



JULY 2025

CLAT Tathya

by Nishant Prakash Law Classes

NPLC's TOP 10 GLORY 2025

A salute to our five toppers who turned pressure into purpose – their journey fuels the ambition of every student aiming for the top.



**Aditya Gautam
Ankhad**



Chaitanya Ghosh



Daiwik Agarwala



Dhruv Kamath



Vidisha Singh



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NPLC's TOP PERFORMERS 2025



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Chaitanya Ghosh



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Dhruv Kamath



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Vidisha Singh



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Samyuktha Kovilakath



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Yutika Kumar

YE POSTER NAHI, PROOF HAI!

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Founded in 2011, Nishant Prakash Law Classes (NPLC) has earned the reputation of being the 'Gurukul for CLAT'—a space where commitment, discipline, and mentorship come together to build India's finest legal minds. Often referred to as the 'Super 30 of CLAT', NPLC is not just a coaching institute—it's a movement for serious law aspirants.

What makes NPLC truly unique is its strictly limited intake—only 60 students offline and 30 online each year. With batch sizes of just 22, every student is thoughtfully selected to ensure they are not just coached, but personally mentored. This one-of-its-kind model helps create a tightly-knit academic environment where no student is left behind, and every performance is tracked, sharpened, and elevated.

Since its inception, NPLC has consistently delivered extraordinary results, with a CLAT success rate of over 90% every year, and most recently, 5 of the top 10 ranks in CLAT & AILET 2025. We do not offer test series, correspondence courses, or shortcut-based programs—only full-time classroom learning, because we believe greatness is built with time, discipline, and relentless hard work.

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Only 60 intakes per year

Navigate.
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Nishant Prakash



Nishant Prakash, founder and chief mentor at NPLC, is a nationally recognized legal educator and policy advisor. An alumnus of one of India's premier National Law Schools, Nishant left a thriving corporate law career to dedicate himself fully to teaching and mentoring the next generation of legal leaders. For over 13 years, he has built an unparalleled reputation as a transformational teacher, guiding students with precision, compassion, and personal accountability.

He has been associated with some of the country's top-tier law firms, including Luthra & Luthra, and holds expertise in Intellectual Property, Insurance, and Trade Law, with over 30 national and international publications to his credit.

A firm believer in long-term academic mentorship, Nishant combines academic rigour with real-world legal insights to prepare students for top law schools and successful careers. His work consistently bridges the gap between textbook learning and practical application, equipping students with a clear understanding of how law operates in the real world.

Know your Mentor |



What sets Nishant apart is not just his knowledge, but his unwavering dedication to each student's growth. Every batch under his guidance is not just taught, but molded. He pushes students beyond their limits—while offering the support, discipline, and insight they need to thrive in competitive legal exams and beyond.

For parents looking for a mentor who truly takes ownership, and for students seeking more than just lectures—Nishant Prakash is the mentor who stays with you, every step of the way.

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1 INDIA'S EV LOCALISATION POLICY

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

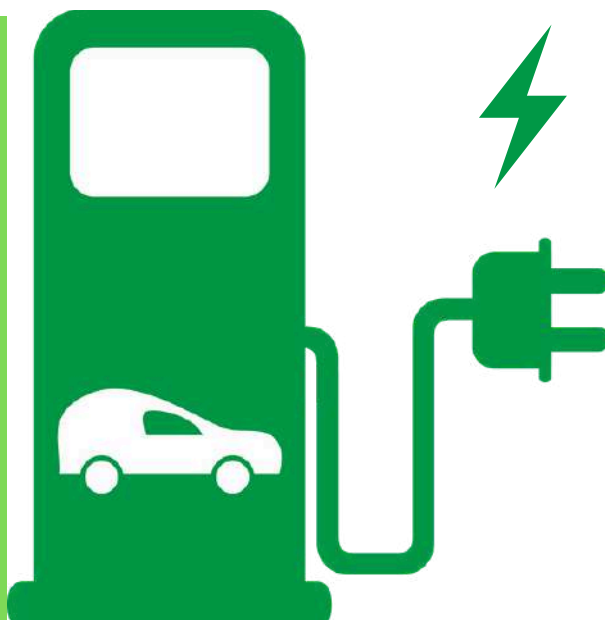
IN FOCUS

- **Venue and Date:** In **June 2025**, the **Government of India** launched the **Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India (SPMEPCI)** to incentivise foreign electric vehicle (EV) manufacturers through customs-duty concessions.
- **Designation and Legal Status:** The scheme grants **customs-duty relief** to foreign EV companies that commit to **domestic manufacturing investment and localisation targets**. It is a policy-level intervention designed to strengthen India's electric mobility sector under its broader climate and industrial strategies.
- **Ecological Significance:** SPMEPCI is a pivotal step in promoting **clean mobility** and establishing India as a hub for **green industrial manufacturing**. While the scheme is expected to attract **foreign capital** and enhance **technological collaboration**, notable firms like **Tesla have opted out**, and **Chinese EV companies have been excluded** due to **national-security concerns**, reflecting a strategic balance between sustainability and geopolitical caution.

Global EV Market versus India

During **2024**, electric cars captured about **20 percent** of worldwide passenger-car sales, with **China** alone retailing more than **11 million** EVs—approximately two-thirds of global electric-car volume. The **United States** sold roughly **1.6 million** electric cars, achieving a market share above **10 percent**. By contrast, India's EV

penetration remained modest: only **111,300** electric passenger vehicles were sold in 2024, representing a market share of just **3 percent**.



Domestic EV Growth Trends

Despite its low base, India's EV segment is expanding swiftly. Retail sales of electric cars in **April 2025** reached **13,120** units, marking a **69 percent** year-on-year increase, while cumulative sales for **January–May 2025** totalled **59,444** units, up **44 percent** on the same period in 2024. Market leader **Maruti**

Suzuki intends to launch additional EV models that could push calendar-year 2025 sales above **150,000** units.

Key Highlights

Import Duty Concessions

SPMEPCI lowers the customs duty on completely built-up (CBU) electric cars priced above **US \$35,000** (≈ **₹29.75 lakh**) from **70–100 percent** to **15 percent** for a five-year window beginning upon approval of the manufacturer's application. Eligible firms may import up to **8,000** units annually, with unutilised quotas carried forward, yet the aggregate duty waiver cannot exceed **₹6,484 crore** or the actual investment—whichever is lower.

Investment and Localisation Requirements

Applicants must commit at least **₹4,150 crore** within **three years** and meet staged Local Value-Addition (LVA) targets of **25 percent** by Year 3 and **50 percent** by Year 5. They must also achieve turnover thresholds of **₹2,500 crore** in Year 2, **₹5,000 crore** in Year 4, and **₹7,500 crore** in Year 5, while demonstrating global group revenue of **₹10,000 crore** (or **₹3,000 crore** for investment-focused entities). The application portal will stay open for **120 days**, extendable until **15 March 2026**.

Key Stakeholders

Premium-segment manufacturers including **Mercedes-Benz**, **Volkswagen-Skoda**, **Hyundai**, and **Kia** have expressed interest in availing the scheme. **Tesla** has opted out, citing a need to prioritise scaling of current global operations and doubts about demand elasticity in India's price-sensitive market.

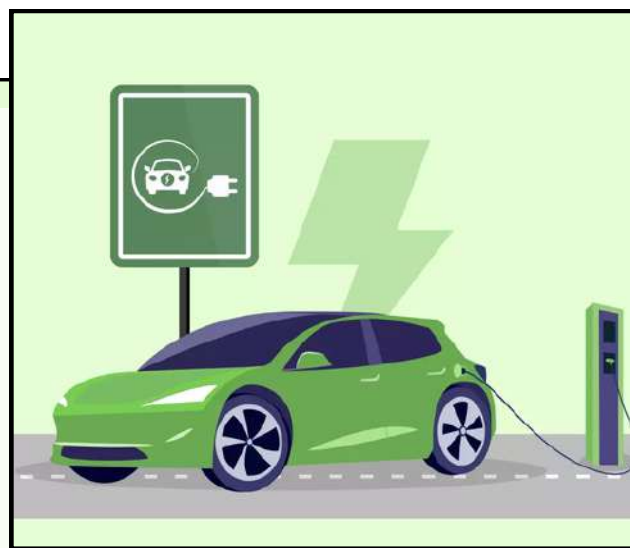
Government Policies

Strategic Vision

Through **SPMEPCI**, the government hopes to foster clean mobility, transform India into a global EV-production base, curb import dependence, boost domestic value creation, and advance the country toward its **Net-Zero 2070** commitment.

Previous Policy Landscape

Earlier initiatives—such as **FAME I & II**, the **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Advanced Chemistry Cells**, and various state EV policies—focused on subsidising domestic producers in the two-wheeler, three-wheeler, and commercial-vehicle segments. The current scheme pivots to premium electric passenger cars, combining controlled import access with stringent localisation goals.



Legal Implications

SPMEPCI embeds legally enforceable investment, localisation, and production milestones; non-compliance can trigger revocation of import concessions. Citing national-security concerns, the government has barred Chinese automakers—particularly **BYD** and **Great Wall Motors**, whose proposals were rejected in **2023**—from the scheme. Authorities have also emphasised strict adherence to anti-dumping provisions and **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** rules under **FEMA** and **DPIIT** guidelines.

Economic Significance

- **Boosting Manufacturing and Jobs:** If fully realised, the policy could attract sizeable capital inflows into battery production and broader EV supply chains, while generating high-skill employment in advanced manufacturing, assembly, and R&D. Analysts caution, however, that EVs use fewer parts than internal-combustion vehicles, necessitating comprehensive reskilling programmes to offset job displacement in traditional auto-component industries.
- **Risk to Domestic Players:** Indian original-equipment manufacturers (OEMs)—notably **Tata Motors** and **Mahindra**—have voiced concern that concessional imports could jeopardise domestic market share and unsettle a tax environment that has hitherto favoured home-grown investment.

Technological Advancements

Industry stakeholders underscore the urgency of developing indigenous R&D capability, battery gigafactories, and sophisticated features such as **Advanced Driver-Assistance Systems (ADAS)** and seamless connectivity.

Comparative experience in **China** and **South Korea** indicates that strong government-backed technological ecosystems are pivotal for EV leadership—an arena where India must accelerate progress.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- What is the full form of SPMEPCI, the scheme launched by the Indian government in June 2025?
(a) Scheme to Promote Mobility of Electric Commercial Imports
(b) Scheme for Promoting Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India
(c) Special Program for Manufacturing Electric Cars in India
(d) Scheme to Promote Market Entry of Electric Passenger Car Imports
- Under SPMEPCI, the reduced customs duty for qualifying electric cars applies to those priced above which threshold?
(a) US \$30,000 (b) ₹20 lakh
(c) US \$35,000 (d) ₹25 lakh
- What is the maximum number of electric vehicles that a manufacturer can import annually under SPMEPCI?
(a) 8,000 (b) 6,484 (c) 5,000 (d) 10,000
- What is the maximum customs duty concession period offered under the SPMEPCI scheme?
(a) 3 years (b) 7 years (c) 5 years (d) 10 years
- What is the minimum investment required from a foreign manufacturer to be eligible under SPMEPCI?
(a) ₹4,150 crore (b) ₹3,000 crore
(c) ₹2,500 crore (d) ₹5,000 crore
- Which company has explicitly declined to participate in the SPMEPCI scheme, citing prioritisation of global operations?
(a) Hyundai (b) Kia
(c) Tesla (d) Mercedes-Benz
- What are the mandated Local Value-Addition (LVA) targets under the SPMEPCI scheme by the third and fifth years respectively?
(a) 20% and 40% (b) 25% and 50%
(c) 30% and 60% (d) 35% and 70%
- Which foreign companies were excluded from SPMEPCI due to national-security concerns?
(a) Kia and Hyundai
(b) Ford and Toyota
(c) BYD and Great Wall Motors
(d) Tesla and Volkswagen
- What is the total cap on customs-duty waivers under the SPMEPCI scheme?
(a) ₹4,150 crore (b) ₹10,000 crore
(c) ₹6,484 crore (d) ₹8,000 crore
- By what percentage did India's electric passenger vehicle sales grow year-on-year in April 2025?
(a) 25% (b) 44% (c) 55% (d) 69%
- Which of the following Indian companies expressed concern over concessional imports affecting their domestic market share?
(a) Maruti Suzuki (b) TVS Motors
(c) Tata Motors (d) Hero Electric
- Which of the following earlier initiatives focused primarily on electric two-wheelers, three-wheelers, and commercial vehicles?
(a) SPMEPCI
(b) FAME I & II
(c) ADAS Project Scheme
(d) Automotive Mission Plan
- What is the minimum global group revenue required for applicants to qualify for SPMEPCI?
(a) ₹10,000 crore (b) ₹7,500 crore
(c) ₹5,000 crore (d) ₹3,000 crore
- What advanced features are Indian EV manufacturers urged to develop under the policy?
(a) Cruise control and side-mirror cameras
(b) Biofuel injectors
(c) Advanced Driver-Assistance Systems and seamless connectivity
(d) Solar-powered engines and windshield displays

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (c) | 3. (a) | 4. (c) | 5. (a) | 6. (c) | 7. (b) | 8. (c) |
| 9. (c) | 10. (d) | 11. (c) | 12. (b) | 13. (a) | 14. (c) | | |

2

GOA AND MIZORAM ACHIEVE FULLY
FUNCTIONAL LITERACY UNDER ULLAS

POLITY

IN FOCUS

- In **May 2025**, the states of **Mizoram** and **Goa** formally announced that they had crossed the **95 percent functional-literacy threshold** set by the Ministry of Education's **ULLAS-Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram** (New India Literacy Programme), thereby joining **Ladakh**, which achieved the distinction in **June 2024**.
- A Press Information Bureau release later confirmed that **Tripura** reached the same benchmark on **23 June 2025**, making it the **third state**—after Mizoram and Goa—to be designated fully literate under the scheme.



What is the ULLAS Scheme?

- Launched in **2022**, **ULLAS** is a **centrally sponsored programme** aligned with the **National Education Policy 2020** that targets adults aged **15 years and above** who missed formal schooling.
- Its stated objective is to equip **five crore** non-literate Indians with **foundational literacy and numeracy**, supplemented by **critical life skills**, **basic education up to Class 8**, **vocational competencies**, and opportunities for **continuing education** by 2027.
- Instruction is delivered through community learning centres and a hybrid digital system that integrates the **DIKSHA platform** and the **ULLAS mobile/web application**, currently available in **22 Indian languages** for maximum inclusivity.

Key Components of ULLAS

- The scheme operates through **five inter-linked components**. First, it offers **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy**, ensuring that every learner can read, write, and compute with understanding.
- Second, it develops **Critical Life Skills**, including **financial, legal, and digital literacy**.
- Third, it provides **Basic Education** up to the **middle-school level (Class 8)** to bridge formal curricular gaps.

- Fourth, it introduces **Vocational Skills** tailored to local livelihood opportunities. Fifth, it promotes **Continuing Education and lifelong learning**, encouraging adult learners to pursue higher studies or specialised short courses as their interests evolve.



Functional Literacy and the FLNAT Certification

- Learning outcomes are measured through the **Functional Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Test (FLNAT)**, a **150-mark examination** that evaluates reading, writing, and arithmetic skills and is normally offered **twice each year**.
- Successful candidates receive official certificates from the **National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)**, formally recognising their transition from non-literate to functionally literate status.

PERFORMANCE OF MIZORAM, GOA, LADAKH, AND TRIPURA

Mizoram: According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24, Mizoram recorded a literacy rate of 98.2 percent and trained 1,692 of the 3,026 non-literate adults it had identified.



Goa: Goa undertook a door-to-door survey across 116 panchayats and municipalities, trained 2,136 of 6,299 identified non-literates, and reported a functional literacy rate of 99.72 percent after FLNAT results.



Ladakh: Ladakh organised three FLNAT phases between 2023 and 2024, involving more than 34,000 participants, to secure its milestone in June 2024.



Tripura: Tripura, declared fully literate on 23 June 2025, achieved a 95.6 percent literacy rate, up from 20.24 percent in 1961, following an intensive state-wide mobilisation drive under ULLAS.

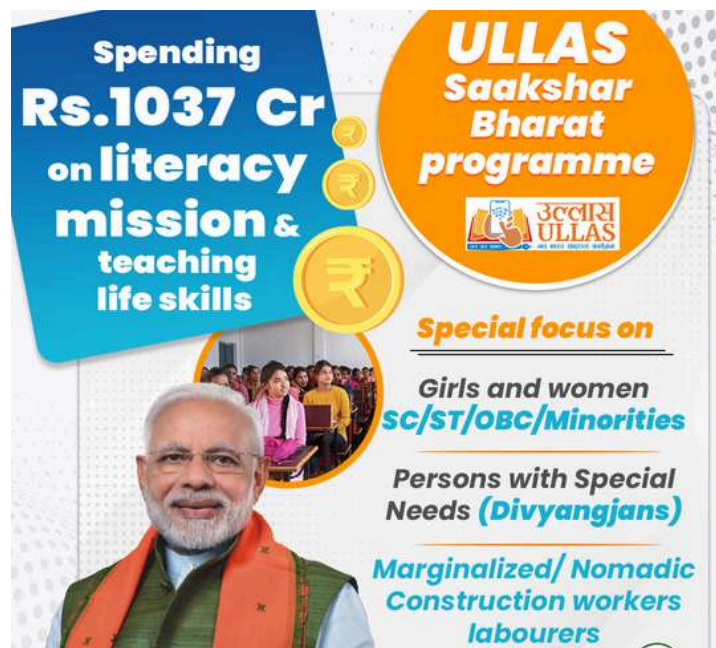


ULLAS in Numbers

- Nationally, the programme has registered more than **2.37 crore learners** and **40.84 lakh volunteer teachers** on the ULLAS app. About **1.77 crore adults** have sat for the FLNAT, and **1.03 crore** have already been certified functionally literate, producing an average pass rate close to **90 percent**.
- States such as **Tamil Nadu, Goa, Delhi, and Rajasthan** routinely post pass percentages at or above **99 percent**, while women constitute over **70 percent** of test-takers in several states, including **Mizoram, Jharkhand, and Punjab**.

How is 'Full Literacy' Defined Under ULLAS?

- In an official circular issued in **August 2024**, the Ministry of Education defined literacy as the **ability to read, write, and compute with comprehension** coupled with essential **digital and financial-literacy skills**. A state or Union Territory that secures **95 percent or more functional literacy** among its eligible adult population qualifies for the “fully literate” designation, a standard harmonised with **UN Sustainable Development Goal 4** on universal literacy and numeracy by 2030.



ULLAS and the Legacy of Adult Literacy in India

- ULLAS synthesises lessons from earlier campaigns such as the **National Adult Education Programme (1978)**, the **National Literacy Mission (1988-2009)**, and the **Saakshar Bharat Mission (2009-2018)**, while adding digital tools, decentralised governance, and community participation.
- By integrating adult-education objectives with the broader NEP-2020 vision, ULLAS positions lifelong learning as a core element of India's education architecture.

Challenges and Ground-Level Realities

- Despite rapid gains, several constraints persist. A portion of the elderly population—particularly those with health issues—remains reluctant or unable to enrol in learning modules.
- Rural-urban disparities continue to affect access, and states such as **Tripura** (pre-2025 declaration), **Gujarat**, and **Tripura** earlier recorded pass percentages below the national average, underscoring the need for **localised instructional strategies** and sustained volunteer mobilisation.
- Addressing digital divides, especially in remote areas without reliable internet, is another operational challenge noted by field administrators.

Achievements of Mizoram, Goa, and Ladakh

- Mizoram** distinguished itself as India's **first fully literate state** under ULLAS on **20 May 2025**, leveraging a strong culture of community participation to train the majority of its remaining non-literates.
- Goa** celebrated its milestone on **31 May 2025**, coinciding with its **39th Statehood Day**, and achieved near-universal FLNAT success across more than **80 local bodies**. **Ladakh** pioneered the achievement for Union.
- Territories in **June 2024**, demonstrating that small-population regions can reach universal adult literacy through phased testing and sustained volunteer engagement.

Comparison with Other Data Sources

- The **PLFS 2023-24** lists **Goa's overall literacy rate at 93.6 percent** and **Ladakh's at 81 percent**, figures that differ from ULLAS outcomes because the survey measures general literacy among those aged seven and above, whereas ULLAS certifies **functional literacy among adults aged 15+** via a standardised test.
- India's **2011 Census** placed adult literacy at **69.3 percent**, revealing **more than 25 crore non-literate citizens**, including **16.68 crore women**.
- ULLAS directly targets this demographic and is expected to accelerate progress in high-burden states such as **Bihar, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh** by 2027.

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

- Adopted on **29 July 2020**, **NEP 2020** replaced the **1986/1992 policy** and introduced a **5 + 3 + 3 + 4 school structure**, competency-based assessment via **PARAKH**, and plans for a **50 percent Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education by 2035**.
- Undergraduate programmes now feature **multiple exit options** and are backed by an **Academic Bank of Credits**, while a unified **Higher Education Commission of India** will eventually subsume existing regulators.
- Adult education, enshrined through ULLAS, is integral to the policy's goal of a **literate, equitable, and knowledge-driven society** (SDG 4).

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. In which year was the ULLAS–Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram formally launched?
(a) 2020 (b) 2022 (c) 2023 (d) 2024
2. What is the full form of ULLAS?
(a) Universal Learning and Literacy Access Scheme
(b) Understanding Learning Levels in Adult Schooling
(c) Ujjwal Literacy and Lifelong Awareness Strategy
(d) None of the above
3. Which of the following states was declared fully literate first under the ULLAS scheme?
(a) Goa (b) Tripura (c) Ladakh (d) Mizoram
4. What is the minimum threshold for a state or UT to be declared “fully literate” under the ULLAS scheme?
(a) 95% (b) 93.5% (c) 90% (d) 100%
5. What is the maximum mark for the FLNAT exam conducted under ULLAS?
(a) 150 (b) 120 (c) 100 (d) 200
6. Which central institution certifies candidates as functionally literate upon passing FLNAT?
(a) NIOS (b) CBSE (c) NCERT (d) UGC
7. Which among the following reported a functional literacy rate of 99.72% post-FLNAT under ULLAS?
(a) Tripura (b) Goa (c) Ladakh (d) Tamil Nadu
8. Which digital platforms are used for delivering instruction under the ULLAS scheme?
(a) PM eVIDYA and ePathshala
(b) SWAYAM and PRAGYATA
(c) DIKSHA and ULLAS app
(d) Shiksha Setu and MyGov
9. As of 2025, how many crore learners have registered under the ULLAS programme?
(a) 1.03 crore (b) 2.37 crore
(c) 40.84 crore (d) 3.27 crore
10. What percentage of test-takers in several states under ULLAS are women?
(a) Over 70% (b) Over 60%
(c) Around 50% (d) Below 40%
11. Under ULLAS, adult education is targeted at persons aged:
(a) 10 and above (b) 15 and above
(c) 18 and above (d) 21 and above
12. What was Tripura’s adult literacy rate in 1961 as mentioned in the content?
(a) 15.8% (b) 20.24%
(c) 22.5% (d) 28.4%
13. According to PLFS 2023–24, what is Ladakh’s general literacy rate?
(a) 98.2% (b) 81%
(c) 93.6% (d) 69.3%
14. Which earlier adult literacy scheme ran between 2009 and 2018?
(a) Saakshar Bharat Mission
(b) National Literacy Mission
(c) National Adult Education Programme
(d) Shiksha Abhiyan Yojana
15. NEP 2020 sets a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) target of what percentage in higher education by 2035?
(a) 50% (b) 45%
(c) 33% (d) 60%

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (d) | 3. (d) | 4. (a) | 5. (a) | 6. (a) | 7. (b) | 8. (c) |
| 9. (b) | 10. (a) | 11. (b) | 12. (b) | 13. (b) | 14. (a) | 15. (a) | |

3

MEMBER STATES OF WHO ADOPT
GLOBAL PANDEMIC TREATY

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

On 20 May 2025, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** adopted the world's first **legally binding global pandemic agreement** during its **78th World Health Assembly**. This landmark treaty—only the **second international accord** in WHO's 75-year history after the **2003 Framework Convention on Tobacco Control**—seeks to strengthen global preparedness, equitable access, and multilateral response mechanisms for future pandemics. The treaty was adopted after over **three years of negotiations** involving **13 rounds of deliberations**, although it was notably **finalised without the participation of the United States**, which had **withdrawn from WHO in January 2025**.

Background

Need for the Pandemic Treaty

- The initiative for a pandemic treaty emerged in **December 2021**, amid the global spread of the **Omicron variant** of COVID-19. By then, severe disparities in vaccine access had become apparent, with **high-income countries hoarding vaccines** while **low-income countries struggled with shortages**.
- A **2022 study published in Nature** estimated that **over one million lives could have been saved** through more equitable vaccine distribution.
- Moreover, the **Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response** described the global COVID-19 response as a result of "**poor strategic choices, inequality, and an uncoordinated system**."

Negotiation Process

- Formal talks began in **December 2021** and spanned **13 negotiation rounds** before consensus emerged in **May 2025**. WHO member states initiated negotiations in 2021 under **Article 19 of the WHO Constitution**, which allows for binding treaties.
- After three-and-a-half years, the agreement was adopted by a large majority, though **ratification by 60 countries** is required

for the treaty to formally enter into force. The agreement reflects compromises between high-income states favouring strong intellectual-property (IP) protections and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) demanding enforceable equity clauses and technology transfer.

IFMSA Delegation to the 78th WHA
WHO Pandemic Agreement

19th - 27th May 2025
Geneva, Switzerland

What is the WHO Pandemic Agreement?

A global treaty to improve the world's **readiness** for **future pandemics**.

Negotiated by WHO member states after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aims to prevent, prepare for, and respond to pandemics.

Pandemic Emergency:
A global outbreak of disease that **exceeds national capacities** and **requires international coordination**.

Why do we need it?

A Treaty is Needed to:



Ensure **equitable access** to vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics.



Guarantee **faster sharing of data**.



Promote **early surveillance** and **warning** systems.



Strengthen **coordination** and **logistics** across borders.

Problems faced in COVID-19:



Countries **hoarded supplies**, leaving others without.



Delays in **sharing** critical virus samples



Rich countries had **first access** to vaccines.



Weak health systems **collapsed** under pressure.

Key Provisions of the Pandemic Agreement

Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS)

A central provision of the treaty is the establishment of a **Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) system**. Pharmaceutical companies will receive **access to pathogen samples and genomic data** during outbreaks in return for equitable contributions: **10% of vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics** to be provided free to WHO; Another **10% to be offered at affordable prices** to low- and middle-income countries. The detailed framework for PABS is currently under development and will be finalised by the **79th World Health Assembly in 2026**.

Technology Transfer and Local Manufacturing

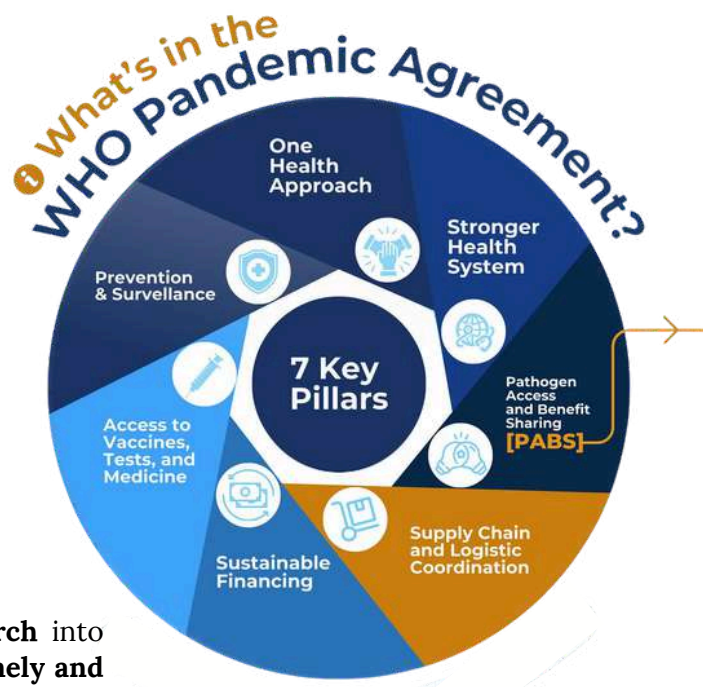
The treaty obliges member states to “**promote, facilitate, or incentivise**” **technology sharing** and **capacity building** in developing countries. This includes supporting **voluntary licensing, patent pools**, and **joint production** to ensure broader global access to life-saving medical products.

Financial and Supply Chain Coordination

A **Coordinating Financial Mechanism** has been mandated to mobilise resources for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. A new **Global Supply Chain and Logistics Network (GSCL)** has been launched to ensure **timely, affordable, and safe delivery** of health products during public health emergencies.

Research and Public Funding Access Conditions

Countries must ensure that **publicly funded research** into vaccines and drugs includes provisions to ensure **timely and equitable access** to final products. Governments may **intervene** if publicly funded treatments become **unavailable or unaffordable** during a pandemic.



How Does **PABS** Work?

Pathogen **A**ccess and **B**enefit **S**haring
Sharing virus samples and benefits fairly and safely

The Problems:



Some **countries** **hesitate to share** virus samples without guarantees.



Industry profits from these samples but doesn't share the benefits.

PABS Solutions



Obligation for companies to Give WHO **access to 20%** of their **output during pandemics**:

- 10% free (donation)
- 10% at affordable prices



Obligation for countries to **share** pathogens and genetic sequences **quickly** with WHO.

In return, they receive equitable access to:

- **Vaccines**
- **Treatments**
- **Diagnostic tools**

* **TRIPS**

Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights is an agreement that sets minimum global standards for protecting intellectual property.

What Are Countries Committing To?

Commitments



Update National Pandemic Plans



Share Outbreak Data Rapidly



Fair Procurement of Supplies



Train Health Workers

Flexibilities



Can use **TRIPS* flexibilities** to bypass IP rights during emergencies



Maintain national sovereignty over health policies



Legal support for compulsory licenses if needed

Sovereignty and National Authority

- The treaty explicitly preserves national sovereignty. **Clause 24(3)** states that the WHO cannot “direct, order, alter, or otherwise prescribe” domestic laws or policies.
- The WHO **cannot impose travel bans, vaccine mandates, or lockdowns**, ensuring that implementation of response measures remains with individual governments.

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Strengths of the Pandemic Agreement

- It **institutionalises equity**, learning from the failures of COVID-19 response where poorer nations were denied access to critical tools.
- The **binding nature** of the treaty under **Article 19** offers more enforceability than non-binding resolutions or declarations.
- By embedding **public health financing, data-sharing, and local production**, it aims to democratise the pandemic response infrastructure. Establishment of a **dedicated COP (Conference of the Parties)** ensures annual reviews and adaptive improvements in treaty implementation.

Limitations and Concerns

- **Limited Enforcement Powers for WHO:** Despite being binding, the treaty does **not authorise WHO to override national decisions**, enforce production quotas, or ensure adherence to equity clauses. This limits WHO’s role in a real-time crisis.
- **Intellectual Property and Innovation Risks:** Private-sector entities have expressed concerns over insufficient **IP protection** and **legal certainty**. The **International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA)** warned that such provisions may **deter high-risk R&D investment** during future pandemics.
- **Uncertainty Around PABS Implementation:** The mechanisms for **accessing and distributing benefits** from pathogen data remain vague. The **PABS system is still under negotiation**, raising doubts about its effectiveness when a crisis strikes.
- **Absence of the United States:** The **United States**, the world’s largest funder of health innovation and a leading pharmaceutical producer, **withdrew from WHO negotiations** after **President Donald Trump’s re-election in January 2025**. Without U.S. participation, the treaty lacks backing from major global pharmaceutical suppliers, undermining its reach and compliance potential.

India’s Role and Contributions

- India has consistently championed the principle of **equitable access** to vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics, especially for **low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)**. India, alongside **South Africa**, led the campaign at the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** for **waivers on TRIPS-related IPR** during COVID-19.
- It continues to advocate balanced provisions in the treaty to ensure that **IP laws do not hinder global access** to critical medical tools. India has called for expanded global investment in **public health infrastructure, workforce training, and emergency preparedness**, especially in **resource-constrained settings**.

Other Highlights from the 78th World Health Assembly

- The Assembly also honoured **Austria, Norway, Oman, and Singapore** for eliminating **industrially produced Trans Fatty Acids (TFAs)** from their food supplies.
- As of **May 2025**, **60 countries**—covering **46% of the global population**—have adopted **best-practice trans-fat elimination policies**. India imposed a **2% limit on trans fats** in oils and fats under the **Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2021**, bringing it in line with WHO’s **REPLACE Framework** for global TFA elimination by 2025.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. When was the legally binding Global Pandemic Treaty adopted by WHO?
(a) 20 May 2025 (b) 20 April 2025
(c) 29 May 2025 (d) 5 June 2025
2. Under which article of the WHO Constitution was the Global Pandemic Treaty negotiated?
(a) Article 15 (b) Article 21
(c) Article 19 (d) Article 13
3. Which country was notably absent from the adoption of the Global Pandemic Treaty?
(a) China (b) United Kingdom
(c) Germany (d) United States
4. How many countries must ratify the pandemic treaty for it to formally enter into force?
(a) 45 (b) 50 (c) 60 (d) 75
5. What percentage of health products must be provided free to WHO under the PABS system?
(a) 10% (b) 5% (c) 15% (d) 20%
6. What does the acronym GSCL stand for in the treaty?
(a) Global Supply Chain and Logistics
(b) Global Safety Compliance Lab
(c) General Scientific Coordination League
(d) Global System for Crisis Logistics
7. Which of the following clauses ensures that WHO cannot override domestic law under the treaty?
(a) Clause 21(1) (b) Clause 17(3)
(c) Clause 24(3) (d) Clause 19(4)
8. What type of legal document is the Global Pandemic Treaty in the WHO's legal instruments?
(a) Executive agreement
(b) Declaration
(c) Binding treaty
(d) Memorandum of Understanding
9. Which country co-led the TRIPS waiver campaign with India during the COVID-19 pandemic?
(a) South Africa (b) Brazil
(c) Indonesia (d) Argentina
10. Which organisation raised concerns about IP protection in the pandemic treaty?
(a) WHO (b) WTO
(c) IFPMA (d) GAVI
11. Which year saw the adoption of WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the only previous binding treaty?
(a) 2001 (b) 2002
(c) 2003 (d) 2004
12. What is one key responsibility assigned to countries for publicly funded pandemic-related research?
(a) Share 25% profits with WHO
(b) Ensure equitable access to final products
(c) Retain commercial confidentiality
(d) Only publish in peer-reviewed journals
13. Which countries were honoured for eliminating industrial trans fats at the 78th World Health Assembly?
(a) India, Brazil, South Korea, UAE
(b) Austria, Norway, Oman, Singapore
(c) France, Canada, UAE, Thailand
(d) Japan, Germany, Malaysia, Italy
14. What percentage of the global population is covered by countries adopting WHO's best-practice trans-fat elimination policies as of May 2025?
(a) 25% (b) 33% (c) 46% (d) 60%
15. What limit has India imposed on trans fats in oils and fats under FSSAI regulations?
(a) 1% (b) 2% (c) 3% (d) 4%

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (a) | 2. (c) | 3. (d) | 4. (c) | 5. (a) | 6. (a) | 7. (c) | 8. (c) |
| 9. (a) | 10. (c) | 11. (c) | 12. (d) | 13. (a) | 14. (d) | 15. (a) | |

4

UKRAINE'S 'OPERATION
SPIDER'S WEB'

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

In **May 2025**, Ukraine launched a bold and technologically sophisticated offensive named **"Operation Spider's Web"**, which marked a dramatic escalation in its military strategy against Russia. This covert drone operation reached over **4,000 km into Russian territory**, targeting critical airbases previously considered deep interior and secure. The strikes led to the **destruction of over 40 strategic Russian aircraft**, including **Tu-95, Tu-160, and A-50** planes, inflicting an estimated **\$7 billion in damage**. This not only dealt a substantial material loss but also shifted the psychological and strategic balance of the **Ukraine-Russia conflict**.

Background

The Shift in Ukrainian Strategy

Prior to this operation, Ukraine primarily relied on **long-range drones launched from Ukrainian territory** to strike military and energy infrastructure within Russia. In contrast, "Operation Spider's Web" employed **short-range, AI-powered drones** that were **clandestinely smuggled** into Russian territory. These drones were transported in **decoy trucks disguised as civilian cargo**, allowing them to be **launched from within Russia itself**, a strategy that bypassed traditional airspace defenses and **surprised Russian intelligence agencies**.

The operation was **personally supervised by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky** and **Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) Chief Vasyl Maliuk**, indicating a **high-level**,

Air bases attacked in Russian territory

Ukraine deployed 117 drones in Operation Spider's Web

★ Confirmed attack



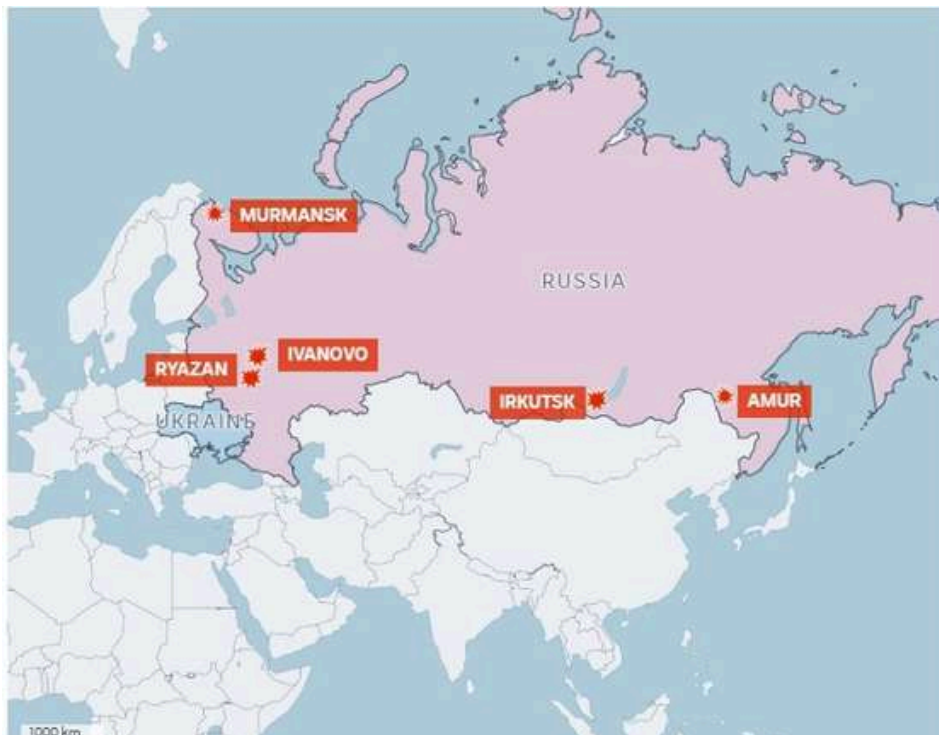
Map: EL PAÍS • Source: Agencies

centralized command in Kyiv for undertaking complex offensive missions. The involvement of top leadership underscores the strategic significance attached to the operation.

Key Highlights

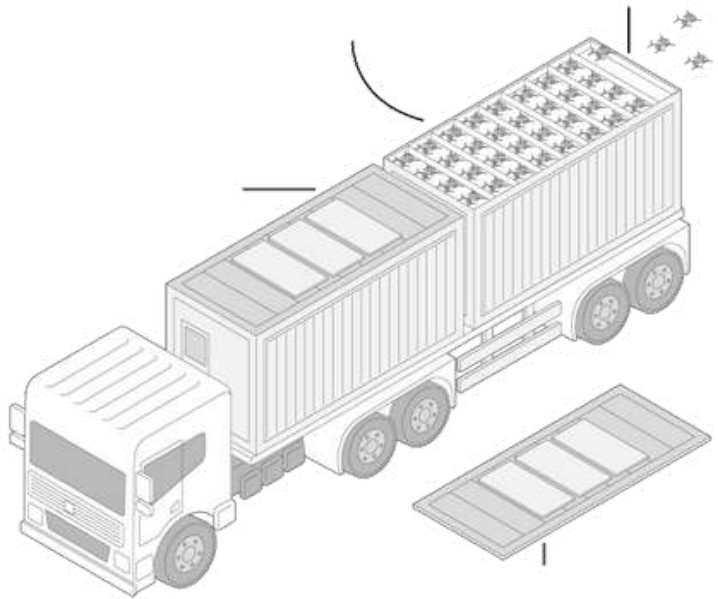
Execution and Targeting

- The drones were hidden in **wooden cabins on trucks**, camouflaged to resemble routine cargo and allowed to circulate freely within Russian territory.
- They were **remotely activated from a control center** positioned near a **Russian FSB office**, enabling **simultaneous strikes across three time zones**.
- Key military airbases targeted during the operation include: **Belaya in Irkutsk; Olenya in Murmansk and Dyagilevo in Ryazan**.
- The aircraft destroyed were not merely tactical assets but formed the core of Russia's **long-range cruise missile delivery systems**, drastically reducing its aerial strike capabilities.
- **Use of AI-Powered Drone Systems:** Ukraine deployed its **first autonomous combat drone systems**, incorporating **artificial intelligence** capable of **independently identifying and engaging targets** without real-time human control. This marked a significant technological advancement and introduced **AI-driven autonomy** into active military combat operations.



Government and Military Implications

- **Asymmetric Warfare Doctrine:** Operation Spider's Web exemplifies **asymmetric warfare**, where a **lower-cost and technologically innovative** approach is used to undermine a stronger adversary. Each Ukrainian drone cost approximately **\$10,000**, while the **value of Russian aircraft destroyed ranged from tens to hundreds of millions of dollars**, highlighting a massive **cost-to-damage differential** in Ukraine's favor.
- **Psychological and Strategic Messaging:** Unlike previous covert drone strikes, Ukraine **publicly acknowledged** this operation. The move served **two distinct purposes**: **Psychological impact:** The strikes heightened **fear and uncertainty** within Russian military ranks and among the general public AND **Strategic signaling:** Ukraine intended to **demonstrate operational capacity** and **resilience** to both adversaries and international allies, especially at a time when **U.S. support under the Trump administration** showed signs of decline.



Economic and Logistical Fallout for Russia

- As a direct consequence of Ukraine's Operation Spider's Web, the **Russian government** implemented stringent internal security protocols, including **mandatory inspections of all civilian cargo trucks** and **enhanced surveillance of national highways**.
- These countermeasures have led to a **major disruption in the smooth functioning of both military and civilian logistics**. In particular, there have been **notable traffic bottlenecks in regions like Irkutsk**, as civilian traffic competes with heightened security checks.
- Furthermore, Russia has been compelled to divert substantial state resources towards **internal surveillance, border checks, and highway monitoring**. These developments are expected to escalate internal security expenditures, contribute to inflationary pressures, and diminish public trust in the efficiency and responsiveness of state institutions.

Legal and Intelligence Dimensions

- The success of Operation Spider's Web exposed **significant weaknesses in Russia's internal security and intelligence apparatus**.
- Russian agencies failed to detect the transport and staging of drones **across thousands of kilometers**, and were **unable to intercept the attacks on key military installations** even during daylight.
- This lapse reflects a **deep institutional failure** within both the **Russian military intelligence** and **Federal Security Service (FSB)**.

Drone Warfare and Military Innovation

- Operation Spider's Web presents a **blueprint for next-generation drone warfare**, which is no longer constrained by traditional battlefield paradigms. It showcases a strategy that depends on **decentralized and highly mobile launch platforms**, making detection and interception significantly more difficult. The drones used in this operation were equipped with autonomous targeting and strike systems, allowing for

- **independent identification and engagement of targets without real-time human intervention.** Moreover, the operation highlighted the **tremendous cost-effectiveness** of such platforms—**low in operational cost but high in potential damage.**
- This evolving model of warfare fundamentally **redefines the concept of secure borders**, as **civilian corridors, commercial transport, and seemingly benign infrastructure** can now be **repurposed as strategic vectors of attack.**

Impact on the Ukraine-Russia Conflict

- With approximately **35% of Russia's cruise missile carrier fleet destroyed**, the operation severely limits **Russia's long-range strike capacity.**
- Many of the aircraft targeted are either **no longer in production** or have **limited manufacturing capacity**, making them **difficult to replace.**
- The operation is viewed as both a **tactical success** and a **strategic psychological blow** to the Kremlin, signaling that Ukraine continues to possess **offensive depth and operational superiority**, despite facing a numerically stronger adversary.

