced, partial, unfair पक्षपाती
7. **Motivated** (adjective) – inspired, driven, determined प्रेरित
8. **Congressional** (adjective) – relating to a congress, legislative कांग्रेस
9. **Call for** (phrasal verb) – demand, require, necessitate मांग करना
10. **Designated** (adjective) – assigned, appointed, selected नियुक्त
11. **Worsening** (adjective) – deteriorating, declining, degrading बिगड़ते हुए
12. **Enforce** (verb) – implement, apply, execute लागू करना
13. **Discriminatory** (adjective) – unjust, biased, unequal भेदभावपूर्ण
14. **Deal with** (phrasal verb) – handle, manage, tackle से निपटना
15. **Conversion** (noun) – change, transformation, alteration परिवर्तन
16. **Interfaith relationship** (noun) – inter-religious relationship, relationship between people of different faiths धर्मान्तर संबंध
17. **Slaughter** (noun) – killing, massacre, bloodshed हत्या
18. **Amendment** (noun) – revision, alteration, change संशोधन
19. **Allege** (verb) – claim, assert, declare आरोप लगाना
20. **Impact** (verb) – affect, influence, alter प्रभावित करना
21. **Indigenous** (adjective) – native, local, original स्वदेशी
22. **Catalogue** (verb) – list, record, register सूचीबद्ध करना
23. **Vilification** (noun) – defamation, slander, denigration बदनामी
24. **Criticise** (verb) – condemn, denounce, disapprove आलोचना करना

25. **Suppression** (noun) – restraint, repression, stifling दमन
26. **Intimidation** (noun) – bullying, threatening, coercion, harassment धमकी
27. **Surveillance** (noun) – monitoring, observation, scrutiny, निगरानी
28. **Demolition** (noun) – destruction, dismantling, razing विध्वंस
29. **Detention** (noun) – confinement, custody, restraint हिरासत
30. **Curtail** (verb) – reduce, cut back, diminish कम करना
31. **Sanction** (noun) – Restriction, penalty, ban, punishment, injunction प्रतिबंध
32. **Impose** (verb) – enforce, inflict, levy थोपना
33. **Revoke** (verb) – cancel, rescind, repeal रद्द करना
34. **Riot** (noun) – disturbance, upheaval, violent disorder दंगा
35. **Desist** (verb) – stop, cease, abstain रोकथाम करना
36. **Stern** (adjective) – strict, severe, harsh कठोर
37. **In line with** (phrase) – in accordance with, in agreement with, in harmony with के अनुसार
38. **Decade** (noun) – ten years, ten-year period दशक
39. **Findings** (noun) – results, conclusions, outcomes नतीजे
40. **Non-inclusive** (adjective) – exclusive, restrictive, discriminatory सीमित
41. **State** (noun) – condition, situation, status स्थिति
42. **Moreover** (adverb) – furthermore, additionally, besides इसके अलावा
43. **Hold sway** (phrase) – have influence, dominate, control प्रभाव रखना
44. **Deliberate** (on) (verb) – consider, think about, reflect विचार करना
45. **Sound** (adjective) – rational, logical, reasonable तर्कसंगत
46. **Defensive** (adjective) – protective, safeguarding, shielding रक्षात्मक
47. **Secular** (adjective) – non-religious, non-sectarian, worldly धर्मनिरपेक्ष
48. **Pluralistic** (adjective) – diverse, multicultural, multiethnic बहुलवादी
49. **Given** (preposition) – considering, taking into account, in view of देखते हुए
50. **Pointed** (adjective) – direct, specific, clear-cut, aimed, directed निर्देशित

51. **Accusation** (noun) – allegation, charge, claim, imputation, assertion आरोप

54. **Burnish** (verb) – enhance, improve, polish, refine संवारना

52. **Eventually** (adverb) – ultimately, in the end, finally, at last अंत में

55. **Back home** (phrase) – in one's own country, in the homeland, domestically अपने ही देश में

53. **Run abroad** (phrase) – conducted overseas, operated internationally, held in a foreign country विदेश में आयोजित

Summary of the Editorial

Hello students! Today, we will talk about a recent report on religious freedom and India's response to it. We'll break it down point by point so you can easily understand the topic.

1. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) released a report about religious freedom in different countries. This report has caused some disagreement between the United States and India.
2. For the fourth year in a row, India's government has rejected the report, calling it "biased and motivated."
3. The report suggests that India should be considered a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) because it claims that religious freedom has gotten worse in the country.
4. The report criticizes the Indian government for having laws and policies that it believes are unfair to people of different religions. Some examples include laws about conversion, interfaith relationships, wearing the hijab, cow slaughter, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, and the National Register of Citizens.
5. The report says that these laws and policies have negatively affected minority groups in India, like Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Dalits, and Adivasis (indigenous peoples and Scheduled Tribes).
6. The USCIRF also mentions acts of violence and discrimination against these minority groups and accuses the Indian government of suppressing critical voices through intimidation, surveillance, property destruction, detentions, and targeting NGOs.
7. The Indian government has responded by asking the USCIRF to stop making such reports and to better understand India's situation.
8. The USCIRF's process has been criticized for being non-inclusive and for not studying religious freedom within the United States, which suggests a double standard.
9. The USCIRF's recommendations are only meant for the U.S. government to consider, so India's public responses may not be necessary or helpful.
10. The Indian government might want to review its own policies and actions regarding religious freedom and rights to ensure justice, equality, and security for all its citizens.
11. In summary, the USCIRF's report on religious freedom has caused a disagreement between the United States and India. India has rejected the report and its recommendations, while critics argue that the Indian government should focus on ensuring justice, equality, and security for all its citizens.

Banking Based: Practice Exercise

1. **Based on the passage, which of the following best describes the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's (USCIRF) latest report on India?** [Editorial Page]
 - A. The report praises India for its progress in religious freedom.
 - B. The report calls for India to be designated a "Country of Particular Concern" for its worsening record on religious freedoms.
 - C. The report focuses solely on India's treatment of Muslim minorities.
 - D. The report completely ignores the issue of religious freedom in India.
 - E. The report suggests that India has made significant improvements in religious freedom in recent years.
2. **From the passage, it can be inferred that all of the following are true about the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) EXCEPT that:**
 - A. The USCIRF has been publishing its findings for the past two decades.
 - B. The process the USCIRF follows is non-inclusive.
 - C. The USCIRF focuses on the state of religious freedoms inside the U.S.
 - D. USCIRF's recommendations are meant only for the U.S. government to deliberate on.
 - E. India's public responses to USCIRF reports make it sound defensive.
3. **According to the passage, which of the following statements about the USCIRF's latest report on India would best support the arguments made in the report if proven false?**
 - A. The report claims that India has a worsening record on religious freedoms.
 - B. The report accuses the Indian government of promoting and enforcing religiously discriminatory policies.
 - C. The report states that laws regarding conversion, interfaith relationships, hijab, and cow slaughter have negatively impacted various minority groups in India.
 - D. The USCIRF has called for sanctions on Indian government agencies and officials due to their findings.
 - E. The report praises the U.S. State Department for not having designated India as a CPC.
4. **What is the tone of the passage?**
 - A. Positive
 - B. Neutral
 - C. Critical
 - D. Pessimistic
 - E. Encouraging
5. **What is the main theme of the passage?**
 - A. The importance of international reports on religious freedom
 - B. The Indian government's defensive response to the USCIRF report
 - C. The need for India to improve its religious freedom record
 - D. The role of the U.S. in influencing Indian policies
 - E. Criticism of the USCIRF's methodology and double standards

Directions (Q6 – Q9): Five sentences P, Q, R, S, and T are given below, you need to rearrange the sentences so that the five sentences can together form a meaningful paragraph.