Evolution of Drones and Their Prominence in the Defense Sector

Introduction to UAVs: Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), popularly known as **drones**, are aircraft systems operated remotely without a human pilot onboard. Their role has expanded significantly over time, evolving from simple **surveillance** platforms to critical assets in modern military operations, including **precision strikes, electronic warfare, logistics, and reconnaissance.**

- **Early Development (1900s – 1940s):** The idea of unmanned flight emerged during **World War I**, when the **United States** developed experimental radio-controlled aircraft such as the **Kettering Bug (1918)**. During **World War II**, drones were used primarily as **target practice** tools to train anti-aircraft gunners. Notably, the U.S. Navy's **Radioplane OQ-2** became the first drone to be **mass-produced.**
- **The Cold War Era (1950s – 1980s):** During the **Cold War**, drones were primarily utilized for **aerial reconnaissance**. The **United States** deployed **Ryan Firebee UAVs** for **photo reconnaissance** and **signals intelligence** during the **Vietnam War**. **Israel** significantly advanced the tactical use of drones in the **1973 Yom Kippur War**, employing them effectively for **battlefield surveillance.**
- **Rise of Armed Drones (1990s – 2000s):** The **Gulf War (1991)** highlighted the strategic need for **real-time surveillance**, leading to the U.S. deployment of the **RQ-2 Pioneer** for observation missions. In the late 1990s, the U.S. introduced the **MQ-1 Predator**, which became the first extensively used **armed drone**, equipped to launch **Hellfire missiles**. Following the **9/11 attacks**, drones became essential components of the **U.S. counter-terrorism strategy**, particularly in **Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Yemen**, where they were employed for **surveillance and targeted killings.**
- **Technological Advancements and Global Proliferation (2010s – Present):** The **2010s** witnessed rapid technological advancement in drone capabilities, including **satellite-guided navigation, thermal imaging, stealth technologies, and artificial intelligence-based targeting systems.** Several countries, including **China, Turkey, and Iran**, developed **indigenous armed drones**. Turkey's **Bayraktar TB2** emerged as a significant force multiplier, particularly evident in its successful deployment during the **2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War** and the conflict in **Ukraine (2022 onwards)**. Drones now serve diverse military functions such as **electronic warfare, logistics delivery, kamikaze-style attacks using loitering munitions, maritime patrol, and potential nuclear delivery platforms.**
- **Drones in Modern Warfare (2020s–2025):** From **2020 to 2025**, drone warfare has become a defining feature of modern military conflicts. The **Russia-Ukraine War** has demonstrated the pivotal role of drones in **intelligence gathering, surveillance, target acquisition, and direct combat**, with both nations employing **FPV drones, loitering munitions, and adapted commercial drones** for bombing missions.

- **Israel** continues to integrate drones into its defense architecture, utilizing systems such as the **Iron Dome** and **Heron UAVs**. The **United States** maintains its dominance with advanced drone platforms like the **Predator** and **Reaper**. **India** has also significantly advanced its drone capabilities, deploying UAVs along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** with **China** and developing indigenous platforms such as the **Rustom-II**, **Tapas-BH**, and **SWIFT**, the latter serving as a precursor to the **Ghatak Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle (UCAV)**.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. What is the name of the drone-led military operation launched by Ukraine in May 2025?
(a) Operation Firestrike
(b) Operation Steel Curtain
(c) Operation Spider's Web
(d) Operation Shadow Phoenix
2. What was the estimated financial damage inflicted on Russia due to Operation Spider's Web?
(a) \$3 billion (b) \$5 billion
(c) \$7 billion (d) \$10 billion
3. Which of the following aircraft types was not among those destroyed in Operation Spider's Web?
(a) Tu-160 (b) Su-35 (c) Tu-95 (d) A-50
4. What technological advancement distinguished Operation Spider's Web from Ukraine's earlier drone strikes?
(a) Satellite-guided drones
(b) AI-powered autonomous targeting
(c) Hypersonic cruise missiles
(d) Balloon surveillance
5. Which Ukrainian officials directly supervised Operation Spider's Web?
(a) Prime Minister and Defence Minister
(b) National Security Advisor and Chief of Staff
(c) President Zelensky and SBU Chief Vasyl Maliuk
(d) Foreign Minister and Military Commander
6. What is the strategic doctrine exemplified by Ukraine's low-cost, high-damage drone tactics?
(a) Hybrid warfare
(b) Information warfare
(c) Asymmetric warfare
(d) Psychological warfare
7. Which method did Ukraine use to smuggle short-range drones into Russian territory?
(a) Parachute drops
(b) Tunneling
(c) Decoy civilian cargo trucks
(d) Underground pipeline systems
8. What percentage of Russia's cruise missile carrier fleet was reportedly destroyed in the operation?
(a) 20% (b) 25% (c) 30% (d) 35%
9. What new internal security measure did Russia implement post-operation?
(a) Curfews in border areas
(b) Drone signal jamming stations
(c) Mandatory inspection of all civilian cargo trucks
(d) No-fly zones over military bases
10. Which of the following is a defining characteristic of next-generation drone warfare as demonstrated by Operation Spider's Web?
(a) Larger drones with jet engines
(b) Fixed launch sites with human pilots
(c) Decentralized mobile launch platforms
(d) Exclusive use of naval UAVs
11. What type of drone first gained mass-production status during World War II?
(a) Bayraktar TB2
(b) Radioplane OQ-2
(c) Kettering Bug
(d) RQ-2 Pioneer

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

12. Which armed drone became widely used by the U.S. in the post-9/11 era for counter-terrorism operations?

- (a) Reaper (b) Heron
(c) MQ-1 Predator (d) Switchblade

13. Which country developed the Bayraktar TB2, a significant force multiplier in 21st-century conflicts?

- (a) Israel
(b) Iran
(c) Turkey
(d) China

14. What indigenous Indian drone platform serves as a precursor to the Ghatak UCAV?

- (a) Heron-II (b) Tapas-BH
(c) SWiFT (d) Rustom-I

15. Which of the following best describes the current (2020s–2025) trend in global drone warfare?

- (a) Exclusive reconnaissance usage
(b) Limited to naval applications
(c) Multi-functional roles in direct combat, surveillance, and logistics
(d) Prohibited in populated zones under international law

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (c) | 2. (c) | 3. (b) | 4. (b) | 5. (c) | 6. (c) | 7. (c) | 8. (d) |
| 9. (c) | 10. (c) | 11. (b) | 12. (c) | 13. (a) | 14. (d) | 15. (d) | |

5 IRAN - ISRAEL CONFLICT 2025

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- On June 13, 2025, the Middle East witnessed a dangerous escalation as Israel launched **Operation Rising Lion**, targeting Iran's nuclear and military infrastructure.
- Key facilities in **Fordow, Natanz, Esfahan, and Tabriz** were struck, resulting in the deaths of senior Iranian nuclear scientists and commanders.
- Iran responded with **Operation True Promise 3**, firing ballistic missiles at Israeli cities, while the **United States entered the conflict** by launching airstrikes on Iran's nuclear sites.
- The escalation has triggered fears of oil supply disruptions and wider regional instability, leading India to initiate **Operation Sindhu** to evacuate its citizens from Iran.

From Strategic Cooperation to Hostile Confrontation

- Pre-1979: Strategic Cooperation:** Until 1979, Iran and Israel enjoyed relatively strong ties. **Iran was among the first Muslim-majority nations to recognise Israel** following its creation in 1948. Iran, under the pro-Western **Pahlavi monarchy**, recognised Israel and supported it by supplying oil during the Arab embargoes.
- Israel's **Periphery Doctrine** sought alliances with non-Arab states like Iran and Turkey to counter Arab hostility.
- Post-1979: The Islamic Revolution and Ideological Rupture:** The Islamic Revolution transformed Iran into a theocratic state under **Ayatollah Khomeini**. Iran severed ties with Israel, labeling it the "**Little Satan**", and began sponsoring militant groups like Hezbollah and Hamas. This ideological shift marked the beginning of a long-standing shadow conflict.

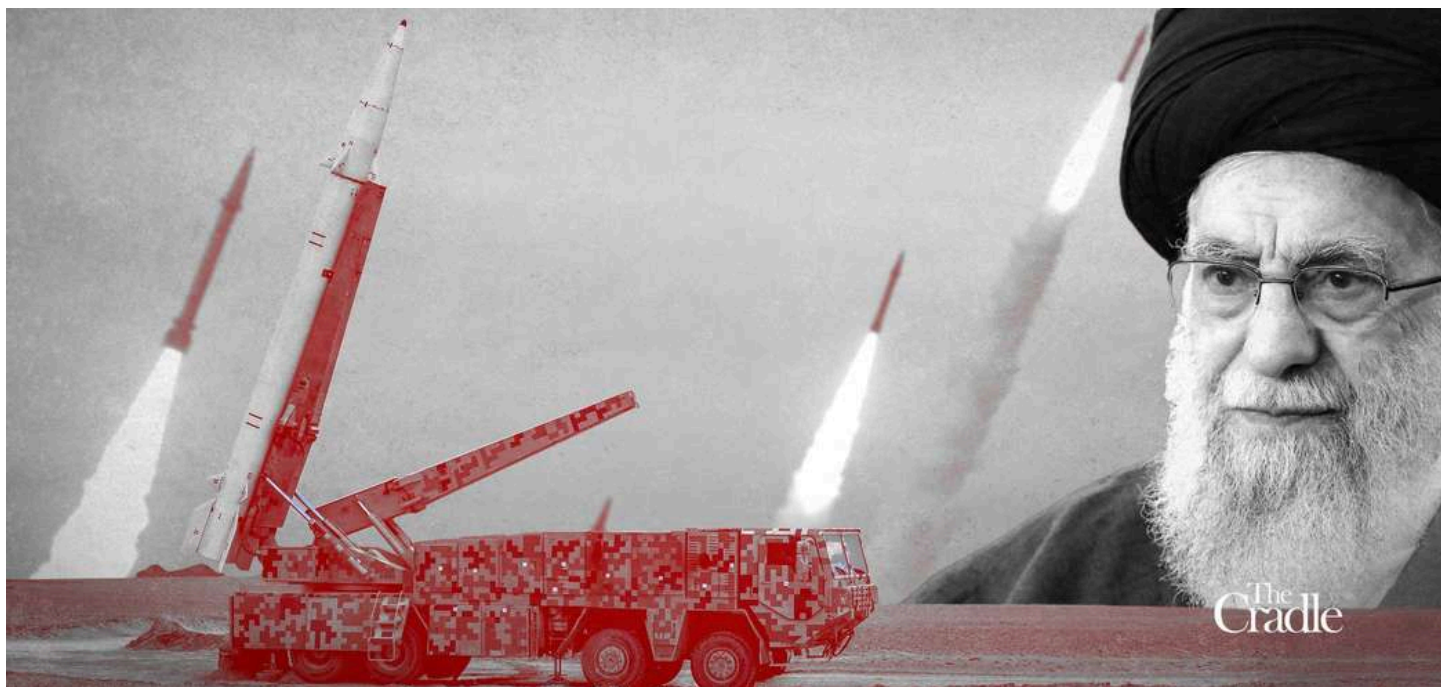


- 2000s to Present: Proxy Battles and Cyber Warfare:** The 21st century has seen both countries engaging in **proxy conflicts** in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Gaza.
- Israel has carried out **assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists** and **cyberattacks**, including the deployment of **Stuxnet** in 2010.
- Iran, meanwhile, has expanded its influence through regional militias, heightening Israel's security concerns.

Immediate Causes of the 2025 Escalation

- The crisis in June 2025 was triggered by several developments. On **June 12, 2025**, the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** passed a resolution **censuring Iran** for non-compliance with its nuclear safeguards obligations, citing unreported nuclear activity at three sites.
- Within 24 hours, **Israel carried out Operation Rising Lion**, targeting Iran's key nuclear infrastructure at **Fordow, Natanz, Esfahan, and facilities in Tehran, Tabriz, and Kermanshah**.

- Israeli Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** justified the offensive by accusing Iran of taking “unprecedented steps” toward developing a nuclear weapon.



- In retaliation, Iran launched **Operation True Promise 3**, firing multiple **ballistic missiles** at Israeli cities. Although **Israel's air defence systems intercepted the majority of missiles**, the attack highlighted **Iran's growing missile capabilities** and its capacity for regional reach.
- Iran's actions were framed as self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, while Israel invoked its "**Begin Doctrine**" which permits **pre-emptive strikes against perceived existential threats**, especially involving **weapons of mass destruction**.

The Role of the United States: Airstrikes and Legal Debate

- **U.S. Airstrikes on Iranian Nuclear Sites:** On June 22, 2025, the United States launched airstrikes targeting Iran's **Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan** nuclear facilities. **Stealth B-2 bombers** equipped with bunker-busting bombs were used to strike fortified sites, marking the first direct U.S. military involvement in this round of the conflict.
- **Legal and Diplomatic Fallout:** Iran denounced the strikes as violations of **international law**, drawing comparisons to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. Legal scholars and international observers questioned the legitimacy of the attack under **Articles 2(4) and 51 of the UN Charter**. Iran raised the issue at the UN, invoking the **Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** to which it is a signatory. The **IAEA confirmed structural damage** to key enrichment facilities but noted that no radiation leaks were detected.

Geopolitical and Economic Implications

- **Energy Security and Oil Market Volatility:** The conflict has sent shockwaves through global energy markets. **Brent crude prices surged by 11%**, rising from \$67.34 to \$74.60 per barrel. With the **Strait of Hormuz**, a passage for one-fourth of the world's oil, under threat of closure, oil prices could exceed \$100 per barrel. Israel's **Leviathan gas field** was temporarily shut, and Iran's crude output could drop from 4 million barrels per day to far lower levels.
- **Disrupted Trade and Shipping Routes:** Commercial maritime traffic has been diverted from the **Red Sea-Suez Canal** to longer routes around the **Cape of Good Hope**, causing significant delays and freight cost increases. **S&P Global** estimates a decline in **Iranian oil exports to below 1.5 million barrels per day**,

- threatening energy stability for major importers, including India. The crisis has also jeopardized **Qatar's LNG shipments**, further risking South Asia's energy supply.



India's Response: Operation Sindhu

- **Launch and Purpose of Operation Sindhu** : On June 23, 2025, the Government of India launched **Operation Sindhu** to evacuate Indian nationals from Iran, utilising the land route through **Armenia**. With **66% of India's 1.34 crore NRIs residing in West Asia**, the decision reflected India's proactive diaspora protection strategy.
- **Armenia's Strategic Relevance**: Armenia was chosen due to its **44-km land border with Iran**, accessible via the **Nurduz-Agarak crossing**, and its secure connectivity to Tehran through a 730-km highway. In contrast, other regional options—such as **Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Iraq, and Turkmenistan**—were either diplomatically hostile, politically unstable, or logistically unfeasible.
- **Indo-Armenian Diplomatic and Defence Ties**: India's strong relationship with Armenia strengthened the operation's feasibility. In 2022, India became Armenia's **top defence supplier**, delivering PINAKA rockets and Akash-1S air defence systems in a **\$250 million arms deal**. Armenia has also supported India on key diplomatic fronts, including Kashmir and UNSC reforms.

- **Connectivity and Strategic Corridors:** Armenia plays a key role in India's **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, designed to connect India with Europe via Iran and the Caucasus. This positions Armenia as a key partner in India's **regional connectivity and evacuation diplomacy**.
- **India's Evacuation Record:** Operation Sindhu continues India's long tradition of large-scale civilian evacuations. Past missions include **Operation Kaveri (Sudan, 2023)**, **Operation Ajay (Israel, 2023)**, **Operation Ganga (Ukraine, 2022)**, **Operation Devi Shakti (Afghanistan, 2021)**, **Operation Samudra Setu (COVID-19, 2020)**, and **Operation Raahat (Yemen, 2015)**.

Strategic and Economic Risks for India

- **Energy Dependence and Inflation:** India, which imports nearly **85% of its crude oil**, faces significant risk if Iranian and Gulf oil supplies are disrupted. A projected drop of **1.75 million barrels per day** in Iranian exports could strain global supply and contribute to **higher inflation, currency depreciation, and growth slowdowns** in India.
- **Impact on Strategic Infrastructure Projects:** The ongoing conflict places vital projects such as **Chabahar Port** and the **INSTC** in jeopardy. These initiatives are critical to India's **Eurasian connectivity strategy** and access to **Afghanistan and Central Asia**. Their disruption could impact India's long-term economic and diplomatic positioning in the region.
- **Diplomatic Balancing Challenges:** India maintains strong defence ties with **Israel** and strategic energy and infrastructure relations with **Iran**. The deepening of hostilities threatens India's ability to maintain **balanced engagement**, requiring cautious recalibration of its **West Asia foreign policy**.

Structural Causes of the Iran-Israel Conflict

- The roots of the conflict lie in ideological, religious, and strategic antagonism. Iran, as a **Shia Islamist republic**, and Israel, as a **Jewish democratic state**, are fundamentally opposed in worldview and regional objectives.
- Iran's support for armed non-state actors such as **Hamas, Hezbollah**, and the **Houthis** fuels hostility, while Israel views **Iran's nuclear programme** as a direct existential threat.
- Moreover, both countries back opposing actors in conflicts across the Middle East, including **Syria, Yemen**, and **Iraq**. The conflict is further entrenched by Israel's policy of **pre-emptive defence** and Iran's bid for strategic depth through alliances and deterrence capabilities.

Strategic Installations Involved in the Conflict

- Among the most strategically significant sites involved are Iran's **Natanz Nuclear Site** in Isfahan Province, known for its large uranium enrichment infrastructure; the **Fordow Facility**, built deep inside a mountain near Qom to withstand airstrikes; and **Isfahan**, which houses research reactors and thousands of scientists.
- Also central to the crisis are the **Strait of Hormuz**, a vital oil chokepoint, the **Chabahar Port**, which is India's economic gateway to Central Asia, and the **Leviathan Gas Field** off Israel's coast, which supplies regional energy needs.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. What was the name of Israel's 2025 offensive targeting Iran's nuclear and military infrastructure?
(a) Operation Strong Dome
(b) Operation Rising Lion
(c) Operation True Promise
(d) Operation Iron Blade
2. Which of the following Iranian cities was not among the initial targets of Israel's Operation Rising Lion?
(a) Tabriz (b) Esfahan (c) Fordow (d) Mashhad
3. What doctrine did Israel invoke to justify its pre-emptive strikes in June 2025?
(a) Begin Doctrine (b) Olmert Doctrine
(c) Barak Doctrine (d) Periphery Strategy
4. What international treaty did Iran invoke while challenging the legality of U.S. airstrikes?
(a) CTBT (b) NPT
(c) INF Treaty (d) IAEA Code of Practice
5. Which of the following nuclear sites in Iran were targeted by U.S. airstrikes on June 22, 2025?
(a) Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan
(b) Bushehr, Shiraz, and Bandar Abbas
(c) Tehran, Mashhad, and Qom
(d) Arak, Ahvaz, and Yazd
6. Which organization passed a resolution censuring Iran on June 12, 2025?
(a) UNGA (b) UNSC (c) IAEA (d) OPCW
7. What was the estimated surge in Brent crude prices following the conflict escalation?
(a) 7% (b) 9% (c) 11% (d) 15%
8. What is the name of India's evacuation mission launched in response to the Iran conflict?
(a) Operation Devi Shakti (b) Operation Sindhu
(c) Operation Ganga (d) Operation Kaveri
9. Which land route did India use for evacuating citizens from Iran in Operation Sindhu?
(a) Iran-Iraq corridor
(b) Iran-Pakistan-India airlift
(c) Nurduz-Agarak crossing via Armenia
(d) Tehran-Kabul road route
10. Armenia's 44-km border with Iran is critical for India due to its:
(a) Linkage to Suez Canal
(b) Gateway to the International North-South Transport Corridor
(c) Proximity to Chabahar Port
(d) Shared maritime security arrangement with India
11. Which of the following world leaders ordered Operation Rising Lion targeting Iran's nuclear infrastructure?
(a) Ebrahim Raisi
(b) Joe Biden
(c) Benjamin Netanyahu
(d) Mohammed bin Salman
12. Which of the following gas fields off Israel's coast was temporarily shut due to the conflict?
(a) Tamar (b) Leviathan
(c) Karish (d) Aphrodite
13. Which of the following previous Indian evacuation missions was conducted from Afghanistan in 2021?
(a) Operation Devi Shakti
(b) Operation Ajay
(c) Operation Raahat
(d) Operation Vande Bharat
14. Which of the following Iranian sites is located deep within a mountain near Qom, making it highly fortified?
(a) Natanz (b) Arak
(c) Isfahan (d) Fordow



SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (d) | 3. (a) | 4. (b) | 5. (a) | 6. (c) | 7. (c) | 8. (b) |
| 9. (c) | 10. (b) | 11. (c) | 12. (b) | 13. (a) | 14. (d) | | |

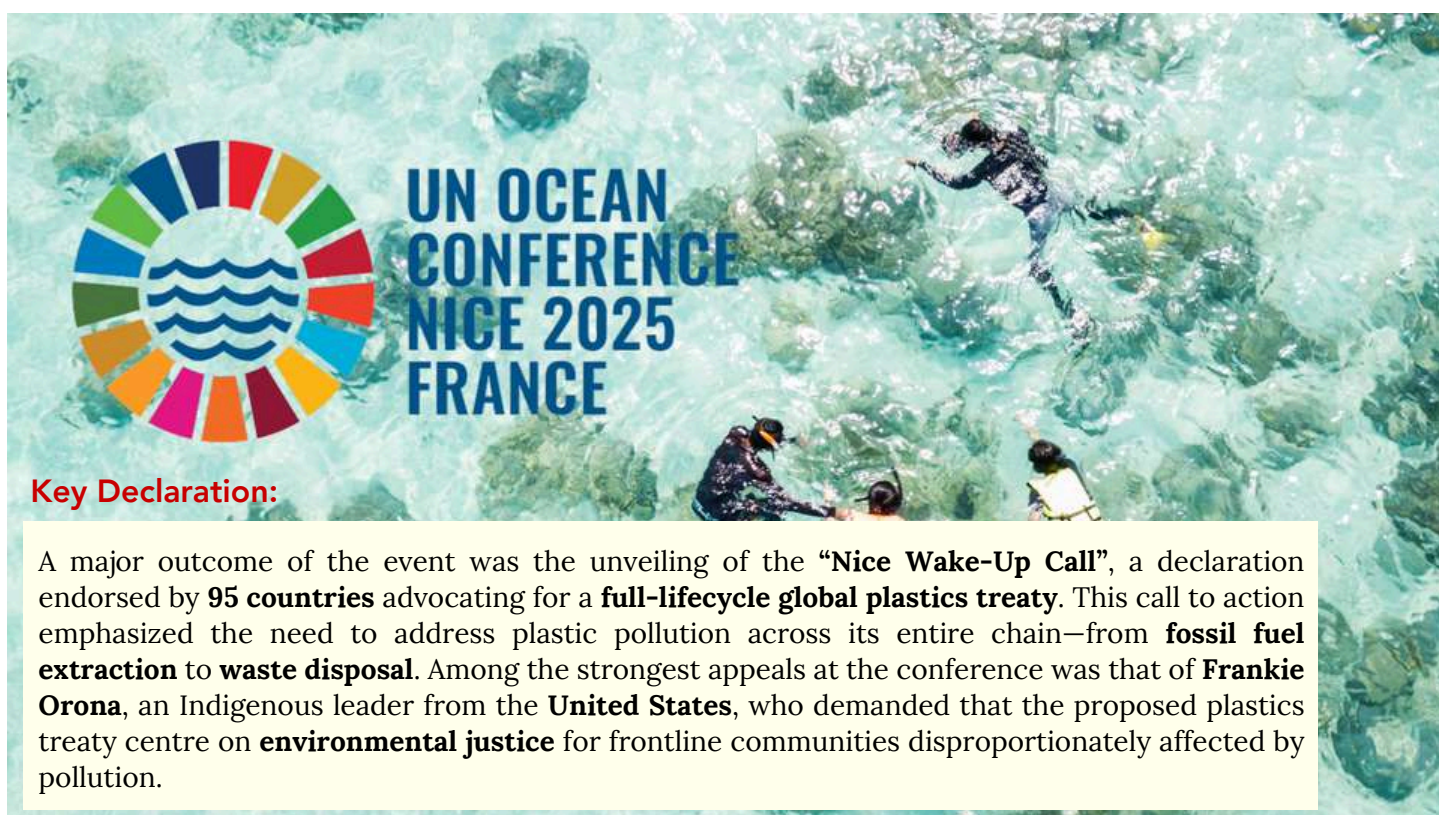
6

THIRD UNITED NATIONS OCEAN
CONFERENCE (UNOC3), 2025

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- In **June 2025**, the **Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3)** was held in **Nice, France**, co-hosted by **France and Costa Rica**. The summit brought together global stakeholders with the aim of accelerating action towards achieving **Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water)**.
- The theme for the conference was, *“Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean”*.



Key Declaration:

A major outcome of the event was the unveiling of the **“Nice Wake-Up Call”**, a declaration endorsed by **95 countries** advocating for a **full-lifecycle global plastics treaty**. This call to action emphasized the need to address plastic pollution across its entire chain—from **fossil fuel extraction** to **waste disposal**. Among the strongest appeals at the conference was that of **Frankie Orona**, an Indigenous leader from the **United States**, who demanded that the proposed plastics treaty centre on **environmental justice** for frontline communities disproportionately affected by pollution.

Key Outcomes of the UNOC3 Conference

- **Participation and Sessions:** The UNOC3 conference convened over **15,000 participants**, including more than **60 Heads of State and Government**, along with representatives from **civil society, scientific institutions, Indigenous communities, academia, financial organizations**, and **industry stakeholders**. The event featured **10 plenary sessions, 10 Ocean Action Panels**, and a **high-level Science Congress**, with side events focusing on themes such as **blue economy, marine science**, and **coastal resilience**.
- **The Nice Ocean Action Plan:** The conference concluded with the adoption of the **Nice Ocean Action Plan**, which served as a **political declaration** and a **registry of voluntary commitments**. The Plan reaffirmed international support for critical initiatives, including the **expansion of marine protected areas**, a **moratorium on deep-sea mining**, and the **decarbonization of maritime transport**. It also called for urgent implementation of global frameworks such as the **Convention on Biological Diversity**, the **Kunming-**

- **Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**, and the **BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) Agreement**.
- **Core Focus Areas:** The declaration placed particular emphasis on combating **plastic and chemical pollution** through **enhanced regulatory frameworks** and **life-cycle-based accountability**. It also acknowledged the need to support **ocean-based economies**, especially those of **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** and **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)**. Furthermore, it underscored the importance of integrating **Indigenous knowledge**, **scientific research**, and **marine ecosystem mapping** into future policy formulation.
- **Financial Commitment:** In addition to policy commitments, several major financial pledges were announced during the conference. These included a **€3 billion investment** by the **European Investment Bank** and the **Asian Development Bank** to tackle plastic pollution and a **\$2.5 billion allocation** from **CAF (Development Bank of Latin America)** for marine infrastructure and conservation initiatives.

Among the most compelling voices at UNOC3 was **Frankie Orona**, a **Native American leader** affiliated with the **Society of Native Nations** and a **UN treaty negotiator**. Orona argued that **plastic pollution disproportionately affects marginalised and Indigenous communities**, many of whom contribute minimally to global plastic waste but reside adjacent to **petrochemical plants** and **refinery clusters**.

A Justice-Centric Vision for Global Plastics Treaty

He termed this situation as a form of **“genocide by pollution”** and labelled it **environmental racism**. His demands included a **global ban on toxic plastic additives**, the imposition of **production caps on fossil fuel-based plastics**, and the provision of **direct financial support** to affected communities. Crucially, Orona called for the **full inclusion of Indigenous leadership** and **traditional ecological knowledge** in the ongoing negotiations for the **global plastics treaty**.

Scientific Testimonies and Chemical Safety Concerns

- **Toxicological Risks in Plastics:** At the conference, **Dr. Bethany Carney Almroth**, a renowned **toxicologist**, presented alarming findings on the toxicological risks associated with plastics. She pointed out that plastics contain **thousands of chemicals**, many of which are **carcinogenic**, **endocrine-disrupting**, or **bioaccumulative** in marine organisms and humans.
- **Call for a Global Chemical Safety Framework:** Dr. Almroth criticized the current **global chemical regulatory frameworks** as **outdated and inadequate** for dealing with the complexity of plastic pollution. She called for the creation of a **global chemical safety regime**, modelled after the **Montreal Protocol**, which was successful in phasing out **ozone-depleting substances**. Her intervention provided **scientific backing** to the growing demands for a stronger, **legally binding plastics treaty**.

The Triple Planetary Crisis and Ocean Degradation

- **Climate Change and Ocean Health:** UNOC3 emphasized that the **Triple Planetary Crisis**—comprising **climate change**, **biodiversity loss**, and **pollution**—is accelerating the **degradation of ocean ecosystems**. **Global warming** has led to **rising ocean temperatures**, **acidification**, and **sea-level rise**, all of which pose existential threats to **marine biodiversity** and **coastal communities**.

- **Coral Bleaching and Habitat Loss:** Between 2023 and 2025, the world witnessed the **Fourth Global Mass Coral Bleaching Event**, affecting **84% of coral reefs worldwide**. Simultaneously, human activities such as **overfishing, deep-sea mining, and coastal megaprojects** have **depleted key fish species** and disrupted marine habitats. Additionally, the discharge of **millions of tonnes of plastic waste and toxic chemicals** has led to **oxygen-deprived “dead zones”** and **massive biodiversity loss**.

Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Ocean Governance

- **Recognition of Traditional Ecological Practices:** A major theme of UNOC3 was the formal recognition of **Indigenous ecological knowledge** as an essential component of **ocean governance**. Indigenous communities were acknowledged for their **regenerative agriculture, sacred fishing practices, and deep-rooted environmental stewardship** based on **reciprocity and balance**.
- **Scientific Relevance of Indigenous Knowledge:** The conference concluded that these knowledge systems are not only culturally significant, but also scientifically robust, offering valuable insights into sustainable marine resource management. The inclusion of Indigenous voices is now viewed as indispensable for addressing the root causes of ecosystem collapse and promoting resilience-based governance frameworks.

Key Global Announcements and Commitments

- **Financial and Conservation Commitments:** UNOC3 saw several landmark announcements that signal a shift toward more concrete ocean protection measures. The **European Commission pledged €1 billion** for **ocean research, marine conservation, and sustainable fisheries**. **French Polynesia** declared its entire **5 million square kilometre Exclusive Economic Zone** as a **Marine Protected Area**, setting a global benchmark for ocean conservation.
- **Innovative Financing and Regional Action:** In another pioneering development, **Indonesia**, in collaboration with the **World Bank**, launched the world's first **Coral Bond**, a financial instrument designed to fund **coral reef restoration** projects. Meanwhile, **Spain** created **five new Marine Protected Areas**, and a **High Ambition Coalition for a Quiet Ocean**, comprising **37 countries**, was formed to address the rising threat of **underwater noise pollution** caused by naval and commercial activities.
- **Progress Toward the 30×30 Target:** Collectively, these initiatives may increase the total area under **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)** from the current 2.7% of global oceans to nearly 10%, moving the world closer to the **30×30 target of protecting 30% of oceans by 2030**.

The United Nations Ocean Conference: Evolution and Purpose

- **Role and Objectives of UNOC:** The **United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC)** is a recurring global summit dedicated to supporting the implementation of **SDG 14: Life Below Water**. It serves as a platform for member states and stakeholders to commit to **ocean conservation, pollution control, and blue economy transitions**.
- **Past Editions and Milestones:** The first edition of the conference was held in **2017 in New York**, where it adopted a “**Call for Action**” against **marine pollution and unsustainable fishing**. The **second edition in 2022**, held in **Lisbon**, saw the endorsement of the **30×30 Pledge** to protect **30% of oceans by 2030**.
- **Objectives of the 2025 Edition:** The **2025 edition in Nice** focused on operationalizing the **Nice Ocean Agreements**, encouraging the **ratification of the BBNJ Agreement by at least 60 countries**, and promoting **legal, financial, and institutional reforms** to address threats to the **high seas**.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Where was the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) held in 2025?
(a) Lisbon, Portugal (b) Nice, France
(c) Geneva, Switzerland (d) New York, USA
2. Which of the following two countries co-hosted the UNOC3 conference?
(a) France and Costa Rica
(b) Portugal and Indonesia
(c) France and Japan
(d) USA and Brazil
3. What was the theme of UNOC3 in 2025?
(a) "Oceans for Climate Resilience"
(b) "Mobilizing Financial Tools for Coastal Protection"
(c) "Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean"
(d) "Ending Plastic Pollution through Innovation"
4. Which of the following declarations was adopted at UNOC3 to support a full-lifecycle global plastics treaty?
(a) Lisbon Call to Action
(b) Nice Declaration for Oceans
(c) Ocean Charter of 2025
(d) Nice Wake-Up Call
5. Who among the following was the Indigenous leader who advocated for environmental justice and inclusion in the plastics treaty?
(a) Greta Thunberg (b) Frankie Orona
(c) Yvonne Harris (d) Bethany Almroth
6. What amount was pledged by the European Investment Bank and ADB to combat plastic pollution?
(a) €3 billion (b) \$5 billion
(c) €1 billion (d) \$4.5 billion
7. What is the name of the action plan adopted at the UNOC3 conference?
(a) Global Ocean Blueprint
(b) Nice Ocean Action Plan
(c) High Seas Accord
(d) Marine Governance Pact
8. Which of the following global agreements seeks to regulate biodiversity in international waters and was promoted at UNOC3?
(a) BBNJ Agreement
(b) Basel Convention
(c) Cartagena Protocol
(d) Stockholm Convention
9. Who proposed a Montreal Protocol-like-framework for plastic chemical safety at the conference?
(a) Antonio Guterres
(b) Dr. Inger Andersen
(c) Dr. Bethany Carney Almroth
(d) Frankie Orona
10. What term did Frankie Orona use to describe the disproportionate pollution impact on Indigenous communities?
(a) Pollution injustice
(b) Genocide by pollution
(c) Eco-disparity
(d) Petrochemical threat zones
11. What percentage of coral reefs were affected by the Fourth Global Mass Coral Bleaching Event (2023–2025)?
(a) 84% (b) 78%
(c) 64% (d) 92%
12. What major financial commitment did the European Commission announce at UNOC3?
(a) €3 billion for marine transport
(b) €2 billion for SIDS fisheries
(c) €1 billion for ocean research and conservation
(d) €1.5 billion for deep-sea mining

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

13. Which of the following countries declared its entire EEZ as a Marine Protected Area during the conference?

- (a) French Polynesia (b) Seychelles
(c) Maldives (d) Palau

14. Which of the following countries launched the world's first Coral Bond with World Bank support?

- (a) Philippines (b) India
(c) Australia (d) Indonesia

15. What is the current global coverage of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), as stated in the UNOC3 conference?

- (a) 2.7%
(b) 5%
(c) 10%
(d) 13.5%

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (a) | 3. (c) | 4. (d) | 5. (b) | 6. (a) | 7. (b) | 8. (a) |
| 9. (c) | 10. (b) | 11. (a) | 12. (c) | 13. (a) | 14. (d) | 15. (a) | |

7

2025 THE HAGUE SUMMIT OF
NATO

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- On 25 June 2025, the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** concluded a **pivotal summit** in **The Hague, Netherlands**, where all **thirty-two member states** unanimously agreed to a significant escalation in **collective defence spending**.
- The central decision of the summit was the adoption of a new **defence spending target of five percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**, replacing the previous informal benchmark of **two percent**.
- The declaration also reaffirmed NATO's foundational commitment to **collective defence under Article 5** and reflected a notable shift in strategic emphasis, particularly in relation to the ongoing **conflict in Ukraine** and the evolving **global threat landscape**.
- The summit marked the **most expensive** in NATO history, with a reported budget of **€183.4 million (\$210 million)**, accompanied by the **largest security operation ever conducted** in the Netherlands.

The Hague Defence Investment Plan and the 5% GDP Target**Components of the New Benchmark**

The most significant outcome of the summit was the formal adoption of the **Hague Defence Investment Plan**, under which NATO member states pledged to increase **defence expenditure to five percent of their respective GDPs by 2035**.

This total is divided into:

- **3.5 percent for core defence spending**, including **military hardware, personnel, and operational readiness**
- **1.5 percent for security-related investments**, including **cybersecurity infrastructure, logistics, military innovation, and reinforcement of defence-industrial capabilities**

THE NEW 5% DEFENCE SPENDING TARGET

- + Ahead of the 2025 summit, **NATO members agreed to raise their defence spending target to 5% of GDP**, as demanded by US President Donald Trump. Spain, however, has not committed to the target.

- + **Under the proposed agreement**, member states would allocate 3.5% of GDP to direct defence spending, with an additional 1.5% dedicated to broader security-related investments, such as cyber-security and intelligence.

- + NATO members will be expected to **meet this target by 2035**.



					
2009 Albania	1949 Belgium	2004 Bulgaria	1949 Canada	2009 Croatia	1999 Czechia
					
1949 Denmark	2004 Estonia	2023 Finland	1949 France	1955 Germany	1952 Greece
					
1999 Hungary	1949 Iceland	1949 Italy	2004 Latvia	2004 Lithuania	1949 Luxembourg
					
2017 Montenegro	1949 Netherlands	2020 North Macedonia	1949 Norway	1999 Poland	1949 Portugal
					
2004 Romania	2004 Slovakia	2004 Slovenia	1982 Spain	2024 Sweden	1952 Türkiye
					
1949 United Kingdom	1949 United States				

NATO Members over the Years

Implementation and Review Mechanism

- The plan requires each member state to submit **annual implementation strategies**, with progress reviewed incrementally. A **comprehensive progress review** has been scheduled for the **post-2029 period**, following the **U.S. presidential election**, to ensure **political continuity and fiscal accountability** in meeting the new benchmark.
- NATO's **Article 3** requires member states to **maintain and develop defence capacity**, and this new pledge aims to reverse longstanding U.S. complaints of **burden-sharing imbalance**. The **German Chancellor Friedrich Merz** and **Finnish President Alexander Stubb** expressed strong support, with Stubb calling it the "**birth of a new NATO**."
- However, the proposal has triggered concern among some European members, as transitioning to a **war economy model** would require **diverting substantial national budgets** from social and developmental sectors to defence manufacturing. In 2025, **Germany** had already **amended its Constitution** to lift the debt brake, enabling higher military spending.

Current Spending Patterns and Divergences Among Member States

- **Leading Contributors and Spending Levels:** As of **2024**, defence expenditure among NATO allies has remained uneven. The **United States** allocated **3.2 percent** of its GDP to defence, while **Poland** stood out with **4.1 percent**, and both **Estonia** and **Latvia** spent approximately **3.4 percent**. These figures indicate that some **Eastern European nations** had already begun scaling up their defence budgets in response to the threat posed by **Russia**.
- **Non-Compliant States and Internal Disagreements:** Several **Western European countries** have continued to fall below even the previous **2 percent threshold**. **Spain**, for instance, spent only **1.24 percent** of its GDP on defence in 2024 and has officially declared its intention **not to adhere** to the new **5 percent target**, citing **high public debt** and **socio-economic constraints**. This divergence highlights ongoing internal disagreements within NATO about **equitable burden-sharing** and the **fiscal viability** of expanded defence commitments.

Reaffirmation of Article 5 and NATO's Foundational Cohesion

- **Reviving Collective Security Commitments:** A cornerstone of the 2025 summit was the reaffirmation of **Article 5 of the Washington Treaty**, which defines NATO's principle of **collective defence**. Under this provision, an **armed attack against any single NATO member** is considered an attack against all members, mandating a **collective response** to restore security.
- **Symbolic Value for Recent Entrants:** This commitment has historically served as NATO's **deterrent foundation** and has attracted recent members such as **Finland** and **Sweden**, who joined in the aftermath of the **Russia-Ukraine war that began in 2022**. Despite ideological differences and evolving geopolitical strategies, all participating leaders at the 2025 summit, including **President Trump**, issued a unified declaration reaffirming the "**ironclad commitment**" to **Article 5**, reinforcing the alliance's **credibility and deterrence posture**.

Shift in NATO's Strategic Focus Regarding Ukraine

- **Reduced Emphasis on Ukrainian Membership and Aid:** Unlike previous summits where **Ukraine** was the focal point of allied solidarity and assistance, the 2025 summit demonstrated a relative shift in emphasis. Under **President Trump's renewed leadership**, NATO's public commitment to Ukraine was more restrained. Trump reiterated his opposition to Ukraine's **prospective NATO membership** and continued the **pause on direct U.S. military aid**, a marked departure from the **2024 summit** that had celebrated **President Zelenskyy** and endorsed an "**irreversible path to membership**."
- **Softened Language on Russian Aggression:** Although the final communiqué acknowledged the **long-term threat posed by Russia**, it refrained from explicitly **condemning Russian aggression** or outlining new

- security assurances for Ukraine. This reflects a **recalibration** of NATO's posture under the **Trump administration**, which prioritizes a more **transactional foreign policy approach** and emphasizes **European responsibility for regional security**.

Internal Fractures and the Challenges of Implementation

- **Economic and Political Constraints:** Despite a common strategic vision articulated in the summit declaration, **significant internal tensions** persist within the alliance. Countries in **Southern Europe**, such as **Spain**, remain sceptical of the **economic feasibility** of meeting the five percent target, particularly when juxtaposed against **domestic welfare obligations** and **high public debt ratios**.
- **Divergent Threat Priorities and U.S. Reliability Concerns:** Additionally, NATO allies differ in their **threat perceptions**. While **Eastern European nations** such as **Poland** and the **Baltic states** view **Russia** as an existential threat, **Western and Southern countries** increasingly prioritize **non-conventional threats**, including **migration flows**, **disinformation campaigns**, and **energy security**. There is also persistent concern regarding the **United States' long-term reliability** as a security guarantor, especially in light of **President Trump's past statements** questioning the utility of NATO and his **conditional approach to alliance commitments**.

WHAT IS NATO'S ARTICLE 5? #NATO

COLLECTIVE DEFENSE IS THE HEART OF THE NATO ALLIANCE.

“THE PARTIES AGREE THAT AN ARMED ATTACK AGAINST ONE OR MORE OF THEM IN EUROPE OR NORTH AMERICA SHALL BE CONSIDERED AN ATTACK AGAINST THEM ALL”

ARTICLE 5, THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY, WASHINGTON D.C. 4 APRIL 1949

IF AN ALLY IS ATTACKED, EACH AND EVERY OTHER NATO MEMBER WILL COME TO THEIR DEFENSE

THE FIRST, AND ONLY TIME NATO HAS INVOKED ARTICLE 5 WAS IN RESPONSE TO THE 9/11 TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST THE UNITED STATES

Symbolic Realignments and Divergent Strategic Visions

- The summit highlighted a growing **transatlantic divergence** in security priorities. While **Europe and Canada** view **Russia** as the primary long-term threat, the **U.S. under Trump** appears increasingly focused on **China**. The **U.S. Navy's shift toward the Pacific**, including the deployment of its **most advanced ships and aircraft**, will necessitate a **scaling down of U.S. military commitments in Europe**, compelling European allies to **fill the vacuum**.
- This divergence is also visible in leadership roles. **Pete Hegseth**, the U.S. Secretary of Defence, **withdrew from the Ukraine Defence Contact Group**, signalling **reduced American leadership** in military coordination.
- Despite internal discord, NATO members unanimously reaffirmed that **Russia remains the principal long-term threat to Euro-Atlantic security**. The summit concluded with the announcement that the **next NATO Summit** will be held in **Türkiye in 2026**, underlining the continuity of strategic dialogue, albeit in a more fragmented global security environment.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. At the NATO Summit held on 25 June 2025 in The Hague, how many member states unanimously agreed to raise the defence spending target to five percent of GDP?
 - (a) Twenty-eight member states
 - (b) Thirty member states
 - (c) Thirty-two member states
 - (d) Thirty-four member states
 2. What was the previous informal defence spending benchmark for NATO members before the 2025 Hague Summit?
 - (a) 2% (b) 3%
 - (c) 1.5% (d) 2.5%
 3. Which component is *not* part of the new 5% GDP defence spending breakdown endorsed at the 2025 NATO Summit?
 - (a) Climate adaptation funds
 - (b) Military R&D
 - (c) Cybersecurity infrastructure
 - (d) Defence industrial reinforcement
 4. Which country openly declared it would not adhere to the 5% defence spending target due to socio-economic constraints?
 - (a) Spain (b) Belgium
 - (c) Slovakia (d) Portugal
 5. What role did King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima play in the 2025 NATO summit?
 - (a) Mediated NATO-Ukraine talks
 - (b) Hosted the NATO Public Forum
 - (c) Held a royal dinner at Huis ten Bosch Palace
 - (d) Opened the Summit Defence Industry Forum
 6. Who advocated for the 5% defence spending plan with a 3.5%–1.5% split?
 - (a) Emmanuel Macron
 - (b) Pete Hegseth
 - (c) Donald Trump
 - (d) Olaf Scholz
 7. What is the title of the formal investment roadmap adopted at the 2025 summit?
 - (a) Atlantic Security Accord
 - (b) Hague Defence Investment Plan
 - (c) NATO Capacity Framework
 - (d) Euro-Atlantic Defence Compact
 8. Under NATO's Article 5, an armed attack on one member is considered:
 - (a) An attack on all members
 - (b) An internal matter
 - (c) A domestic issue
 - (d) A breach of neutrality
 9. Which two countries joined NATO following the Russia-Ukraine war?
 - (a) Sweden and Austria
 - (b) Sweden and Finland
 - (c) Ukraine and Moldova
 - (d) Georgia and Bosnia
 10. What was the estimated cost of organising the 2025 NATO Summit in The Hague?
 - (a) €150.5 million
 - (b) \$190 million
 - (c) €183.4 million
 - (d) \$251.9 million
 11. What mechanism has NATO introduced to monitor member states' progress toward the 5% defence target?
 - (a) Annual military audits and yearly review
 - (b) Peer review committees and post-2028 review
 - (c) Annual implementation strategies and post-2029 review
 - (d) Budget transparency index
 12. The new NATO defence spending pledge aligns with which NATO treaty provision that obligates member states to maintain and develop their individual and collective defence capacities?
 - (a) Article 4 (b) Article 5
 - (c) Article 9 (d) Article 3

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

13. What major divergence emerged between the U.S. and European NATO members during the 2025 summit?

- (a) Cybersecurity threats
- (b) Financial aid to Africa
- (c) Priority between Russia and China
- (d) Commitment to nuclear disarmament

14. Which NATO Secretary of Defence withdrew from the Ukraine Defence Contact Group in 2025?

- (a) Lloyd Austin
- (b) Pete Hegseth
- (c) Jim Mattis
- (d) Mark Espe

15. Where will the next NATO Summit (2026) be held?

- (a) Poland
- (b) Germany
- (c) United Kingdom
- (d) Türkiye

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (c) | 2. (a) | 3. (a) | 4. (a) | 5. (c) | 6. (c) | 7. (b) | 8. (a) |
| 9. (b) | 10. (c) | 11. (c) | 12. (d) | 13. (c) | 14. (b) | 15. (d) | |

8

SCO DEFENCE MINISTER'S
MEET 2025

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- On **June 26, 2025**, during the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' Meeting** held in **Qingdao, China**, **India declined to endorse the joint statement** issued by participating countries.
- According to official sources, **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** refused to sign the final communiqué because it **excluded any reference to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack**, which claimed the lives of **26 civilians**, including a **Nepali national**, but included references to **militant activity in Balochistan**.
- India considered this a move by **Pakistan and China** to dilute the regional consensus on **counter-terrorism**, thereby compromising India's core position on **security and terrorism**.

Understanding Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

- The **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** was formally established in **2001**, evolving from the **"Shanghai Five" mechanism** formed in **1996**, which included **China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan**.
- Today, it spans nearly **80% of the Eurasian landmass** and represents approximately **40% of the global population**.
- The organisation has two key permanent bodies: the **SCO Secretariat in Beijing** and the **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** headquartered in **Tashkent, Uzbekistan**.
- Decision-Making and Challenges:** SCO functions on a **consensus-based decision-making model**, which ensures inclusivity but also **limits its agility**, especially on sensitive security issues.
- The requirement for unanimity often leads to **diplomatic deadlock**, particularly when **India, Pakistan, and China** hold divergent positions on terrorism definitions and countermeasures.



India's stand of NOT Signing the SCO joint statement

- India's decision not to sign the SCO joint statement was guided by its **zero-tolerance policy on terrorism**. The refusal signaled India's consistent assertion that **security cannot be compromised for diplomatic convenience**, even at the cost of isolating itself in multilateral forums.
- In his official address at the meeting, **Rajnath Singh** categorically identified the attack as being carried out by **The Resistance Front (TRF)**, a proxy of the **UN-designated terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)**. The assault took place in **Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir**, where **26 civilians**, including a **Nepali citizen** and a



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the SCO Defence Minister Meet 2025

- **local pony handler**, were killed. Victims were allegedly **targeted based on their religious identity**, with TRF claiming full responsibility.
- **India's Public Condemnation and Policy Stand:** Mr. Singh stated that “**peace and prosperity cannot co-exist with terrorism**”, and emphasized that nations using **cross-border terrorism as an instrument of state policy** must be held accountable.
- He called on SCO to **take a principled stand** and **reject double standards** in dealing with terrorism. The **Ministry of External Affairs** later confirmed that no joint statement was released due to **lack of consensus**, with **India insisting on the inclusion of terrorism concerns**.
- **Tensions with China and Pakistan:** The timing of the refusal was also significant. This was the **first visit by an Indian Union Minister to China** since the **2020 standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)** in eastern Ladakh. Moreover, **China's tacit support of Pakistan's narrative**, particularly its insistence on omitting references to **cross-border terrorism**, contributed to the collapse of consensus.

Implications for Regional Security Architecture

- **RATS and Missed Opportunities** The failure to adopt a unified defence statement reflects negatively on **SCO's counter-terrorism credibility**, especially in light of its **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)**.
- Between **2011 and 2015**, RATS facilitated the prevention of **20 terror attacks** and the **arrest of thousands of extremists**. The current impasse undermines that momentum.
- **India's Operation Sindoor:** In response to the Pahalgam attack, India launched **Operation Sindoor** on **May 7, 2025**, a cross-border military initiative aimed at dismantling **terror infrastructure inside Pakistan**.
- This operation represents India's commitment to **preemptive defence measures**, reinforcing its message that **epicentres of terrorism will no longer remain safe havens**.

Regional and global security flash-points

- Ministers exchanged views on Gaza, the Iran–Israel clash, Afghanistan’s instability and Red-Sea maritime threats, calling for “**collective vigilance and strategic autonomy**”.
- **Iran, participating for the first time as a full member**, condemned strikes on its nuclear sites and urged **SCO naval exercises in the Strait of Hormuz**.
- Russia linked rising risks to Western sanctions and said the bloc should deepen “non-Western” defence links.

Practical cooperation decisions

- **Logistics & Medical Support Framework**: Members agreed to let each other’s contingents use field hospitals, fuel depots and airlift during SCO drills and UN missions, with a standard operating procedure due by November 2025.
- **Counter-terror exercise “Pabbi-Antiterror-2026”**: Pakistan will host a major urban CT drill focused on drone forensics and hostage rescue; India reserved the right to confirm participation after seeing the concept note.
- **Cyber-range proposal**: **Russia** tabled a plan for a shared cyber-training network to rehearse responses to attacks on critical infrastructure; experts will develop a blueprint before the Tashkent working-group meeting in September.
- **Afghanistan mine-action guidelines**: A non-binding set of principles on humanitarian demining was adopted to coordinate SCO teams in Afghanistan.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. On what grounds did India decline to endorse the SCO joint statement during the Defence Ministers' Meeting in June 2025?
 - (a) Omission of any economic cooperation agenda
 - (b) Reference to Israeli actions in Gaza
 - (c) Exclusion of the Pahalgam terror attack and inclusion of Balochistan references
 - (d) Dispute over border demarcation clauses
2. Who was identified by India as responsible for the April 22 Pahalgam attack?
 - (a) Jaish-e-Mohammed
 - (b) Hizbul Mujahideen
 - (c) The Resistance Front (TRF)
 - (d) Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent
3. Where was the 2025 SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting hosted?
 - (a) Tashkent, Uzbekistan
 - (b) Qingdao, China
 - (c) Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
 - (d) Astana, Kazakhstan
4. Which of the following countries joined SCO most recently, bringing the total number of full members to ten?
 - (a) Belarus
 - (b) Turkmenistan
 - (c) Afghanistan
 - (d) Mongolia
5. What is the decision-making mechanism followed by the SCO?
 - (a) Two-thirds majority
 - (b) Simple majority
 - (c) Consensus-based
 - (d) Weighted voting
6. What is the name of the counter-terrorism body of the SCO?
 - (a) Central Anti-Terror Bureau
 - (b) Eurasian Security Division
 - (c) SCO Homeland Security Wing
 - (d) Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
7. Which of the following Indian military operations was launched in May 2025 in response to the Pahalgam attack?
 - (a) Operation Ajay
 - (b) Operation Sindhu
 - (c) Operation Sindoor
 - (d) Operation Ganga
8. What principle did India emphasize when refusing to sign the joint SCO communiqué?
 - (a) Strategic neutrality
 - (b) Non-interventionism
 - (c) Panchsheel Doctrine
 - (d) Zero-tolerance on terrorism
9. Which of the following is not a permanent body of the SCO?
 - (a) SCO Human Rights Commission
 - (b) Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
 - (c) SCO Secretariat
 - (d) None of the above
10. In which city is the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) headquartered?
 - (a) Dushanbe
 - (b) Tashkent
 - (c) Bishkek
 - (d) Almaty
11. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), established in 2001, evolved from which earlier regional grouping formed in 1996?
 - (a) Shanghai Five
 - (b) BRICS
 - (c) Eurasian Union
 - (d) Collective Security Treaty Organization
12. Which of the following statements reflects the limitation of SCO's counter-terrorism consensus?
 - (a) Frequent deployment of NATO forces in Central Asia
 - (b) Reliance on a rotating presidency model
 - (c) Varying definitions of terrorism among member states
 - (d) SCO's transition into a military alliance
13. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), a key permanent body of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), is headquartered in which

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

city?

- (a) Beijing (b) Bishkek
(c) Astana (d) Tashkent

14. What was India's consistent position on China's Belt and Road Initiative within SCO?

- (a) Open support for BRI corridors through Pakistan
(b) Conditional participation
(c) Full endorsement
(d) Repeated rejection

What theme was adopted for the 2025 SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting?

- (a) "Peace through Partnership"
(b) "SCO 2040: Future and Security"
(c) "Upholding the Shanghai Spirit: SCO on the Move"
(d) "Security and Connectivity in Eurasia"

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (c) | 2. (c) | 3. (b) | 4. (a) | 5. (c) | 6. (d) | 7. (c) | 8. (d) |
| 9. (a) | 10. (b) | 11. (a) | 12. (c) | 13. (d) | 14. (d) | 15. (c) | |

9

NEW NON-PERMANENT
MEMBERS TO THE UNSC

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- In June 2025, the United Nations General Assembly conducted the annual election to select **five new non-permanent members** to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the term beginning in January 2026 and ending in December 2027.
- The member states elected to this prestigious position were **Bahrain, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Latvia, and Liberia**.
- These countries were chosen through a secret ballot that saw participation from 188 UN member states, and all five countries secured the required two-thirds majority in a single round of voting.
- With their induction, they will replace Algeria, Guyana, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, and Slovenia, whose terms conclude at the end of 2025. The newly elected countries will join Denmark, Greece, Pakistan, Panama, and Somalia, who were elected in 2024 and will continue to serve until the end of 2026.

Security Council

- The United Nations Security Council is one of the **six principal organs** of the United Nations and holds the primary mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security. It possesses the authority to authorise peacekeeping operations, impose sanctions, recommend the admission of new member states, and, under certain conditions, approve the use of force.
- Established in **1945** following the conclusion of the **Second World War**, the UNSC was created under the provisions of the **United Nations Charter** as the apex institution responsible for addressing threats to international peace. It is headquartered at the United Nations Headquarters in **New York City**, where all its regular meetings and deliberations are convened unless otherwise decided by consensus.



Structure

The Council comprises fifteen members, which include five permanent members and ten non-permanent members. The five permanent members, also known as the **P5**, are **China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America**. These countries enjoy veto power, meaning that any substantive resolution can be blocked by any one of them regardless of the majority support it may receive.

The ten non-permanent seats are allocated based on equitable geographical distribution. Of these, five seats are assigned to the **Africa and Asia-Pacific Group** (including Arab States), one seat to **Eastern Europe**, two seats to **Latin America and the Caribbean**, and two seats to the **Western European and Other States Group**.

Election Process

Non-permanent members of the Security Council are elected annually by the United Nations General Assembly. To win a seat, a candidate must obtain a **two-thirds majority** of the votes cast by member states present and voting. Each year, elections are held for **five of the ten non-permanent seats**, with each region fielding its own candidates based on internal consultations and consensus. The voting is conducted through a secret ballot process, even if the number of candidates equals the number of available seats. Every Security Council member, whether permanent or non-permanent, **holds one vote**. However, decisions on substantive matters require an affirmative vote of nine members, including the concurrence of all five permanent members. All decisions of the Security Council are legally binding on the entire United Nations membership, in accordance with **Articles 25 and 103 of the United Nations Charter**.



Presidency of the UNSC



The presidency of the Security Council rotates on a monthly basis among the fifteen members, following the English alphabetical order of their country names. The presiding member sets the agenda, convenes and chairs meetings, and serves as the Council's official representative. In June 2025, the presidency was held by **Guyana**. India last held the presidency in **December 2022**, during which it led high-level discussions on counter-terrorism, maritime security, and reformed multilateralism.

2025 Election Results and Country-Specific information

- The 2025 election produced a notable mix of returning and first-time members. From the African region, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** received **183 votes**, marking its **third term**, while **Liberia**, which garnered **181 votes**, returns after a gap of one term.
- From the Asia-Pacific region, **Bahrain** received **186 votes** and rejoined the Council after previously serving a single term.
- In the Eastern European group, **Latvia** made history by winning **178 votes** and securing its **first-ever seat** on the Security Council.
- From the Latin America and Caribbean region, **Colombia** was elected with **180 votes**, marking its **eighth term** on the Council. All five countries achieved their mandates in the first round, signaling a strong consensus among the General Assembly members.

Recent Committee Appointments within the UNSC

- Among the newly elected and continuing non-permanent members, **Pakistan** and **Algeria** received key committee assignments. Pakistan has been appointed as the **Chair of the UNSC 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee** for the year 2025.
- This committee is tasked with monitoring compliance with targeted sanctions against Taliban-affiliated individuals and organizations that threaten peace and stability in Afghanistan. In addition to this role,

- Pakistan has also been named a **Vice-Chair of the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC)** for the 2025–2026 term. This role involves assisting in the implementation and oversight of global counter-terrorism measures under Security Council Resolution 1373.
- **Algeria** has been selected as the **Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee** for 2025. Its leadership in this capacity will involve coordinating international efforts to counter terror financing, facilitate intelligence sharing, and promote legal reforms among UN member states. Supporting Algeria in this role are three Vice-Chairs: **France** and **Russia**, both permanent members of the Council, and **Pakistan**, as a non-permanent member.

India's Role and Advocacy for UNSC Reforms

- India has served as a non-permanent member of the UNSC on **eight occasions**, namely during the periods **1950–1951, 1967–1968, 1972–1973, 1977–1978, 1984–1985, 1991–1992, 2011–2012, and most recently 2021–2022.**
- This makes India one of the most frequently elected non-permanent members, a testament to its sustained diplomatic credibility and commitment to multilateralism.
- India is also a leading voice in the movement to reform the UNSC. It is part of the **G4 coalition**, which also includes **Germany, Japan, and Brazil**. The G4 advocates for a Security Council that reflects contemporary global realities, including the increased role of emerging economies and regional powers.
- The proposed reforms include expanding the Council's membership from 15 to either 25 or 26 members, creating **six new permanent seats**, including two for African nations and one each for India, Germany, Japan, and Brazil.
- The plan also recommends increasing the number of non-permanent members to 14 or 15 and reforming the veto mechanism, either by limiting its use or introducing time-bound restrictions.
- During the recent **Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN)** on Security Council reform, **Kuwait's Permanent Representative**, who co-chairs the process, publicly acknowledged **India as a strong contender for permanent membership** if and when such expansion is agreed upon.
- India has emphasised that the current structure of the UNSC, which dates back to the post-World War II era, fails to reflect the multipolarity of today's world and inadequately represents the interests of the **Global South**, especially regions such as **Africa, Latin America, and Asia.**

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which of the following countries was elected to the United Nations Security Council for the 2026–2027 term?
(a) Somalia (b) Bahrain
(c) Slovenia (d) Guyana
- How many votes are required in the UN General Assembly to elect a non-permanent UNSC member?
(a) Two-thirds majority (b) Three-fourths majority
(c) Simple majority (d) Absolute majority
- Which country among the 2025 UNSC inductees is serving its first-ever term?
(a) Liberia (b) Latvia
(c) Colombia (d) Bahrain
- Which of the following is not a permanent member (P5) of the UN Security Council?
(a) United States (b) France
(c) Japan (d) China
- Which of the following articles of the UN Charter makes UNSC decisions binding on member states?
(a) Article 19 (b) Article 25
(c) Article 73 (d) Article 103
- How often does the presidency of the UN Security Council rotate among its members?
(a) Every six months (b) Annually
(c) Every three months (d) Monthly
- Which country held the presidency of the UNSC in June 2025?
(a) India (b) Guyana
(c) Denmark (d) Latvia
- Which country was elected to the UNSC from the Eastern European Group in 2025?
(a) Slovenia (b) Latvia
(c) Greece (d) Albania
- Who chairs the 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee in 2025?
(a) Pakistan (b) Algeria (c) France (d) Russia
- Which country has been appointed Chair of the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee for 2025?
(a) India (b) Pakistan
(c) Algeria (d) Colombia
- Which of the following countries was elected to the UNSC in 2024 for the 2025–2026 term?
(a) Liberia (b) Greece (c) Bahrain (d) DRC
- What is the minimum number of affirmative votes needed for a substantive UNSC resolution to pass?
(a) 8, including any three permanent members
(b) 9, including all five permanent members
(c) 10, with at least one P5
(d) 11, excluding abstentions
- What resolution established the 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee?
(a) Resolution 1540 (b) Resolution 1373
(c) Resolution 1988 (d) Resolution 1267
- India chaired the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) of the UNSC in which year?
(a) 2022 (b) 2021 (c) 2020 (d) 2023
- India, Germany, Brazil, and Japan together form which group pushing for UNSC reform?
(a) IBSA (b) G-77 (c) G-4 (d) BASIC

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (a) | 3. (b) | 4. (c) | 5. (b) | 6. (d) | 7. (b) | 8. (b) |
| 9. (a) | 10. (c) | 11. (b) | 12. (b) | 13. (c) | 14. (a) | 15. (c) | |

10 INDIA'S SEEKS PAUSE ON INDUS WATERS TREATY DISPUTE WITH PAKISTAN

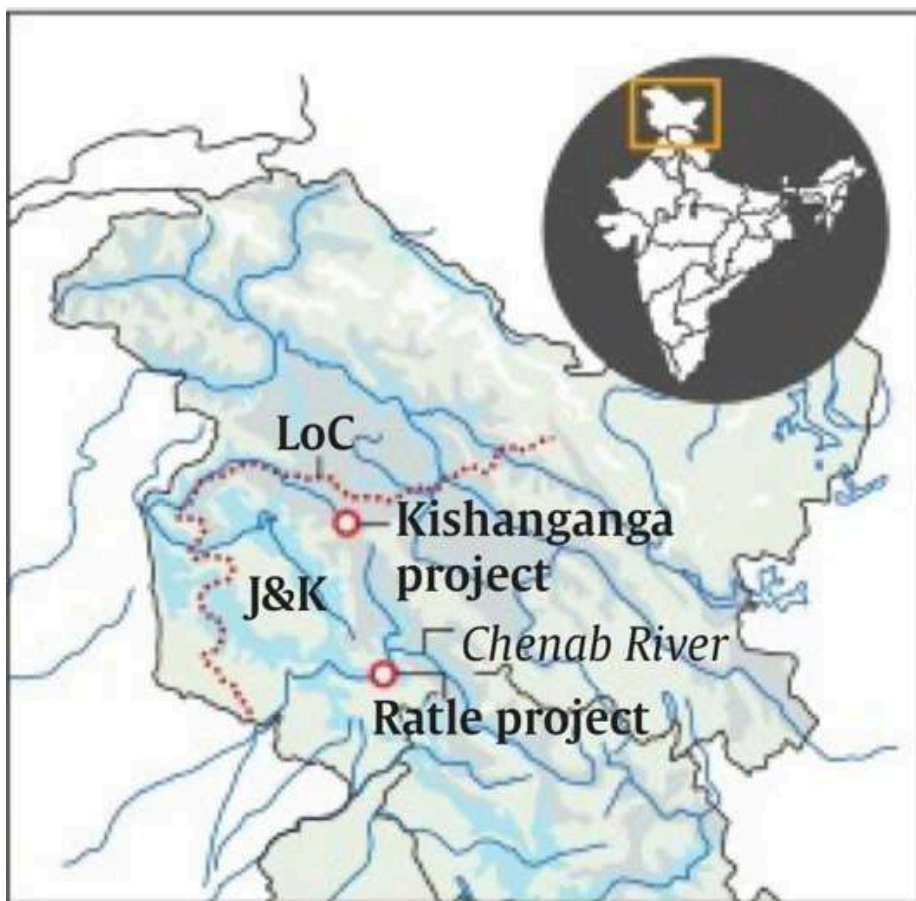
INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- On **June 24, 2025**, India formally requested the **World Bank-appointed neutral expert, Michel Lino**, to pause proceedings on disputes related to the **Kishanganga** and **Ratle hydropower projects** in **Jammu and Kashmir**, citing the Union Cabinet's decision to place the **Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)** in **abeyance**.
- This move followed the **April 22 Pahalgam terror attack**, in which **26 civilians**, including a **Nepali national**, were killed.
- According to top Indian government sources, New Delhi is currently **disinclined to engage with Islamabad**, and the treaty will remain suspended until **Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures support for cross-border terrorism**.

Nature of the Hydropower Projects in Dispute

- The ongoing proceedings concern two major Indian hydropower projects in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The **Kishanganga project** is located on the **Kishanganga river**, a tributary of the **Jhelum**, while the **Ratle project** is located on the **Chenab river**.
- These rivers fall under the **Western Rivers** category as defined in the IWT, which are **primarily allocated to Pakistan** for usage, though India retains the right to limited non-consumptive use, including for hydropower generation.
- On **October 13, 2022**, the **World Bank** appointed **Michel Lino**, a **French dam engineer** and former **President of the International Commission on Large Dams**, as the neutral expert under **Article IX and Annexure F of the Indus Waters Treaty**.
- His mandate is to determine whether the technical design features of the two Indian projects comply with the treaty's specifications. The disputes relate to alleged **violations of minimum flow requirements** and design elements claimed by Pakistan to breach the treaty.



India's Treaty Suspension and Diplomatic Notifications

Following the Cabinet's decision to suspend the treaty, **India formally notified Michel Lino**, requesting that the **2025 work programme** be vacated.

- As per this programme, **Pakistan was scheduled to submit its counter-memorial by August 7**, with the **fourth round of discussions** and site visits scheduled between **November 17 and 22, 2025**. These meetings were expected to include document submissions, expert questioning, and a second visit to Indian project sites.
- India sent a formal communication to Pakistan on **April 24**, declaring the treaty's suspension. Pakistan, prior to the launch of **Operation Sindoor** on **May 7**, responded with a proposal for diplomatic dialogue. However, India has not responded to this outreach, reinforcing its position that **engagement is contingent upon Pakistan's renunciation of terrorism**.

India's Legal and Strategic Response

- **Rejection of the Court of Arbitration's Authority:** India has **categorically rejected the jurisdiction** of the **Hague-based Court of Arbitration**, which had issued a **supplemental award** asserting its competence over the Kishanganga and Ratle projects. The **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** stated that the tribunal was **illegally constituted** without mutual consent, and that its functioning was **void ab initio**. India maintains that such unilateral invocation **violates the sequential dispute resolution structure** of the IWT.
- **India's Objection to Parallel Proceedings:** Under the IWT, disputes are to be addressed through a **three-tier mechanism**: the **Permanent Indus Commission (PIC)**, the **Neutral Expert mechanism**, and the **Court of Arbitration**, used sequentially based on the complexity and nature of the issue. India insists that **simultaneous engagement** of both the neutral expert and arbitration tribunal violates the **core procedural design** of the treaty.

Strategic Implications and Treaty Recalibration

- **Long-Term Diplomatic Strategy and Treaty Review:** India has consistently signalled a shift in its approach towards the IWT. It issued formal notices to Pakistan in **January 2023** and **September 2024**, calling for a **comprehensive treaty review**, citing changing **geopolitical, hydrological, and security conditions**. The present suspension is thus part of a **strategic recalibration**, grounded in India's assertion of its **sovereign right under international law** to reconsider treaty obligations in response to **persistent cross-border terrorism**.
- **Domestic Infrastructure Plans and Operational Changes:** In parallel, India has begun to **divert Indus waters** through new canal systems for use in **domestic irrigation and power generation**. Additionally, the government has conducted **flushing exercises** at **Salal (1987)** and **Baglihar (2008-09)** — two **run-of-the-river hydropower projects on the Chenab** — to clear sediment buildup. These are the first such operations since the construction of the projects and were earlier blocked by Pakistan under IWT clauses. Officials confirmed that **monthly flushing cycles** will now be institutionalised.

Pakistan's Legal Strategy and India's Counter-Position

Pakistan's Push for Arbitration and Internationalisation: Pakistan has historically preferred **arbitration** over neutral expert proceedings, often seeking to escalate **technical design issues** into **legal disputes**. In 2015, it approached the World Bank for a neutral expert but changed its stance in **2016** to push for arbitration. This tactic, according to India, is an effort to **internationalise water-sharing disputes** and divert attention from its **support for terrorism**.

India's Allegation of Manipulation and Forum-Shopping: India accuses Pakistan of **manipulating treaty mechanisms** and pursuing **forum-shopping**, particularly at a time when India has elevated its concerns over cross-border attacks. The MEA has described the arbitration proceedings as a **"charade orchestrated at Pakistan's behest"** and reiterated that **genuine treaty compliance cannot coexist with terrorism sponsorship**.

Broader Legal and Geopolitical Context

- **Treaty Design and Institutional Redundancy:** The **Indus Waters Treaty**, signed in **1960**, is widely considered one of the most durable international agreements. However, the **simultaneous appointment of both a neutral expert and an arbitration court in 2022**—a first in the treaty's 65-year history—has raised concerns about **procedural redundancy** and **institutional conflict**. India maintains that this undermines the treaty's **efficiency and legal clarity**.
- **Global Water Diplomacy and India's Policy Shift:** India's latest stance reflects a **broader shift in global water diplomacy**, where nations assert greater **sovereignty over transboundary resources** in the face of **terrorism and security threats**. India has now explicitly linked **water-sharing with national security**, and is unlikely to return to the IWT framework without tangible guarantees from Pakistan.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. On what grounds did India request a pause in the Indus Waters Treaty proceedings in June 2025?
 - (a) Water shortages in Himachal Pradesh
 - (b) Ongoing arbitration at The Hague
 - (c) The April 22 Pahalgam terror attack and support for cross-border terrorism
 - (d) Environmental impact assessments not completed
2. Which two hydropower projects are central to the current dispute between India and Pakistan?
 - (a) Baglihar and Salal
 - (b) Kishanganga and Ratle
 - (c) Dul Hasti and Ratle
 - (d) Nimoo Bazgo and Kishanganga
3. Under which article of the Indus Waters Treaty was the neutral expert appointed?
 - (a) Article III
 - (b) Article VI
 - (c) Article IX
 - (d) Article I
4. Who is the current neutral expert appointed by the World Bank in the India-Pakistan water dispute?
 - (a) Michel Lino
 - (b) Peter Schoettle
 - (c) Jean-Paul Lacoste
 - (d) Anton Korobov
5. Which river is the Kishanganga hydropower project located on?
 - (a) Chenab
 - (b) Ravi
 - (c) Kishanganga
 - (d) Beas
6. What specific issue has Pakistan raised regarding the technical design of the Kishanganga and Ratle projects?
 - (a) Environmental compliance under IUCN norms
 - (b) Violation of minimum flow and design specifications
 - (c) Indian refusal to allow site visits
 - (d) Treaty-imposed upper storage limit breach
7. What is India's stated position on the functioning of the Court of Arbitration in this dispute?
 - (a) It is legally constituted and valid
 - (b) It is void ab initio due to lack of mutual consent
 - (c) It is secondary to the Permanent Indus Commission
 - (d) It is under United Nations jurisdiction
8. What significant change has India made regarding sediment clearance at Salal and Baglihar dams?
 - (a) Permanent flushing operations institutionalised
 - (b) Dam decommissioning initiated
 - (c) Export of sediment to Bhutan
 - (d) Redesign for increased water storage
9. What date was originally scheduled for Pakistan to submit its counter-memorial in the paused neutral expert proceedings?
 - (a) August 7, 2025
 - (b) July 15, 2025
 - (c) October 1, 2025
 - (d) September 10, 2025
10. What mechanism does India accuse Pakistan of exploiting through forum-shopping?
 - (a) The dispute resolution mechanism of the IWT
 - (b) Article I of the UN Charter
 - (c) World Bank grant protocols
 - (d) Geneva Convention
11. What is India's core condition for re-engaging under the Indus Waters Treaty framework?
 - (a) Signing a bilateral water quality protocol
 - (b) Dismantling of Pakistani nuclear assets
 - (c) Pakistan's credible and irrevocable renunciation of terrorism
 - (d) Joint construction of a new dam
12. What term did India use to describe the arbitration process initiated by Pakistan?

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- (a) "Unilateral assertion of sovereignty"
- (b) "Institutional overreach"
- (c) "Procedural redundancy"
- (d) "Charade"

13. What is the primary procedural violation India alleges regarding the ongoing parallel proceedings?

- (a) Lack of public consultation
- (b) Simultaneous invocation of neutral expert and arbitration mechanisms
- (c) Use of outdated hydrological data
- (d) Application of Paris Agreement norms to water

14. Which treaty provision outlines the three-tier dispute resolution mechanism India insists must be followed sequentially?

- (a) Annexure A
- (b) Article IX
- (c) Article V
- (d) Annexure D

15. What broader diplomatic shift does India's position on the IWT represent?

- (a) Support for Pakistan's IMF bailout conditions
- (b) Assertive linkage between water-sharing and national security
- (c) Support for regional water-trade through SAARC
- (d) Return to Indus Basin Development Fund

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. (c) | 2. (b) | 3. (c) | 4. (a) | 5. (c) | 6. (b) | 7. (b) | 8. (a) |
| 9. (a) | 10. (a) | 11. (c) | 12. (d) | 13. (b) | 14.(b) | 15.(b) | |

11

EU PROPOSES LEGALLY BINDING BAN ON RUSSIAN GAS IMPORTS BY 2027

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

- On **June 17, 2025**, the **European Commission** formally proposed a **legally binding ban** on imports of **Russian pipeline gas** and **liquefied natural gas (LNG)** into the **European Union** by the end of 2027.
- This policy aims to transform into law the EU's strategic decision to sever its long-standing energy relationship with Russia—a decision first articulated in the aftermath of **Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine**.
- The Commission's plan seeks to preclude any **veto attempts by Hungary and Slovakia**, countries which continue to rely on Russian gas and have previously blocked sanctions requiring unanimous consent.

Timeline for Implementation

Phase-Wise Ban on New and Existing Contracts

The Commission has outlined a **three-phase timeline** for implementing the ban. Beginning **January 1, 2026**, all **new contracts signed in 2025** for Russian pipeline gas or LNG will be prohibited. For **short-term contracts**, defined as those lasting **less than one year** and signed **before June 17, 2025**, the ban will take effect on **June 17, 2026**. The final stage of implementation will come into force on **January 1, 2028**, when all long-term Russian gas contracts will be banned, thus fully terminating the EU's use of Russian gas.

Exceptions for Hungary and Slovakia: Hungary and Slovakia, which continue to import Russian gas via pipeline, will be permitted to phase out their imports by **January 1, 2028**, including those under **short-term contracts**. These concessions were made to allow adequate transition time for economies heavily dependent on Russian energy.



Legal Architecture and Avoidance of Veto Power

- **Use of EU Trade and Energy Law:** To bypass the **requirement for unanimous approval** among EU member states—which has been obstructed by Hungary and Slovakia in previous sanction proposals—the Commission has anchored the ban within the framework of **EU trade and energy law**. This allows the measure to be adopted using a **reinforced qualified majority** in the **European Parliament**, avoiding the veto hurdle under common foreign and security policy provisions.
- **Invocation of Force Majeure Clauses:** The Commission has designed the legal framework to be strong enough for companies to invoke “**force majeure**” clauses, which refer to **unforeseeable events** that can be used to lawfully terminate binding contracts. According to **EU Energy Commissioner Dan Jørgensen**, this would enable companies to withdraw from Russian gas agreements without incurring legal penalties.

Impact on European Energy Importers

Affected Corporations and Contractual Exposure: Major European energy companies, such as **TotalEnergies** (France) and **Naturgy** (Spain), have **long-term contracts** for Russian LNG that extend into the **2030s**. These firms may face **legal and financial risks**, including **arbitration claims**, if the EU fails to provide robust legal protection under the proposed regulation.

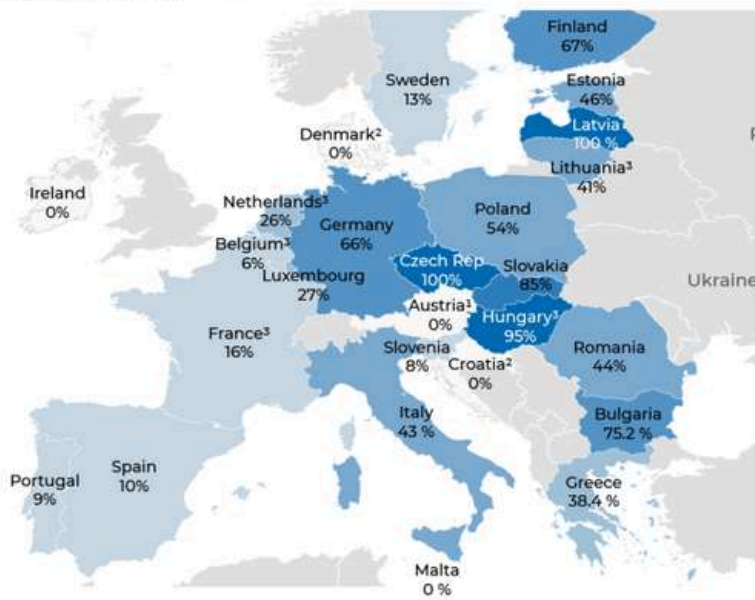
Mandatory Contract Disclosures: To ensure effective enforcement, the proposal requires that all **companies importing Russian gas** disclose **contractual details** to both **EU and national authorities**. This transparency measure is intended to prevent contractual evasion and to facilitate regulatory compliance.

- **Reduction of Russian Gas Dependency:** Currently, about **19% of Europe's gas** continues to come from Russia, primarily through the **TurkStream pipeline** and **LNG shipments**, down from nearly **45% before 2022**. The EU has already imposed sanctions on most **Russian oil imports**, with exceptions for **Hungary and Slovakia**, which remain heavily reliant on Russian crude.
- **Strategic Shift to Alternative Suppliers:** In its pursuit to replace Russian energy, the EU is set to **expand clean energy capacity** and **increase LNG imports from the United States**. The EU's LNG terminals have the capacity to **import 250 billion cubic metres annually**, though utilisation in recent years has remained below capacity. Countries like **Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France**, which currently import Russian LNG, have expressed full **political support** for the proposed ban.

ENERGY

Russian gas imports into the EU

Russia is the largest supplier of gas to Europe which it uses to heat homes and generate electricity. In 2020, the EU received some 40 percent of its gas from Russia.



¹ Natural gas trade data are confidential. ² No Russian gas imports reported. ³ Includes significant quantity of natural gas transit. No data available for Cyprus.
Source: Eurostat 2021

@AJLabs



- The **European Union (EU)** is a unique political and economic union of **27 member countries**, which originated from post-war efforts to promote peace and economic cooperation in Europe.
- Its earliest form, the **European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)**, was established in **1951** by **Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands** through the **Treaty of Paris**.
- This was followed in **1957** by the creation of the **European Economic Community (EEC)** and the **European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom)** under the **Treaty of Rome**.

- The **European Union** was officially formed in **1993** with the signing of the **Maastricht Treaty**, which replaced the EEC and introduced broader political integration. The **Treaty of Lisbon**, enacted in **2009**, further enhanced the EU's powers, including legislative efficiency and foreign policy coordination. The **United Kingdom** was a member until its withdrawal in **2020**, a process popularly known as **Brexit**.
- In terms of **demography**, **Germany** has the **largest population** among member states, while **France** is the **largest in area**, and **Malta** is the **smallest** country in the Union. The EU is governed through several core institutions: the **European Commission**, which serves as the executive arm responsible for proposing legislation and implementing decisions; the **European Parliament**, directly elected by EU citizens and serving as a legislative body; the **European Council**, which sets the EU's overall political direction; the **Council of the European Union**, representing the member states' governments; and the **Court of Justice of the European Union**, ensuring uniform interpretation and application of EU law.
- The EU implements several key policies and agreements, notably the **Single Market**, which ensures the free movement of **goods, services, capital, and people** across member states. The **Schengen Area** facilitates **passport-free travel** across most EU countries, although **Cyprus and Ireland** are excluded. Notably, four **non-EU countries**—**Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein**—are also part of the Schengen framework. The **Eurozone**, consisting of **19 EU countries**, constitutes a **monetary union** using the **euro** as a common currency. Other important policies include the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**, which supports farmers and ensures food security, and the **Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)**, which enables joint coordination on foreign and defense matters.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. What institution proposes EU legislation and enforces compliance?
(a) European Parliament (b) European Commission
(c) European Council (d) Council of the EU
2. What is the final deadline for EU member states to fully stop importing Russian gas under the new proposal?
(a) January 1, 2026 (b) June 17, 2026
(c) January 1, 2028 (d) December 31, 2027
3. Which two EU countries have received transition exemptions until 2028 under the new gas import ban?
(a) Poland and Austria
(b) France and Italy
(c) Hungary and Slovakia
(d) Germany and Czech Republic
4. Which treaty led to the formal creation of the European Union in 1993?
(a) Treaty of Rome (b) Treaty of Paris
(c) Lisbon Treaty (d) Maastricht Treaty
5. What legal mechanism is being used to bypass unanimity requirements for the proposed gas ban?
(a) Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty
(b) Reinforced qualified majority under EU trade and energy law
(c) A referendum among member states
(d) Emergency veto override provision
6. What clause enables companies to lawfully terminate Russian gas contracts without penalties?
(a) Termination for cause clause
(b) Sovereignty clause
(c) Force majeure clause
(d) Dispute settlement clause
7. Which of the following companies has contracts for Russian LNG extending into the 2030s?
(a) Eni (Italy) (b) TotalEnergies (France)
(c) Uniper (Germany) (d) Gaz de France
8. What was the name of the first major European integration entity created in 1951?
(a) European Community
(b) European Monetary Union
(c) Common European Assembly
(d) European Coal and Steel Community
9. Which pipeline is currently a major source of Russian gas to Europe in 2025?
(a) Nord Stream 2 (b) Yamal-Europe
(c) TurkStream (d) Trans-Mediterranean
10. Which of the following EU countries are not part of the Schengen Area?
(a) Cyprus and Ireland
(b) Portugal and Spain
(c) Greece and Italy
(d) Belgium and the Netherlands
11. How many countries are part of the EU's monetary union using the euro?
(a) 27 (b) 19 (c) 24 (d) 21
12. What is the name of the EU policy ensuring the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people?
(a) Single Market
(b) European Stability Mechanism
(c) Customs Union Policy
(d) Common Development Agenda

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (c) | 3. (c) | 4. (d) | 5. (b) | 6. (c) | 7. (b) | 8. (d) |
| 9. (c) | 10. (a) | 11. (b) | 12. (a) | | | | |

12

FIRST GENE-EDITED SHEEP MARKS MILESTONE IN LIVESTOCK BIOTECHNOLOGY

SCIENCE & TECH

IN FOCUS

- India marked a historic milestone in **animal biotechnology** with the successful birth of its first **gene-edited sheep** developed by the **Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST-Kashmir)**.
- The achievement signifies the country's entry into the elite group of nations employing **precision genome-editing technologies** for livestock enhancement.
- The sheep, a **Kashmir Merino**, was developed through gene-editing that introduced no foreign DNA, thereby distinguishing it from traditional transgenic animals and making it more likely to gain regulatory approval under India's **evolving biotech policy framework**.

The Pioneering Institution and Scientists Behind the Project

Role of SKUAST-Kashmir

SKUAST-Kashmir has emerged as a leader in **reproductive biotechnology**, with this achievement reinforcing its status on the global map of advanced genetic research. The project aligns with the university's vision to develop India's most **advanced reproductive biotechnology facility** that integrates scientific innovation with applications in agriculture and animal husbandry.

Leadership and Legacy: The research was spearheaded by **Dr. Riaz Ahmad Shah**, Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Sciences, SKUAST-Kashmir. His team had earlier achieved global recognition in 2012 by cloning India's first **Pashmina goat**, named **Noori**, a milestone in the field of cloning endangered breeds. The gene-edited sheep is seen as a continuation of this legacy and a symbol of the university's long-term commitment to **scientific excellence**.



The Science Behind the Innovation

What is Gene Editing?

Gene editing refers to a set of **genome modification techniques** that enable scientists to add, remove, or alter genetic material at precise locations in the DNA. In this case, the editing was performed using **CRISPR-Cas9 technology**, a revolutionary tool in molecular biology that allows targeted modifications without introducing **foreign genetic material**.

CRISPR-Cas9 and the Myostatin Gene

The researchers targeted the **myostatin (MSTN) gene**, which is known to act as a **negative regulator of muscle growth**. Inactivation of this gene leads to **increased skeletal muscle mass**. The result of editing this gene in the Kashmir Merino lamb was an approximately **30% increase in muscle mass**, a trait beneficial for

meat production and observed naturally only in select European sheep breeds like the **Texel**.

Observed Impact: The gene-edited lamb, born in **December 2024** and weighing **3.15 kg at birth**, was notably **heavier than its non-mutated sibling**. The offspring has been kept under observation for six months and is now thriving. Its **DNA profile is being sent for further international verification**, demonstrating adherence to **global biosafety protocols**.

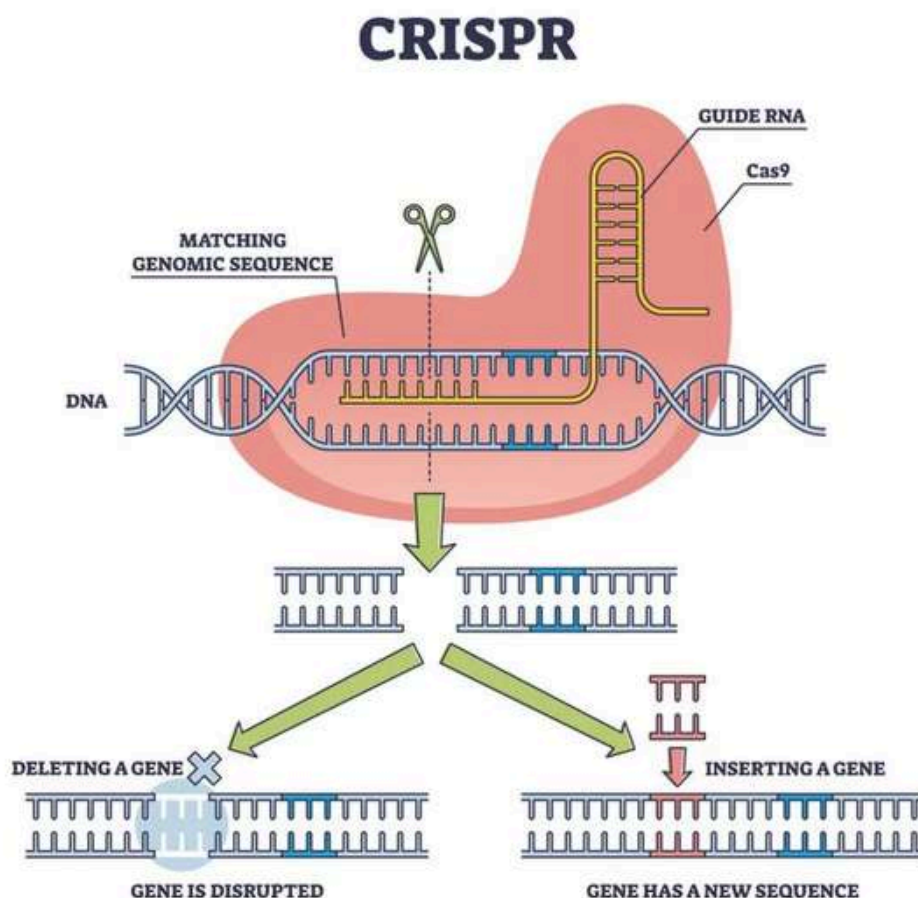
Significance of Kashmir Merino Breed in the Innovation

Characteristics of Kashmir Merino: The **Kashmir Merino** is a **dual-purpose sheep breed**, developed in the 1960s at the Government Sheep Breeding and Research Farm in Reasi, Jammu. It is known for producing **high-quality wool** and **good meat yield**, making it an ideal candidate for biotechnological enhancement.

Genetic Potential and Adaptability: Kashmir Merino was developed by crossbreeding **local breeds** like Poonchi, Gaddi, and Bakerwal with **exotic breeds** such as Australian Merino and Delaine rams. It is **3 to 4 times more productive** than native sheep and is well-adapted to the **harsh climatic conditions** of the Kashmir Valley.

National and Global Implications of the Achievement

- **Regulatory and Policy Relevance:** The absence of foreign DNA in the gene-edited sheep positions it outside the category of **genetically modified organisms (GMOs)**, paving the way for potential regulatory acceptance under India's **new biotechnology framework**. This distinction is crucial for policy discussions surrounding **food safety, bioethics, and public acceptance**.
- **Agricultural and Economic Impact:** Experts have emphasized the gene-edited lamb's potential in boosting **India's meat yield** amid rising domestic demand. Furthermore, this success follows the government's endorsement of **India's first gene-edited rice variety**, reinforcing the nation's growing stature in **genomic science** and **precision agriculture**.
- **Future Applications:** Beyond muscle growth, the gene-editing platform holds promise for **disease resistance, increased reproductive efficiency, and enhanced wool quality**. The SKUAST team plans to target the **FGF5 gene** in future projects to improve **fibre length** in sheep, expanding the technology's utility in the **textile industry** as well.