- P. The Supreme Court's concern over the increasing prevalence of hate speech is laudable
- Q. There are politicians and public figures who don't believe in moderation; they make deplorable statements that end up offending the sensibilities of a lot of people, often resulting in anger, further triggering similar statements.
- R. Such prevalence is the direct consequence of declining standards of public debate.
- S. Then there are publicity seekers who make remarks just for the heck of it.
- T. The apex court has often expressed its displeasure over obnoxious remarks made in public.
6. Which of the following should be the **FIRST** sentence after rearrangement?
- (P)
 - (Q)
 - (R)
 - (S)
 - (T)
7. Which of the following should be the **SECOND** sentence after rearrangement?
- (P)
 - (Q)
 - (R)
 - (S)
 - (T)
8. Which of the following should be the **THIRD** sentence after rearrangement?
- (P)
 - (Q)
 - (R)
 - (S)
 - (T)
9. Which of the following should be the **FOURTH** sentence after rearrangement?
- (P)
 - (Q)
 - (R)
 - (S)
 - (T)
10. **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.**
- a dream for many Indian students,(D)/ an expensive proposition(E)/ Pursuing higher education abroad is (F)/ but it can also be(G)/
 - Indian students that can help reduce the financial burden of studying abroad(A)/ there are a variety of scholarship opportunities available to(B)/ However,(C)/
- BCA, EFDG
 - GFED, BAC
 - BAC, FDEG

- D. FDGE, CBA
- E. None of the above

Direction (Q11 – Q12): Read the given sentences to find out whether there is any grammatical error in them

11. Despite of (A)/ elaborate search operations, (B)/ the police could find no trace (C)/ of the missing girls. (D)/ No Error. (E)
12. The Magician, who has been (A)/ using his talent for make the public aware (B)/ of social issues, is confident (C)/ that his mission would be a success. (D)/ No Error. (E)

Direction (Q13- Q19): Read the passage given below and answer the following questions.

On November 22, five villagers from Meghalaya and an Assam forest guard were killed and two others were seriously injured in a firing incident along the boundary between the two States. The Assam government said the incident happened after its forest guards tried to intercept a truck smuggling illegal timber. When the truck was stopped, the forest personnel were gheraoed by unknown miscreants who resorted to violence, according to Assam, which maintains that the staff resorted to firing to save their lives. Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma said on Twitter that the Assam police and Assam forest guards entered Meghalaya and “resorted to unprovoked firing”. Versions differ and both States have instituted separate inquiries, but the mistrust and _____(a)_____ conflicts in the northeast that lead to such incidents are deeper. Assam and Meghalaya have a five-decade old boundary dispute. Meghalaya, carved _____(b)_____ of Assam as an autonomous region in 1970, became a **full-fledged** State in 1972. In March, Assam and Meghalaya resolved the boundary dispute at six out of total 12 such locations along their 884.9 km boundary, and the next round of talks was to take place soon. Though the latest _____(c)_____ did not arise out of this dispute, it happened along a disputed border stretch.

Assam has boundary disputes at various points in time with the States carved out of it — Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram. Last year, the police forces of Assam and Mizoram clashed, killing five on the Assam side. Dozens of people have died in conflicts along State borders in the northeast over the years. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had asked Assam to take the lead in resolving the _____(d)_____ disputes, which have their origins in the colonial cartography that overlooked the life patterns of local communities. Traditional hunting, grazing and farming grounds of communities got divided by modern administrative boundaries at many places. When new States were formed, such concerns acquired a more serious nature, and the Naga demand for a unified homeland that is now spread beyond the State of Nagaland is instructive. It is unfortunate and tragic that States(A)/ that are part of the Indian Union(B)/ is involved in violent clashes (C)/ with one another. (D)/ The BJP is in government in **much(A)** of the northeast and has the **leverage(B)** to aim for a **outstanding(C)** resolution of all **comprehensive (D)** disputes in the region. Communities will have to be taken into confidence, and boundaries adjusted. In any case, these man-made lines should not be allowed to restrict the movement of people in pursuit of a livelihood

Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate combinations of words

13. Versions differ and both States have instituted separate inquiries, but the mistrust and _____(a)_____ conflicts in the northeast that lead to such incidents are deeper.