Challenges and Triumphs in the Research Journey

- **Research Timeline and Setbacks:** The gene-editing project began in **2020** and faced **three failed attempts** before succeeding. The embryo was developed in a laboratory, implanted into a **surrogate ewe**, and monitored closely through gestation and birth. This iterative scientific process underscores the **precision and complexity** of advanced gene-editing techniques.
- **Cloning to Gene Editing: Evolution of Innovation:** SKUAST-Kashmir's progress from **cloning Noori** in 2012 to producing a **gene-edited sheep** in 2024 represents a broader shift in biotechnology—from replication to **genetic enhancement**. Unlike cloning, which replicates existing genomes, gene editing introduces **targeted improvements** that align with **contemporary agricultural goals**.
- **Policy Alignment and Global Collaboration:** This achievement aligns with India's vision for a **sustainable bioeconomy** and scientific leadership. Vice Chancellor **Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai** highlighted the integration of **biotechnology with artificial intelligence** as a transformative force for ensuring **food security, livelihood enhancement, and climate-resilient agriculture**.

Institutional Roadmap

- SKUAST-Kashmir aims to expand its capabilities in **reproductive cloning, stem cell research, vaccine development, and transgenic innovation**. It is poised to play a key role in India's effort to create **disease-resistant, high-yielding, and environmentally adaptive livestock**, contributing to **India's self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat)** in the agricultural sector.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which institution developed India's first gene-edited sheep?
(a) SKUAST-Kashmir (b) IVRI, Bareilly
(c) NDRI, Karnal (d) NBAGR, Hisar
- What is the name of the sheep breed that was gene-edited in this project?
(a) Kashmir Merino (b) Deccani
(c) Pashmina (d) Nellore
- What gene-editing tool was used to modify the sheep's genome?
(a) TALEN (b) RNAi (c) CRISPR-Cas9 (d) ZFN
- What specific gene was targeted in the gene editing process?
(a) FGF5 (b) MSTN (c) BMP15 (d) PRLR
- What is the primary function of the Myostatin (MSTN) gene in animals?
(a) Inhibits muscle growth
(b) Enhances reproductive traits
(c) Promotes wool production
(d) Regulates body temperature
- What percentage increase in muscle mass was observed in the gene-edited sheep?
(a) 10% (b) 20% (c) 30% (d) 40%
- How was the gene-editing different from traditional genetic modification?
(a) It involved foreign gene insertion
(b) It used chemical mutagens
(c) No foreign DNA was introduced
(d) It used crossbreeding only
- The Kashmir Merino sheep was originally developed by crossbreeding native breeds with which exotic breeds?
(a) Rambouillet and Suffolk
(b) Australian Merino and Delaine
(c) Texel and Dorset
(d) Karakul and Merino
- In which Indian state is SKUAST located?
(a) Himachal Pradesh (b) Jammu and Kashmir
(c) Uttarakhand (d) Punjab
- What was the approximate weight of the gene-edited lamb at birth?
(a) 2.0 kg (b) 2.7 kg (c) 3.15 kg (d) 3.8 kg
- Which past achievement is SKUAST-Kashmir also known for?
(a) First test-tube buffalo
(b) Cloning India's first Pashmina goat
(c) Sequencing the sheep genome
(d) Producing hybrid wool
- Which gene is SKUAST planning to target next to improve wool fibre length?
(a) MSTN (b) MYC
(c) SOX9 (d) FGF5
- Why is the gene-edited sheep less likely to face regulatory restrictions in India?
(a) It was cloned naturally
(b) It has higher wool yield
(c) It was not bred in a lab
(d) It contains no foreign genetic material
- Which of the following is a natural trait observed in Texel sheep that was replicated in the gene-edited Kashmir Merino?
(a) Long gestation period
(b) Disease resistance
(c) Increased muscle mass
(d) Higher reproductive rate
- What broader goal does SKUAST-Kashmir's innovation align with in India's national vision?
(a) Doubling farmers' income by exporting Pashmina
(b) Atmanirbhar Bharat in animal biotechnology
(c) Replacing native breeds with exotic ones
(d) Privatizing livestock vaccine production

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (a) | 2. (a) | 3. (c) | 4. (b) | 5. (a) | 6. (c) | 7. (c) | 8. (b) |
| 9. (b) | 10. (c) | 11. (b) | 12. (d) | 13. (d) | 14. (c) | 15. (b) | |

13

INDIA'S FIRST INDIGENOUS POLAR
RESEARCH VESSEL

SCIENCE & TECH

IN FOCUS

- On **June 4, 2025**, a major milestone was achieved in India's maritime and scientific history when **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE)** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with **Norway's Kongsberg** in **Oslo**, in the presence of Union Minister **Sarbananda Sonowal**, to co-design and construct **India's first Indigenous Polar Research Vessel (PRV)**.
- This strategic collaboration reflects not only India's expanding capabilities in **shipbuilding and ocean sciences** but also its ambition to contribute meaningfully to **global polar research efforts**, particularly in the context of **climate change, marine biodiversity, and Antarctic governance**.

What is a Polar Research Vehicle?

A **Polar Research Vessel (PRV)** is a specially engineered ship designed to navigate and operate in the harsh, icy conditions of the **Arctic and Antarctic** regions. It serves as a **mobile scientific laboratory**, facilitating advanced research in **glaciology, climatology, oceanography, and marine biology**. In addition to supporting field missions in polar environments, the PRV is equipped to carry out **deep-sea oceanographic research**, making it a critical asset in understanding the **Earth's climate systems, subsurface ocean dynamics, and polar ecosystems**.



India's PRV will be operated by the **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)**, located in **Goa**, which is the nodal institution managing India's scientific missions in the polar regions. Currently, India maintains **three active polar research stations**, namely **Himadri** in the Arctic, and **Maitri** and **Bharati** in Antarctica. The introduction of an indigenously developed PRV will significantly strengthen India's **logistical independence**, enhance **real-time research capabilities**, and ensure uninterrupted support to these stations throughout the year.

Project Details: Construction, Cost, and Capabilities

- The PRV will be constructed at **GRSE's Kolkata shipyard** with advanced design and technological support provided by **Kongsberg, Norway**.
- The vessel will be outfitted with **state-of-the-art scientific instrumentation** to enable multifaceted research operations. These include capabilities for **deep-sea exploration, marine ecosystem analysis, and data collection on glaciological, meteorological, and climatic phenomena**.

- The ship will also be equipped with advanced navigation and propulsion systems designed to comply with **Polar Code regulations**, ensuring safe operations in extreme cold and ice-prone waters.

Estimated Cost and Timeline

- As per the announcement made by **Union Minister Kiren Rijiju** in the **Rajya Sabha** in **2023**, the estimated cost of constructing the PRV is approximately **₹2,600 crore**, with a targeted project completion timeline of **five years**.
- This investment underscores India's commitment to building a **technologically self-reliant scientific fleet**, aligning with the objectives of the **Make in India** and **Atmanirbhar Bharat** initiatives.

Scientific and Strategic Significance for India

- **Enhancing India's Role in Climate Science and Polar Research:** The commissioning of the PRV marks a critical enhancement of India's capability to engage in **long-duration scientific missions** in the **polar and Southern Ocean realms**, which are crucial for understanding the impact of **climate change on global sea levels, carbon cycles, and weather patterns**.
- This initiative positions India as a key stakeholder in international climate dialogues, where **first-hand polar data** and **sustained scientific presence** are increasingly valued.

International Engagement: India-Norway Maritime Partnership

- **Strategic Bilateral Cooperation in the Maritime Sector:** The PRV collaboration is part of a broader **India-Norway strategic maritime partnership**, focused on the development of **sustainable, smart, and green shipping solutions**. Indian shipyards now account for around **11% of the global order book** of the **Norwegian Shipowners' Association (NSA)**, reflecting Norway's growing trust in India's shipbuilding capacity. The MoU further consolidates bilateral cooperation in **ship design, green port logistics, and digital maritime ecosystems**.
- **Pillars of the Bilateral Partnership:** The India-Norway maritime engagement rests on six foundational pillars. First, under **green and sustainable shipping**, the countries are jointly exploring the deployment of **zero-emission vessels** powered by **hydrogen, ammonia, and electric propulsion**, and are collaborating on **LNG/ammonia bunkering infrastructure**.
- Second, in **smart port ecosystems**, they are developing **AI-enabled digital twins, smart logistics, and shore-to-ship electrification platforms**. Third, the partnership emphasizes **Arctic and polar navigation** through joint feasibility studies on the **Northern Sea Route (NSR)** and compliance with the **Polar Code**. Fourth, knowledge sharing in **ferry electrification and inland waterways** will enhance India's riverine mobility systems.
- Fifth, collaboration in **shipbuilding and recycling** will drive eco-friendly vessel production and capacity expansion. Finally, **capacity building and research cooperation** include technology transfers in **seafarer training, offshore hydrocarbons, ocean renewable energy, and maritime heritage**.

India's Maritime Vision and Strategic Blue Economy Framework

- **Alignment with SAGAR and MAHASAGAR Initiatives:** The PRV supports India's strategic doctrine of **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)**, particularly in reinforcing India's leadership in maritime governance and ocean science.
- It also aligns with the upgraded **MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across Regions)** initiative, which emphasises **capacity-building, disaster resilience, climate cooperation, and scientific-technological integration** with neighbouring and partner nations.
- **Sagarmala and Sagarmala 2.0:** Launched in **March 2015**, the **Sagarmala Programme** aims to modernize India's ports, boost coastal shipping, and enable **port-led industrialization**. As of 2025, **839 projects** worth **₹5.79 lakh crore** have been identified, of which **272 projects** worth **₹1.41 lakh crore** have been completed. Notably, **coastal shipping traffic** increased by **118%**, and **inland waterway cargo movement** surged by **700%**, substantially decongesting land transport networks. The **Ro-Pax ferry services** have benefited more than **40 lakh passengers**, enhancing coastal connectivity. In **early 2025**, **Sagarmala 2.0** was launched

- with a seed budget of ₹40,000 crore, aiming to mobilize ₹12 lakh crore in private investment. This second phase focuses on **shipbuilding, green ports, digitalization**, and new initiatives like the **Maritime AI Technology Readiness and Innovation (MAITRI)** platform.

Environmental Compliance: Hong Kong Convention and India's Role

- **India's Leadership in Eco-Friendly Ship Recycling:** India is one of the world's largest ship recycling nations, with major facilities located in **Alang, Gujarat**. As of 2025, **96 out of 120 ship recycling yards** in India have received **Statements of Compliance (SoC)** with the **Hong Kong International Convention (HKC)** for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships.
- **Overview of the Hong Kong Convention (HKC):** The **Hong Kong Convention**, adopted in **May 2009** by the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** in coordination with the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** and **Basel Convention Secretariat**, seeks to ensure that end-of-life ships are recycled in a manner that protects **human health** and the **environment**. The Convention mandates that all ships above **500 gross tonnage (GT)** maintain an **Inventory of Hazardous Materials (IHM)** and undergo **surveys and certification** throughout their life cycle. It also requires ship recycling to take place in **authorized facilities** that adhere to **worker safety, emergency preparedness, and hazardous waste protocols**.
- **Global Legal Enforcement and India's Compliance:** The HKC will enter into **legal force on June 26, 2025**, after fulfilling ratification thresholds in 2023—namely, accession by **at least 15 States** representing **40% of the global merchant fleet by tonnage** and **3% of global ship recycling volume**. India, having acceded to the Convention in **November 2019**, is among the leading compliant nations and a critical player in promoting **environmentally responsible ship recycling**.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which Indian shipbuilding company is constructing India's first Indigenous Polar Research Vessel?
(a) Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers
(b) Cochin Shipyard Limited
(c) Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders
(d) Hindustan Shipyard Limited
2. With which foreign company has India partnered for the co-design of the PRV?
(a) Wärtsilä (Finland)
(b) Kongsberg (Norway)
(c) Samsung Heavy Industries (South Korea)
(d) Mitsubishi Shipbuilding (Japan)
3. Which Indian ministry was represented at the signing of the PRV MoU in Oslo?
(a) Ministry of Science and Technology
(b) Ministry of External Affairs
(c) Ministry of Earth Sciences
(d) Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways
4. Which institution will operate India's Indigenous PRV?
(a) National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)
(b) Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)
(c) National Institute of Oceanography (NIO)
(d) Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology (CMLRE)
5. Which of the following is *not* an Indian polar research station?
(a) Himadri (b) Maitri
(c) Bharati (d) Dakshin Gangotri
6. What is the estimated cost for constructing India's Indigenous PRV?
(a) ₹1,200 crore (b) ₹2,600 crore
(c) ₹3,400 crore (d) ₹5,000 crore
7. What is the primary research purpose of a Polar Research Vessel?
(a) Mineral exploration in Arctic
(b) Fisheries management
(c) Scientific research in icy and polar environments
(d) Oil extraction in deep-sea basins
8. India's PRV project supports which major national initiative for maritime development?
(a) Startup India (b) Jal Shakti Abhiyan
(c) Sagarmala 2.0 (d) Swachh Sagar
9. Under which international convention has India secured Statements of Compliance (SoCs) for ship recycling yards?
(a) Kyoto Protocol (b) Hong Kong Convention
(c) Basel Convention (d) Rotterdam Convention
10. What percentage of India's ship recycling yards have received SoCs under the Hong Kong Convention?
(a) 60% (b) 70% (c) 80% (d) 96%
11. Which Indian state hosts most of the ship recycling facilities compliant with the Hong Kong Convention?
(a) Maharashtra (b) Tamil Nadu
(c) Gujarat (d) Andhra Pradesh
12. What is the targeted completion timeline for the PRV project?
(a) 3 years (b) 4 years
(c) 5 years (d) 6 years
13. Which of the following is *not* one of the six foundational pillars of the India-Norway maritime partnership?
(a) Development of offshore wind farms
(b) Smart port ecosystems
(c) Green and sustainable shipping
(d) Capacity building and research
14. What platform was launched under Sagarmala 2.0 to promote maritime innovation?
(a) VIKAS (b) SAHYOG (c) MAITRI (d) ANUBHAV
15. What is the minimum gross tonnage (GT) threshold above which ships must maintain an Inventory of Hazardous Materials under the Hong Kong Convention?
(a) 100 GT (b) 300 GT (c) 500 GT (d) 1000 GT

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (a) | 2. (b) | 3. (d) | 4. (a) | 5. (d) | 6. (b) | 7. (c) | 8. (c) |
| 9. (b) | 10. (d) | 11. (c) | 12. (c) | 13. (a) | 14. (c) | 15. (c) | |

14 AXIOM 4 MISSION LAUNCH

SCIENCE & TECH

IN FOCUS

- On **June 25, 2025**, India crossed a transformative threshold in its space journey as **Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla**, an astronaut from ISRO's Gaganyaan pool, was launched aboard the **Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-04)** to the **International Space Station (ISS)**.
- As the **Mission Pilot**, Shukla became the **second Indian citizen in history to visit space** and the **first to travel on a commercial international flight**, reaffirming India's emergence as a key player in **human spaceflight** and global **space partnerships**.
- The successful launch from **Kennedy Space Centre**, Florida, underlines not only ISRO's scientific readiness but also its commitment to shaping a future defined by Indian astronauts in orbit.

Background: Gaganyaan Programme and India-US Space Cooperation

1

Gaganyaan's Strategic Foundations

The origin of India's human spaceflight ambitions can be traced to the **announcement of the Gaganyaan Programme by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 15 August 2018**. This mission aimed to send Indian astronauts into space using indigenous capabilities. Under this programme, **four Indian Air Force test pilots** were selected, trained both abroad and at ISRO's **Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC)** in Bengaluru. Key milestones under Gaganyaan include:

- **Successful Crew Escape System demonstration** in the **TV-D1 mission**
- **Hardware integration** for the upcoming **uncrewed Gaganyaan-1**
- **Gaganyatri-specific training**, including underwater survival, orbital mechanics, and biomedical testing.
- **First crewed launch targeted for Q1 2027**

2

Foundation of Ax-04: India-US Space Diplomacy

During the **Prime Minister's historic visit to the United States in 2023**, the Ax-04 collaboration was formalized through high-level diplomatic engagements. This mission was envisioned as a stepping stone towards deeper **India-US strategic cooperation in space**, particularly in **crewed missions, space station operations, and commercial launch partnerships**. The participation of an Indian astronaut in Ax-04 is not merely symbolic; it reflects the **equal partnership role ISRO played**, both in planning and execution.

Axiom Mission 4

Launch Chronology and Key Events: The **Falcon 9 rocket**, a reusable two-stage launch vehicle developed by **SpaceX**, lifted off from **Launch Pad 39A** at 12:01 PM IST on **25 June 2025**. The rocket carried the **Crew Dragon capsule**, which executed a flawless **soft docking** with the **International Space Station (ISS)** at 4:02 PM IST on 26 June, followed by **hard docking** at 4:16 PM IST. The capsule hatch was opened at 5:53 PM, and Shubhanshu Shukla officially entered the ISS—greeted by the **Expedition 73 crew** during a welcome ceremony held at 6:45 PM IST.

International Crew Composition

The **Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-04)** comprises **four astronauts** from **four different countries**, reflecting the collaborative nature of modern commercial space missions. This diverse composition also highlights the trend of increasing international cooperation in human spaceflight. **Commander Peggy Whitson**, representing the **United States**, brings unmatched experience as **NASA's most seasoned female astronaut**. **Mission Pilot Shubhanshu Shukla**, from **India**, is the first Indian astronaut to travel on a commercial orbital mission, representing **ISRO**. **Sławosz Uznański**, from **Poland**, and **Tibor Kapu**, from **Hungary**, serve as **Mission Specialists**, contributing to scientific and operational aspects of the mission. Together, the Ax-04 crew exemplifies multinational collaboration in a commercial space environment.



Scientific Activities and India's Research Contribution

Daily Mission Timeline and Experiments

- **Activities on Day 1 (June 26, 2025):** Following the successful docking of the Crew Dragon capsule to the ISS, Shubhanshu Shukla began his mission by undergoing an **initial safety briefing**, **baseline health evaluation**, and a comprehensive **orientation to the onboard systems and environment**.
- **Activities on Day 2:** On the second day, the astronaut conducted a **tour of ISS laboratories**, **activated Indian scientific payloads**, and participated in his **first private medical conference**. This confirmed his stable health and effective adaptation to **microgravity conditions**.
- **Outreach and Reflection on Day 3:** A highlight of Day 3 was Shukla's **video interaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, during which he described **India's appearance from orbit**, discussed the **cultural significance** of carrying the Indian flag into space, and reflected on consuming **Indian food in microgravity**.
- **Operational Coordination on Day 4:** Shukla contributed to ongoing **scientific data collection**, and participated in a **Crew Earth Observation session** during an overpass of India. He also underwent a **second round of medical monitoring** and coordinated with ground teams on experimental updates.
- **Research and STEM Outreach on Day 5:** On the final documented day, the astronaut redeployed a **microalgae culture bag**, contributed to a **human physiology experiment**, and retrieved **myogenesis tissue samples** from the station's freezer. He also conducted a **STEM education session**, filmed for academic audiences back home in India.

Indian Scientific Experiments Onboard

- **Biological and Agricultural Experiments:** One of the key contributions from India includes the study of **microalgae growth** under microgravity conditions, designed to test its suitability for **oxygen regeneration** and **nutritional supplementation** during long-duration space missions. Additionally, experiments focused on the **sprouting of salad seeds** aim to evaluate the feasibility of **space farming**.
- **Tardigrade and Gene Expression Studies:** Another experiment investigates the **spaceborne behaviour of the Paramacrobiotus sp.**, a hardy species of **tardigrade**. Researchers will examine its **survival**,

- **reproduction, and transcriptomic changes**, offering insights into extremophile adaptation in extraterrestrial environments.
- **Human Physiology and Cognitive Performance:** Additional experiments examine the **impact of microgravity on human muscle regeneration**, with particular attention to the role of **metabolic supplements**. Parallel cognitive tests study astronaut interaction with **digital interfaces**, a key concern in navigation and mission control during extended missions.
- **Payload Handling and Integration Support:** All Indian scientific experiments were reviewed and integrated by **Redwire Space, USA**, ensuring compliance with **ISS operational protocols**. Payloads were securely packaged and accompanied by specific **hardware handling guidelines**, facilitating seamless execution onboard the station.

ISRO's Role and Training of Indian Astronauts

High-Level Oversight and Facility Visits: A dedicated ISRO team led by **Chairman Dr. V. Narayanan** visited the **Johnson Space Center, Kennedy Space Center**, and facilities of **SpaceX and Axiom Space** in **June 2025** to oversee the mission's final integration stages. The delegation's presence underscored India's active and equal participation in international crewed missions.

Resolution of Technical Anomalies: During these visits, the ISRO delegation played a direct role in addressing critical mission delays. They ensured corrective action for multiple issues including a **harness defect in the Dragon capsule**, **propellant leakage in the Falcon 9 booster**, and a **pressure leak in the ISS's Zvezda module**. The originally scheduled launch on **19 June 2025** was postponed until complete risk mitigation was confirmed.

Final Authorisation and Launch Participation: Once the anomalies were resolved to mutual satisfaction, the ISRO team returned to the United States and participated in the final pre-launch procedures and the successful liftoff on **25 June 2025**, highlighting the seriousness with which India treats crew safety and mission preparedness.

Astronaut Training and Selection

Crew Selection under Gaganyaan: Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla and Prashanth B. Nair were chosen from the cohort trained under ISRO's Gaganyaan Programme. Shukla served as Mission Pilot while Nair was the Backup Crew Member for the Ax-04 mission.

Training Across Leading International Facilities: Their astronaut training was conducted at NASA's Johnson Space Center, Axiom Space's headquarters, and SpaceX Dragon simulators. The modules covered included spacecraft systems, emergency procedures, payload operations, space medicine, and zero-gravity acclimatisation.

Outdoor Leadership and Team Resilience Training: They also participated in NASA's National Outdoor Leadership Programme (NOLPS) held in Mexico. This phase of training focused on team-building, problem-solving under stress, and psychological preparedness, essential for confined space missions.

Symbolism, Diplomacy, and Cultural Representation

Cultural Diplomacy in Orbit: As a tribute to **India's cultural heritage**, Shukla carried curated artefacts crafted by students from the **National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad**.



These items represent various Indian handicrafts, embodying **regional diversity**, **artistic excellence**, and **craftsmanship traditions**. Their presence aboard the ISS underscores India's commitment to integrating **culture with science**, symbolizing its soft power on a global platform.

Strategic and Diplomatic Significance: The mission reinforces **India's equal-footing space diplomacy** and active contribution to **commercial crewed missions**. It recalls the legacy of **Rakesh Sharma's 1984 spaceflight** while showcasing India's evolution—from riding on foreign missions to **leading integrated space collaborations**. The partnership with Axiom, SpaceX, and NASA exemplifies India's growing stature in the global space ecosystem.

Significance for Gaganyaan and Beyond

- **Validation of Medical and Operational Protocols:** The Ax-04 mission functioned as a **live operational prototype** for India's first crewed mission, allowing ISRO to test critical components such as **astronaut medical telemetry**, **communication protocols**, and **crew-ground interface dynamics**.
- **Microgravity Research and Experiment Logistics:** The hands-on execution of Indian scientific experiments enabled ISRO to refine its approach to **payload design**, **microgravity compatibility**, and **onboard experiment handling**, directly informing the mission protocols of **Gaganyaan-1**.
- **Multinational Integration and Real-Time Coordination:** The successful coordination with international partners under the Ax-04 framework offers valuable experience in **multilateral crew management**, **emergency protocol standardisation**, and **ISS operations**, all of which are crucial for future deep space missions.



Expanding India's Space Ambitions

- **Goals for a National Space Station and Lunar Mission:** India has set a target to **establish its own space station by 2035**, with plans to enable extended scientific operations in low-Earth orbit. Additionally, ISRO has outlined a roadmap for a **human Moon landing mission by 2040**, signalling its ambitions for deep space exploration.
- **Commercial Opportunities and Global Positioning:** Despite being a global space power, India currently holds only **2% of the global space economy**. Missions like Ax-04 are critical to enhancing international credibility and encouraging **private sector participation** in areas such as **launch vehicles**, **payload development**, and **orbital services**.
- **Inspiring a New Generation of Scientists:** The symbolic and scientific success of Shubhanshu Shukla's mission is expected to **inspire Indian youth** and increase national interest in **aerospace sciences**. This cultural momentum will support India's efforts to create an **innovation-driven, employment-generating space ecosystem** in the coming decades.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Who became the second Indian citizen in history to travel to space as part of Axiom Mission 4?
(a) Rakesh Sharma (b) Prashanth B. Nair
(c) Shubhanshu Shukla (d) Sunita Williams
 2. Axiom Mission 4 was launched aboard which commercial rocket?
(a) PSLV-C58 (b) GSLV Mk III
(c) New Shepard (d) Falcon 9
 3. From which launch site did Ax-04 take off?
(a) Satish Dhawan Space Centre
(b) Baikonur Cosmodrome
(c) Kennedy Space Center
(d) Vandenberg Space Force Base
 4. What role did Shubhanshu Shukla serve in the Axiom Mission 4?
(a) Commander (b) Flight Engineer
(c) Mission Specialist (d) Mission Pilot
 5. Who was the commander of the Ax-04 mission?
(a) Scott Kelly (b) Sławosz Uznański
(c) Peggy Whitson (d) Tibor Kapu
 6. Which Indian programme trained the astronauts who participated in Ax-04?
(a) Mangalyaan (b) Chandrayaan
(c) Gaganyaan (d) Astrosat
 7. Which US-based company supported the integration of Indian scientific payloads on Ax-04?
(a) Axiom Space (b) Blue Origin
(c) SpaceX (d) Redwire Space
- Which Indian research institution contributed payloads such as microalgae and tardigrade studies for the mission?
(a) ISRO Human Space Flight Centre
(b) DRDO Space Biology Division
(c) Various Indian scientific institutes under ISRO coordination
(d) NCPOR
9. What major physiological experiment was part of India's research onboard Ax-04?
(a) Astronaut sleep rhythm tracking
(b) Human muscle regeneration in microgravity
(c) Space plant breeding
(d) In-situ oxygen generation
 10. What cultural items did Shubhanshu Shukla carry to space as a tribute to India's heritage?
(a) Photographs of ISRO scientists
(b) Holy books
(c) Miniature spacecraft models
(d) Handicraft artefacts from NID
 11. Which backup astronaut was trained alongside Shubhanshu Shukla for the Ax-04 mission?
(a) Prashanth B. Nair (b) Ajay Singh
(c) Rakesh Sharma (d) Anil Menon
 12. What was one of the key technical issues resolved by the ISRO delegation before the launch?
(a) Fuel leakage in the Soyuz launcher
(b) Solar panel detachment
(c) Harness defect in the Dragon capsule
(d) Water leak in life-support systems
 13. Under which space diplomacy milestone was the Ax-04 India-US collaboration finalized?
(a) PM Modi's 2023 US visit
(b) Chandrayaan-3 launch
(c) Artemis Accord
(d) BRICS Space Cooperation Summit
 14. What long-term goal has India set for its own space station?
(a) By 2027 (b) By 2030 (c) By 2035 (d) By 2040
 15. What percentage of the global space economy does India currently hold, as noted in the Ax-04 context?
(a) 2% (b) 3% (c) 5% (d) 1%

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (c) | 2. (d) | 3. (c) | 4. (d) | 5. (c) | 6. (c) | 7. (d) | 8. (c) |
| 9. (b) | 10. (d) | 11. (a) | 12. (c) | 13. (a) | 14. (c) | 15. (b) | |

15

KHICHAN AND MENAR AS NEW
RAMSAR SITES

ENVIRONMENT

IN FOCUS

- On **5 June 2025**, coinciding with the **eve of World Environment Day**, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change **Bhupender Yadav** announced the addition of **Khichan Wetland in Phalodi** and **Menar Wetland in Udaipur** to the prestigious list of **Ramsar Sites**.
- This designation brings the total number of Ramsar sites in India to **91**, reinforcing India's position as the **Asian leader in wetland conservation**. Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed the news, calling it a testament to India's growing public participation and commitment toward **ecological sustainability**.

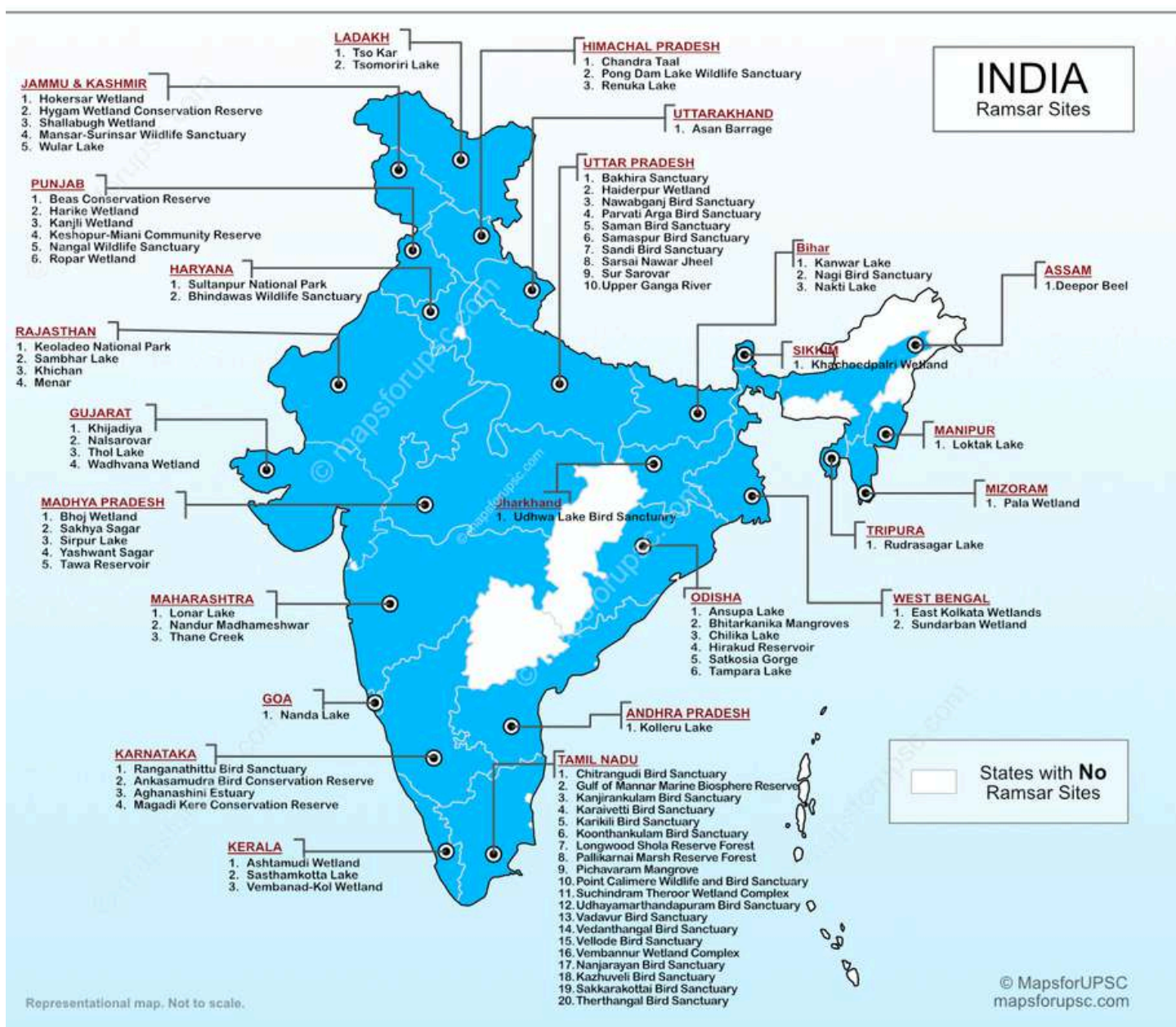
Ramsar Convention

The **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** is an intergovernmental treaty adopted in **1971** in **Ramsar, Iran**, which provides a global framework for the **conservation and wise use of wetlands**. It recognises wetlands as ecosystems of critical ecological and economic importance and aims to halt their degradation and promote sustainable use.

India's Membership and Obligations: India became a **Contracting Party to the Ramsar Convention in 1982** and has since made significant efforts to identify, protect, and manage wetlands of international importance. Ramsar Sites in India are designated based on **nine ecological criteria**, including their importance for **biodiversity conservation**, presence of **rare or threatened species**, and their role in supporting **waterbird populations** or **unique wetland types**.

Ramsar Site Definition and Ecosystem Services: As per the Convention, wetlands include **marshes, fens, peatlands, lakes, rivers, ponds, and marine areas** up to **six metres in depth at low tide**, whether **natural or artificial, permanent or temporary**, with **fresh, brackish, or saltwater**. Wetlands are described as among the **most productive ecosystems**, offering critical **ecosystem services** such as **flood control, water purification, carbon sequestration, groundwater recharge, and biodiversity support**.





Rajasthan's New Ramsar Sites

Menar Wetland Complex (Udaipur District)

- **Hydrological and Ecological Features:** The Menar Wetland Complex is a freshwater monsoon-dependent ecosystem located in southern Rajasthan. It comprises three primary ponds—Braham talab, Dhand talab, and Kheroda talab—interlinked by seasonally flooded agricultural land. During the monsoon season, the inundated farmland creates extensive habitat suitable for over 110 species of waterbirds, of which 67 are migratory.
- **Avifaunal Diversity and Threatened Species:** Menar supports populations of globally threatened birds, including the critically endangered white-rumped vulture and the long-billed vulture. The mango trees surrounding Braham talab host large colonies of Indian flying foxes, further adding to the site's ecological value.
- **Community-Led Conservation Model:** Menar is widely recognised for its community-driven

- **conservation efforts.** The residents of **Menar village** play an active role in protecting the habitat by **preventing poaching, discouraging fishing, and raising awareness about bird safety**, making it one of the finest examples of **public-led environmental stewardship** in Rajasthan.

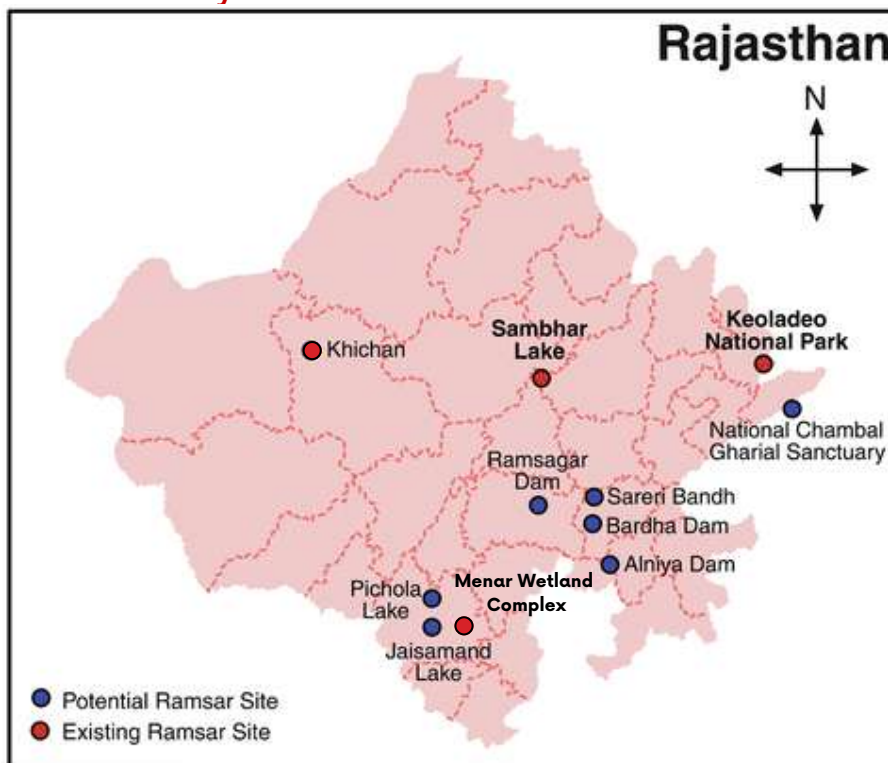
Khichan Wetland (Phalodi, Jodhpur District)

- **Desert Wetland Landscape:** Located in the **northern Thar Desert**, the **Khichan Wetland** comprises two primary water bodies—**Ratri nadi (seasonal river)** and **Vijaysagar talab (pond)**—along with **riparian zones and scrublands**. The site is surrounded by **drought-resistant vegetation** typical of arid ecosystems.
- **Globally Significant Migratory Bird Site:** Khichan is internationally renowned for hosting massive flocks of **Demoiselle cranes**, with annual wintering populations exceeding **22,000 individuals**. These migratory birds travel from **Central Asia**, including **Mongolia and Kazakhstan**, and arrive at Khichan between **October and March**.
- **Local Participation and Threat Mitigation:** The local community plays a vital role in conserving crane populations by implementing **mitigation strategies** such as **raising awareness about power line collisions, managing stray dog threats**, and **maintaining feeding areas**. The site has also become a hub for **eco-tourism, ornithological research, and environmental education**, drawing birdwatchers, students, and scientists from across the country.



Rajasthan's Ramsar Profile and Wetland Diversity

- **Expansion of Ramsar Coverage in Rajasthan:** With the inclusion of **Khichan Wetland in Phalodi** and **Menar Wetland in Udaipur**, the state of Rajasthan now possesses a total of **four Ramsar-designated wetlands**.
- These additions reflect a growing recognition of Rajasthan's ecological diversity and the increasing commitment of both the government and local communities towards wetland conservation.
- The earlier two Ramsar sites in the state include the **Keoladeo Ghana National Park** in Bharatpur, designated as early as 1981 and also recognised as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, and the **Sambhar Lake**, which



- straddles the Nagaur and Jaipur districts and represents India's largest inland saltwater lake.
- **Ecological Significance of Rajasthan's Wetland Types:** Rajasthan's Ramsar wetlands span a wide ecological spectrum, encompassing **monsoon-fed freshwater ponds, desert oasis wetlands, and saline ecosystems.**
- This diversity highlights the state's unique position in supporting **bird migration corridors**, especially within the **Central Asian Flyway.**
- The Menar Wetland exemplifies **seasonal freshwater systems**, while Khichan offers a critical desert habitat for migratory cranes.
- In contrast, Sambhar Lake contributes to **hypersaline ecological processes**, and Keoladeo National Park functions as a **man-managed wetland** maintained through regulated hydrology and active conservation.

The Montreux Record and Wetlands Under Stress in India

- **Purpose and Scope of the Montreux Record:** The **Montreux Record** is maintained under the Ramsar Convention as a register of wetlands whose **ecological character has undergone, is undergoing, or is likely to undergo significant changes** due to factors such as **human interference, pollution, or climate-related stressors.** Inclusion in this record serves to mobilise **international cooperation**, technical support, and funding for the restoration of such sites. The Montreux Record thus functions as both a **warning mechanism** and a **restorative tool** within the Ramsar framework.
- **Indian Wetlands Currently Listed:** As of 2025, India has **two wetlands included in the Montreux Record.** The first is the **Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan**, which was placed on the list in **1990** due to concerns over **water scarcity, siltation**, and the proliferation of **invasive species**, all of which threaten the site's suitability as a bird nesting and feeding habitat. The second site is **Loktak Lake in Manipur**, added in **1993**, which represents **Northeast India's largest freshwater lake.** It is ecologically unique for its **Phumdis**—floating mats of vegetation and organic matter—that support both biodiversity and local livelihoods, but are now under threat due to **hydrological alterations and pollution.**
- **Chilika Lake: A Case of Successful Restoration:** In contrast to the above, **Chilika Lake** in Odisha stands as a model for successful wetland restoration. Initially added to the Montreux Record in **1993** due to declining fish productivity and salinity imbalance, it was removed in **2002** following extensive hydrological interventions and community-based management. This made Chilika the **first Ramsar site in Asia to be delisted from the Montreux Record**, underscoring the potential for evidence-based policy and public engagement to restore deteriorating wetland ecosystems.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Who announced the inclusion of Khichan Wetland and Menar Wetland as new Ramsar Sites on the eve of World Environment Day 2025?
(a) Narendra Modi
(b) Bhupender Yadav
(c) Ashwini Kumar Choubey
(d) Gajendra Singh Shekhawat
2. After the inclusion of Khichan and Menar, what is the total number of Ramsar sites in India?
(a) 91 (b) 90 (c) 89 (d) 92
3. The Ramsar Convention was adopted in which country?
(a) Sweden (b) Iran (c) India (d) Switzerland
4. What type of wetland ecosystem is Menar classified as?
(a) Desert wetland
(b) Hypersaline lagoon
(c) Monsoon-dependent freshwater wetland
(d) Permanent alpine lake
5. Which critically endangered bird species is found in Menar Wetland?
(a) White-rumped vulture (b) Great Indian bustard
(c) Sarus crane (d) Black-necked stork
6. Which of the following Ramsar sites is not located in Rajasthan?
(a) Sambhar Lake (b) Keoladeo National Park
(c) Chilika Lake (d) Khichan Wetland
7. What river system is associated with the Khichan Wetland?
(a) Yamuna. (b) Ratri nadi
(c) Luni (d) Chambal
8. Which wetland in Rajasthan is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site?
(a) Keoladeo National Park (b) Sambhar Lake
(c) Menar Wetland (d) Khichan Wetland
9. What are the primary migratory birds that Khichan is globally renowned for hosting?
(a) Demoiselle cranes (b) Greater flamingos
(c) Siberian cranes (d) Eurasian spoonbills
10. Which of the following describes the Ramsar Convention's definition of wetlands?
(a) Only freshwater lakes and rivers
(b) Forested uplands and desert plains
(c) Natural or artificial aquatic ecosystems, including those with saline, brackish, or freshwater
(d) Marine systems deeper than 10 metres
11. What is the purpose of the Montreux Record under the Ramsar framework?
(a) Penalising countries violating wetland laws
(b) Register of wetlands under ecological stress
(c) Catalogue of wetlands with tourism potential
(d) Inventory of coral reef systems
12. Which two Indian wetlands are currently listed in the Montreux Record?
(a) Chilika and Keoladeo (b) Keoladeo and Loktak
(c) Wular and Loktak (d) Sunderbans & Nal Sarovar
13. What makes Loktak Lake ecologically unique?
(a) Phumdis—floating organic vegetation
(b) Largest mangrove forest
(c) High-altitude location
(d) Volcanic crater origin
14. What is the Ramsar status of Chilika Lake as of 2025?
(a) Newly added to Montreux
(b) Not a Ramsar site anymore
(c) Successfully removed from Montreux Record
(d) Under consideration for delisting

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (a) | 3. (b) | 4. (c) | 5. (a) | 6. (c) | 7. (b) | 8. (a) |
| 9. (a) | 10. (c) | 11. (b) | 12. (b) | 13. (a) | 14. (c) | | |

16 ETALIN HYDROPOWER PROJECT IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

ENVIRONMENT

IN FOCUS

- The Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has granted **in-principle forest clearance** to the **3,097 MW Etalin Hydropower Project** in Arunachal Pradesh.
- This clearance marks a pivotal shift in India's infrastructure and environmental policy, as it overturns the FAC's own 2022 decision that had rejected the project based on significant **biodiversity, tribal, and cumulative impact concerns**.
- The approval, granted in May 2025, allows diversion of approximately **1,175 hectares of forest land** in the **Dibang Valley**, a part of the **Eastern Himalaya Global Biodiversity Hotspot**, and involves the **felling of over 2.78 lakh trees**, making it one of the most environmentally controversial infrastructure clearances in recent years.

Geographic and Ecological Profile of the Project Area

Location and River Systems: The Etalin Hydropower Project is located in the **remote Dibang Valley** of Arunachal Pradesh, an ecologically sensitive region bordering China. The project proposes construction of two **gravity dams** on the **Dri River** and the **Talo River** (locally known as Tangon), both of which are tributaries of the **Dibang River**, a major tributary of the Brahmaputra. The **run-of-the-river** nature of the project implies that it will not involve large-scale water storage, but will instead divert river flow through tunnels to generate electricity.



Biodiversity Richness and Wildlife Habitat: The proposed site falls within a forest landscape that is part of the **Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot**, recognized globally for its exceptional flora and fauna. The region is home to over **680 species of birds**, representing nearly **56% of India's avifauna**, and includes several **rare and endemic species**. Mammalian biodiversity includes **tigers, leopards, snow leopards, black bears, alpine musk deer, and the endangered Mishmi takin**. Notably, **six globally threatened mammal species** inhabit the project zone, including **three endangered** and **three vulnerable** species, making the area ecologically irreplaceable.

Project Appraisal History and Clearance Process

Prolonged Deliberations and Reversal of Rejections: The Etalin project has been under appraisal by the Forest Advisory Committee since **2014**, with six formal discussions recorded between **2015 and 2022**. In **December 2022**, the FAC had explicitly rejected the proposal due to concerns over inadequate and outdated ecological studies. It had directed the Arunachal Pradesh government to conduct **multi-seasonal biodiversity**

assessments and a **comprehensive cumulative impact study**, given the high number of hydropower projects planned across the Dibang River basin.

However, in **May 2025**, the FAC granted in-principle forest clearance based on existing documents, including a **four-month study by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** submitted in 2019 and a cumulative impact assessment. This move **overlooked its own 2022 directive** for more rigorous environmental documentation.

Role of the Wildlife Institute of India and Scientific Criticism: The WII study submitted as a biodiversity baseline for the project was conducted over a limited four-month period and received widespread academic criticism. In a **peer-reviewed scientific paper**, **29 Indian conservationists** criticized the study for **inaccurate species reporting**, including mention of the **African straw-coloured fruit bat and long-tailed house bat**, neither of which is native to India. The FAC sub-committee in 2022 had reiterated the necessity of **multi-seasonal replicate studies**, yet the final clearance in 2025 relied on the same contested report, raising concerns about scientific rigour in environmental decision-making.

Tribal Opposition and Social Concerns

Indigenous Resistance from the Idu Mishmi Community

The forests earmarked for the Etalin project are classified as **community forests**, governed traditionally by the **Idu Mishmi tribe** under customary rights. The community has **consistently opposed** the project since its inception, citing threats to their cultural heritage, livelihoods, and the fragile Himalayan ecosystem. Their concerns include the disruption of spiritual sites, deforestation-driven wildlife displacement, and increased risk of landslides in the seismically active region.

Lack of Free, Prior and Informed Consent: Despite the tribal opposition, there is limited evidence that the principle of **Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)**—enshrined under **Schedule V of the Constitution** and the **Forest Rights Act, 2006**—was adequately followed. Activists have alleged that local consultations were either tokenistic or conducted without providing access to technical reports or environmental impact documents in local languages. This raises potential procedural violations in terms of both **environmental justice** and **tribal self-governance**.



Policy Dimensions and Legal Framework

Role and Mandate of the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC): The **Forest Advisory Committee** is a statutory body constituted under the **Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980**, with the mandate to examine proposals involving forest land diversion for non-forest purposes. Its role is **advisory**, but crucial in safeguarding ecological integrity. The FAC is required to base its recommendations on **ecological impact assessments**, **biodiversity documentation**, and compliance with **forest rights laws**, particularly in tribal areas.

Run-of-the-River Projects and Environmental Controversies: While **run-of-the-river** projects are promoted as low-impact alternatives to large dams, they can still cause **substantial ecological alterations**. These include **fragmentation of river ecosystems**, **reduced river connectivity**, and **changes in sediment and nutrient flows**, especially in **mountain ecologies**.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- In which district of Arunachal Pradesh is the Etalin Hydropower Project located?
(a) Dibang Valley (b) West Siang
(c) Lower Dibang Valley (d) Lohit
- What is the total proposed installed capacity of the Etalin Hydropower Project?
(a) 2,880 MW (b) 3,097 MW
(c) 3,600 MW (d) 2,520 MW
- Which two rivers will have dams constructed under the Etalin Hydropower Project?
(a) Subansiri and Siang (b) Lohit and Kameng
(c) Dri and Talo (d) Ranganadi and Siyom
- As per the Forest Advisory Committee's May 2025 decision, how much forest land will be diverted for the Etalin project?
(a) Around 980 hectares (b) Over 1,175 hectares
(c) Nearly 1,400 hectares (d) Exactly 1,000 hectares
- Which endangered species is among those found in the Etalin project zone?
(a) Hangul (b) Mishmi takin
(c) Nilgiri tahr (d) Western tragopan
- The Etalin project falls within which global ecological classification?
(a) Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot
(b) Deccan Plateau dry forest
(c) Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot
(d) Trans-Himalayan cold desert zone
- Which institution submitted the four-month biodiversity report for the Etalin Project?
(a) Zoological Survey of India
(b) Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education
(c) Indian Institute of Ecology and Environment
(d) Wildlife Institute of India
- What was the main criticism of the Wildlife Institute of India's 2019 report?
(a) It excluded data from summer months
(b) It overestimated vegetation cover
(c) It did not cover bird diversity
(d) It misreported non-native species
- Which tribal community traditionally governs the forest lands affected by the Etalin Project?
(a) Nyishi
(b) Idu Mishmi
(c) Monpa
(d) Galo
- Which constitutional and legal framework mandates Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) from tribal communities?
(a) Schedule VI and PESA Act, 1996
(b) Schedule V and Forest Rights Act, 2006
(c) Article 371 and Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
(d) Article 338A and Panchayati Raj Act, 1992
- When was the Etalin project proposal first taken up for appraisal by the Forest Advisory Committee?
(a) 2015 (b) 2014 (c) 2016 (d) 2017
- What is a key ecological concern associated with run-of-the-river (RoR) hydropower projects?
(a) River fragmentation and flow alteration
(b) High greenhouse gas emissions
(c) Low sedimentation rate
(d) Depletion of fossil fuels
- Under which law is the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) constituted?
(a) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
(b) Biological Diversity Act, 2002
(c) Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
(d) Environment Protection Act, 1986
- How many trees are estimated to be felled for the Etalin Hydropower Project?
(a) Around 1.5 lakh (b) Over 3 lakh
(c) Over 2.78 lakh (d) Around 50,000
- Which of the following was a demand made by conservationists regarding hydropower development in the Dibang basin?
(a) Local employment quota
(b) Free electricity to tribal villages
(c) Basin-level cumulative impact assessment
(d) Change of project site to Assam plains

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (a) | 2. (b) | 3. (c) | 4. (b) | 5. (b) | 6. (c) | 7. (d) | 8. (d) |
| 9. (b) | 10. (b) | 11. (b) | 12. (a) | 13. (a) | 14. (c) | 15. (c) | |

17

FIRST ASSEMBLY OF THE
INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE

ENVIRONMENT

IN FOCUS

- On **June 16, 2025**, the inaugural Assembly of the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** was held in **New Delhi**, with **Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav** presiding as the President of the Assembly.
- This momentous gathering marked a significant step forward in the global conservation discourse, following the official establishment of IBCA in **March 2024**.
- The alliance was earlier announced by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** in **2023** on the **50th anniversary of Project Tiger**, symbolising India's leadership in big cat conservation and its resolve to institutionalise international cooperation under the aegis of the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**.

Genesis and Structural
Framework of IBCA

- **Conceptual Origins and Cabinet Approval:** The IBCA was conceived as a **multi-country, multi-agency platform** to collectively address the growing challenges faced by big cat species across the globe. The announcement came during PM Modi's visit to **Mysuru in 2023**, commemorating five decades of Project Tiger. The **Union Cabinet**, in **February 2024**, formally approved the alliance's institutional design, and the Government of India committed a funding support of **₹150 crore for 2023–2028** to operationalize its objectives.
- **Institutional Architecture:** Headquartered in **India**, the IBCA comprises three major institutional pillars: the **General Assembly of Member States**, a **Standing Committee**, and a **Secretariat** that manages the alliance's day-to-day functions and coordinates implementation activities. The alliance's scope includes the conservation of **seven iconic big cat species—Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma—**through shared knowledge, funding support, and strategic collaborations.
- **Countries Joining the Framework:** By **September 2024**, **25 countries** had formally ratified the IBCA Framework Agreement. This cohort includes diverse nations such as **Bhutan, Suriname, Liberia, Kazakhstan, Somalia, Cambodia, and Eswatini**, reflecting wide-ranging geographic participation. The alliance is open not only to **range countries**, where big cats are native, but also to **non-range countries** willing to contribute to conservation financing and advocacy.

Core Mandate and Operational Functions

- **Conservation Objectives and Strategic Roles:** IBCA's fundamental mission is to conserve and restore **big cat populations and habitats** through collaborative international efforts. Its objectives include the **exchange of anti-poaching practices, habitat restoration techniques, and strategies to reduce human-wildlife conflict**. In addition, it promotes **joint research, climate change policy coordination, and capacity building** among member states.
- **International Legal Integration and SDG Alignment:** The alliance is aligned with multilateral environmental frameworks like **CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species)** and **CMS (Convention on Migratory Species)**, and actively supports regional conservation agreements.

- Furthermore, its initiatives directly support the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly in areas related to life on land, climate action, and sustainable communities.

Ecological Value of Big Cats

- Keystone Species and Ecosystem Health:** Big cats are considered **keystone species**, playing a pivotal role in the ecological equilibrium of their habitats. Their presence helps **regulate prey populations**, minimize **overgrazing**, and indirectly reduce the **risk of forest fires**. Healthy predator-prey dynamics also contribute to enhanced **carbon sequestration** and forest integrity, making their conservation crucial for climate mitigation.
- Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Conservation:** Protecting big cats ensures the survival of multiple interconnected ecological functions such as **soil fertility**, **water availability**, and **faunal diversity**. In essence, conserving these predators not only safeguards their own survival but also secures the **broader environmental systems** in which they reside.

Assembly Highlights and Key Decisions

1

Governance package:

- Rules of Procedure, Financial Regulations and Staff Manual were unanimously adopted, giving the Alliance a legal backbone for decision-making, budgeting and recruiting.
- The Assembly elected a 15-member Council for 2025-30 and authorised the recruitment of the first Secretary-General by December 2025.

2

Workplan 2025-26

- A Global Big-Cat Status Report will be published in mid-2026, consolidating range-state monitoring data using common genetic and camera-trap protocols.
- Three regional capacity-building hubs—South Asia (India), Latin America (Brazil) and Africa (Kenya)—will run training on forensic genetics, SMART patrolling and community-based ecotourism.
- An Illegal Trade Early-Warning System, linked to the World Customs Organization's CEN platform, will pilot in nine member states by late 2026.

3

Financing and resource mobilisation

- India's startup pledge of US \$100 million will underwrite core operations; thereafter, IBCA will rely on tiered annual membership fees, voluntary partner contributions and "green bond" issues earmarked for corridor restoration.
- The Assembly authorised negotiations with the Global Environment Facility and the Asian Development Bank for co-financed corridor and prey-base projects.

4

Membership uptake

- Eleven countries (Armenia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Liberia, Nicaragua, Somalia, Suriname) completed full accession paperwork during the Assembly, bringing formal membership to 56 with another 39 as signatory observers.

India's Role and National Announcements

- India offered its National Tiger Conservation Authority as the Alliance's interim secretariat and committed to open-source its M-STripes patrol-monitoring software to all members.
- The Environment Minister unveiled a Cheetah Translocation Knowledge Portal to share lessons from

- India's own reintroduction efforts with range and re-introduction states.

Challenges Acknowledged

- Delegates flagged persistent funding gaps for ranger salaries and human-wildlife conflict mitigation in many range states; a dedicated "Community Co-existence Fund" will be explored in 2026.
- Several African members requested technical help to align national laws with the Alliance's model anti-poaching legislation by 2027.

Legal and Conservation Status of Big Cats

Protection under IUCN, CITES, and Indian Law: The following table illustrates the **conservation status** of the seven big cat species under the **IUCN Red List**, **CITES Appendices**, and **India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**:

Species	Scientific Name	IUCN Red List	CITES	Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	Endangered	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Lion	<i>Panthera leo</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Snow Leopard	<i>Panthera uncia</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Cheetah	<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Jaguar	<i>Panthera onca</i>	Near Threatened	Appendix-I	Not listed
Puma	<i>Puma concolor</i>	Least Concern	Appendix-II	Not listed

India's Conservation Leadership and Legacy

Flagship Projects and Institutional Frameworks: India has long been a forerunner in big cat conservation, with over **70% of the world's tiger population**, numbering **more than 3,600**, residing in Indian forests. The landmark **Project Tiger** launched in **1973** laid the foundation for this success. Other major Indian initiatives include the **Asiatic Lion Reintroduction Project (2004)**, **Project Snow Leopard (2009)**, and **Project Cheetah (2022)**, which reintroduced the cheetah after its extinction in India in **1952**. India also enacted the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** and established institutions like the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** to uphold legal and scientific conservation measures.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which big cat is placed under Appendix-II of CITES and Least Concern on IUCN Red List?
(a) Jaguar (b) Cheetah (c) Lion (d) Puma
2. Which Indian institution is administratively linked to the IBCA framework?
(a) Zoological Survey of India
(b) National Tiger Conservation Authority
(c) Wildlife Institute of India
(d) Indian Forest Service
3. Which of the following species is not listed under Schedule I of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972?
(a) Jaguar (b) Tiger (c) Cheetah (d) Leopard
4. How many countries had ratified the IBCA Framework Agreement as of September 2024?
(a) 25 (b) 30 (c) 17 (d) 22
5. The gestation period of the cheetah is approximately:
(a) 100–110 days (b) 90–95 days
(c) 105–120 days (d) 80–90 days
6. Which of the following big cats is classified as "Endangered" under the IUCN Red List?
(a) Puma (b) Snow Leopard
(c) Jaguar (d) Tiger
7. The IBCA's Secretariat is headquartered in which country?
(a) Kazakhstan (b) India
(c) Bhutan (d) Suriname
8. Which one of the following is a function of IBCA under its conservation strategy?
(a) Development of captive breeding zoos
(b) Regulation of climate bonds
(c) Export of exotic species
(d) Exchange of anti-poaching practices
9. Which of the following statements is true regarding Puma?
(a) It is listed in Appendix-I of CITES
(b) It is listed under Schedule I of India's Wildlife Act
(c) It is native to India
(d) It is classified as Least Concern by IUCN
10. Which phrase was used to describe the IBCA's symbolic alignment with India's global vision?
(a) Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat
(b) Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas
(c) One Earth, One Family, One Future
(d) Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam
11. Which of the following global conventions does the IBCA align its work with?
(a) UNFCCC (b) UNCLOS
(c) CITES (d) ICAO
12. Which of the following countries is not among those that ratified the IBCA Framework Agreement?
(a) Eswatini (b) Cambodia
(c) Venezuela (d) Liberia
13. Which big cat species has the shortest gestation period among those found in India?
(a) Leopard (b) Cheetah
(c) Lion (d) Snow Leopard
14. Which Indian project was launched in 2009 to conserve a high-altitude big cat species?
(a) Project Cheetah
(b) Project Lion
(c) Project Snow Leopard
(d) Project Tiger

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| 1. (d) | 2. (b) | 3. (a) | 4. (a) | 5. (b) | 6. (d) | 7. (b) | 8. (d) |
| 9. (d) | 10. (c) | 11. (c) | 12. (c) | 13. (b) | 14. (c) | | |

18

BONN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE 2025

ENVIRONMENT

IN FOCUS

- The **Bonn Climate Change Conference 2025** convened in **Bonn, Germany**, from **June 16 to June 26**, bringing together over **5,000 delegates**, including government representatives, scientists, Indigenous communities, and civil society stakeholders.
- Held annually under the aegis of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, the conference plays a pivotal role in laying the technical groundwork and political agenda for the **year-end Conference of the Parties (COP)**.
- The Bonn summit is formally referred to as the **Sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies (SBs)** and serves as the only other regular UNFCCC summit besides COP, functioning as a preparatory forum to review implementation and draft decisions.

Institutional Structure and Role of Subsidiary Bodies

The Bonn Conference is steered by two permanent UNFCCC entities: the **Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)** and the **Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA)**. The SBI monitors progress in executing UNFCCC decisions and assesses technical and financial needs of developing countries. The SBSTA serves as a scientific advisory arm, relaying inputs from the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** to global policymakers. These bodies together shape recommendations that often become legally binding outcomes at subsequent COP sessions.

Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA): Striving for Equity in Resilience

One of the core discussion points in **Bonn 2025** was the **Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)**, a concept introduced in the **Paris Agreement of 2015** but substantively progressed only during **COP28 in Dubai**. The GGA aims to define universal metrics to assess climate adaptation capacity and resilience. At Bonn, technical deliberations led to partial consensus on a **draft set of 100 indicators**, yet disagreements over **finance** and **Means of Implementation (MoI)** delayed a complete resolution. These indicators are expected to be finalized and adopted at **COP30 in Belém, Brazil**.

Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP): Advancing Climate Justice

Negotiators at the Bonn summit achieved a breakthrough on the **Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP)** by agreeing to establish a **Belém Action Mechanism**. Launched during **COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh**, JTWP ensures that the transition to a low-carbon economy is **socially equitable**, supporting workers and communities dependent on fossil fuel economies. The program aims to align national climate strategies with **socioeconomic development goals**, thereby ensuring inclusive participation and fair outcomes.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Despite the February 2025 deadline for updated **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** for the year **2035**, most countries failed to meet submission expectations, weakening efforts to limit warming to **1.5°C**. The host of COP30, **Brazil**, urged nations to submit revised targets by **September 2025**, but current NDC pledges suggest a potential global temperature rise nearing **2°C**. This delay in ambition undermines the momentum built by earlier NDCs and hinders the effectiveness of the global climate framework.

Climate Finance: Debates over Equity and Obligations

Discussions on **climate finance** were marked by stark divisions between developed and developing countries. Nations like **India** emphasized the need to fulfill existing pledges, including the mobilization of **USD 1.3 trillion annually by 2030**. While developed countries proposed increasing the role of **private finance**, many Global South nations insisted on **public grant-based support**, invoking **Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement**, which places financial responsibility on developed nations. According to the **Climate Policy Initiative**, total climate finance must reach **USD 9 trillion per year by 2030** to meet the targets of the Paris Agreement.

Loss and Damage Fund: Persistent Gaps in Contributions

The status of the **Loss and Damage Fund**, created to assist nations severely affected by climate-related disasters, was a cause for concern. Although **USD 768 million** has been pledged globally, only **USD 495 million** has been formalized through agreements and a mere **USD 321 million** has been disbursed. This figure falls drastically short of the estimated **USD 1 trillion** required, casting doubt on the fund's operational viability in the near term.

India's Updated NDC Performance: Ahead of Targets

India has demonstrated notable progress in achieving and exceeding its climate targets. As per its **4th Biennial Update Report (BUR-4) submitted in 2024**, the country achieved a **36% reduction in emission intensity**, surpassed **47.10% non-fossil fuel power capacity**, and created a **carbon sink of 2.29 billion tonnes**. These achievements surpass India's **updated NDCs of 2022**, which had aimed for a **45% reduction in emission intensity**, **50% non-fossil fuel capacity**, and **2.5–3 billion tonnes** of carbon sink by **2030**. India's early compliance enhances its credibility in international negotiations and strengthens its claim to climate finance and technology transfers.

Looking Ahead to COP30 in Belém, Brazil

The outcomes of **Bonn 2025** will play a decisive role in shaping the agenda and negotiations at the upcoming **COP30**. Key priorities include formal adoption of the **GGA indicators**, operationalization of the **Belém Action Mechanism** under JTWP, and renewed pressure on developed countries to scale up **public climate finance**. The trajectory of global climate action in this decisive decade will significantly depend on whether the momentum generated at Bonn is transformed into concrete multilateral outcomes at COP30.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. What was the primary function of the 2025 Bonn Climate Change Conference?
 - (a) Negotiating trade agreements under the WTO
 - (b) Finalising the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report
 - (c) Preparing the technical and political agenda for COP30
 - (d) Coordinating biodiversity conservation under CBD
 2. The Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) was originally introduced under which agreement?
 - (a) Kyoto Protocol
 - (b) Paris Agreement
 - (c) COP28 in Dubai
 - (d) Glasgow Climate Pact
 3. What is the primary role of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA)?
 - (a) To implement climate finance mechanisms
 - (b) To monitor fossil fuel emissions in developing countries
 - (c) To assess adaptation needs of island nations
 - (d) To provide scientific input for policymaking
 4. The Belém Action Mechanism, adopted at Bonn 2025, is related to:
 - (a) Carbon market regulation
 - (b) Just Transition Work Programme
 - (c) Plastic pollution and marine ecosystem protection
 - (d) Indigenous land rights and afforestation
 5. According to the Climate Policy Initiative, total climate finance required annually by 2030 is approximately:
 - (a) USD 1.3 trillion
 - (b) USD 3.5 trillion
 - (c) USD 321 billion
 - (d) USD 9 trillion
 6. Which of the following is a key mandate of the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP)?
 - (a) Imposing carbon tariffs on high emitters
 - (b) Ensuring socially equitable low-carbon transition
 - (c) Enhancing coastal resilience infrastructure
 - (d) Standardising methane pricing mechanisms
 7. What was a major shortcoming discussed at Bonn 2025 related to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)?
 - (a) Over-reporting of emission reductions
 - (b) Failure of countries to meet 2025 update deadlines
 - (c) Lack of differentiation between developed and developing countries
 - (d) Legal dispute over binding status of NDCs
 8. As per India's 4th Biennial Update Report (BUR-4), submitted in 2024, what was the carbon sink created so far?
 - (a) 3 billion tonnes
 - (b) 1.85 billion tonnes
 - (c) 2.29 billion tonnes
 - (d) 4.2 billion tonnes
 9. Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement places the responsibility of climate finance primarily on:
 - (a) Least Developed Countries (LDCs)
 - (b) Developing economies
 - (c) Developed nations
 - (d) International financial institutions
 10. Which of the following statements is true about the Loss and Damage Fund as discussed at Bonn 2025?
 - (a) It was formally created at COP21 in Paris
 - (b) It has disbursed more than USD 1 trillion to affected nations
 - (c) Only USD 321 million has been disbursed so far
 - (d) It is managed solely by the IMF
 11. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) primarily focuses on:
 - (a) Monitoring the execution of UNFCCC decisions
 - (b) Guiding IPCC's scientific review process
 - (c) Publishing the UNEP Emissions Gap Reports
 - (d) Conducting biodiversity assessments
 12. Which country is hosting the upcoming COP30?
 - (a) UAE
 - (b) Indonesia
 - (c) Brazil
 - (d) Kenya
 13. What percentage of non-fossil fuel-based power capacity had India achieved as of BUR-4 in 2024?
 - (a) 40.00%
 - (b) 50.00%
 - (c) 45.50%
 - (d) 47.10%
 14. The conference at Bonn is also known as the:
 - (a) Global Adaptation Assembly
 - (b) Permanent Working Group on Emissions
 - (c) Sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies (SBs)
 - (d) Climate Emergency Committee Summit
 15. Which of the following best describes the purpose of the GGA indicators discussed at Bonn?
 - (a) To evaluate clean energy investments
 - (b) To standardise carbon pricing globally
 - (c) To measure adaptive capacity and resilience
 - (d) To track renewable energy storage capacity
- Correct Ans

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (c) | 2. (b) | 3. (d) | 4. (b) | 5. (d) | 6. (b) | 7. (b) | 8. (c) |
| 9. (c) | 10. (a) | 11. (a) | 12. (c) | 13. (d) | 14. (c) | 15. (d) | |

19 HIGH SEAS TREATY RATIFIED AT UN OCEANS CONFERENCE

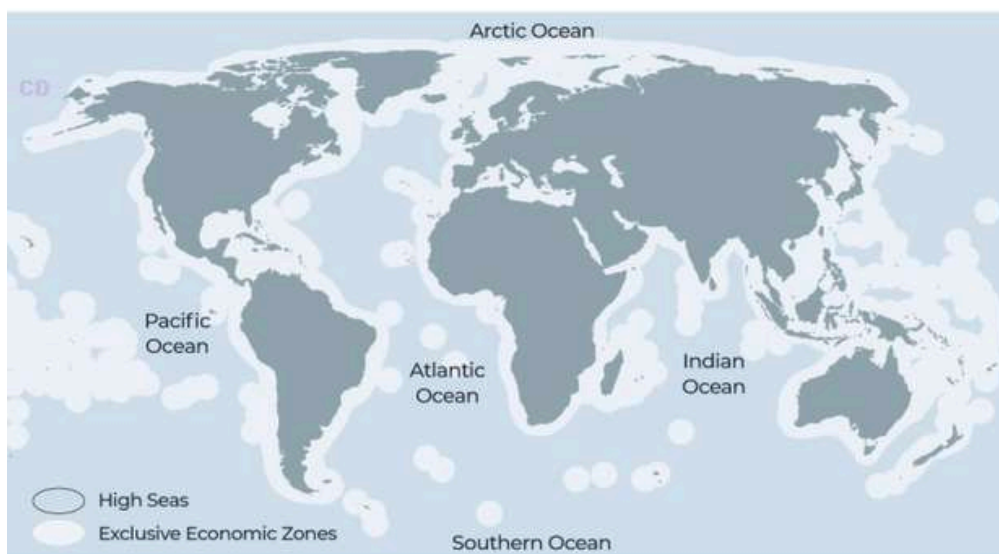
ENVIRONMENT

IN FOCUS

The **Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3)** was convened in **Nice, France**, in **June 2025**, and co-hosted by **France and Costa Rica**. The summit served as a crucial global platform for accelerating efforts to achieve **Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water**. With the theme “**Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean**,” the conference underscored the urgency of unified global commitments to protect marine ecosystems. One of the most compelling appeals came from **Frankie Orona**, an Indigenous leader from the **Society of Native Nations (USA)**, who advocated for a **justice-centric global plastics treaty** with binding obligations for environmental accountability.

High Seas Treaty

- The High Seas Treaty (formally, the UN Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction or BBNJ Agreement) plugs the biggest hole in ocean governance: until now, two-thirds of the ocean—waters lying beyond any country's 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone—had no global rules for creating marine protected areas (MPAs), assessing industrial impacts or sharing benefits from marine genetic resources (MGRs).



Oceans cover more than
70 percent
of our planet's surface

The ocean has absorbed
90 percent
of the world's excess heat

Every year at least
8 million
tonnes of plastic waste end
up in the world's oceans

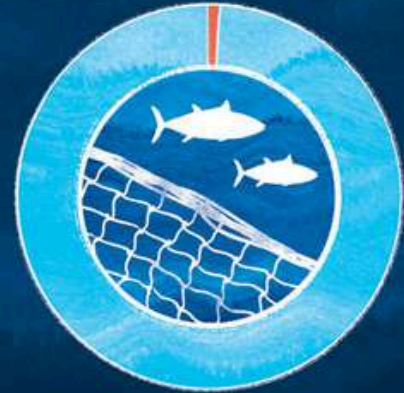
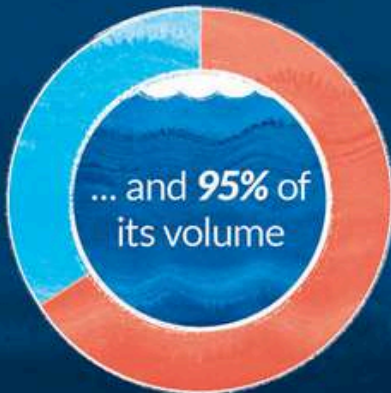
- Adopted by consensus at the UN on 19 June 2023, opened for signature in September 2023 and already signed by 132 states, it will enter into force 120 days after the 60th ratification; with 50 instruments deposited by June 2025, the threshold is expected to be crossed before the UN General Assembly meets in September 2025.
- Once operative, the treaty will enable high-seas parks vital to the global 30 × 30 biodiversity goal, set ground rules for green-blue biotechnology, and establish a new Conference of Parties (COP) to watch over half the planet.

What are the *high seas*?

They make up nearly **2/3** of the world's ocean ...

They represent **95%** of Earth's occupied habitat

But less than **1%** of the high seas are protected



From Idea to Adoption

- **Early calls and UNCLOS gap:** The 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) left biodiversity in “areas beyond national jurisdiction” (ABNJ) largely unregulated. A UN Working Group began exploring options in 2004, and the General Assembly authorised negotiations in 2017.
- **Negotiating marathon:** Five Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) sessions (2018-2023) wrestled with equity, finance and sovereignty. A final 36-hour push in March 2023 produced consensus text; the WHA adopted it formally on 19 June 2023.

Scope and Architecture

- **Species covered:** All marine life and genetic material in ABNJ are included—pelagic fish, deep-sea corals, microbes and untapped genetic sequences.

Four substantive pillars

- **Marine genetic resources (MGRs) & benefit-sharing:** Requires digital-sequence data (DSI) and sample uploads to a WHO-style network within 12 months; obliges equitable sharing of monetary and non-monetary benefits.
- **Area-based management tools (ABMTs) & MPAs:** Creates a step-by-step process—proposal, scientific review, consensus (or $\frac{3}{4}$ vote) adoption—to designate high-seas MPAs.
- **Environmental impact assessment (EIA):** Mandates prior EIA for any activity “with more than minor or transitory impact” and strategic environmental assessments for programmes or policies.
- **Capacity-building & technology transfer:** Commits developed states to fund training, gear, observation systems and research cruises for developing members.

Implementation Challenges

- **Finance and capacity:** Developing states fear they will lack funds to patrol vast MPAs or negotiate MGR benefit-sharing contracts. The Global Environment Facility is designing a dedicated funding window, but details await COP-1.

- **Overlap with sectoral bodies:** Regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) and the International Seabed Authority retain mandates; ensuring coherence without duplication is a diplomatic tight-rope.
- **Ratification hurdles:** The United States has signed but political opposition in the Senate makes ratification uncertain, potentially weakening leadership and funding.

Strategic Significance

- **30 × 30 and climate co-benefits:** Because the high seas comprise nearly half Earth's surface, achieving the Kunming-Montreal target of protecting 30 % of ocean area by 2030 is impossible without the treaty's MPA mechanism. Intact high-seas ecosystems also sequester vast amounts of carbon, making MPAs a nature-based climate solution.
- **Biotechnology equity:** Deep-sea genes hold promise for enzymes, medicines and climate-resilient crops; the treaty's benefit-sharing rules aim to prevent "sequence hoarding" and ensure developing nations share in profits.
- **India's Position:** India signed the treaty on opening day and told the 2025 Nice Ocean Conference it is "in the process of ratifying." Delhi welcomes the equitable MGR provisions and sees an opportunity to expand its blue-economy research, but it also emphasises capacity-building finance and respect for traditional fishing rights.



PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Where was the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) held in June 2025?
(a) Lisbon, Portugal (b) Paris, France
(c) Nice, France (d) Geneva, Switzerland
- Which Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) was the focus of UNOC3?
(a) SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption
(b) SDG 13 – Climate Action
(c) SDG 15 – Life on Land
(d) SDG 14 – Life Below Water
- What key issue does the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ Agreement) primarily address?
(a) Conservation of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction
(b) Governance of Exclusive Economic Zones
(c) Overfishing in territorial waters
(d) Piracy in high-seas trade routes
- When will the High Seas Treaty come into force?
(a) Upon signature by 50 states
(b) Upon adoption by the UN General Assembly
(c) 120 days after the 60th ratification
(d) Immediately after the 2025 UNOC
- Who made a notable appeal at UNOC3 for a justice-centric global plastics treaty?
(a) António Guterres (b) Emmanuel Macron
(c) Greta Thunberg (d) Frankie Orona
- Which international convention left biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction largely unregulated?
(a) UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
(b) Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
(c) UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)
(d) Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
- Which of the following is not one of the four core pillars of the High Seas Treaty?
(a) Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
(b) Maritime border dispute resolution
(c) Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs) & benefit-sharing
(d) Capacity-building & technology transfer
- What key mechanism does the treaty establish to help meet the 30×30 biodiversity goal?
(a) Exclusive Economic Zones
(b) Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
(c) Climate-smart fisheries
(d) Plastic waste removal corridors
- What concern have developing countries raised regarding the treaty's implementation?
(a) Lack of exclusive fishing rights in EEZs
(b) Insufficient financial support to manage MPAs and MGR contracts
(c) Inadequate patent protection for marine products
(d) Restriction on offshore oil exploration
- What is India's stated position on the High Seas Treaty as of the 2025 Nice Ocean Conference?
(a) India supports the treaty and is in the process of ratifying it
(b) India signed but will not ratify the treaty
(c) India rejected the treaty due to fishing restrictions
(d) India has asked for exemptions for coastal states

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. (c) | 2. (d) | 3. (a) | 4. (c) | 5. (d) | 6. (c) | 7. (b) | 8. (b) |
| 9. (b) | 10. (a) | | | | | | |

20 10TH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2025

INDICES AND REPORTS

IN FOCUS

- India has marked a significant milestone in its sustainable development journey by securing the **99th position** in the **2025 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index**, released by the **United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)**.
- This is the first time India has entered the **top 100** out of 167 countries, with a score of **67.0** out of 100, indicating considerable improvement across sectors such as health, education, clean energy, and financial inclusion.
- The country's performance reflects a consistent upward trend, moving up from **109th in 2024**, **112th in 2023**, **121st in 2022**, and **120th in 2021**, thus demonstrating India's accelerating commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Global Progress and the Growing SDG Gap

- Despite ten years since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, the 2025 Sustainable Development Report shows that **only 17% of the 169 SDG targets** are on track to be achieved by 2030.
- The report reveals that global progress is off-course, with the majority of countries struggling due to **conflicts, economic vulnerability, and climate-induced disasters**.
- While there has been notable progress in areas such as internet access, renewable energy, and child survival, this is counterbalanced by deterioration in press freedom, governance indicators, and environmental resilience.
- The growing disparity across countries reflects a fractured global response to the SDGs, exacerbated by a lack of coordinated international financing and structural reforms.

Top and Bottom Performers in the 2025 Index

- The top positions in the 2025 SDG Index are dominated by European nations, particularly the **Nordic countries**. **Finland** leads with a score of **87.0**, followed by **Sweden (85.7)**, **Denmark (85.3)**, **Germany (83.7)**, and **France (83.1)**.
- Other countries in the top 10 include **Austria, Norway, Croatia, Poland**, and **Czechia**, all scoring above 81.
- The bottom ranks are held by countries grappling with chronic conflict and limited governance capacity, including **South Sudan (167th)**, **Central African Republic**, **Chad**, **Somalia**, and **Yemen**, where scores remain below 48.
- This stark contrast underscores the urgent need for targeted support to fragile and conflict-affected states to bridge the SDG divide.

SDG DASHBOARDS AND TRENDS



■ Major challenges
 ■ Significant challenges
 ■ Challenges remain
 ■ SDG achieved
 ■ Information unavailable
↘ Decreasing
→ Stagnating
↗ Moderately improving
↗ On track or maintaining SDG achievement
● Information unavailable

India's Regional and Global Comparisons

- India's rank of 99th places it ahead of several neighbouring countries, including **Bangladesh (114th)** and **Pakistan (140th)**.
- However, it still trails behind regional peers such as **Bhutan (74th)**, **Nepal (85th)**, **Sri Lanka (93rd)**, and **Maldives (53rd)**.
- Among major global economies, **China** is ranked **49th** with a score of **74.4**, and the **United States** stands at **44th** with **75.2**, despite the latter's low engagement with SDG institutions.
- India's performance has been notably supported by its national efforts under the NITI Aayog SDG India Index, which continues to track state-level progress, incentivize policy innovation, and improve data-driven decision-making.

Areas of Progress and Areas of Regression

- India and many developing countries have demonstrated measurable progress in sectors aligned with **basic service delivery** and **digital infrastructure**.
- These include expansion of **mobile broadband (SDG 9)**, **electricity access (SDG 7)**, and **child and neonatal health (SDG 3)**.
- However, five areas have seen global backsliding since 2015, including **rising obesity rates (SDG 2)**, **decline in press freedom (SDG 16)**, **mismanagement of nitrogen use (SDG 2)**, **biodiversity loss as measured by the Red List Index (SDG 15)**, and **increased perception of corruption (SDG 16)**.
- These reversals reveal systemic challenges that require new regulatory, financial, and political approaches to sustainable development.

Government Programmes Behind India's SDG Improvement

- India's improved ranking is the result of several transformative schemes across key SDG targets. In the realm of **poverty reduction (SDG 1)**, initiatives such as **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana**, **MGNREGA**, and **Jan Dhan Yojana** have played vital roles.
- For **zero hunger (SDG 2)**, programs like **Poshan Abhiyaan**, **National Food Security Act**, and **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana** have strengthened food security.
- On **health (SDG 3)**, flagship efforts including **Ayushman Bharat**, **Mission Indradhanush**, and the **National Health Mission** have expanded access and affordability.
- **Education outcomes (SDG 4)** have been supported through the **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**, **NEP 2020**, and digital platforms such as **DIKSHA**. Other contributions come from missions like **Swachh Bharat**, **Jal Jeevan**, **Make in India**, **Smart Cities**, **ISA**, **Project Tiger**, and the **International Big Cat Alliance**, all of which address a diverse set of goals from clean water to life on land.

Structural Challenges Impeding Global SDG Attainment

- The 2025 SDG Index also draws attention to several macro-level impediments. **Armed conflicts** in regions such as **Ukraine**, **Gaza**, and **Sudan** have triggered massive displacement, with over **120 million people** forcibly uprooted, undermining peace and institutional development under **SDG 16**.
- The persistent **climate finance gap** remains another challenge, with the **UNFCCC** estimating that **developing countries require USD 6 trillion by 2030** to meet climate goals.
- The **COVID-19 pandemic** disrupted healthcare, education, and economic systems, particularly in developing countries, reversing gains made in **poverty alleviation** and **energy access**.
- The environmental front is also under pressure, as the **IPCC warns** that **up to 99% of coral reefs** could vanish at 2°C of warming, threatening progress on **SDG 14**.
- Moreover, natural disasters disproportionately affect **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** and **landlocked developing countries (LLDCs)**, which incurred nearly **6.9% of global disaster-related economic losses** between 2015 and 2022.

Strategic Measures to Accelerate SDG Progress

- The 2025 report outlines several strategic directions to overcome current stagnation. There is an urgent need to **reform the Global Financial Architecture** so that capital flows equitably to **emerging and developing economies (EMDEs)**.
- Mechanisms such as **green bonds**, **blended finance**, and **debt relief** must be expanded to create fiscal space for SDG investments.
- National governments are urged to localise SDG planning through **district-level action plans**, integrate **citizen audits**, and promote **real-time tracking** of progress.
- Environmental sustainability can be supported through **regenerative agriculture**, reduced food waste, and increased investment in biodiversity.
- Multilateral frameworks must also be strengthened to build trust and cooperation, with reformed global institutions facilitating SDG-aligned trade and environmental justice.

Commitment to Multilateralism and Institutional Accountability

- The 2025 index ranks countries not only on SDG outcomes but also on **commitment to multilateralism**. **Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobago** are the highest-ranked for their participation in international cooperation mechanisms.
- In contrast, the **United States**, for the second consecutive year, ranks **193rd**, due to its withdrawal from key institutions such as the **Paris Agreement** and **World Health Organization**.
- India, by contrast, is among the **190 UN member states** that have participated in the **Voluntary National Review (VNR)** process. This signals its consistent diplomatic engagement and institutional transparency in reporting SDG implementation progress.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. What is India's rank in the 2025 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index?
(a) 93rd (b) 99th (c) 109th (d) 112th
2. Which organization released the 2025 SDG Index?
(a) UN Environment Programme (UNEP)
(b) World Economic Forum (WEF)
(c) United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)
(d) UN Development Programme (UNDP)
3. What score did India achieve in the 2025 SDG Index?
(a) 67.0 (b) 69.5 (c) 74.4 (d) 75.2
4. Which country ranked highest in the 2025 SDG Index?
(a) Sweden (b) Denmark
(c) Germany (d) Finland
5. How many SDG targets are on track to be achieved globally by 2030, according to the 2025 report?
(a) 12% (b) 17% (c) 25% (d) 33%
6. Which of the following countries is not in the top 5 of the 2025 SDG Index?
(a) France (b) Germany
(c) Austria (d) Denmark
7. Which neighbouring country ranks above India in the 2025 SDG Index?
(a) Nepal (b) Bangladesh
(c) Pakistan (d) None
8. What is the rank of the United States in terms of overall SDG performance in 2025?
(a) 39th (b) 44th (c) 49th (d) 53rd
9. Which Indian scheme is associated with SDG 1 (No Poverty)?
(a) Ayushman Bharat
(b) PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana
(c) Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana
(d) Poshan Abhiyaan
10. Which sector has shown global regression under SDG 2?
(a) Mismanagement of nitrogen use
(b) Mismanagement of water resources
(c) Decline in organic farming
(d) Urban food insecurity
11. Which SDG is negatively affected by rising perceptions of corruption?
(a) SDG 8 (b) SDG 13 (c) SDG 16 (d) SDG 17
12. What is the estimated financial requirement for developing countries to meet climate goals by 2030?
(a) USD 3 trillion (b) USD 4.5 trillion
(c) USD 6 trillion (d) USD 10 trillion
13. According to IPCC warnings, up to what percentage of coral reefs may vanish at 2°C of global warming?
(a) 50% (b) 70% (c) 90% (d) 99%
14. What is the rank of the United States in terms of commitment to multilateralism in 2025?
(a) 150th (b) 190th (c) 193rd (d) 170th
15. Which country among the following is ranked highest in commitment to multilateralism?
(a) United States (b) Barbados
(c) China (d) France

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (c) | 3. (a) | 4. (d) | 5. (b) | 6. (c) | 7. (a) | 8. (b) |
| 9. (c) | 10. (a) | 11. (c) | 12. (c) | 13. (d) | 14. (c) | 15. (b) | |

NPLC's —————
LNAT Achievers

University
of Oxford



LNAT (2021 – 2022)



Surbhi Sachdeva

LNAT (2022 – 2023)



Kartikay Kataria

LNAT (2023 – 2024)



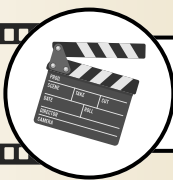
Adi Singh

LNAT (2024 – 2025)



Samyuktha Kovilakath

The only Indian Institute to place four students in a row in the undergrad law programme at Oxford University!



MEDIA COVERAGE

India's Top Revolutionary Educationist: Talks About His Journey From Working In Premier Law Firm To Become The Most Sought After Educationist In Country Imparting Legal Education



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

India's Top Law Coach Speaks On Cracking Law Entrances



Super 30 of law entrance bags 5 out of top 10 in AILET and CLAT

ARUN SINGHANI ■ NEW DELHI

When your students bag five out of top 10 slots in elite law entrance test, it is a rare feat. But for Nishant Prakash, it is a daily occurrence. He speaks volumes about your passion, diligence and grit. Nishant Prakash, the eminent corporate lawyer turned educator, will simply grin on extraordinary journey. The AILET results on Thursday saw a burst of messages and phone calls. Just days ago, Prakash had another round of celebration with a strike rate of over 90% by his students in the

Common Law Admission Test (CLAT), for admissions to over 20 law universities across India. Out of 60 students that he provided training to, 54 cracked up with a seat either in CLAT or AILET. Ten of his students featured in top 10 in CLAT as well. Hailing from the small town of Meerut in Uttar Pradesh, Nishant growing up with him, I ended up being at the National Law University at Raipur, and membership of legal luminaries like Kamal Nath and KK Verma. After this, I was fortunate to work with Luthi & Luthi Law Offices at New

Delhi with specialising in Intellectual Property Rights, Insurance and Trade Law," says Prakash. However, despite a thriving law of making took him to rather an unconventional path - of teaching. "Hailing from Bihar, such dramatic shift to my career was imposed upon me. It meant checks and wading into uncertain territories. With a mild shaming passion should take priority of some point in life," said Prakash. In 2014, he set up Nishant

Prakash Law Classes and in just 10 years, he has established a reputation covered by law equities nationwide, transcending the industry to become a leader in education reform, with significant impact on legal education. Nishant takes great pride in and the "super" in AILET and CLAT. Nishant's Ghosh ranked 4th in 6. Vidula Singh at no 10 in ranked no 4. Danish Aggarwal no 7. His noteworthy achievements extend beyond coaching in NIT

Along appointed him to advise on the pivotal initiative of "Transforming Legal Education in India," positioning him as a key contributor to national legal education reform. Further solidifying his role in education reform, he is part of a high-level committee implementing the National Education Policy 2020, in the state of Assam reflecting his broader impact on the national education framework. Nishant is recognized as the "Super Nishant" for his commitment to education, underscoring his effectiveness in guiding students to secure admissions in top law schools.

the pioneer
NEW DELHI | SATURDAY | DECEMBER 10, 2022

An Interview With India's leading Educationist: How Important Is To Join Coaching Institute To Crack An Aptitude Based Exam Like CLAT



THE HINDU CLAT candidates aggrieved over 'errors'; consortium denies laxity

Krishnakumar Rajalingam
NEW DELHI

A petition challenging the correctness of the provisional answer key of the postgraduate Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) had on December 1 for admission to 24 national law universities has sparked a debate. The Supreme Court on the petition on the ground of instantaneity, orally the up court over national results. A Bench headed by Justice of India Sanjay Kumar gave the petitioners liberty to approach the jurisdictional High Court. The petition, filed by Anam Khan and Ayush Agrawal, alleged that the provisional answer key released on December 2 contained significant errors, including incorrect answers to 12 questions. Persons associated with the legal representation of Law Universities (ENLU), said the final answer key was out by the time the case came up on December 9. The consortium announced the release of the final answer key and results to December 7 from December 10. "The provision



al answer key had mistakes which were not resolved even in the final answer key," Manasi Bhushan, advocate who appeared for the petitioners in the court, said. "There are pre-Court has promptly adjudicated and granted interim relief in petitions challenging the provisional answer key. In my opinion, it is better to stay from the apex all across India, seeking remedy to avoid difficulty in terms of conflicting judgments only for that state's jurisdiction." A corporate lawyer-turned CLAT mentor, Nishant Prakash, alleged that the CLAT (undergraduate) was also conducted in an equally unprofessional manner. "Four questions

of the logical reasoning section were absolutely wrong which were later retracted by the consortium in the final answer key. Three more answers in the provisional answer keys were changed later upon the grievances raised by the students. I strongly believe that the consortium cannot be absolved just by stating as the majority of students find up wasting time trying these questions and could not complete the paper," he said. S. Shankar Kumar, Director of the Gujarat National Law University and vice-president, CLAT Consortium, said "extreme care is always taken to avoid mistakes". "In law, the questions and the answer options in the paper are interpreted differently by different people," he said.