Fill the most appropriate option in (a)

- (i) Sticky
- (ii) Undue
- (iii) Underlying
- (iv) Adequate

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

14. Meghalaya, carved _____(b)_____ of Assam as an autonomous region in 1970, became a full-fledged State in 1972.

Fill the most appropriate option in (b)

- (i) In
- (ii) Out
- (iii) Up
- (iv) Into

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

15. Though the latest _____(c)_____ did not arise out of this dispute, it happened along a disputed border stretch.

Fill the most appropriate option in (c)

- (i) Room
- (ii) Staunch
- (iii) Flare-up
- (iv) Stability

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

16. Assam to take the lead in resolving the _____(d)_____ disputes, which have their origins in the colonial cartography that overlooked the life patterns of local communities.

Fill the most appropriate option in (d)

- (i) Reassurance
- (ii) Proximate
- (iii) Citing
- (iv) Lingering

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

17. **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.**

It is unfortunate and tragic that States (A)/ that are part of the Indian Union(B)/ is involved in violent clashes (C)/ with one another. (D)/

- A. (A)
- B. (B)
- C. (C)
- D. (D)

E. No Error

18. 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

FULL-FLEDGED

- (i) Under these conditions, **full-fledged** dreaming is practically impossible.
- (ii) Within months the student had become a **full-fledged** instructor.
- (iii) The other extreme is to use **full-fledged** speech synthesis.

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

19. 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.

The BJP is in government in **much(A)** of the northeast and has the **leverage(B)** to aim for a **outstanding(C)** resolution of all **comprehensive (D)** disputes in the region.

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

20. 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) Neha is studying engineering
 - (ii) her friend is in the United States Studying Biotechnology
- A. Likely
 - B. Now that
 - C. Provided
 - D. Meanwhile
 - E. None of these

F.

Answers

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

Explanations

1. **Correct answer: B) The report calls for India to be designated a "Country of Particular Concern" for its worsening record on religious freedoms.**

Explanation: The passage states that the USCIRF's latest report has called for India to be designated a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) for its "worsening" record on religious freedoms. It criticizes the Indian government for promoting and enforcing religiously discriminatory policies and targeting various minority groups.

2. The passage states that the USCIRF does not study the state of religious freedoms inside the U.S., which suggests a double standard. Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer, as it is the only statement that is not true about the USCIRF based on the information given in the passage.
3. Explanation: The question asks which statement, if false, would best support the arguments in the passage. This means that the statement should be in contrast with the report's conclusions. Option E suggests that the report praises the U.S. State Department for not designating India as a CPC, which is contrary to what the passage states. In reality, the report criticized the U.S. State Department for not doing so. Therefore, proving this statement false would best support the arguments in the passage.

4. **Correct answer: c) Critical**

Explanation: The tone of the passage is critical as it discusses the issues highlighted by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's (USCIRF) report and the Indian government's defensive response to it. The passage also calls for an internal review of the Indian government's conduct and the direction it hopes to lead India in regarding religious freedoms and rights.

5. **Correct answer: c) The need for India to improve its religious freedom record**

Explanation: The main theme of the passage is the need for India to improve its religious freedom record, as highlighted by the USCIRF report. While the passage discusses the Indian government's defensive response, the criticism of the USCIRF's methodology, and the role of the U.S. in the matter, these are secondary themes that support the main theme. The passage emphasizes the need for an internal review and for the Indian government to focus on delivering justice, equality, and security to its citizens

6. P) The Supreme Court's concern over the increasing prevalence of hate speech is laudable
7. R) Such prevalence is the direct consequence of declining standards of public debate.
8. Q) There are politicians and public figures who don't believe in moderation; they make deplorable statements that end up offending the sensibilities of a lot of people, often resulting in anger, further triggering similar statements.
9. S) Then there are publicity seekers who make remarks just for the heck of it.