1

FIRST WOMEN BATCH GRADUATES FROM NDA

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

The National Defence Academy (NDA) at Khadakwasla, Pune, etched a new chapter in India's military history on **30 May 2025** when **17 women cadets—who joined the tri-service academy in 2022 after a Supreme-Court-driven policy change—marched past the Antim Pag alongside 319 male course-mates to graduate with the 148th Course (Spring Term 2025).**

Why was it in the news?

- This was the **first time in the NDA's 75-year existence that women featured in the Passing-Out Parade (POP)**, marking the completion of three years of joint military and academic training.
- The event drew national and international attention because it **symbolised the armed forces' biggest structural gender reform since women were first allowed into the officer corps in 1992.**
- **Mizoram Governor and former COAS Gen V. K. Singh** reviewed the parade and called the moment "a proud testament to *Naari Shakti* in uniform."

Background – How the women cadets reached the NDA

- A **Supreme Court interim order in August 2021** directed the Union Government to open NDA entry to women, ending a male-only policy in place since 1954.
- The **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)** modified its NDA entrance examination from 2022-I onward, and 19 women cleared the maiden selection; **17 reported to the academy on 27 December 2022** after pre-joining medicals.
- Like their male peers, they underwent **six terms of integrated military training, academics and outdoor leadership**, living in mixed squadrons but training with identical syllabi.

Highlights of the historic Passing-Out Parade

- The **Khetarpal Parade Ground** hosted 1,341 cadets on parade, with 336 passing out; the women marched in the centre files, visually indistinguishable except for short military haircuts.
- **Division Cadet Captain (DCC) Shreeti Daksh** topped the Arts stream, becoming the first woman to receive the academy's academic gold medal.
- The cohort's lead drummer at the band, **Cadet Ishita Sharma**, became a social-media icon for breaking a second gender stereotype during the POP.

Significance of the milestone

- Graduation certifies that women can meet NDA's exacting physical, academic and discipline standards without dilution, refuting longstanding scepticism.
- The inclusion of women at the pre-commissioning stage offers them an equal career runway to rise eventually to the three-star rank and above, unlike earlier batches who joined after college and thus faced shorter service windows.
- The moment also aligns India with global best practice, as most NATO nations have long commissioned women from their main defence academies.

What happens next for the pioneering cadets?

- After POP, the women report to their service academies for one year of specialised training—the Indian Military Academy (Army), Air Force Academy, or Indian Naval Academy—before commissioning in mid-2026.
- The Ministry of Defence has created tailored mentorship and infrastructure upgrades (separate barrack blocks, obstacle-course adaptations and gender-specialist medical staff) to support the transition.

Broader implications for India's armed forces

- The success of this batch paves the way **for larger female intakes—up to 120 per year—from the NDA entrance exam 2026 onward**, according to Defence Ministry projections.
- A pipeline of women officers with identical foundational training is likely to accelerate policy reforms on command appointments, submariner posts and Special Forces roles that still exclude women.
- The achievement serves as a symbolic boost for gender-inclusive national initiatives such as Naari Shakti and **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao**, offering a powerful recruiting narrative for the Services.

2

CENTRE NOTIFIES NEW JOB &
DOMICILE RULES FOR LADAKH

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- India's Home Ministry has issued two linked notifications—the **Union Territory of Ladakh Reservation (Amendment) Regulation, 2025** and the **Ladakh Grant of Domicile Certificate (Procedure) Rules, 2025**—that together create an **85 percent local-job quota**, a **legally binding Ladakh Resident Certificate (LRC) regime**, and the **Union Territory's first women-reservation in its hill councils**.
- Released on **2–3 June 2025**, the rules answer five years of public agitation for safeguards after Ladakh was carved out of **Jammu-&-Kashmir in 2019** and are designed to protect land, jobs and culture while a broader demand for Sixth-Schedule status remains pending.

The Rules

- The rules were **gazetted on 3 June 2025**, marking the Centre's first statutory concession to the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA).
- They raise local reservations from 50 % to **85 % of all Group C & D jobs and professional-college seats**, leaving only 15 % fully open.
- A new domicile definition—**15 years' continuous residence counted prospectively from 31 Oct 2019**—effectively freezes outside eligibility until 2034.
- One-third of seats in both Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs) are now reserved for women, a first for the region.

Key features of the new framework

Job-reservation matrix

- STs 45 %, SCs 4 %, border-area residents 10 %, Pahari-speaking people 6 % and other locals 20 %**: together they form the new 85 % Ladakh-resident quota.
- The ceiling excludes the national 10 % EWS quota, which can push total reservations above 90 % in Ladakh's unique demography.

Domicile rules

- An applicant (or parent/guardian) must show **uninterrupted residence in Ladakh for 15 years after 31 Oct 2019**; proof includes ration cards, school records and electricity bills.
- Scheduled-Tribe members recorded in the **1961 or 1971 census** qualify automatically, reflecting Ladakh's tribal super-majority.
- Digital LRCs must be issued within **30 days** via a new portal overseen by district magistrates.

Governance & language

- The rules recognise **Bhoti, Purgi, Shina, Balti and Ladakhi** as official languages for recruitment tests and public business.
- They pave the way for a **Ladakh Public Service Commission**, ending reliance on J-K PSC and UPSC for gazetted posts.

Reactions on the ground

- LAB and KDA** welcomed the safeguards but reiterated demands for Sixth-Schedule status and full statehood.
- Women's groups** hailed the one-third LAHDC quota as "historic," while student unions demanded similar representation in university and police recruitment boards.
- Tourism and solar-energy investors warned the 15-year rule may delay skilled-labour inflows, urging a clearer regime for temporary work permits.

3 USBRL PROJECT

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

- **The Udhampur–Srinagar–Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL)** has become India's first all-weather rail artery to the Kashmir Valley: on **6 June 2025 Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the final 111 km Katra–Sangaldan–Srinagar stretch, flagged off the winter-ised Katra–Srinagar Vande Bharat Express, and declared the entire 272 km corridor “open for regular traffic.”**
- The ₹38,000-crore project—featuring the world's tallest Chenab Rail Bridge, India's first cable-stayed Anji Khad Bridge and the country's longest transportation tunnel—connects Jammu with Baramulla through 36 tunnels and 943 bridges, slashing Katra–Srinagar travel time to three hours and giving the armed forces their first direct rail logistics line to the Line of Control.

- **Completion & inauguration:** The Katra–Srinagar section, the last missing link, went live on 6 June 2025, making the line fully operational.
- **Engineering marvels unveiled:** The 359 m-high **Chenab Rail Bridge**—taller than the Eiffel Tower—was opened for scheduled trains, while the **Anji Khad Bridge** became India's first cable-stayed rail bridge.
- **Vande Bharat rollout:** A winterised, 130 km/h Katra–Srinagar Vande Bharat Express began daily service, signalling the corridor's readiness for high-speed passenger traffic.

Project snapshot

- **Total length:** 272 km from Udhampur to Baramulla (including 25 km Udhampur–Katra section opened 2014).
- **Terrain:** Climbs from 600 m at Udhampur to 1,760 m at Banihal, piercing the Pir Panjal range via tunnels that cover 119 km (≈44 % of route).
- **Cost:** Revised project outlay stands at about ₹38,000 crore (≈ US \$5 billion).
- **Executing agencies:** Konkan Railway Corporation (Katra–Banihal), IRCON (Banihal–Baramulla) and Northern Railway (Udhampur–Katra).

Feature	Details	Significance
Chenab Rail Bridge	1,315 m long steel-arch, 359 m above riverbed	World's highest rail bridge; wind & blast resistant
Anji Khad Bridge	473 m cable-stayed span, 193 m single pylon	India's first cable-stayed rail bridge
Tunnel T-50	12.77 km between Khari & Sumber	Longest transport tunnel in India
Banihal Tunnel (T-80)	8.4 km; double track	Replaces weather-prone Jawahar road tunnel

Strategic and socio-economic impact

- **Defence logistics:** Seamless rail access enables rapid troop and equipment movement to the Kashmir Valley, boosting border readiness.
- **Economic uplift:** Faster shipment of apples, dry fruits and handicrafts can raise farmer incomes and reduce spoilage.
- **Tourism surge:** Direct all-weather trains are projected to raise annual tourist arrivals by 30 %, benefiting hospitality and transport sectors.
- **Employment & skills:** Construction generated ≈100,000 jobs and introduced advanced tunnelling and bridge-building know-how to Indian Railways.

4

**EXTREME POVERTY IN INDIA
DOWN TO 5.3% IN 2022-23****ECONOMY****IN FOCUS**

India's extreme-poverty rate has fallen to **5.3 percent of the population in 2022-23**, according to the World Bank's June 2025 poverty-line update. The new estimate—calculated at a **higher international line of USD 3.00 a day in 2021 PPP terms**—implies that roughly **269–270 million Indians have escaped extreme poverty since 2011-12**. Even at the previous USD 2.15 line, India's head-count ratio is now just **2.3 percent**, one of the lowest among large low- and middle-income economies.

- On **5 June 2025** the World Bank announced a **revision of the global extreme-poverty threshold from USD 2.15 to USD 3.00 (2017 → 2021 PPP)** to reflect updated cost-of-living data.
- The accompanying **Country Profile for India on the Poverty & Inequality Platform (PIP)** showed a **5.25 percent poverty rate for 2022** and 5.3 percent for FY 2023 under the new line.
- Indian media highlighted that the decline persisted **despite the tougher poverty standard**, crediting targeted welfare schemes and resilient growth.

Methodology and data sources

A higher poverty line: The Bank's statisticians re-anchored the international line to the consumption patterns of the 15 poorest countries using **2021 Purchasing-Power Parity (PPP) prices**, yielding **USD 3.00 per person per day**.

Indian estimates

- Poverty trends for 2011-12 → 2022-23 were derived from **Consumer Pyramids Household Survey (CPHS)** data adjusted with the Roy-van der Weide imputation method, because India's last large-sample NSS consumption round was in 2011-12.
- The World Bank's "**India: Trends in Poverty 2011-12 to 2022-23**" technical note details the re-weighting and deflator adjustments used.

Key findings for India

- **Head-count ratio:** 27.1 % in 2011-12 → **5.3 % in 2022-23** at USD 3 line; 16.2 % → 2.3 % at USD 2.15 line.
- **People lifted out of extreme poverty:** ≈ 270 million over the decade.
- **Number of poor in 2022-23:** about **75 million**, down from 344 million in 2011-12.
- **Shared prosperity:** Consumption growth for the bottom 40 % averaged 4.4 % a year, faster than the national mean.

Drivers of poverty reduction

1. **High and broad-based GDP growth** averaging 7 %+ since 2014, including strong post-pandemic rebound.
2. **Targeted cash-transfer and food programmes** (PM-KISAN, PDS reforms, free LPG refills) that raised real rural incomes and cushioned shocks.
3. **Minimal food-price inflation** relative to incomes, helped by buffer-stock operations and PM-Garib Kalyan free-grain scheme during COVID-19.
4. **Infrastructure push**—electrification, rural roads, digital payments—that improved productivity and market access.

Regional and social patterns

- Poverty fell **across every major state**, but the decline was fastest in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, reflecting high starting levels. Scheduled-Caste and Scheduled-Tribe households saw the **steepest percentage-point drops**, yet still record higher poverty rates than the national mean.
- Urban poverty is now below 3 %, while rural poverty—though sharply lower—remains above 6 % in several eastern states.

Implications and policy take-aways

- **For India:** The new numbers bolster New Delhi's claim that **extreme poverty is approaching "elimination"**, but they also raise the bar for next-generation goals—moving people above the **USD 6.85 upper-middle-income line**. Continued progress will hinge on **quality job creation**, especially for youth and women, and on tackling multidimensional deprivations that remain at 15 %.
- **For global poverty counts:** Because India houses nearly a fifth of the world's population, its large drop in poverty **shaved about 1 percentage point off the global head-count ratio** after the line revision—offsetting part of the upward push expected from the higher USD 3 benchmark.

Caveats and criticisms

- Analysts note that CPHS under-samples the poorest households; the Bank's imputations mitigate but do not remove this bias.
- Consumption-based poverty may understate vulnerability: roughly **17 % of Indians still live between USD 3 and USD 6.85 a day**, at risk of sliding back during shocks.

What happens next?

- The World Bank will integrate India's upcoming **2022-23 National Family Expenditure Survey** (expected in 2026) to sharpen estimates.
- A new **"Shared Prosperity & Planet" dashboard** will track whether India's poverty gains are matched by reductions in carbon and resource intensity.

5

FLIPKART SECURES NBFC LICENSE
FROM RBI

ECONOMY

IN FOCUS

India's largest home-grown e-commerce firm has crossed a regulatory milestone: **Flipkart Finance Pvt Ltd received a non-deposit-taking NBFC licence from the Reserve Bank of India on 13 March 2025, publicly disclosed on 5 June 2025, making Flipkart the first Indian online-retail platform authorised to lend from its own balance sheet.** The approval lets the Walmart-backed company move beyond “buy-now-pay-later” tie-ups and build a captive credit engine for shoppers and marketplace sellers through the Flipkart app and its new fintech app **super.money**.

What the RBI licence allows

- Flipkart can issue short-tenor personal loans, instant checkout credit (BNPL), revolving lines for merchants and co-branded cards—funded entirely from Flipkart Finance's own book.
- The entity must maintain minimum 15 % capital-to-risk ratio, follow RBI's 2022 Digital-Lending guidelines, and cannot accept public deposits.

Why Flipkart sought an in-house NBFC

- **Margin gain & data loop:** direct lending converts partner-share fees into Flipkart interest income and feeds purchase data into its risk models.
- **Seller stickiness:** on-platform working-capital loans can cut MSME churn and deepen inventory supply.
- **IPO story:** a fintech revenue arm broadens Flipkart's pitch ahead of its anticipated domestic listing.

Sector-wide significance

- Flipkart's move pressures Amazon India (still reliant on partner NBFCs) and Reliance's Jio-commerce play to secure their own licences, accelerating e-commerce-fintech convergence.
- A native lender inside a top marketplace could channel fresh credit to thousands of small sellers, addressing part of India's ₹25-lakh-crore MSME funding gap.
- For consumers, in-app micro-loans under ₹50,000 expand first-time formal credit but increase the need for responsible-lending oversight.

Risks and regulatory guard-rails

- Flipkart must manage thin-file and fraud risk with AI underwriting and adhere to RBI consent rules on data sharing.
- Conflict-of-interest scrutiny could tighten: loans must remain arm's-length from marketplace promotions.
- RBI's new cap on default-loss-guarantee structures for digital lenders will apply to any bank-partnered products that Flipkart continues to offer.

What happens next

- Beta launch of instant checkout loans and seller overdrafts is planned for Diwali 2025, after internal system audits.
- Flipkart Finance is expected to raise up to ₹1,000 crore through Tier-II bonds within 12 months to seed its loan book.
- The super.money app will integrate UPI payments, fixed-deposit products and pre-approved credit, aiming for profitability by end-2025.

6 WORLD FOOD SAFETY DAY 2025

IMPORTANT DAYS

IN FOCUS

World Food Safety Day (WFSF) 2025 was observed on **7 June** under the global theme “**Food Safety – Science in Action**”, a call from FAO and WHO to turn scientific knowledge into concrete steps that keep food free from hazards, reduce illness and save lives. The theme stresses that food can only be safe when scientific guidance is actually applied by farmers, processors, traders, regulators and consumers alike.

Why WFSF 2025 mattered

- Foodborne diseases still sicken one in ten people worldwide each year, costing low- and middle-income economies an estimated USD 110 billion in lost productivity and medical expenses.
- The 2025 campaign arrived as climate-driven shocks raise contamination risks from mycotoxins, antimicrobial-resistant bacteria and chemical residues across global supply chains.

Core messages issued by FAO & WHO

- **Use science to prevent, detect and manage hazards:** robust surveillance, risk assessment and rapid alert systems are essential at every stage “from farm to fork.”
- **Strengthen national food-control systems:** governments were urged to update legislation, invest in laboratories and join Codex Alimentarius standard-setting work.
- **Support food-business operators and SMEs:** training, good-hygiene practice manuals and access to rapid-test kits turn scientific know-how into safer local products.
- **Empower consumers:** clear labelling, hand-washing, safe refrigeration and correct cooking temperatures help families apply “science in action” at home.

Global and local activities

- FAO and WHO released an updated **communication toolkit** with posters, infographics and social-media cards in six UN languages.
- More than **300 registered events**—from Codex webinars on mycotoxin testing to school food-safety fairs in Latin America—ran in the week of 3–9 June.
- Retail groups in North America and Europe showcased “science in action” by demonstrating digital traceability and temperature-monitoring sensors in fresh-food aisles.

India-specific highlights

- FSSAI organised a nationwide “Eat Safe Campus” drive, auditing canteens in 200 colleges and announcing that 63 % met all hygiene benchmarks.
- IIT-Delhi researchers unveiled a low-cost handheld aflatoxin detector for groundnuts, winning the FAO–WHO student innovation challenge.
- State food-safety labs in Kerala and Gujarat livestreamed facility tours to show how microbiological tests translate science into everyday protection for consumers.

Longer-term priorities promoted in 2025

- Integrate food-safety actions into national climate-adaptation plans to anticipate new pathogen and toxin profiles.
- Expand One-Health collaborations so human-health, veterinary and environmental agencies share data on emerging foodborne hazards.
- Mobilise investment for rapid-testing technologies and cold-chain infrastructure in low-income settings, converting science into affordable everyday practice.

7 AIR INDIA FLIGHT CRASH

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

IN FOCUS

India's worst aviation disaster in a decade struck on **12 June 2025**, when **Air India Flight 171, a Boeing 787 bound for London-Gatwick, crashed 32 seconds after take-off from Ahmedabad's Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Airport**. The wide-body jet ploughed into a doctors' hostel at B.J. Medical College, killing **241 of 242 people on board and 19 on the ground; only one passenger survived**. The accident is the first fatal loss of a Dreamliner and has triggered a multipart investigation led by India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) with technical support from the U.S. NTSB, Boeing and GE Aerospace.

Aircraft details

- Airframe: Boeing 787-8 "Dreamliner," registration **VT-ANB**, delivered new to Air India in 2014 and powered by twin GE GENx-1B engines.
- Flight: scheduled AI 171, Ahmedabad → London-Gatwick, 230 passengers, 11 cabin crew, 1 augmented pilot.
- The type's electrical-hydraulic architecture and engine-control software are central to the current probe.

What is an aircraft "black box"?

- The term is the popular nickname for the **two mandatory flight-recording devices carried on every large commercial aircraft: the Flight Data Recorder (FDR) and the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR)**. Together they capture hundreds of parameters (altitude, speed, control-surface positions, engine settings) and all cockpit sounds so investigators can reconstruct an accident.
- Although called "black," the units are painted **high-visibility orange** to be easier to spot in wreckage and are built to survive extremes—impact forces up to 3 400 g and post-crash fires of more than 1 000 °C.
- Regulations under the International Civil Aviation Organization place the recorders—often as a single combined module—in the rear fuselage, the part of the airframe most likely to remain intact in a crash
- Both the CVR and flight-data recorder (FDR) were recovered within 48 hours and downloaded at the AAIB lab in New Delhi.
- FDR shows the autothrottle commanded idle just after rotation while the fuel-control switches on both engines momentarily flipped from "RUN" to "CUTOFF," immediately reducing thrust.
- Investigators are studying whether a short in the left electrical panel triggered an automatic dual-engine rollback—a failure mode never before documented on the 787.

What is the DGCA?

- The **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** is India's national aviation regulator, an attached office of the Ministry of Civil Aviation. It issues and enforces all civil-airworthiness regulations, certifies aircraft and airlines, licenses pilots and engineers, approves aerodromes, and oversees air-safety investigations.
- The DGCA also represents India at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and publishes Civil Aviation Requirements that operators must follow for maintenance, flight operations and crew training.
- After the Air India Flight 171 crash, the DGCA ordered immediate technical audits of Dreamliner fleets, mandated one-time checks of fuel-control switches, and began a review of obstacle-free zones around Indian runways, demonstrating its role as the country's chief safety watchdog.
- India's aviation regulator (DGCA) ordered an immediate one-time inspection of every Air India Dreamliner before departure effective 15 June and launched a special audit of the airline's engineering base.
- A wider DGCA inspection of all Indian carriers and big hubs found recurring maintenance lapses; airlines were given seven days to show corrective action. DGCA also began obstacle-clearance reviews at secondary airports after the hostel impact highlighted inadequate runway-end safety zones.

Investigation status

- A joint team from India's AAIB, the U.S. NTSB, Boeing and GE Aerospace is probing engine-control logic, electrical switchover procedures and possible maintenance errors.
- The 30-day **preliminary report** was submitted to the Civil Aviation Ministry on 8 July; India is not obliged to publish it but officials hint at public release given international interest.
- Full factual findings are due within six months and could influence global 787 operating directives and Boeing certification work on future wide-bodies.

Broader impact and next steps

- Air India grounded its 787s for 48 hours, cancelled eight long-haul flights and began simulator-based upset-recovery refreshers for all Dreamliner crews.
- FAA issued a precautionary worldwide service bulletin directing immediate inspection of GENx engine fuel-control switches on 787-8/-9 fleets.
- Insurance analysts project hull-plus-liability claims above USD 1.4 billion, the largest ever for an Asian carrier.
- Urban planners are reviewing land-use near Indian airports after doctors' hostels and student dorms were found within potential impact zones.

8 GOVT NOTIFIES SEZ REFORMS

ECONOMY

IN FOCUS

India has formally overhauled its Special Economic Zone framework: on **3 June 2025** the Commerce Department notified the **Special Economic Zones (Amendment) Rules, 2025**, the first instalment of a broader reform package that will eventually be folded into the forthcoming **DESH (Development of Enterprise and Service Hubs) Bill**. The notification relaxes land-size norms, streamlines approvals, and removes legacy export-obligation hurdles—changes immediately welcomed by semiconductor, electronics-component and defence manufacturers that see SEZs as turnkey locations for high-technology investment.

Why the reforms were notified

- The government wants SEZs to anchor its **₹76,000-crore semiconductor mission** and **“Make in India” electronics drive**, but legacy rules demanded large, encumbrance-free plots and rigid export ratios that did not suit capital-intensive fabs.
- A **slowdown in net-new SEZ approvals since 2018** and de-notification of 100-plus zones convinced policymakers that the 19-year-old regime needed an investor-friendly facelift ahead of the DESH Bill.

Key provisions in the June 2025 amendments

- **Reduced minimum land requirement** for dedicated semiconductor or electronic-component SEZs—now **10 ha instead of 50 ha**; the Board of Approval (BoA) may waive the “encumbrance-free” condition if the land is mortgaged or leased to a government agency.
- **Hub-and-spoke flexibility**: contiguous-land mandate eased for multi-facility zones if the plots are connected by internal logistics corridors, enabling “vertical” SEZs inside brown-field industrial parks.
- **Automatic approval window of 30 days** for unit licences and import-duty exemptions once state Single-Window clearances are uploaded on the SEZ online portal.
- **Deemed-domestic status** for sales into India of products that meet a 50 % value-addition threshold, eliminating double-taxation when goods move from an SEZ to the domestic tariff area.
- **Faster exit rules**: an SEZ developer may surrender approval by paying only net-unutilised duty benefits instead of full upfront incentives, freeing stuck land parcels for alternate use.

Objectives behind the overhaul

- **Catalyse high-tech clusters** in semiconductors, AI hardware, defence electronics and EV components by matching global “fab park” incentives.
- **Re-energise dormant zones** and repurpose partially vacant SEZ land without waiting for the DESH legislation.
- **Align with global supply-chain shifts** as firms seek “China-plus-one” production bases; flexible rules help India bid for packaging, testing and compound-semiconductor units.

Link with the forthcoming DESH Bill

- The **DESH Bill, expected in the Monsoon Session of Parliament, will formally replace the 2005 SEZ Act**, broadening the zones’ mandate to include domestic sales, service exports and sustainable-manufacturing incentives; the June rules act as an interim “plug-in.”
- DESH will introduce **“development hubs”** with sector-agnostic land norms, a single grievance redress platform and tax incentives that comply with WTO rules—features foreshadowed by the 2025 amendments.

9

**2026 AS THE INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF THE WOMAN FARMER****IMPORTANT DAYS****IN FOCUS**

The UN General Assembly has formally proclaimed **2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF)**, adopting resolution **A/RES/78/279** on 2 May 2024 with more than 100 co-sponsors led by the United States. FAO, IFAD and UN Women have been asked to coordinate a global programme that spotlights the 1.25 billion women who produce almost half of the world's food, mobilises new finance for land rights, climate-smart technology and leadership training, and feeds the SDG-2 and SDG-5 "rescue plans" to be tabled at the 2025 UN Summit of the Future.

- The **UNGA vote on 2 May 2024** made IYWF the first UN international year devoted exclusively to rural women, winning cross-regional support from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Latin America.
- On **5 June 2025** FAO and UN Women hosted the first global steering-committee meeting, launching an open call for national action plans and partner pledges.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture highlighted the initiative as a centre-piece of its food-security diplomacy, underscoring bipartisan support at home.

Objectives of the International Year

- **Raise visibility** of women farmers' contributions to food security, nutrition, climate resilience and rural economies.
- **Accelerate investment** in land tenure, credit, extension and digital services that close gender gaps in productivity and income.
- **Improve data and evidence**, requesting sex-disaggregated indicators in FAO's agricultural censuses and the World Bank's Poverty Platform.
- **Support leadership and voice**, aiming for 50 % women's representation on farmers'-organisation boards by 2030.

Core pillars set out in resolution 78/279

1. **Inclusive land and resource rights** – Member States are urged to reform inheritance and titling laws so women can hold and transfer land on equal terms with men.
2. **Gender-responsive finance** – International financial institutions are invited to create guarantee windows and blended-finance vehicles that reach at least ten million women farmers by 2027.
3. **Climate-smart technology & extension** – Calls for scaling drought-resistant seeds, clean-energy irrigation and digital advisory platforms tailored to smallholders.
4. **Leadership & decision-making** – Encourages quotas and training so that rural women can shape policies in cooperatives, water-user associations and local councils.

Implementation architecture

- **Lead agencies:** FAO will chair an inter-agency task-force with UN Women, IFAD and WFP, reporting annually to the UNGA Second Committee.
- **Resource mobilisation:** The task-force will unveil a multi-partner trust fund in early 2026; preliminary pledges total **US \$215 million** from governments, philanthropies and ag-tech firms.
- **Global calendar:** A Rome launch (January 2026), regional forums under the five UN Economic Commissions, and a high-level stock-take at UNGA 81 (December 2026).

Expected impact

- Closing gender gaps in farm productivity could boost global GDP by up to **US \$1 trillion** and cut hunger for 150 million people.

- Wider access to climate-smart inputs for women could reduce agriculture-linked emissions by around 2 %.
- The Year is designed to fast-track progress on SDG-2 (Zero Hunger), SDG-5 (Gender Equality) and the **Doha Action Programme for LDCs 2022-31**.

India-specific engagement

- The Agriculture Ministry announced a **“She-FARM 100”** initiative covering 100 aspirational districts with land-records digitisation, women-only FPO incubators and climate-smart seed kits.
- NABARD is preparing a ₹2,500-crore Women-Farmer Credit Guarantee Scheme timed to launch with IYWF.
- Civil-society networks such as MAKAAAM plan nationwide yatras to amplify women farmers’ voices in policy debates.

10

UNFPA STATE OF WORLD
POPULATION REPORT 2025

INDICES AND REPORTS

IN FOCUS

The UNFPA State of World Population Report 2025, titled “**The Real Fertility Crisis: The Pursuit of Reproductive Agency in a Changing World**,” warns that falling birth-rates are not the result of people rejecting parenthood but of the economic, social and gender barriers that stop them from having the families they want. Based on new UNFPA-YouGov surveys in 14 countries and the latest demographic data, the report argues that the true crisis is a shortfall in **choice, not babies**, and calls on governments to remove the obstacles that limit reproductive autonomy.

Why was it in the news?

- Released globally on **10 June 2025**, the report immediately sparked debate about pronatalist cash bonuses versus rights-based policies.
- Media highlighted UNFPA’s finding that **nearly one in five adults worldwide expect to have fewer children than they desire**.
- UNFPA Executive Director Dr Natalia Kanem used the launch to criticise coercive population measures and urge investment in childcare, gender equality and climate resilience.

Key global findings

- Desired families unmet:** 19 % of women and men of reproductive age across the survey countries do not believe they will achieve their ideal family size, despite wanting children.
- Barriers named:** respondents cited high living costs (39 %), job instability (21 %), housing shortages (19 %), lack of childcare (12 %) and unequal domestic roles for women as principal deterrents.
- Global fertility picture:** total fertility has dropped from 5.0 in 1960 to 2.3 in 2025; two-thirds of people now live in countries below the replacement rate of 2.1.
- No “baby bust” in sub-Saharan Africa:** the region still averages 4.1 births, yet unmet need for modern contraception remains 22 %—evidence that choice, not coercion, should drive fertility change.

India-specific snapshot

- Population size:** April 2025 estimate of **1.463 billion**, keeping India the world’s most populous country.
- Fertility rate:** India’s TFR has fallen to **1.9**, already below replacement level, with life expectancy projected at 71 (men) and 74 (women) years.
- Crisis of fertility aspirations:** a UNFPA India release shows **36 % of adults have had an unintended pregnancy** while 30 % report they could not achieve either more or fewer children as desired; 23 % experienced both constraints.
- Gender norms still bind:** women cite unequal household duties and weak workplace support as major reasons for postponing or limiting births.

Recommendations for India

- Expand PM-POSHAN and Anganwadi childcare to reduce women’s unpaid care burden** and boost labour-force participation, thereby easing economic concerns around parenthood.
- Ensure universal access to quality contraception and fertility services**, especially for the 17 % of currently married women whose needs remain unmet, as per NFHS-6 preliminary tables.
- Promote equal parental leave in the upcoming Labour Codes** to normalise shared caregiving and reduce workplace penalties for motherhood.
- Integrate reproductive-choice indicators into the National Family Health Survey** to track “fertility aspiration gaps” alongside fertility levels.

11

GLOBAL GENDER GAP
REPORT 2025

REPORT AND INDICES

IN FOCUS

The **Global Gender Gap Report 2025**, released by the World Economic Forum on **4 June 2025**, finds that the world has closed **68.8 % of the overall gender gap**, a gain of just 0.3 percentage points in the past year; at this pace full parity is still **123 years away**. Iceland remains the most gender-equal country for the 16-th straight year, while India slips two places to **131 / 148** despite small score improvements.

Why was the 2025 edition in the news?

- It is the first post-pandemic report to show the gap narrowing faster than in 2021-24, yet warns that progress is “nowhere near the velocity required” to meet the 2030 Sustainable-Development Goal on gender equality.
- Media focused on the finding that economic participation is recovering, but women’s political empowerment has stalled, dragging overall scores.
- The report fuelled debate in South Asia after India, Pakistan and Bangladesh all ranked in the bottom quartile.

Global key findings (four pillars)

- **Economic Participation & Opportunity:** Gap closed to **59 %**, up 0.5 pp year-on-year, thanks to rising female labour-force participation and shrinking wage gaps in services.
- **Educational Attainment:** Stands at **94 % parity**, but some low-income countries still lag in secondary enrolment for girls.
- **Health & Survival:** Virtually static at **95 %**, with continuing sex-ratio imbalances in a handful of economies.
- **Political Empowerment:** Remains the widest gap at **22 % parity** and deteriorated in half the countries surveyed.

Top and bottom performers

- **Top five:** Iceland, Finland, Norway, United Kingdom and Sweden all score above 84 % parity.
- **Fast climbers:** The **United Arab Emirates** jumps five places to 69th after big gains in women’s leadership roles.
- **Lowest ranked:** Afghanistan, Chad, Iran, Pakistan and Algeria occupy the final slots.

India-specific highlights

- **Overall score:** **64.1 %**, up 0.3 pp, but rank falls two places to **131** as peer countries improve faster.
- **Economic Participation:** Score rises to **40.7 %** because of an uptick in female estimated income and senior manager roles.
- **Educational Attainment:** Near-parity at **96 %**, yet female STEM enrolment remains under 30 % of total.
- **Health & Survival:** Still constrained by a sex-ratio gap; parity at **94 %**.
- **Political Empowerment:** Marginal progress to **26 %**, reflecting more women ministers but stagnant parliamentary representation.

Policy messages from the report

- **Close care-economy gaps:** Affordable childcare and eldercare would boost women’s paid-work hours and GDP.
- **Accelerate women’s skilling for AI and green jobs** so labour-market gains are future-proof.
- **Mandate gender targets in public procurement and corporate boards** to expand leadership pipelines.
- **Invest in digital-inclusion programmes**—every 10 % rise in women’s internet access correlates with a 0.6 pp rise in economic-parity scores.

12

INDIA'S PM HISTORIC VISIT TO
CYPRUS AND CROATIA

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

India's June 2025 swing through **Cyprus (15-16 June)** and **Croatia (18-19 June)** was the first-ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister to either country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi used both stops to open Mediterranean gateways for the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**, secure EU support for an India-EU free-trade deal, and sign a total of nine new cooperation accords covering defence, maritime security, energy, fintech and culture. The trips also underscored India's outreach to smaller EU members ahead of Cyprus's EU Presidency in 2026 and Croatia's push to develop an Adriatic logistics hub.

Why were the visits historic?

- **First Indian PM in Cyprus in 22 years;** Modi received a ceremonial welcome at Larnaca and Cyprus's highest civilian award, the *Grand Cross of the Order of Makarios III*.
- **First-ever Indian head-of-government visit to Croatia,** hailed in Zagreb as the start of a "new chapter" in bilateral ties.
- Both capitals positioned themselves as EU entry points for Indian trade and technology investment.

Cyprus leg (15-16 June, Nicosia & Limassol)

- **Strategic corridor focus:** Leaders agreed to make Cyprus a maritime-logistics node for IMEC sea-rail traffic linking India to Europe.
- **Defence & maritime MoU:** New pact expands naval visits, joint search-and-rescue drills and cybersecurity cooperation.
- **Finance & fintech:** Eurobank and India's NPCI signed an MoU to roll out **UPI-based remittances**, making Cyprus only the second EU state to adopt the Indian payment rails.
- **People-to-people links:** ICCR Chair in India Studies announced at University of Nicosia; Modi addressed 8 000-strong diaspora gathering in Limassol.

Key agreements signed

- Joint Declaration on an India-Cyprus Comprehensive Partnership.
- MoU on Defence and Maritime Security Cooperation.
- MoU on Digital Payments and UPI Remittances.

Croatia leg (18-19 June, Zagreb & Rijeka)

- **Economic boost:** Four agreements inked in agriculture, science & technology, culture and higher-education (University of Zagreb-Indology programme).
- **Port logistics & defence:** Talks covered Indian investment in Rijeka port modernisation and cooperation on shipbuilding and coastal surveillance systems.
- **EU trade agenda:** Zagreb pledged to lobby for concluding the India-EU Free-Trade Agreement by end-2025 and supported India's call for a balanced investment treaty.
- **Cultural diplomacy:** Joint stamp release commemorated 30 years of diplomatic ties; Croatia announced visa-on-arrival for Indian tourists starting January 2026.

Key agreements signed

1. MoU on Agricultural Cooperation (crop genetics, irrigation tech).
2. Cultural Exchange Programme 2025-30.
3. Science-and-Technology Cooperation Roadmap (AI & green hydrogen).
4. University MoU on Indology & Croatian Language Studies.

13 GDP BASE YEAR REVISED TO 2022-23**ECONOMY****IN FOCUS**

India will re-base **all national-accounts statistics to the financial year 2022-23**, with the first full, back-cast GDP series scheduled for release on **27 February 2026**; the change replaces the current 2011-12 reference, captures post-pandemic structural shifts such as GST formalisation, digital platforms and green energy, and aligns GDP with forthcoming CPI and IIP rebasing exercises.

Why was the revision in the news?

- The Statistics Minister informed Parliament in December 2024 that the Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics (ACNAS) had endorsed 2022-23 as the new base and fixed February 2026 for publication.
- MoSPI's June 2025 press briefing confirmed that work on supply-use tables, deflators and back-series is under way, using fresh GST, MCA-21 and household-survey data.
- Media outlets highlighted that India will join peer economies that now update national-accounts weights every 5-7 years to reflect rapid economic change.

What does “changing the base year” mean?

- A base year provides constant-price weights so that “real” GDP strips out inflation; revising it ensures sectoral shares and price deflators mirror today's economy.
- India last rebased in 2015 (from 2004-05 to 2011-12); digital services, gig work and pandemic-era healthcare now render those weights outdated.

Methodological and data improvements

- GST e-way bills and monthly returns will replace older retail-trade blow-ups, capturing a larger slice of services and wholesale activity.
- The revamped MCA-21 corporate database (1.8 million active firms) will sharpen estimates for manufacturing and finance.
- Results from the 2023-24 Household Consumption & Expenditure Survey will update CPI and reconcile private-consumption weights.
- Night-light satellite data and high-frequency crop imagery will plug gaps in informal agriculture and micro-enterprise output.
- MoSPI will publish full supply-use tables for 2022-23, improving consistency between production and expenditure GDP.

Timeline and institutional steps

- ACNAS (26 experts chaired by Prof Biswanath Goldar) began work in June 2024 to set data, deflators and SNA-2025 alignment.
- Compilation and peer-review of new sectoral weights run through September 2025, followed by a six-month back-casting exercise to 2013-14.
- The revised GDP, GVA and allied price indices go live on 27 February 2026; IIP and CPI will follow with 2022-23 and 2024 bases, respectively.

Expected impacts

- MoSPI simulations suggest nominal GDP for 2022-23 could rise 1-2 % because digital and start-up activity will be better captured, slightly easing fiscal-deficit and debt ratios.
- Sectoral weights will tilt toward information technology, renewable energy and health, while agriculture's constant-price share may fall below 14 %. More granular regional accounts and informal-sector coverage should improve targeting of welfare schemes and investment incentives.

14 51ST G7 SUMMIT

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

The 51st G7 Leaders' Summit—hosted by Canada at Kananaskis, Alberta, on 16-17 June 2025—took place amid the Israel-Iran flare-up, Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine and renewed trans-Atlantic trade frictions. Leaders issued six thematic statements (critical minerals, AI for prosperity, wildfire resilience, quantum cooperation, migrant-smuggling sanctions and counter-repression), but could not agree on a traditional joint communiqué after U.S. President Donald Trump left early to oversee Middle-East crisis management.

Why the summit was in the news

- **First Canadian G7 presidency in eight years:** Prime Minister Mark Carney revived Kananaskis, site of the 2002 G8, and sought to showcase Canada's climate and critical-minerals agenda.
- **Middle-East escalation overshadowed talks:** Trump's early departure and emergency Iran-Israel consultations dominated headlines and derailed plans for a lengthy leaders' declaration.
- **Rare absence of consensus on Ukraine wording:** European members blamed Washington for blocking a robust pledge; Canada instead issued a solo sanctions package.

Core outcomes and statements

- **Economic & trade:** Leaders **reaffirmed opposition to “non-market policies”** such as forced technology transfers and export subsidies—an indirect swipe at China. The U.S. and U.K. unveiled a side-deal cutting select tariffs on aerospace and automotive goods.
- **Technology & innovation:** Adoption of an **“AI for Prosperity” statement** commits G7 to human-centric, trustworthy AI and risk-mitigation standards. A new **Quantum Cooperation Framework** sets shared research goals and export-control guidelines (details in the science ministers' annex).
- **Climate, environment & resources:** **Critical Minerals Action Plan** pledges financing tools and supply-chain due-diligence rules to diversify away from single-supplier dependence. The **Kananaskis Wildfire Charter** calls for satellite-based early warnings and pooled aerial-firefighting assets by 2027.
- **Security & foreign policy:** A **statement on migrant smuggling** floats targeted sanctions against trafficking networks. Leaders blamed Iran for regional instability while upholding Israel's right to self-defence; they urged “measured de-escalation.” Canada announced **77 new individual and 39 entity sanctions on Russia**, plus restrictions on 1000 tariff lines, independently of a collective text.

Participation and notable bilaterals

- Guest invitees included India, Australia, Brazil, South Korea, South Africa, Mexico and Ukraine, aligning with Canada's “bridging democracies” theme.
- PM Narendra Modi met Carney to reset India-Canada ties after a two-year diplomatic chill.
- U.K.-U.S. agreed to pursue a fuller trade deal after the tariff accord; EU-Australia launched security-defence pact talks at the margins.

Implications for India

- India welcomed the critical-minerals plan as it eyes Canadian and Australian lithium partnerships for its EV ambitions.
- The AI declaration aligns with New Delhi's push for global interoperable governance frameworks under its Global Digital Public Infrastructure initiative.
- IMEC's Mediterranean node, discussed with Cyprus during Modi's earlier visit, gained visibility as G7 leaders highlighted resilient corridors.

15

11TH INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY
2025

INTERNATINOAL

IN FOCUS

The 11th International Day of Yoga (IDY) on **21 June 2025** set a fresh marker for the global movement Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched at the UN in 2014. Observed in **191 countries**, the day revolved around the new theme **“Yoga for One Earth, One Health,”** linking personal well-being to planetary stewardship. From the UN Headquarters lawn in New York to mass sessions on India’s beaches, mountain passes and even an Antarctic research base, millions practised a common 45-minute protocol while governments, health agencies and yoga schools used the moment to promote climate-sensitive lifestyles and universal health coverage.

Why IDY 2025 was in the news

- **Theme debut – “Yoga for One Earth, One Health”:** FAO and WHO backed the slogan, urging citizens to adopt simpler, climate-friendly habits through yoga.
- **Prime-ministerial outreach:** PM Modi led the national event from Visakhapatnam’s RK Beach and called for “inner peace as global policy” in a televised address carried by broadcasters across the Gulf and Africa.
- **Record-scale participation:** India’s Ministry of AYUSH registered over **2 000 official events in 191 countries**, with a cumulative onsite attendance of about 28 million.
- **Absence of a UN-level pandemic-era cap:** The North Lawn of UNHQ again hosted an open public session organised by India’s mission after three years of restricted access.

Global highlights

- **United Nations, New York:** 1 200 participants—from diplomats to local school-children—performed the Common Yoga Protocol; UN officials linked yogic mindfulness to the SDG-17 cooperation agenda.
- **Mediterranean & Middle East:** Mass sunrise events at Cyprus’s Limassol promenade and Oman’s Muttrah Corniche echoed India’s new Mediterranean outreach.
- **Arctic & Antarctic stations:** Research teams livestreamed sun-salutations under 24-hour daylight, symbolising yoga’s “borderless” appeal.

India-specific celebrations

- **Visakhapatnam flagship session:** Nearly 50 000 people joined Modi on the beach in a live, zero-single-use-plastic event powered by solar lighting.
- **Grass-roots mobilisation:** The 100-day countdown (handbook circulated by MDNIY) mobilised village panchayats, defence units and rail stations for practice runs.
- **Cultural icons:** Television actors and athletes amplified the theme on social media; actress Simaran Kaur described her daily pranayama routine in national dailies.
- **Visual spectacle:** AP photo galleries captured rooftop and riverside sessions from Leh to Kanyakumari, reinforcing yoga’s integrative reach.

Key initiatives and records

- **Guinness challenges:** A civil-society consortium launched a year-long bid to set 12 world records in classical āsanās; initial Utkatāsana endurance trials drew 10 000 registrants worldwide.
- **Digital push:** The UPI-linked “YogaPay” pilot app rewarded practitioners with carbon-credit points redeemable at organic-produce markets—a first-of-its-kind blend of fintech and wellness.
- **AYUSH awards:** New cash prizes for yoga start-ups and researchers were announced, to be conferred on IDY 2026.

16

KERALA SEEKS AMENDMENT TO
WILDLIFE ACT, 1972

ENVIRONMENT

IN FOCUS

Kerala's Left-led government has formally asked the Centre to **amend the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLPA)** so that state officials can act faster—and, when necessary, lethally—against “problem” elephants, wild boar, bonnet macaques and other species that repeatedly enter farms and villages. The request, sent in May 2025 and reiterated by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in mid-June, comes after a sharp rise in human-wildlife conflicts that killed at least 182 people and damaged crops worth ₹800 crore over the past five years. Kerala argues that the WLPA's present schedules and lengthy “vermin” declaration process tie the hands of forest officers and leave rural communities angry and unsafe.

Why is the issue in the news?

- The state cabinet on **29 May 2025** authorised a formal memorandum to the Union Environment Ministry asking for targeted amendments.
- **9 June 2025**: The *Indian Express* published the full list of proposed tweaks—Kerala's first public disclosure of the draft.
- During rallies on **15 June**, the Chief Minister blamed “Delhi's inaction” for recent elephant and wild-boar deaths of farmers, renewing political pressure.

Key amendments Kerala seeks

- **Faster “vermin” tagging**: empower states to declare species such as wild boar and bonnet macaque as vermin in specified panchayats for limited periods without waiting for central gazette notifications.
- **Schedule reshuffle**: downgrade the bonnet macaque from Schedule I (highest protection) to Schedule II so problem troops can be legally captured, relocated or culled.
- **Section 11 streamlining**: allow chief wildlife wardens to issue immediate destruction orders for “habitually aggressive” elephants once they are radio-collared and documented, bypassing multiple approvals.
- **Compensation clause**: insert a new sub-section making the Centre responsible for 50 % of ex-gratia paid by states for wildlife deaths, injuries and crop losses.

Why Kerala wants these changes

- **Rising casualties**: human deaths from wild-animal attacks doubled between 2015 and 2024; the state paid ₹176 crore in compensation last year alone.
- **Procedural delays**: wild-boar culling permits can take three to six months, by which time crop damage is done and local anger spills into illegal poisoning or electrocution.
- **Protected-area saturation**: elephant density in Wayanad and Nilambur exceeds ecological carrying capacity, driving herds into inhabited coffee and rubber estates.
- **Legal bottleneck**: WLPA schedules were tightened in 2022, giving blanket protection to many species and removing the Centre's power to delegate vermin listing to states.

Current WLPA provisions (and Kerala's pain points)

- **Section 62** lets the Centre declare any species “vermin” for a fixed area and time, but only through a Gazette notification that typically takes months.
- **Section 11(1)(a)** allows destruction of “dangerous” animals, yet requires proof that every alternative has failed; forest officers cite legal risk and public-interest litigation.
- **Schedules I & II** grant near-absolute protection; even relocation requires state wildlife board consent and, for Schedule I, Centre's nod.
- Forests and wildlife lie in the Concurrent List, so Parliament must amend the WLPA or empower states through delegated legislation—Kerala cannot act alone. Kerala invokes Article 21 (right to life), arguing the law must balance human safety with wildlife conservation.

17

UK PARLIAMENT PASSES ASSISTED
DYING BILL

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

The House of Commons has broken fifty years of legislative deadlock on the right to die. On **20 June 2025** MPs approved the **Terminally Ill Adults (End-of-Life) Bill**—often called the Assisted Dying Bill—by **314 votes to 291** after an emotional free-vote debate. The measure, promoted by Labour back-bencher **Kim Leadbeater**, would allow mentally competent adults who have a medically certified life expectancy of six months or less to obtain lethal medication under a multilayered system of safeguards.

If the House of Lords concurs later this year and Royal Assent follows, England and Wales will join a growing list of liberal democracies—including Canada and New Zealand—where assisted dying is legal.

Parliamentary journey so far: The bill received its formal first reading on 12 January 2025. On 14 March it cleared second reading by 329 to 278, at which point MPs sent it to a detailed committee stage where they tightened mental-capacity tests and added a 14-day cooling-off period.

- The decisive third-reading vote on 20 June represents the first time either chamber of Parliament has endorsed physician-assisted dying since the issue was first introduced as a private member's proposal in 1997.

Core features of the bill

- The legislation restricts eligibility to UK residents aged eighteen or above who are terminally ill with no more than six months to live and who are judged by two independent doctors to have full decision-making capacity.
- After medical confirmation, a multidisciplinary End-of-Life Review Panel must sign off the request, and the patient then observes a statutory reflection period before self-administering the prescribed drugs; a doctor may assist only when the patient is physically incapable.
- Strict penalties of up to fourteen years in prison address coercion or falsified paperwork, while a conscientious-objection clause protects clinicians who decline to participate.

Arguments for and against

- Supporters—including Dignity in Dying, the Royal College of Physicians and Prime Minister Keir Starmer—say the bill offers terminal patients control and dignity, pointing to evidence from Canada and Oregon that robust safeguards prevent abuse.
- Opponents such as Scope, the Church of England and several senior palliative-care doctors warn that subtle coercion could pressure disabled or elderly people to choose death, and they call instead for greater investment in end-of-life care.

Projected impact

- A government impact assessment estimates that between 1 700 and 7 600 adults a year could request assisted dying once the system is fully mature by 2035.
- The Care Quality Commission would create an electronic registry and publish annual data so Parliament can monitor safety and uptake.
- Scotland is debating a parallel bill and may adopt broadly similar rules, whereas Northern Ireland's Executive has signalled opposition, raising the possibility of divergent UK regimes.
- **Next legislative steps:** The bill now moves to the House of Lords, where a second-reading debate is expected in October 2025. Constitutional convention suggests that peers rarely overturn Commons decisions on conscience issues, yet close scrutiny of safeguards is anticipated. During committee stage the Lords will help design regulations for the End-of-Life Review Panel, with final passage and Royal Assent possible before Christmas 2025.

18 DRAFT REGISTRATION BILL 2025

POLITY

IN FOCUS

India is preparing to scrap the 117-year-old Registration Act, 1908 and replace it with a technology-first statute. The **Draft Registration Bill, 2025**, released on 27 May 2025 by the Department of Land Resources, promises end-to-end online property registration, a far wider list of documents that must be compulsorily registered, and tighter fraud-prevention tools such as Aadhaar-enabled authentication and real-time title checks. The ministry has invited public comments until 25 June 2025, after which the draft will move to the Union Cabinet and Parliament.

Why the draft law is in the news:

- The draft was posted for public consultation on the Land Resources portal on **27 May 2025**, a rare instance of pre-legislative disclosure in property law.
- Mainstream dailies highlighted that the Bill would allow citizens to register property “from home” and would **replace a colonial-era statute that predates Independence**.
- Real-estate industry bodies welcomed the move as a “game-changer”, while state stamp-duty departments and civil-society groups have flagged data-security and digital-divide concerns during stakeholder workshops.

Objectives behind the reform

- The government wants to create a **citizen-centric, paper-less, fraud-resistant registration ecosystem** that dovetails with Digital India Land Records Modernisation and the upcoming nationwide Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) project.
- The Bill also seeks to **unify fragmented state procedures** by giving the Centre power to prescribe common technical and security standards while allowing states to keep fee schedules and language interfaces.

Key provisions in the Draft Registration Bill 2025

- The Bill introduces a legal basis for **electronic presentation, admission and archival of deeds**, and for issuing digitally signed registration certificates.
- It **expands compulsory registration** to cover agreements to sell, powers of attorney dealing with immovable property, sale certificates issued by courts or authorities, equitable-mortgage instruments and lease deeds exceeding eleven months.
- Aadhaar-based e-KYC is permitted “with informed consent”, but alternative verification (passport, PAN or biometric attendance at facilitation centres) must be offered to citizens who opt out of Aadhaar.
- The draft provides for a **National Registration Portal** that can inter-operate with GST, municipal and land-records databases to pull ownership data and detect fraudulent multiple sales.
- It empowers states to notify **offline facilitation counters** in rural or connectivity-poor areas to avoid excluding those on the wrong side of the digital divide.
- All registered documents will receive a **QR-coded digital token**, enabling instant verification by buyers, banks and courts.
- The Bill proposes a **Registration Dispute Resolution Authority** with quasi-judicial powers to hear complaints within sixty days, reducing case load on civil courts.
- Heavy monetary penalties and up to three years’ imprisonment are prescribed for officials or intermediaries who tamper with the digital registry or leak personal data, aligning with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023.

Expected benefits and opportunities

- Online, single-window registration is projected to **cut average turnaround time from several days to a few hours** and to lower transaction costs by eliminating middle-men.
- A wider compulsory-registration net is expected to shrink the informal “agreement to sell” market and **bring more transactions into the tax base**, improving revenue buoyancy for states.
- Digitally resilient records with instant title verification could **reduce property fraud and litigation**, boosting buyer confidence and facilitating mortgage lending.
- Real-estate analysts believe the law will **improve India’s Ease of Doing Business ranking** on property transfer indicators and aid NRI investors who currently struggle with physical paperwork.

Concerns and implementation challenges

- Cyber-security experts warn that Aadhaar OTP systems have known vulnerabilities, urging robust encryption and fallback biometric checks, especially for NRIs whose numbers are deactivated.
- Rural stakeholders point to patchy internet and power supply as major hurdles; they advocate staggered roll-outs and capacity-building at sub-registrar offices.
- State revenue officials fear short-term revenue loss if digital fee caps undercut existing stamp-duty collections, demanding clarity on fiscal impact.
- Legal commentators caution that the Bill must mesh with state stamp laws and the Transfer of Property Act, warning of transitional disputes if integration is rushed.

19

**SAGARMALA FINANCE CORPORATION
LIMITED AS FIRST MARITIME NBFC****POLITY****IN FOCUS**

India has created a dedicated lender for the blue-economy: **Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL)**, inaugurated on **26 June 2025** by Ports, Shipping & Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, is now registered with the Reserve Bank of India as the country's **first Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) focused exclusively on the maritime sector**. Born out of the earlier Sagarmala Development Company, the Mini-Ratna enterprise begins life with a paid-up capital of about ₹680 crore and the freedom to raise debt, issue guarantees and lend directly to ports, shipyards, shipping start-ups and coastal-logistics projects. Policymakers see the NBFC as the financial arm of the government's **Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**, designed to crowd in private capital, cut project finance costs and accelerate more than ₹6 trillion worth of Sagarmala pipeline works.

Why SMFCL matters

- The launch gives India a **sector-specific lender on the model of IIFCL or REC**, but for ports and shipping, closing a gap that commercial banks have been reluctant to fill.
- Because SMFCL holds an RBI licence, it can **structure long-tenor loans, refinance existing debt and provide credit-enhancement guarantees**, reducing weighted-average capital costs for big-ticket harbour, dredging and cruise-terminal projects by an estimated 150–200 basis points.
- The corporation aligns with India's aim to grow port capacity to 3 billion tonnes and lift coastal shipping's modal share from 6 percent to 12 percent by 2035.

Corporate and regulatory architecture

- SMFCL is a **non-deposit-taking NBFC**; it cannot accept public deposits, but it can borrow in domestic and offshore markets and issue green or blue bonds to international investors.
- The entity retains 100 percent Union-government ownership and **Mini-Ratna Category-I status**, letting its board clear loans quickly and hire specialist talent at market salaries.
- Exposure to any single project is capped at **10 percent of net owned funds** to contain concentration risk, and an internal risk group will apply traffic-volatility stress tests that mainstream banks often lack for maritime assets.

Product suite and immediate pipeline

- SMFCL will offer **term loans, take-out financing, refinancing of high-cost bank debt, credit-guarantee products and working-capital lines for MSME logistics firms**.
- Management has announced plans to float **₹1,500 crore of green and blue bonds in FY 2026** to fund shore-power systems, dredger electrification and mangrove-restoration buffers.
- The inaugural lending docket—worth about **₹12,000 crore**—includes the Vadhavan deep-sea port SPV, a container-cargo automation project at JNPT and a coastal LNG bunkering chain.

Strategic benefits for the maritime ecosystem

- Dedicated finance is expected to **cut gestation delays**, which currently average three years for port modernisation, by bringing quicker financial closure.
- Tailored products for coastal-logistics start-ups and ship-repair yards should **create new jobs and foster innovation** in green-fuel bunkering, smart dredging and maritime digital twins.
- A blue-bond window will help India **tap climate finance** for shoreline protection and resilience, integrating environmental goals into port-led growth.

20

EC ORDERS REVISION OF ELECTORAL ROLLS AHEAD OF BIHAR ELECTIONS

POLITY

IN FOCUS

The Election Commission of India has launched an extraordinary **Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the photo-electoral rolls in Bihar** in the run-up to the expected October–November 2025 Assembly election. The order, issued on 24 June 2025 and followed by detailed instructions on 30 June, directs a house-to-house verification of every voter, expands the list of proof documents, deploys 20,000 additional booth-level officers, and fixes **1 August 2025** for publication of draft rolls so that final, error-free rolls can be ready well before the schedule is announced. The Commission says the revision is essential to “pure rolls, clean polls,” yet critics call it an unprecedented mid-cycle exercise that could disenfranchise vulnerable voters if executed poorly.

Why the Commission acted now:

- The Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, told reporters in Patna that recent field checks showed large clusters of duplicate, shifted and deceased entries, especially in urban migrant wards, and that a normal summary revision would not be enough to restore integrity before polling.
- Political parties across the spectrum had filed hundreds of complaints after the 2024 Lok Sabha election, alleging both inflated numbers and missing first-time voters.

Scope and timeline of the Special Intensive Revision

- The SIR is based on four pillars laid down in the Commission’s 24 June circular: inclusive outreach, mandatory inclusion of anyone who submits Form-6, strict verification of citizenship and age, and deletion only through a speaking order open to appeal.
- Booth-level officers are visiting every household between 1 July and 15 July to distribute and collect enumeration forms; scanned images are uploaded nightly to the National Voters’ Portal, where automated scripts flag duplicates.
- Draft rolls will be published on 1 August, claims and objections will be heard until 16 August, final rolls will be frozen by 31 August and updated only through the limited continuous-updating window after the election schedule is notified.

New procedural features

- For the first time in Bihar, the Commission has allowed electors to submit Form-6 online with an undertaking that missing documentary proof—such as an Aadhaar or passport—may be uploaded later at the claims-and-objections stage.
- The aim is to prevent exclusion caused by document unavailability. BLOs have been authorised to use a secure mobile app that captures geo-tagged photographs of households visited and pushes them to the district server, reducing the scope for paper forgery.
- **Safeguards against disenfranchisement:** The Commission’s press note insists that no name can be deleted merely because a voter failed to meet the BLO at home; removal requires a written, appealable order by the Electoral Registration Officer after public notice. About four lakh volunteers from the NCC, NSS and local colleges have been mobilised to help senior citizens, homeless citizens and persons with disabilities fill forms.
- **Legal and political reactions:** Civil-society group Association for Democratic Reforms has petitioned the Supreme Court, arguing that junking the January 2025 final roll and restarting from scratch is arbitrary and risks large-scale deletion of legitimate voters. A separate plea by BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay asks the Court to direct the Commission to conduct a special revision before every state election across India, not just in Bihar, to ensure uniform purity.

21

HOW INDIA 'ADDED' MORE THAN
3,500 KM TO ITS COASTLINE

POLITY

IN FOCUS

India's coastline has **not physically expanded**; instead, a 2024–25 satellite-based resurvey by the Survey of India (SoI) and National Hydrographic Office (NHO) showed that the shore's intricate inlets, spits and island fringes are far longer than earlier cartographers could capture. As a result, the official figure—used by ministries, disaster planners and defence strategists—jumped from **7,516 km to 11,098 km, an apparent gain of 3,582 km, or almost 48 percent**. The revision, accepted by the Coastal Protection and Development Advisory Committee in May 2025, standardises shoreline data for the first time since the 1970s and will guide everything from port siting and hazard mapping to maritime-boundary diplomacy.

How the coastline suddenly “grew”

- Earlier measurements were done on 1 : 4,500,000 paper charts that smoothed creeks and estuaries; the new survey used 1 : 250,000 satellite imagery and GIS, which trace every indentation.
- Modern algorithms followed a “coast-per-pixel” line; because real shores are fractal, a finer scale always returns a longer edge—an example of the **coastline paradox** in geography.
- The resurvey also recognised **1,389 islands**—1,298 offshore and 91 inshore—that had never been consistently logged, adding several hundred kilometres of perimeter.
- Gujarat gained the most length (now 2,340 km), while Karnataka's shore rose to 343 km with 98 newly mapped islets; Puducherry's shorter, straighter coast actually shrank slightly.

Why the update matters:

- **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) maps, hazard lines and setback rules** will be redrawn, affecting real-estate, tourism and port clearances.
- Defence and foreign-affairs agencies gain a precise baseline for **straight-baseline and exclusive-economic-zone (EEZ) claims** under UNCLOS, strengthening India's case in maritime-boundary talks.
- Disaster managers can refine storm-surge, erosion and sea-level-rise models because the new shoreline captures every mangrove creek and tidal flat.
- Blue-economy planners get accurate lengths for **shore-power cabling, coastal roads and fibre corridors**, reducing design overruns.

Limitations and future steps

- Because of the coastline paradox, a yet finer 1 : 50,000 scale would lengthen the number again; the Ministry of Earth Sciences therefore proposes to **freeze 1 : 250,000 as the national standard** to avoid inter-agency confusion.
- The next review is mandated for 2035, when higher-resolution data or LiDAR could reveal further micro-features and slightly adjust the figure.
- State governments must revise their CRZ master plans within two years, and the NHO is producing updated nautical charts to match the SoI baseline.

Take-aways for students and policymakers

- India did **not gain territory**; it simply **measured its extremely jagged shore with 21st-century tools**.
- The new figure of **11,098 km** will be the working reference for regulation, defence, climate resilience and blue-economy investments—until the next technological leap reveals even finer detail.

22 2025 WORLD INVESTMENT REPORT

REPORT

IN FOCUS

Global foreign-direct investment (FDI) entered a second year of retreat in 2024, sliding **11 per cent to US \$1.5 trillion**, and the latest **World Investment Report 2025** from UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) warns that productive capital flows are unlikely to recover soon while geopolitical risk, high borrowing costs and fragmented digital-economy rules persist. The report, subtitled “**International Investment in the Digital Age**,” underlines three contrasting signals: a sharp fall in cross-border mergers and acquisitions, a modest rise in greenfield project announcements (led by digital and renewable segments) and a continued slump in investment aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Why the 2025 report is making headlines

- UNCTAD launched the study on **19 June 2025**, framing the data as “a wake-up call” for policy-makers because developing countries are now receiving their lowest share of global FDI since 2005.
- Media attention has focused on the report’s warning that a widening digital divide and restrictive investment-screening regimes could trap emerging economies in a low-capital equilibrium.

Global investment landscape in 2024**Overall trends**

- The headline US \$1.5 trillion inflow in 2024 masks an even deeper contraction once volatile conduit flows through a handful of European hubs are netted out.
- Developed economies saw a **22 per cent drop**, with Europe plunging **58 per cent** because several large intra-company treasury operations were unwound.
- Developing-country inflows fell a more moderate **2 per cent**, but infrastructure finance and project finance were hit hardest, threatening SDG delivery.

Regional snapshots

- **Africa bucked the trend**, posting a record US \$70 billion thanks to energy and digital infrastructure projects, although the total remains only five per cent of the world figure.
- **Developing Asia displayed a mixed picture**: South-East Asia and South Asia grew modestly, offsetting declines in Central and West Asia.
- **Latin America and the Caribbean** saw a 9 per cent fall, but new enquiries in green hydrogen and critical minerals give grounds for optimism.
- **The report’s thematic focus: investment in the digital age**: UNCTAD highlights that one in three announced greenfield projects in 2024 targeted digital-economy segments, including data centres, semiconductor back-end plants and AI-service hubs. Yet digital FDI is highly concentrated: the top ten host economies captured 72 per cent of announced project value, leaving most low-income countries on the margin of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. To narrow this gap, the report calls for “digital investment facilitation packages” combining hard infrastructure, regulatory coherence and data-governance certainty.

India-specific findings

- India remained **South Asia’s largest FDI recipient**, drawing US \$27.6 billion in 2024—down 1.9 per cent, yet robust enough to lift the country two notches to **15th place worldwide**.
- Greenfield project announcements surged in digital services, semiconductors and renewables, offsetting a slowdown in traditional automotive and telecoms investments.
- India ranked among the global top ten destinations for cross-border investment in land and development sites during the first quarter of FY 26, underscoring its real-estate appeal.

23

RWANDA AND CONGO SIGN PEACE AGREEMENT

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

The Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda signed a United States-brokered peace agreement in Washington on 27 June 2025, their first formal accord in more than a decade of hostility. The deal obliges both governments to halt support for armed groups, create a joint security mechanism for eastern Congo, and open a fast-track programme for cross-border economic integration, especially in critical-mineral value chains. Although welcomed as a potential turning-point, observers warn that success will depend on restraining the M23 rebellion, financing disarmament and winning local trust in provinces long scarred by atrocities.

Why the agreement is in the news:

- This is the first time Kinshasa and Kigali have signed a comprehensive, written pact since the abortive 2013 Nairobi Declaration, giving the new document strong symbolic weight.
- United States mediation—personally endorsed by President Trump and witnessed by Secretary of State Marco Rubio—signals rare high-level American engagement in the Great Lakes.
- President Paul Kagame's cautious welcome on 4 July showed both optimism and lingering mistrust, underscoring the fragility of the process.

Key provisions of the peace accord:

- Both parties reaffirm the principles of territorial integrity and agree to a verifiable cessation of hostilities within 72 hours of entry-into-force.
- A Joint Security Coordination Centre, staffed by equal numbers of Congolese and Rwandan officers and advised by the United States Africa Command, will begin patrols inside North Kivu within 30 days.
- The agreement creates a twelve-month timetable for disarming, demobilising and reintegrating all non-state armed groups operating along the border, with amnesty excluded for grave human-rights crimes.
- Kigali and Kinshasa pledge to “de-risk” mineral supply chains and to build joint processing facilities so that profits from coltan, tin and tungsten benefit both economies.
- A bilateral Commission on Missing Persons and Survivors will document abuses since 1994 and recommend reparations packages.

Background to the conflict

- Eastern Congo hosts more than 100 armed groups, many formed during the 1994 Rwandan genocide spill-over and successive Congolese civil wars.
- Rwanda has long accused the Congolese army of harbouring the FDLR militia that threatens Rwandan security; Congo, in turn, says Kigali backs the M23 rebels now holding parts of North Kivu.
- Previous regional initiatives—the 2022 Luanda and Nairobi processes—produced ceasefire promises but no lasting reduction in violence.

Implementation challenges and scepticism

- Amnesty International notes that the text is silent on specific accountability mechanisms for past massacres, a gap that may undermine local confidence.
- Analysts at the International Crisis Group caution that neither M23 nor the FDLR signed the document, so spoiler violence remains a serious risk.
- Kagame warned that Rwanda will act unilaterally if Congolese forces cooperate with hostile militias, reflecting continued distrust.

Regional and international reactions

- The African Union and the East African Community both issued statements welcoming the agreement and offering monitoring support.
- The United States Institute of Peace argues that the economic clauses could dovetail with U.S. efforts to secure clean-energy supply chains, but only if violence truly subsides.
- Grass-roots Congolese civil-society groups voiced guarded optimism but demanded that community leaders be included in the follow-up committees.

Potential implications

- Successful implementation could reopen the key Goma–Gisenyi corridor, boosting regional trade by an estimated US \$300 million per year.
- Integrated mineral processing may attract new U.S. and EU investment and reduce reliance on conflict-tainted exports.
- A durable peace would allow the UN's MONUSCO mission to accelerate its planned draw-down, saving roughly US \$700 million annually.

24 GLOBAL TOBACCO EPIDEMIC REPORT

REPORT

IN FOCUS

The **World Health Organization's 2025 "Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic"** shows that tobacco-control laws are now shielding **6.1 billion people – roughly three-quarters of humanity – with at least one MPOWER measure at best-practice level**, yet progress is stalling in dozens of countries and new nicotine products are out-running regulation. Global adult smoking prevalence has fallen from 22.3 % in 2007 to 16.4 % in 2023, but tobacco still killed more than seven million people last year and 40 nations have yet to adopt even one best-practice measure.

Coverage and implementation

- Since 2007, the number of people covered by at least one strong tobacco-control policy has quadrupled, rising to 6.1 billion by 2024.
- Only **four countries – Brazil, Mauritius, the Netherlands and Türkiye – now tick every element of the MPOWER package**, while eleven more are one step away.
- Forty countries remain without a single best-practice measure, leaving 1.3 billion people completely unprotected by modern tobacco laws.

Progress highlights

- **Graphic health warnings** are the report's biggest success story: 110 nations now mandate large pictorial labels, up from just nine in 2007, reaching 62 % of the global population.
- Twenty-five countries have gone a step further with **plain packaging** that removes brands and colours from cigarette packs.
- Eighty-five jurisdictions have raised tobacco excise taxes so that duties account for at least 75 % of the retail price; tax hikes are credited with preventing 37 million premature deaths since 2007.

Persistent gaps

- Only 79 countries provide **comprehensive smoke-free indoor public spaces**, leaving roughly 2.6 billion people exposed to second-hand smoke at work, in restaurants or on public transport.
- Fewer than half of all governments fund **national quit-lines and cessation services**, despite evidence that every US \$1 invested returns at least US \$7 in health-care savings.
- Regulation of **electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS)** remains patchy; 88 countries still have no minimum sales age for e-cigarettes and 74 have no rules at all.

Regional snapshots

- **Africa recorded the steepest recent policy growth**, yet cigarette affordability is rising as incomes grow faster than excise taxes.
- **South-East Asia's success is mixed**: smoke-free laws now cover a majority of people, but chewable smokeless tobacco remains weakly regulated and highly prevalent.
- **Europe shows widening divergence**; while the Netherlands achieved full MPOWER compliance, 17 other European states have not introduced a single best-practice tax measure.

India-specific status

- India's daily adult smoking rate fell to **7 % in 2023, on track for its NCD target**, yet smokeless-tobacco use remains high and was not included in WHO's new prevalence estimate.
- The country's graphic-warning labels, which cover 85 % of pack fronts and backs, meet WHO's strongest standard and are singled out as good practice.
- WHO urges India to move faster on plain packaging and to adopt a uniform minimum age and flavour ban

for e-cigarettes, which are currently prohibited but still sold illicitly.

Health and economic toll

- Tobacco exposure caused **about one in eight global deaths — more than seven million — in 2023**, according to the epidemiological annex.
- Annual health-care and productivity losses linked to tobacco now exceed US \$1.4 trillion, dwarfing global tobacco tax revenues.

Policy recommendations

- WHO calls on governments to **close the ENDS regulatory gap** by setting minimum age limits, banning advertising and applying excise taxes equal to or higher than those on cigarettes.
- Countries still outside the MPOWER framework should prioritise **large pictorial warnings and 100 % smoke-free laws** as the quickest, most cost-effective steps.
- To finance enforcement, the report backs **earmarked tobacco taxes** and urges international donors to redirect US \$267 million toward cessation services in low-income states over the next five years.

25

INDIA'S FIRST HOUSEHOLD INCOME
SURVEY

POLITY

IN FOCUS

India will launch its **first-ever Household Income Survey (HIS)** in **February 2026**, filling a critical data gap by measuring how much money households actually earn—salary, farm income, business profits, transfers and capital gains—instead of inferring well-being only from consumption. A 23 June 2025 press note from the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) announced the exercise and named a **Technical Expert Group (TEG)** chaired by economist **Surjit S. Bhalla** to design the survey's concepts, questionnaire and sampling plan. The survey will be run by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) and will cover the entire country in a single twelve-month round, creating India's first official income-distribution database for use in poverty analysis, tax policy, social protection and state finance commissions.

Why India needs a Household Income Survey

- **Current statistics rely on consumption, not income.** Policymakers lack direct evidence on how wages, farm profits or government cash transfers translate into earnings across deciles, which limits targeted fiscal design.
- **Rapid structural change—GST, platform work, farm-gate reforms and expanding social transfers—requires new metrics;** the last indirect income estimates date back to the 2011-12 consumption round.
- **International comparability:** Most G-20 peers already publish household-income panels that feed into inequality indicators such as the Gini coefficient; India's absence hampers cross-country analysis.

Survey design and methodology

- **Sample size and frame:** About **2.5 lakh households** will be drawn using a stratified, multi-stage design that aligns with the new Census frame and the Periodic Labour Force Survey sampling blocks.
- **Reference period:** Fieldwork will start in **February 2026** and run for twelve months so that seasonal income—harvest bonuses, festival bonuses, dividend payouts—is captured.
- **Modules:** The questionnaire will disaggregate earnings into wages, self-employment income, property income, pensions, remittances and social-security transfers, allowing cross-checks with GST, EPFO and PM-KISAN databases.
- **Digital capture:** Enumerators will use handheld tablets linked to the National Survey Portal; Aadhaar authentication is optional and confined to consent-based data validation.
- **Back-checks and big-data links:** The TEG is exploring encrypted linkage—post-survey and with consent—to income-tax, EPFO and e-Shram records to benchmark under- or over-reporting.

How the HIS differs from existing NSS surveys

- **Income, not outlay:** Unlike the quinquennial Consumption Expenditure Survey, the HIS measures earnings streams directly.
- **Year-long panel structure** captures volatility, a first for an NSS socio-economic round.
- **Tight integration with administrative datasets** (GST, PM-KISAN, e-Shram) will allow reconciliation of survey and register data—key for improving national accounts.

Anticipated policy uses

- **Inequality and tax policy:** Direct income distributions will let the Finance Ministry calibrate personal-income-tax slabs and GST compensation cesses.
- **Targeting of cash transfers:** Programmes such as PM-KISAN, PM-Awas and state basic-income pilots can be fine-tuned to the actual earnings distribution.
- **Fiscal devolution:** State Finance Commissions may use district-level income data to adjust revenue-

- sharing formulas and local-body grants.
- **Macro-model calibration:** The Reserve Bank and MoSPI can reconcile national-accounts household-income estimates with bottom-up survey totals, improving GDP accuracy.

Challenges flagged by experts

- **Recall and under-reporting:** High-net-worth and self-employed respondents may under-state income; the TEG is designing bounding questions and cross-validation with tax data.
- **Digital divide:** Tablet-based CAPI could face connectivity issues in remote areas; the NSSO plans offline data capture with nightly sync at district hubs.
- **Respondent fatigue:** Two visits within a year may burden households; shorter second-round schedules are under consideration.

26

UN REPORT RAISES ALARM OVER 13 'HUNGER HOTSPOTS'

INTERNATIONAL

IN FOCUS

The latest **FAO-WFP "Hunger Hotspots: Early Warnings on Acute Food Insecurity, June-October 2025"** rings a loud alarm bell: life-threatening hunger is poised to intensify in **13 countries and territories**, with five of them teetering on the edge of famine. The report stresses that conflict, climate shocks, economic free-fall and constrained humanitarian access are converging to push millions toward starvation and that urgent, front-loaded action can still avert the worst outcomes.

Why was the report in the news?

- UN agencies released the outlook on **16 June 2025**, warning governments and donors that risk levels have escalated since the previous November-to-May forecast and urging rapid scale-up of lifesaving assistance ahead of the next lean seasons.
- Media coverage focused on the finding that **Gaza, Sudan, South Sudan, Haiti and Mali face an "immediate risk of starvation,"** the most severe alert the FAO and WFP can issue short of a formal famine declaration.

What the Hunger Hotspots report does:

- The semi-annual study pinpoints places where acute food insecurity is likely to worsen over the next five months and where early, at-scale aid is most cost-effective at saving lives and livelihoods.
- Countries are graded into three tiers—**highest concern, very high concern and high concern**—based on projected numbers in IPC Phase 3+ and aggravating factors such as violence, displacement, price spikes and climate hazards.

The 13 current hunger hotspots

Highest concern – famine possible or under way

- **Sudan:** conflict-driven collapse of markets and health services threatens 25 million people; famine has already been confirmed in several IDP camps.
- **Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza):** the entire 2.1 million population is in Crisis or worse, with half a million at Phase 5 by September if access remains blocked.
- **South Sudan:** floods and fighting put 7.7 million people at risk, including 63 000 in famine-like conditions.
- **Haiti:** gang violence and economic collapse have left 5.4 million in Crisis or worse; pockets of famine are already recorded in Port-au-Prince.
- **Mali:** insurgency and sanctions have doubled emergency-level hunger in the north and centre since 2022.

Very high concern – sharp deterioration likely

- **Yemen:** protracted conflict and funding cuts threaten nationwide ration reductions, exposing 17 million people to Crisis or worse.
- **Democratic Republic of Congo:** renewed clashes in North Kivu could push acute hunger above 28 million.
- **Myanmar:** escalation of civil war and a weak monsoon jeopardise subsistence farming for six million.
- **Nigeria (North-East and North-West):** insurgency, banditry and inflation endanger 24 million, with 80 000 at catastrophe level in Borno State alone.

High concern – serious risk of slippage

- **Burkina Faso:** insecurity, displacement and price spikes keep 2.3 million in Crisis or worse.
- **Chad:** spill-over from Sudan's war and drought raise the spectre of emergency hunger for 3.4 million.
- **Somalia:** El Niño floods follow years of drought, threatening fragile gains after 2022's near-famine.
- **Syrian Arab Republic:** conflict, economic free-fall and water scarcity keep 12.9 million food-insecure.

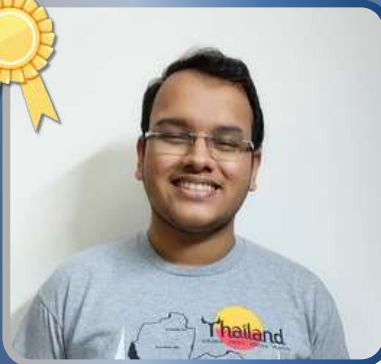
Main drivers of the crisis

Conflict remains the dominant trigger, pushing more than 140 million people into hunger hotspots, while overlapping **economic shocks**—inflation, currency collapse and debt stress—compound the misery. **Climate extremes** are multiplying the damage: Sudan and Somalia face opposing flood-and-drought cycles, and a looming La Niña threatens crops in the Sahel and Horn of Africa. In many places **humanitarian access is shrinking** just as donor funding falls, especially after major cuts by key donors in 2024-25.

UN recommendations for urgent action

- Scale up **multisectoral assistance** now—food, nutrition, cash and agriculture inputs—to prevent a slide into famine.
- Invest in **supporting local food production**, which costs less and preserves dignity even in conflict zones.
- Provide sustained **funding for early-warning and rapid-response mechanisms** so agencies can act before IPC levels spike.
- Strengthen **diplomatic efforts** to secure humanitarian corridors, particularly for Gaza, Sudan and Haiti.

VOICES VICTORIES



AIR 2, CLAT 2025

DAIWIK AGARWALA

I don't think I've ever given so many tests in my life as I did at NPLC in just one year. They made me take so many mocks that I became almost mechanical before the actual exam. The course structure here is such that hard work is non-negotiable. And last, but not least, Nishant Sir would connect with your parents and keep them informed about your every day scores, which added a bit of pressure and made all of us work harder. There were times when my scores didn't meet my expectations, and I felt low, but Sir was always there to motivate me.



AIR 2, AILET 2025

CHAITANYA GHOSH

This place is not your regular coaching institute that you see around. They don't just make you work hard—they make you smart. NPLC has been my best choice for both CLAT and AILET preparation. These exams cover general topics that seemed easy to me initially, but it wasn't until I started attending classes at NPLC that I realized the major challenges I would have faced if I solely depended on self-study. The competitive environment and Sir's dedicated guidance have been key in helping me clear every law entrance exam I took. I cleared every law entrance exam I wrote.



AIR 4, CLAT 2025

ADITYA GAUTAM ANKHAD

It's all about AILET and CLAT here. Students eat, drink, and sleep law entrance preparation! I used to go to another institute in XIth, but somehow, I was just an enrollment number there. Initially, when I joined, the competition and pressure from Sir felt overwhelming, but thanks to him, everything became much easier. Here, no one calls you by batch number or enrollment ID. All of us studying together were very good friends, but we competed intensely. Since they have a limited intake, we received a lot of personalized attention. I recall most of my batchmates at NPLC making it to the top NLUs. This place is even better than you can imagine!

"At NPLC, branding isn't on T-shirts — it's in the AIRs."

VOICES VICTORIES



AIR 6, AILET 2025

DHRUV KAMATH

I had never experienced such intense competition in any classroom before I did my first class at NPLC. It was a bit horrifying initially however it got better with time. If you can't work hard, I do not feel this is the place for you. Nishant sir is simply amazing. I never liked him till I was at the center as there was too much pressure from his side unlike my school, However, I can tell you, that I could make it to NLU Delhi, and only because of him. I recall almost everyone with me in the class who got through either of the top 5 NLUs.



AIR 10, AILET 2025

VIDISHA SINGH

Nishant Sir's classes are the complete package. While there's a great deal of hard work expected, he creates an environment where you can ease your way into cracking the exam. Unlike the rigid and monotonous teaching methods of many other coaching institutions, his classes are a perfect blend of learning and fun. His approach is practical, reliable, and tailored to real exam scenarios, which is reflected in his incredible track record of sending most of his students to the top 5 NLUs. Even after completing his classes, you'll find yourself wanting to go back for more (I still do).



AIR 24 AILET 2025
& OXFORD

SAMYUKTHA KOVILAKATH

People often ask me how I managed to prepare for Indian law entrances and the Oxford Law entrance at the same time. My answer is simple: NPLC gave me the discipline, perspective, and clarity to handle both. Nishant Sir's classroom isn't just a place where laws are taught - it's where ambition is refined and sharpened. What stood out to me most was how the training here doesn't chase trends - it builds fundamentals. I never felt like I was preparing for just one exam - I was preparing to think like a lawyer.

This journey hasn't just taken me to AILET AIR 24—it's also taken me across continents. And for that, I credit the environment, the mentorship, and the unwavering standards at NPLC.

"Mentorship isn't a model here — it's a method."

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**Duration of Test:** 2 Hours (120 Minutes)**Maximum Marks:** 120

1. Detach and keep the carbon-copy OMR response sheet that comes with the question booklet; this is your only answer sheet.
2. If you spot any defect in your question booklet, immediately ask the invigilator for a replacement set along with a fresh OMR sheet—do not reuse the previous OMR.
3. Only one blank OMR sheet will be provided under any circumstance, so treat it carefully and avoid damage.
4. Answer every question; no queries or clarifications about the question paper will be entertained during the exam.
5. Electronic gadgets (phones, smartwatches, etc.) are strictly forbidden inside the examination hall.
6. Any attempt at using unfair means will lead to cancellation of your exam.
7. Impersonation is a serious offense: it results in disqualification and possible legal action.
8. The exam comprises 120 multiple-choice questions for a total of 120 marks; note that 0.25 marks are deducted for each incorrect answer or if more than one option is shaded.
9. Use only a black or blue ballpoint pen to fill in your roll number and other identification details on the OMR sheet.
10. Shade the chosen answer circle completely (with black/blue pen), selecting exactly one option per question—partial or multiple shading invalidates the response.
11. Since responses on the OMR cannot be erased or changed, be sure before you mark any circle.
12. Retain your admit card, duly signed by the invigilator; you will need to present it when required (e.g., at admission).
13. Handle the OMR sheet gently—do not fold it. Ensure both invigilator and you sign in the designated spaces. Also, write the question booklet number and the OMR sheet number as instructed, sign the attendance sheet, and after the exam, return the original OMR page to the invigilator. Only fill in information in the allotted fields—avoid any stray markings.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Passage:-1 When the Taliban took over Afghanistan in August 2021, India responded with caution. A few days into the takeover, New Delhi withdrew its ambassador and diplomatic staff from Kabul and suspended direct engagement. Realising that a stringent no-talk policy was impractical, India started to gradually open channels of communication. The reopening of the Indian embassy in June 2024 was followed by a public meeting in January this year between Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Afghanistan's acting Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, in Dubai. Amidst these developments, since August 2021, India has been regularly delivering wheat, pesticides, medical supplies and other forms of aid. Even in the Union Budget for 2024-25, there was an allocation of Rs 100 crore for assistance to Afghanistan. The first-ever ministerial-level conversation between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Muttaqi on Thursday should be seen as the next logical step in the incremental outreach by both countries. The phone call took place days after the India-Pakistan ceasefire following the Pahalgam terror attack, which was unequivocally condemned by the Taliban regime.

Traditionally, Delhi and Kabul have had warm ties, barring the years of Taliban 1.0 (1996-2001), when India saw it as a proxy for Pakistan's strategic interests. But relations between the Taliban and Pakistan have been deteriorating rapidly, primarily driven by issues over the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, operating along the Afghan-Pakistan border. Realising that it does not have a hold on the Taliban any more, Rawalpindi has been trying to drive a wedge between India and Afghanistan. In a post on X, Jaishankar welcomed Muttaqi's "firm rejection" of Pakistan's "recent attempts to create distrust between India and Afghanistan through false and baseless reports" — a reference to reports in Pakistan that Indian missiles had hit Afghanistan during Operation Sindoor. Amid a widening rift between Taliban 2.0 and Pakistan, India needs to keep communication lines open and prevent Afghanistan from becoming a sanctuary for anti-India terror groups.

There is no denying that the Taliban continues to be an autocratic regime with little regard for human rights, especially the rights of women. That is why India is yet to recognise the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Indeed, increased engagement risks undermining India's moral stand. But to not engage at all carries risks, too. China has signed significant investment and security agreements with the Taliban, including a \$540-million oil extraction deal. Within the power politics of South Asia, given the China-Pakistan-Bangladesh axis, a Kabul-Beijing entente would be a matter of concern. India does not have the power to alter Afghan politics and society, but it has to deal with whoever sits in Kabul.

[Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/express-view-talking-to-taliban-10011368/>]

Q1. What is the primary purpose of the passage?

- A. To compare China's and Pakistan's relations with the Taliban.
- B. To outline India's evolving diplomatic engagement with the Taliban-led government.
- C. To highlight human rights abuses under the Taliban regime.
- D. To criticise India's moral stance in not recognising the Taliban regime.

Q2. In the phrase "Realising that a stringent no-talk policy was impractical" (line 3), the word stringent most nearly means:

- A. Excessively harsh
- B. Temporarily suspended
- C. Delicately balanced
- D. Partially effective

Q3. Which of the following is the antonym of autocratic

as used in "the Taliban continues to be an autocratic regime"?

- A. Despotic
- B. Authoritarian
- C. Absolute
- D. Democratic

Q4. What does the author imply by stating that the Jaishankar-Muttaqi ministerial conversation "should be seen as the next logical step in the incremental outreach by both countries"?

- A. That India's engagement is purely reactive to Pakistan's actions.
- B. That the meeting was orchestrated solely for public-relations benefit.
- C. That India's policy has steadily shifted from isolation to pragmatic engagement.
- D. That India and Afghanistan have already fully reconciled their differences.

Q5 Which of the following sentences is grammatically correct and preserves the original meaning?

- A. Realising that stringent no-talk policy was impractical, India started to gradually open channels of communication.
- B. Realising that a stringent no-talk policy was impractical, India started gradually to opening channels of communication.
- C. Realising that a stringent no-talk policy was impractical, India gradually started opening channels of communication.
- D. Realising that the stringent no-talk policy was impractical, India started gradually opening channels of communication.

Q6 Wheat delivered by India since August 2021 is to aid/assistance as the \$540-million oil extraction deal signed by China is to _____.

- A. deterrence
- B. investment
- C. mediation
- D. negotiation

Passage:-2 The Indian Space Research Organisation has added another feather to its cap with the Spadex mission, successfully docking two satellites in space. Docking is a critical capability without which India's future space projects, including the setting up of a permanent station in space or landing of human beings on the Moon, would not be possible. The immediate utilisation of this capability would be required in the Chandrayaan-4 mission which is supposed to bring back samples from the Moon.

The fact that the ISRO is only the third or fourth space agency in the world to accomplish a certain feat is no longer a reason for surprise. In the last few years, it has firmly established itself as one of the leading space agencies of the world. From here on, it would be its failure that is unanticipated, not its success. Thanks to the spate of capabilities acquired and demonstrated by the agency in the last few years, India is comfortably placed in the top bracket of countries in terms of at least one of the technologies expected to reshape the global order in coming decades. Artificial Intelligence, quantum systems, clean energy are some of the other technologies that are likely to decide a country's fate and well-being in the immediate future. Unlike space, however, the gap between India's capabilities and the front-runners in these technology domains is significantly large.

Scientists often attribute the success of the space and nuclear establishments in the country to the relative freedom that the ISRO and the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) have enjoyed in deciding their plans and programmes, recruitment and expenditure. The political class has generally approved of, and backed, the decisions taken by the scientific community. Of course, there are other factors contributing to their success, but as India makes efforts to close the gap on critical and emerging technologies, several scientists talk about recreating the ISRO and DAE models for other key scientific groups or departments. Building ISRO or DAE-like institutions for other key sectors in science might be easier said than done, but it might be worth the while to evaluate the main factors behind their success and assess whether some of these principles can be applied in other areas. The critical technology sectors which are likely to emerge as the key drivers of the Indian economy and form the backbone of its strategic self-reliance need support, nurturing and some special liberties. ISRO's success needs to be learnt from, replicated and spread widely.

[Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/express-view-isros-latest-success-an-example-to-follow-9783086/>]

Q7 What is the central argument of the passage?

- A. India's success in space technology makes it the unquestioned global leader in all critical emerging technologies.
- B. The ISRO and DAE models' relative autonomy has been key to their success and could inform other strategic sectors.
- C. India must prioritise clean energy and quantum systems over space exploration to secure its future.
- D. The Chandrayaan-4 mission is the only upcoming project that truly tests ISRO's docking capability.

Q8 In the phrase "Thanks to the spate of capabilities acquired and demonstrated by the agency" (line 3), the word spate most nearly means:

- A. scarcity
- B. sudden outpouring
- C. strategic alignment
- D. measured deployment

Q9 Which inference about India's technological standing is best supported by the passage?

- A. India's lead in space technology guarantees it will soon lead in AI and quantum systems.
- B. Political backing alone explains the successes of ISRO and DAE.
- C. Replicating ISRO's autonomy model is straightforward and will quickly bridge gaps in other tech domains.
- D. While India excels in space, it still lags significantly behind front-runners in AI, quantum, and clean energy.