PRQST

The Supreme Court's concern over the increasing prevalence of hate speech is laudable. Such prevalence is the direct consequence of declining standards of public debate. There are politicians and public figures who don't believe in moderation; they make deplorable statements that end up offending the sensibilities of a lot of people, often resulting in anger, further triggering similar statements. Then there are publicity seekers who make remarks just for the heck of it. The apex court has often expressed its displeasure over obnoxious remarks made in public.

10. **D) FDGE, CBA**

Pursuing higher education abroad is a dream for many Indian students, but it can also be an expensive proposition. However, there are a variety of scholarship opportunities available to Indian students that can help reduce the financial burden of studying abroad.

11. (A) 'despite' के साथ 'of' का प्रयोग नहीं होता है।

- 'of' is not used with 'despite'.

12. (B) 'make' के बदले 'making' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि किसी भी Preposition के बाद आनेवाली मुख्य क्रिया हमेशा 'V4 (V + ing)' रूप में होती है, जैसे-

- He was punished for getting late.
- Ram prevented me from going there.

- 'making' will be used instead of 'make' because the main verb that comes after any preposition is always in the form 'V4 (V + ing)', like-

- He was punished for getting late.
- Ram prevented me from going there.

13. **Underlying** (adjective) –primary, basic, core, fundamental, main बुनियादी

- **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

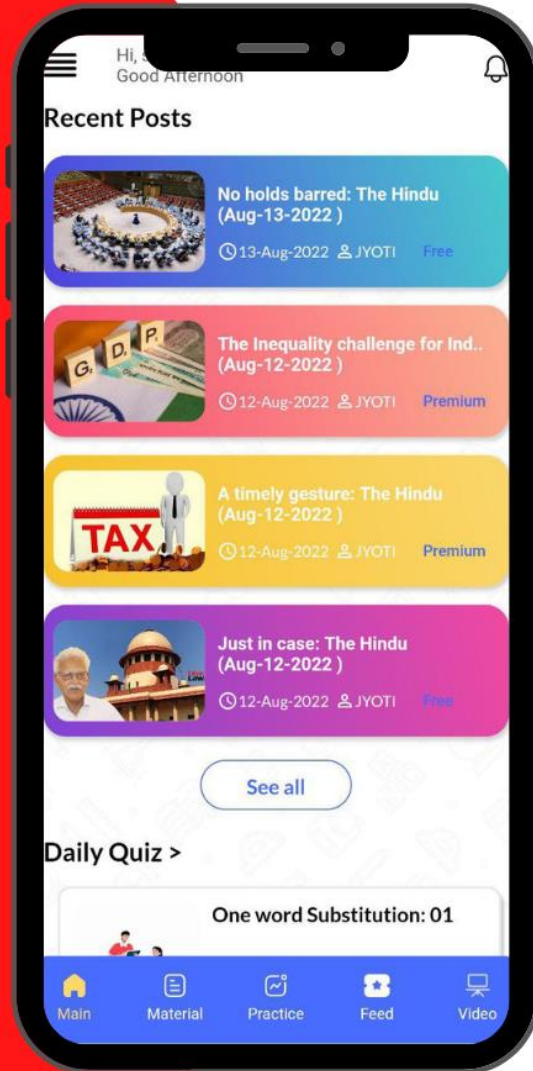
14. **Carve out** (phrasal verb) – to make or create; take something from a larger whole से काटकर बनना

- **Carve up** (phrasal verb) – divide something ruthlessly into separate areas or parts.

15. **Flare-up** (noun) – A sudden burst of anger or passion; an angry dispute एकाएक भड़कना

- **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

16. **Lingering** (adjective) – persistent, protracted, prolonged, remaining जारी
- **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
17. 'is' के बदले 'are' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि subject “states” (plural) है जिसके लिए Verb हमेशा plural होता है।
18. **Full-fledged** (adjective) – Complete, developed, mature, full-size पूर्ण
According to the given options only (i) AND (ii) (iii) are contextually correct.
19. The BJP is in government in much of the northeast and has the leverage to aim for a comprehensive resolution of all outstanding disputes in the region.
20. Neha is studying engineering **meanwhile** her friend is in the United States Studying Biotechnology



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