Q10 Which of the following sentences best preserves the meaning and is grammatically correct?

- A. Unlike space, however, the gap between India's capabilities and the front-runners in these technology domains remain significantly large.
- B. Unlike space, however, the gap between India's capabilities and those of the front-runners in these technology domains is significantly large.
- C. Unlike space, however, the gap between India's capabilities and the front-runners in these technology domains are significantly large.
- D. Unlike space, however, the gap between India's capabilities and the front-runners in these technology domains has been significantly large.

Q11 ISRO is to docking capability as DAE is to _____.

- A. quantum computing
- B. nuclear energy
- C. artificial intelligence
- D. clean energy

Q12 Which of the following is a synonym for autonomy as implied in "relative freedom that the ISRO and the Department of Atomic Energy ... have enjoyed" (lines 5-6)?

- A. sovereignty
- B. dependence
- C. regulation
- D. subordination

Passage:-3 My eyes are like shining torches, penetrating the darkness when I would rather be asleep. Shapes emerge which I could not see ten minutes ago. Now everything is so clear that I might as well sit up and not pretend any longer that I'll drop off before morning comes. This is not the first night I've lain awake in the early hours. In fact, at one stage, I thought I might have to ask for sleeping tablets. But I resisted. Instead I increased my level of daytime exercise whenever I got the opportunity, using up all my energy as best I could, so I'd drop off the minute my head hit the pillow. It worked for a while. But the benefits were short-lived. Now I'm back where I started, waking up at 3am, being forced to confront my misery at the most depressing hour known to man. Perhaps I should pull the blanket over my head and hope the cosiness lulls me into a state of drowsiness. Or maybe I should force my mind to switch thoughts – to the minutiae of daily life. Unfortunately, distraction of the mind, while useful in any sanity toolbox, is not infinite. I'm going to wrap the blanket tightly round me now, not because it'll help me sleep, but because it's a bit deathly cold at this hour. It's dark under here. I can feel the warmth from my breath. It's like central heating but more suffocating. I'm going to have to come up for air soon. It needn't have been like this. Me lying here on my own with useless morbid thoughts. I should be lying with my husband, feeling his comforting warm body when I wake up in the night, or listening to his deep relaxed breathing and the occasional snore when I can't drop off myself, at least on the nights he bothered to come home. All I can hear now are occasional footsteps. But they're reliable and regular.... more than can be said for him.

He's only been gone three months. It still doesn't feel real. It's like he's on holiday and could walk through the door any moment, except, of course, I know he won't. What I need is a fresh start. No more memories. Maybe by the time morning comes my imagination will transport me to the the perfect villa where I can enjoy

cocktails on the verandah with a new man in my life. But that will only be in my dreams. There are those footsteps again. The prison wardens are pretty regular in this cell block. Maybe they think I'll break out and murder them too.

[Source: <https://writersbeat.com/insomnia-for-life-short-story-450-words-t45383.html>]

Q13 What best captures the passage's main theme?

- A. The health benefits of increased daytime exercise.
- B. The contrast between physical warmth and emotional coldness.
- C. Sleeplessness deepened by grief and symbolic confinement.
- D. Practical strategies for dealing with early-morning wakefulness.

Q14 Which inference is most strongly supported by the passage?

- A. The narrator's husband is in prison, and the footsteps belong to wardens.
- B. The narrator will soon resume taking sleeping tablets.
- C. The cold room temperature is the primary cause of insomnia.
- D. The narrator and her husband share these sleepless nights together.

Q15 In "force my mind to switch thoughts – to the minutiae of daily life," minutiae most nearly means:

- A. grand events
- B. trivial details
- C. imaginative scenarios
- D. significant milestones

Q16 Which word best describes the narrator's tone in "It needn't have been like this. Me lying here on my own with useless morbid thoughts"?

- A. Sardonic
- B. Regretful
- C. Jubilant
- D. Detached

Q17 "I can feel the warmth from my breath. It's like central heating but more suffocating." This is an example of:

- A. Metaphor
- B. Simile
- C. Personification
- D. Hyperbole

Q18 Which revision best preserves the original meaning and is grammatically correct?

- A. I can feel the warmth from my breath, like central heating but more suffocating.
- B. I can feel warmth from my breath; it's as central heating but more suffocating.
- C. I feel the warmth of my breath—like central heating but more suffocating.
- D. Feeling the warmth of my breath is like central heating but more suffocating.

Passage:-4 'Sir, there is someone who wants a loan'. Surrounded by a small pile of yellow passbooks, Jai, the loan officer, glanced up from filling out the ledgers for the day's collections. We were at a microfinance group meeting in Kolkata, India. Jai and I were seated on the raised single bed, the only piece of furniture save the narrow almirah (wardrobe) in one corner. The sole window to the room overlooked the entrance to the house next door. A small child clung to the window bars, observing the ongoing proceedings. The 'someone' was Krishna, a woman in her late forties, her greying hair pulled into a neat bun, who stood at the entrance.

'Who wants the loan?' Jai asked, quickly getting to business. 'Me,' Krishna responded. 'And who will be your guarantor?' he continued. 'My jamai [son-in-law].' 'Don't you have a son?' demanded Jai. Krishna nodded yes. 'Why can't he be your guarantor?' he asked. She simply shook her head silently, unwilling to delve into the details of an absent son. The other women in the room shared knowing looks, aware to some extent of their neighbour's domestic situation. 'Where does your daughter live?' asked Jai. 'Just next door,' she responded, pointing to the adjoining room through the window. Another of the group members chimed in, 'Sir, he [the son] doesn't want another obligation. Why can't her jamai be the guarantor if he is willing?' Sighing, Jai thought for a second, finally asking: 'Can't your daughter take the loan instead? It will make things easier with her age and guarantor.' Krishna nodded, going off to find her daughter to put in the loan application.

Bad sons, good daughters, mothers cared and uncared for: microfinance loans not only operate through kinship networks, but also produce new forms of relationality in the service of financial profits. Commercial microfinance institutions (MFIs) in India often require women to have male kin guarantors in order to access loans that are ostensibly designed for women's empowerment. These guarantors are typically the borrower's

husband, but it can also be an adult son (18 and above), brother, or if age permits, a father or father-in-law. This stipulation for male guarantors to access loans both binds families together and discloses places where they fall apart. As microfinance loans are normalised in the urban poor neighbourhoods of Kolkata, they have brought kinship relations under the gaze of financial institutions. What I call 'relations of guarantee' do not simply mirror kinship as a formal structure; rather, they call upon both borrowers and guarantors to also continuously reflect upon and provide signs of this relationship as it is lived for MFIs to assess. They reveal how underlying familial relationships are speculated upon and transformed by the process of financialisation.

[Source: Sohini Kar, 'Relative indemnity: risk, insurance, and kinship in Indian microfinance']

Q19 What is the primary purpose of the passage?

- A. To celebrate microfinance as a tool of women's empowerment.
- B. To show how mandatory male guarantors reveal and reshape family relationships under microfinance.
- C. To argue that microfinance institutions should drop the guarantor requirement.
- D. To compare urban and rural loan practices in India.

Q20 In "underlying familial relationships are speculated upon and transformed by the process of financialisation" (line 18), transformed most nearly means:

- A. preserved
- B. obscured
- C. altered
- D. documented

Q21 Which inference about gender dynamics in microfinance does the passage best support?

- A. Requiring male guarantors both empowers women borrowers and exposes patriarchal constraints.
- B. Women are preferred guarantors because they are seen as more reliable.
- C. MFIs allow female guarantors when male kin are unavailable.
- D. Guarantor rules are applied uniformly without regard to gender.

Q22 What is the author's tone in the phrase "bad sons, good daughters, mothers cared and uncared for"?

- A. Satirical
- B. Celebratory
- C. Indifferent
- D. Critical

Q23 The phrase "brought kinship relations under the gaze of financial institutions" (line 15) is an example of:

- A. Metaphor
- B. Simile
- C. Personification
- D. Oxymoron

Q24 What does the concept of "relations of guarantee" imply about the borrower-guarantor relationship?

- A. It remains a purely formal requirement, with no real effect on personal ties.
- B. It forces both parties to continuously perform and prove their familial bond.
- C. It eliminates the need for MFIs to verify kinship documents.
- D. It weakens the authority of male guarantors over female borrowers.

CURRENT AFFAIRS AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Passage:-1

When the body of Pope Francis was moved from the simplicity of his home in Casa Santa Marta, the Vatican's guest house, on Wednesday morning to the opulence of St Peter's Basilica, another step was taken in the late pope's final journey.

The Irish-born Cardinal Kevin Farrell supervised that transition as Camerlengo, the Vatican's caretaker in the absence of a ruling pope. On Saturday, the Dean of the College of Cardinals will preside at the papal funeral—an event that will be transmitted to the world on television, radio, and a bewildering array of digital platforms. Between now and then, there is space reflection as tens of thousands of people make their way to the basilica in hope of a final moment of their own as they stand in silence before the Pope's simple wooden coffin.

[Extracted with edits and revisions from <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/czjn1pv3zymo>]

Q25. Which treaty led to the establishment of Vatican City as a sovereign state?

- A. Treaty of Tordesillas, 1494
- B. Concordat of 1801
- C. Lateran Treaty, 1929
- D. Treaty of Rome, 1957

Q26. How is a new Pope elected in the Roman Catholic Church?

- A. Through a hereditary succession line decided by the Church's founding scriptures
- B. By a conclave of cardinals who vote, typically selecting one of their own
- C. By a global vote among practicing Catholic citizens in a papal referendum
- D. Via appointment by the Archbishop of Canterbury and global bishops' conclave

Q27. What is the office of the Pope formally known as?

- A. The Papacy
- B. The Apostolic Chair
- C. The Roman Episcopate
- D. The Holy Synod

Q28 Which of the following is true about Vatican City's governance structure?

- A. It is governed by a constitutional monarchy with a separate Prime Minister and a Parliament.
- B. It is under the administrative control of Italy's Ministry of Interior and Police.
- C. It is jointly administered by the Pope and the College of Cardinals with annual elections.
- D. It is governed by the Pope who exercises supreme legislative, executive, and judicial authority.

Q29. What is a key source of revenue for the Vatican City?

- A. Income taxes from its citizens and residents
- B. Profits from agricultural exports and luxury goods sales
- C. Donations from global Catholics, investments, and publication sales
- D. Membership fees collected annually from cardinals and clergymen

Passage:-2

The massacre of 26 people, most of them tourists, in Pahalgam, Kashmir, by Islamist terrorists has jolted the conscience of the nation and the world. It is a tragic reminder of the constant threat of terrorism, which strikes without warning at innocent civilians. The mind-numbing reports of the attackers identifying victims by religion before executing them at close range mark a new low in the history of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. Home Minister Amit Shah, who visited the attack site, asserted that "Bharat won't bend to terrorism," while Prime Minister Narendra Modi curtailed his visit to Saudi Arabia to return to New Delhi. India must speak in one voice in this period of national calamity.

[Extracted with edits and revisions from <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/unity-and-resolve-on-the-terror-attack-in-pahalgam/article69484027.ece>]

Q30. Under which bilateral treaty does India allocate the use of Eastern and Western rivers to India and Pakistan respectively?

- A. Indus Waters Treaty, 1960
- B. Shimla Agreement, 1972
- C. Tashkent Agreement, 1966
- D. Treaty of Lahore, 1846

Q31. Which of the following was not one of the five-point actions announced by India in response to the Pahalgam terror attack?

- A. Imposition of economic sanctions on Pakistani banks operating in India
- B. Cancellation of the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme for Pakistan
- C. Reduction of diplomatic staff in the High Commission in Islamabad
- D. Suspension of the Attari-Wagah Integrated Check Post for goods and people movement

Q32. What is the name of the terror group believed to be a proxy of Lashkar-e-Taiba and associated with the Baisaran meadow attack in Anantnag?

- A. Jaish-e-Mohammed
- B. Hizbul Mujahideen
- C. The Resistance Front (TRF)
- D. United Jihad Council

Q33. Which of the following best describes India's legal reasoning for suspending the Indus Waters Treaty?

- A. The treaty was due for a scheduled renegotiation under its sunset clause
- B. Pakistan initiated violations of international water-sharing obligations
- C. Article 62 of the Vienna Convention allows termination due to a fundamental change of circumstances
- D. The treaty lacked enforcement provisions for counterterrorism clauses

Q34. Which of the following statements best describes the broader strategic goal behind targeting the Pahalgam region during the terrorist attack?

- A. It was a symbolic retaliation against Indian military operations in Udhampur
- B. It aimed to derail the Indian elections scheduled for mid-2025
- C. It exploited the region's terrain to delay rescue efforts and undermine perceptions of security near a pilgrimage site
- D. It intended to prevent international tourists from accessing the Buddhist monasteries in Ladakh

Q35. What is a major implication of India revoking the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme for Pakistani nationals?

- A. It halts diplomatic and non-diplomatic travel for Pakistanis under SAARC privileges
- B. It gives India access to SAARC members' security cooperation mechanisms
- C. It forces Pakistan to withdraw from SAARC entirely
- D. It violates India's commitments under the SAARC Charter

Passage:-3

Reacting to news that the Finnish government has initiated the process of withdrawing from the Ottawa convention, a landmark treaty prohibiting the use of anti-personnel mines, Esther Major, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Research in Europe, said:

"The Finnish government's move to leave the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is a disturbing backward step that further undermines the global consensus aimed at minimizing civilian harm during armed conflict.

"Anti-personnel landmines are inherently indiscriminate weapons. They have devastating effects on civilians, sometimes decades after they are deployed, while unexploded anti-personnel landmines can blight whole regions for generations. The use of weapons which are by their nature indiscriminate is prohibited under customary international humanitarian law.

"This move, which follows the recent withdrawal from the Convention on Cluster Munitions by Lithuania, goes against decades of progress on eliminating the production, transfer and use of inherently indiscriminate weapons. As the world prepares to mark the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action this week, we call on the Finnish government to reverse this decision that will inevitably put civilian lives at risk."

[Extracted with edits and revisions from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/finland-move-to-leave-convention-banning-anti-personnel-mines-could-put-civilian-lives-at-risk/>]

Q36. Which of the following countries is not a member of the Ottawa Convention (Mine Ban Treaty)?

- A. Norway
- B. France
- C. Japan
- D. United States

Q37. The Ottawa Convention, also called the Mine Ban Treaty, came into force in which year?

- A. 1997
- B. 1998
- C. 1999
- D. 2000

Q38. Which one of the following is not cited as a reason by India for not joining the Ottawa Convention?

- A. Need for use of mines against maritime threats in Indian Ocean
- B. Security concerns arising from porous borders
- C. Threat of ongoing insurgencies
- D. Challenges in verifying non-state actors' mine use

Q39. Which European country, despite rising regional tensions, has decided to remain committed to the Ottawa Convention?

- A. Norway
- B. Poland
- C. Finland
- D. Latvia

Q40. Which of the following best captures the primary goal of the Ottawa Convention?

- A. To prohibit the use of chemical and biological weapons in armed conflict
- B. To regulate the manufacture and transfer of automatic firearms across borders
- C. To eliminate the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines
- D. To oversee post-war peacekeeping deployments and ceasefire monitoring

Q41. What is the stated primary justification by Poland, Finland, and the Baltic States for planning to withdraw from the Ottawa Convention in 2025?

- A. Rising threats from non-state actors in Africa and Middle East
- B. Financial burden of mine clearance obligations under the Treaty

C. Need to retain landmines as deterrence against Russian aggression

D. Opposition to victim rehabilitation clauses interfering with national laws

Passage:-4 The Jnanpith Award is India's highest literary honor, instituted in 1961 by the Bharatiya Jnanpith trust. It recognizes an author for their outstanding contribution to literature written in any of the official languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The award celebrates the richness and diversity of Indian literary traditions and has been conferred upon eminent writers such as G. Sankara Kurup, U.R. Ananthamurthy, and Mahasweta Devi. The recipient receives a cash prize, a citation, 8

and a bronze replica of Vagdevi (the goddess of learning). By honoring both modern and classical works across genres, the Jnanpith Award plays a crucial role in preserving linguistic heritage and promoting literary excellence in India.

Q42. Who received the 58th Jnanpith Award in 2025 for his contributions to Sanskrit literature and spiritual discourse?

- A. Gulzar
- B. Jagadguru Rambhadracharya
- C. Vinod Kumar Shukla
- D. Damodar Mauzo

C. Ghazal

D. Triveni

Q43. Which renowned poet-lyricist was also honored during the 58th Jnanpith Award ceremony but could not attend due to health issues?

- A. Javed Akhtar
- B. Harivansh Rai Bachchan
- C. Gulzar
- D. Amitav Ghosh

Q45. The Jnanpith Award is administered by which institution?

- A. Sahitya Akademi
- B. Indian Council for Cultural Relations
- C. Bharatiya Jnanpith
- D. National Book Trust

Q46. Who is the first writer from Chhattisgarh to receive the Jnanpith Award (59th edition)?

- A. G. Sankara Kurup
- B. Nilmani Phookan Jr
- C. Ashapurna Devi
- D. Vinod Kumar Shukla

Q44. What unique poetic form is Gulzar credited with popularizing?

- A. Sonnet
- B. Haiku

Passage:-5: On 15 December 2024, the United Kingdom (UK) officially acceded to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), marking a significant step in its post-Brexit trade strategy. The UK's inclusion as the second-largest economy (after Japan) within the CPTPP. The CPTPP exemplifies the UK's independent stance in shaping its trade policy outside the perceived shackles of the European Union (EU). One year following Brexit, the UK formally applied to join the CPTPP in 2021.

The Integrated Review 2021, the British government's principal foreign policy paper, underscored the ambition for Global Britain to demonstrate the UK as an open and outward-looking geopolitical actor. The Indo-Pacific tilt forms a key pillar of this vision, reflecting a shift in global power dynamics towards the East. The UK's approach to the region is based on securing trade and investment opportunities and diversifying supply chains and economic linkages. In this context, Britain has attempted to strengthen its diplomatic & military ties in the region, signed FTAs with Indo-Pacific countries and become a dialogue partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

[Extracted with edits and revisions from <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/uk-joins-cptpp-a-symbolic-move-or-a-strategic-shift>]

Q47. When did the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) officially come into force?

- A. December 30, 2017 B. December 30, 2018
C. March 8, 2018 D. April 15, 2019

Q48. Which of the following countries was initially part of the original Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) but later withdrew in 2017?

- A. France B. China
C. United States D. India

Q49. Which of the following statements regarding CPTPP membership is correct?

- A. CPTPP currently includes 15 countries including India and China.
B. CPTPP membership includes European Union as a block member.
C. CPTPP membership includes 12 countries.
D. CPTPP includes only Asian countries.

Q50. Which city hosted the signing of the CPTPP agreement in March 2018?

- A. Santiago
B. Tokyo
C. Canberra
D. Kuala Lumpur

Q51. What share of global GDP is accounted for by the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)?

- A. 10% B. 20% C. 15% D. 25%

Q52. According to NITI Aayog's view, joining groupings like CPTPP and RCEP would be most beneficial to which sector of India's economy?

- A. Agriculture sector
B. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector
C. Automobile manufacturing sector
D. Pharmaceutical sector

LEGAL REASONING

Passage 1: Economic duress involves a manipulation of the will of a person to do or not to something adverse to his commercial interests, which vitiates the consent of a party. It is characterized as 'an unlawful coercion to perform an act by threatening financial injury at a time when one cannot exercise free will.' It turns upon whether the commercial pressure exercised by one party on the other was such as to vitiate the other party's consent by coercion of his will. In the leading case of *Pao On v Lau Yiu Long*, the Court laid down specific criteria to constitute economic duress in an attempt to provide an objective definition. The Court stated that "the commercial pressure alleged to constitute economic duress must be such that the victim must have entered the contract against his will, must have had no alternative course open to him, and must have been confronted with coercive acts by the party exerting the pressure". Thus, any finding of economic duress must rest not only on the exclusion of consent but on the conjunction of pressure and lack of specific choice.

While the concepts of economic duress and commercial pressure have a very fine line of difference, many judicial attempts have been made to distinguish the two on certain objective criteria. One such is the test of 'illegitimacy of pressure'. The 'illegitimate pressure' test postulated that the real determinant of duress in economic sphere is not commercial pressure, which is invariably present in commercial dealings, but it is the nature of the pressure. It does not suffice that the will of the plaintiff be overborne by coercive action. Rather, the coercive action must be 'wrongful' or 'illegitimate'.

According to this test, commercial pressure would amount to economic duress if three basic elements are proved; (1) that some illegitimate means of persuasion was used; (2) that a causal relationship existed between the illegitimate conduct and the plaintiff's response; and (3) that the plaintiff's response was self-conscious and he acted as he did because he was forced to do so.

In terms of the effect of economic duress on a contract, economic duress renders a contract voidable and not void. Underlying this is the fact that duress results in the impairment of consent and not in the absence of it. Duress, be it economic or not, gives room for compromise. A victim of economic duress may often submit to the illegitimate pressure simply because his commercial interests would be best served by consenting to the contract. The party whose consent was vitiated by duress may allow for honest claims in the contract by

agreeing to vary the terms. In such situations, it would be more practical for the party under threat to renegotiate the terms of the contract after the illegitimate pressure is put to rest rather than reduce the contract to a nullity.

[Source: Extracted with edits and revisions from <https://ceerapub.nls.ac.in/economic-duress-and-its-effect-on-contractual-obligations-in-india/>]

Q53. DevLuxe Realty was scheduled to receive 20,000 sq. ft. of marble slabs from StoneGrain Pvt Ltd. Just before dispatch, DevLuxe emailed that the slabs would be accepted only at 60% of the agreed price, or they'd shift to a competitor. StoneGrain had already mined and pre-cut the slabs, couldn't resell in time, and was facing loan default. With no practical alternative, StoneGrain consented in writing. Months later, they sued to void the price reduction due to economic duress. Which of the following best reflects the correct legal position?

- A. DevLuxe's threat to switch vendors during fulfilment created illegitimate pressure leaving no viable choice for StoneGrain.
- B. StoneGrain accepted the change voluntarily and is therefore estopped from later claiming coercion.
- C. A party's tough bargaining does not amount to coercion unless there's physical threat or statutory violation.
- D. The economic hardship of one party is irrelevant if the contract was renegotiated without legal breach.

Q54. An organic produce exporter, MiraAgro, had a fixed-rate contract with BigFresh Mart. Two weeks before shipment, BigFresh threatened to cancel unless MiraAgro reduced rates by 20% due to "seasonal oversupply." BigFresh cited no contract clause but insisted this was standard industry response. MiraAgro had perishable stock and pending EMIs. With no alternative buyer abroad, it conceded. After delivery, it sought to recover the unpaid balance under the original contract.

Which is the most appropriate legal conclusion?

- A. MiraAgro's agreement, while difficult, was made with awareness of business conditions and thus legally valid.
- B. The cancellation threat amid perishability and lack of market options constitutes economic duress under the 'illegitimate pressure' test.
- C. Price renegotiations due to oversupply are market-driven and cannot form the basis of coercion claims.
- D. Standard industry practice justifies last-minute renegotiation, regardless of contract terms.

Q55. MobiChain Tech Ltd. supplied blockchain security software to FinEdge Capital. Mid-contract, FinEdge stopped monthly payments and demanded a 50% licensing fee cut, stating "cost optimisation" policy.

MobiChain couldn't sever ties as it had custom-coded systems reliant on FinEdge's infrastructure. Moreover, FinEdge withheld 3 months' dues, threatening breach suits if MobiChain exited. MobiChain reluctantly agreed but later sought to void the modified fee terms.

Which statement best applies to this scenario?

- A. Duress exists as the consent was extracted through coercive tactics and lack of alternatives.
- B. The renegotiation arose from business strategy and both parties acted commercially.
- C. The delayed dues were unrelated to the modification and cannot support a duress claim.
- D. Software dependency was known, and MobiChain should have anticipated negotiation risks.

Q56. Factual Matrix: Kairavi leases out fabrication machines to ProEdge Engineering. As part of the lease agreement, servicing was included. During the third month, ProEdge unilaterally withheld payments and asked Kairavi to add two new machines under the same price citing "market downturn." Kairavi declined but was warned the lease would be terminated and damage claims filed. Her workshop was heavily reliant on that contract. She agreed to modify the terms but later sued. Which option most accurately reflects the law?

- A. Since Kairavi modified the contract knowingly, duress is ruled out.
- B. The lack of force or fraud removes any ground for economic duress.
- C. The coercive threat to end a critical contract and initiate damage suits qualifies as illegitimate pressure.
- D. A party's reliance on a single contract cannot be used to invalidate a revised deal.

Q57. Factual Matrix: Nautix Seals agreed to supply waterproof coating to AquaDams Ltd. Just before installation, AquaDams threatened to replace them unless Nautix provided five extra engineers without added compensation. Nautix had already flown in the team and rented equipment. Replacement would mean financial ruin. Under pressure, they agreed, but then sued under economic duress to recover costs.

Which legal analysis is most appropriate?

- A. The demand lacked coercion since no legal right was violated.
- B. Nautix's choice to comply does not prevent a claim

for duress if consent was overborne.

C. The financial risk faced by Nautix is irrelevant as they agreed in writing.

D. Additional staffing demands are normal in the engineering industry and not coercive.

Q58. Which of the following best explains why economic duress does not render a contract void but only voidable?

A. Because pressure leads to complete lack of consent, making the contract legally suspect but not illegal.

B. Because the contract remains lawful but the consent was impaired by coercive pressure, making it voidable.

C. Because coercion only makes part of the contract defective, not the entire agreement.

D. Because once a contract is performed, the opportunity to render it void no longer exists.

Passage 2: According to Section 4 of The Indian Easements Act, 1882, an easement is a right possessed by the owner or occupier of a property to do or continue to do something in connection with or in respect of another person's land. This right is granted to ensure the beneficial enjoyment of the owner's own property. The concept of easements includes the right to do or continue to do something, or to prevent or continue to prevent something, in relation to another piece of land. The term "land" refers to everything permanently attached to the earth, and "beneficial enjoyment" encompasses convenience, advantage, amenity, or necessity. Easements can take various forms and serve different purposes. To establish an easement, certain essential elements must be met. These include:

1. Dominant and Servient Heritage: For an easement to exist, there must be two separate properties: the dominant heritage (the property benefiting from the easement) and the servient heritage (the property on which the easement is imposed). The two properties must be distinct and separate from each other.

2. Separate Owners: The owners of the dominant and servient heritages must be different individuals or entities. A single person cannot hold both properties and establish an easement.

3. Beneficial Enjoyment: The purpose of an easement is to provide beneficial enjoyment to the dominant owner. The easement should confer express or implied benefits on the dominant heritage.

4. Positive or Negative: Easements can be either positive or negative in nature. Positive easements allow the dominant owner to perform certain acts on the servient land, while negative easements prohibit or restrict certain acts by the servient owner. However, the dominant owner cannot bind the servient owner to perform any actions.

Easements can only exist between adjacent properties. They are rights in rem, which means they are enforceable against the whole world. Easements are always attached to the dominant tenement and cannot be exercised on one's own land. An easement can be acquired through an express grant. This involves the explicit inclusion of the right of easement in a deed of sale, mortgage, or any other form of transfer. The grantor must clearly express their intention to grant such a right.

Easements can also be acquired in implied circumstances, which include:

1. Easement of Necessity: When the owner or occupier of a property cannot use their property without exercising the right of easement over the servient heritage. This arises out of absolute necessity and convenience.

2. Quasi Easements: In cases where common properties are converted into tenements through various forms of transfer such as sale, mortgage, or partition, easements can be implied. This occurs when the properties are divided, and certain rights are inherent in the new tenements.

Additionally, easements can be acquired by prescription, through open, continuous, and uninterrupted enjoyment for a specified period without the owner's permission. This method recognizes long-term use as a basis for establishing legal rights.

[Source: <https://legalstixlawschool.com/blog/An-Overview-of-the-Law-of-Easements-in-India>]

Q59. Factual Matrix: Radha owns a farmhouse surrounded on three sides by land owned by Mahesh. The fourth side abuts a river but has no road access. To reach the public road, Radha crosses a narrow track on Mahesh's land. There is no formal agreement, but Radha has been using the path since her purchase 7 years ago. Recently, Mahesh installed a gate, restricting her access. Radha argues she has a right of way under easement of necessity. Which of the following is the correct legal outcome?

- A. Radha cannot claim an easement as no express agreement was made in writing or deed.
- B. Since Radha can potentially build a bridge to the river, she has not shown absolute necessity.
- C. Radha's long use and lack of road access establish an easement of necessity due to absolute need.
- D. Easement of necessity cannot arise unless the property was originally held by both parties jointly.

Q60. Factual Matrix: Ajay and Bhavna co-owned a large ancestral home with a shared well. Upon partition, Bhavna got the front half with the well, and Ajay got the rear portion without water access. Ajay continues using the well as he had always done. Bhavna now wants to build a boundary wall cutting off the well. Ajay claims a quasi-easement. Which is the most accurate legal position?

- A. Ajay has no rights post-partition unless a registered easement was specifically granted.
- B. Ajay can claim an implied quasi-easement since the properties were severed from a unity of ownership.
- C. Easement rights over water sources cannot arise unless backed by government permission.
- D. A co-owner cannot claim easement over previously shared facilities unless express terms exist.

Q61. Sneha sold the rear half of her property to Farid but included no clause about continued use of the front driveway. Sneha's remaining land is now landlocked. Farid refuses passage through the front portion. Sneha argues that her right to access the road persists by implied easement. Which of the following correctly applies the law?

- A. Sneha has no claim as she failed to explicitly reserve a right of passage during sale.
- B. Since Sneha's plot is now landlocked, a right of necessity arises despite omission in the deed.

C. Easements cannot be claimed by former owners once they transfer the access point to others.

D. The buyer's refusal to allow access is valid as the dominant and servient heritage were never separate.

Q62. Kiran owns two adjacent plots—Plot A has a septic tank that drains through Plot B. She sells Plot B to Dev, without mentioning the drainage pipe. Dev constructs a wall blocking the outflow. Kiran demands restoration of the pipe's path, citing continued enjoyment under implied easement. What is the correct legal resolution?

- A. Dev is within rights to build as no express easement was recorded during transfer.
- B. The right to drain sewage cannot form the subject of an easement under the law.
- C. Kiran may claim a quasi-easement due to apparent and continuous use that existed prior to sale.
- D. Easement rights are extinguished once properties pass to different owners, unless re-created contractually.

Q63. Meera lives in a house that opens into a shared alley owned by her neighbor Raghu. She has used the alley to park her scooter for 10 years without objection. Raghu now puts up a fence, citing ownership. Meera claims an easementary right to use the alley for convenience. What is the legally correct position?

- A. Meera can claim a positive easement based on long-term peaceful enjoyment and convenience.
- B. Meera's act was permissive, and convenience does not equate to beneficial enjoyment in law.
- C. Raghu is barred from fencing the alley since Meera's enjoyment was open and continuous.
- D. Parking scooters is not connected to land enjoyment and cannot give rise to an easement.

Q64. Which of the following most accurately summarises the essential requirements for a valid easement under Section 4?

- A. Use of a neighbor's land in a way that grants convenience to either party for economic benefit.
- B. A legally enforceable right over another's property that benefits the dominant tenement and burdens the servient one.
- C. A mutual arrangement between landowners that allows shared use and enjoyment of each other's land.
- D. A personal right of a property owner to walk across their own land or allow others to do so.

Passage 3: Section 9 of the Civil Procedure Code, 1908, forms the cornerstone of civil adjudication in India. It declares that civil courts shall have the jurisdiction to try all suits of a "civil nature" except those which are either expressly or impliedly barred. This provision affirms a presumption in favour of civil jurisdiction. Unless a statute specifically excludes the authority of a civil court, or such exclusion can be inferred by necessary

implication, the civil court retains the power to adjudicate the matter. The burden of proving such exclusion rests entirely upon the party who seeks to oust the court's jurisdiction. Thus, Section 9 ensures that courts remain accessible for the resolution of disputes over private rights, barring only those domains which the legislature has clearly reserved for specialised forums.

A "suit of a civil nature" generally includes claims relating to property rights, contracts, torts, succession, office-holding, or any other private legal entitlement. Section 9 includes two explanations that expand this definition: suits involving rights to property or office, even if they involve elements of religious practice, are still deemed civil if they concern a legal right rather than a matter of personal belief. For example, a dispute over the right to manage the affairs of a temple or to receive offerings may be treated as a civil matter, despite its religious overtones, so long as the claim pertains to legal entitlements and not mere theological doctrine.

However, this jurisdiction is not unlimited. Certain statutes—such as the Industrial Disputes Act, the Land Acquisition Act, or the Armed Forces Tribunal Act—either expressly or implicitly exclude the jurisdiction of civil courts. An express bar typically appears in statutory language that directly states that civil courts shall not entertain disputes under the Act. An implied bar, on the other hand, may be inferred when a statute creates a complete and self-contained mechanism for adjudicating disputes, and permitting parallel civil proceedings would defeat the legislative intent. The Supreme Court has consistently held that such exclusions must be construed narrowly. In *Dhulabhai v. State of Madhya Pradesh*, the Court laid down principles to assess when civil jurisdiction can be ousted. Even where a statute offers a special remedy, if it does not provide an adequate relief or if there is a violation of natural justice, civil courts may still exercise jurisdiction.

[Source: <https://lawcrust.com/section-9-civil-courts-cpc/>]

Q65. A temple priest filed a suit in the civil court asserting his right to collect offerings made at the deity's altar. The temple trust argued that the dispute is religious in nature and should be decided by the Charity Commissioner. The priest maintained that the issue pertains to his entitlement under a customary office, not theology. Which of the following is the correct legal position?

- A. The suit concerns religious beliefs and cannot be adjudicated by civil courts under Section 9.
- B. Since the claim involves customary rights over property-like entitlements, it is a suit of a civil nature.
- C. As a statutory body is involved, only the Charity Commissioner can decide disputes relating to the temple.
- D. Civil courts cannot decide cases where religious institutions are involved unless both parties are private individuals.

Q66. Chandra filed a civil suit seeking reinstatement after dismissal from a Hindu religious trust's administrative board, alleging mala fide removal. The trust challenged jurisdiction, citing that office disputes in temples involve internal spiritual discipline and are outside court jurisdiction. Chandra argued he had a legal right to the office. Which is the most appropriate outcome?

- A. The civil court has no jurisdiction as spiritual bodies are governed by religious autonomy.
- B. Disputes over temple appointments are ecclesiastical and cannot be treated as civil matters.
- C. The suit is maintainable since legal entitlement to office, even in a religious institution, is a civil right.
- D. Civil courts lack jurisdiction because trusts are governed under state-endowed religious laws.

Q67. An ex-employee of a factory filed a civil suit claiming back wages and permanent reinstatement. The factory moved to dismiss the case, citing the Industrial Disputes Act (IDA), which provides a full remedy via the Labour Commissioner and Industrial Tribunal. The ex-employee argued civil courts should hear it as his fundamental right was violated. What is the correct legal position?

- A. The IDA creates an exclusive mechanism, so civil court jurisdiction is impliedly barred.
- B. Civil courts always retain jurisdiction in cases involving constitutional rights like equality.
- C. Since the IDA provides only partial relief, the suit must proceed before a civil judge.
- D. Jurisdiction is shared unless the law expressly excludes it.

Q68. Factual Matrix: A villager filed a civil suit alleging unfair compensation for acquired agricultural land. The state opposed the suit, citing the Land Acquisition Act's express provision that compensation disputes be raised only before the Collector and Reference Court. The villager argued the procedure denied him a hearing, and thus natural justice was violated. Which is the most likely result under law?

- A. Civil court jurisdiction is barred because the Land Acquisition Act creates a special remedy.
- B. The Collector's process is binding, and civil suits cannot override statutory compensation.
- C. Civil courts can still intervene if the procedure violated natural justice, per the Dhulabhai test.
- D. No civil court can hear compensation disputes once the land has vested with the state.

Q69. A woman filed a civil suit against the Army alleging wrongful denial of family pension after her husband's combat death. The Army objected, saying the Armed Forces Tribunal Act gives the Tribunal exclusive power to decide all such service-related matters. She argued the Tribunal had not granted her adequate hearing. Which conclusion is best supported by Section 9 principles?

- A. The suit must be dismissed, as pension is a military matter under the exclusive Tribunal regime.
- B. Civil courts can intervene only where there is complete lack of remedy in the special forum.
- C. If the Tribunal's procedure was inadequate or unjust, civil court jurisdiction may revive.
- D. Since compensation claims relate to state policy, the court cannot interfere.

Q70. Which of the following best summarises the position of law under Section 9 CPC?

- A. Civil courts can try all cases unless the parties have agreed in writing to settle through another forum.
- B. Civil courts may adjudicate any suit that involves rights of private citizens unless expressly or impliedly excluded.
- C. All civil claims must go first to alternative forums created under special laws before reaching civil courts.
- D. Civil courts cannot entertain suits involving government entities or religious organisations.

Passage:-4

Article 22 of the Indian Constitution pertains to the protection of a person's right to personal liberty and safeguards against detention or arrest without proper legal procedure. This article is considered to be one of the fundamental rights guaranteed to citizens of India. Article 22 applies to both citizens and non-citizens and protects individuals in cases of arrest and detention in certain cases by providing certain important rights. The core object behind this clause is to ensure the personal liberty of individuals is maintained by preventing arbitrary arrests and detention. Preventive detention refers to the detention of a person to prevent them from committing a crime in the future. This provision ensures that preventive detention is not misused by the government to suppress dissent or opposition.

Article 22(1) states that any person who is arrested and detained shall be informed of the grounds for such arrest and shall have the right to consult and be represented by a legal practitioner of their choice. This provision ensures that an arrested person is not kept in the dark about the reason for their arrest and has the right to legal assistance. The first right states that the person who has been arrested or detained needs to be informed of the grounds of such arrest or detention thereby ensuring that the arrest/ detention is not arbitrary. In the case of *Joginder Kumar v. State of U.P.* it was held that a detained person should know the cause of his detention and is entitled to let any third person know the location of his detention. The second right enables the arrested person/detenu to get a chance to be represented by a legal practitioner of their choice. This right is available right from the moment a person has been arrested. This enables the arrested person to get a fair trial. The Supreme Court in *Hussainara Khatoon v. State Of Bihar* has held that the right to a speedy trial is a constitutional right.

Article 22(2) states that any person who is arrested and detained must be produced before the nearest magistrate within 24 hours of their arrest, excluding the time required for transportation. This provision is aimed at preventing arbitrary detention and ensuring that the detained person is produced before a judicial

authority within a reasonable time. These 24 hours are not inclusive of the time of travel from the place of arrest to the magistrate's court. Article 22(3) is an exception to clauses (1) and (2) of Article 22 and it states that none of the rights mentioned in clause 1 and 2 of the Article would be applicable for a person who is deemed to be an enemy alien and anybody who is arrested or detained under the law providing for preventive detention.

[Source: <https://lawctopus.com/clatalogue/clat-pg/article-22-under-the-indian-constitution/>]

Q71. Aareb, a student activist, is arrested during a peaceful protest. He is neither informed of the reasons for arrest nor allowed to contact a lawyer. He is kept at a local police station for two days without being produced before a magistrate. His family files a writ petition under Article 226 alleging violation of fundamental rights. Which of the following best describes the situation?

- A. Since preventive detention wasn't invoked, none of Article 22's exceptions apply and his rights were violated.
- B. Police action is justified because arrest during public protests does not need prior explanation.
- C. Aareb's rights under Article 21 may be infringed but Article 22 does not apply in protest arrests.
- D. Arrests in political matters fall under sovereign functions and cannot be questioned in court.

Q72. Muneer, a foreign national from a country with which India is at war, is detained during a national emergency under preventive detention laws. He claims a right to consult a legal practitioner and to be informed of the reasons for arrest.

Which of the following is most accurate in law?

- A. His rights under Article 22(1) and 22(2) remain intact despite his foreign nationality.
- B. Being an enemy alien under Article 22(3), he is excluded from protections under clauses (1) and (2).
- C. Even enemy aliens are entitled to the right to be produced before a magistrate under Indian law.
- D. The preventive detention law overrides Article 22 altogether.

Q73. Karuna is arrested on suspicion of theft. She is informed of the arrest but is denied access to legal counsel for the first 48 hours. She is produced before a magistrate within 24 hours but pleads that her constitutional rights were breached due to denial of legal assistance. What is the correct legal position?

- A. No constitutional right is violated as she was produced before a magistrate in time.
- B. Karuna's right to legal counsel arises only during the trial phase, not pre-trial.
- C. Denial of legal counsel immediately after arrest violates Article 22(1), as representation must be allowed

from the moment of arrest.

- D. The magistrate's oversight cures any prior violation of procedure.

Q74. Aditya is taken into police custody and detained for 30 hours without being produced before a magistrate. The police justify the delay on the grounds of heavy rain disrupting transportation. No record of efforts made to reach a magistrate is provided. Which of the following is the most correct application of the law?

- A. Article 22(2) was violated unless the State can prove the delay was reasonable and travel time was factored.
- B. No violation occurred as logistical issues can override procedural timelines during emergencies.
- C. Since no confession was obtained during detention, no harm was caused and Article 22 was not triggered.
- D. Detention under 48 hours does not attract constitutional review under Article 22.

Q75. Ritika is arrested in connection with a drug trafficking case under a law that permits preventive detention. She is served an order stating that she is detained to "prevent unlawful activities" but is not given the grounds for her detention. Her lawyer challenges the detention in the High Court.

Which of the following best applies?

- A. Preventive detention laws override Article 22(1), and no further information needs to be given to the detainee.
- B. She must still be informed of the grounds of detention even under preventive detention laws.
- C. Article 22(3) suspends all procedural safeguards for preventive detainees.
- D. The validity of preventive detention orders cannot be challenged in civil courts.

Q76. Sameer, a taxi driver, is picked up by the police during a citywide anti-terror raid. His family is not informed of his location. He is held at an undisclosed place for three days. Later, he is released without charges. His wife files a petition alleging arbitrary detention.

Which of the following is the best legal response?

- A. As no charges were filed, no violation occurred under the Constitution.
- B. The family's right to know Sameer's location is protected under *Joginder Kumar v. State of U.P.*, and secrecy amounts to a rights violation.

- C. The police have discretion in terror-related cases to detain without procedural compliance.
D. Detention without formal arrest does not come under the purview of Article 22.

Q77. Which of the following statements best summarises the scope and limitations of Article 22 as interpreted by Indian courts?

- A. Article 22 ensures due process after arrest, including trial, evidence production, and judicial review.

- B. Article 22 prohibits all forms of preventive detention unless approved by Parliament under national security grounds.

- C. Article 22 provides safeguards against arbitrary arrest but excludes protections in certain categories like enemy aliens and preventive detainees.

- D. Article 22 applies only to citizens and provides partial protections to non-citizens.

Passage:-5

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS), enacts comprehensive provisions for the right of private defence. This legal doctrine empowers individuals to protect their person and property from imminent threats, where otherwise an assault or offence is in progress. It recognises the basic principle that the State cannot always be present to prevent every crime, and thus individuals must be allowed to take lawful steps to protect themselves and others in times of emergency.

Section 35 confirms that every person has the right of private defence both of their own body and that of another, as well as of movable or immovable property, against offences such as theft, robbery, mischief, criminal trespass, or attempts thereof. This reflects a continuation of long-standing criminal jurisprudence. The right is not unfettered. Section 37 imposes strict restrictions: there is no right of private defence against non-deadly acts by public servants acting in good faith under colour of law, or when victims have the opportunity to seek help from authorities. Crucially, any defensive act must not exceed what is reasonably necessary to repel the threat.

The principle of proportionality is central to the exercise of private defence. It ensures that the force used by a defender must be commensurate with the nature and gravity of the threat faced. For example, if an individual is confronted with a minor theft that poses no threat of bodily harm, using lethal force would be deemed excessive and unjustified. Courts examine whether the defender had reasonable apprehension of serious injury or death and whether there were alternative, less harmful means to avert the danger. This test prevents abuse of the right of private defence and maintains a balance between personal liberty and social order.

Sections 36 and 38–39 refine the scope of valid defence. Under Section 36, even if the attacker suffers from unsoundness of mind, intoxication, youth, or a misconception, the defender retains full rights as if facing a sane and culpable offender. Sections 38 and 39 delineate when lethal force is proportionately justified: defence of life is available against assaults causing reasonable apprehension of death or grievous hurt, including attempts at rape, kidnapping, or confining a person. Regarding property, Sections 41–43 permit deadly force in specific circumstances such as robbery, house-breaking at night, or mischief judged likely to endanger life. In all other property offences, the defender is limited to non-lethal harm as long as the threat persists.

Section 40 specifies that the right to private defence commences with a reasonable apprehension of danger and continues until the threat recedes or the wrongdoer is restrained. In high-stakes exigencies, where a defender cannot avoid harming innocent bystanders, the law offers protection to the defender so long as the danger could not have been averted otherwise.

[Source: https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-18134-right-of-private-defence-under-bns-bharatiya-nyaya-sanhita-.html#google_vignette]

Q78. During a nighttime burglary, Kabir discovers three masked intruders attempting to ransack his home. Fearing for his life, he wields a kitchen knife and fatally stabs one intruder who lunges at him. The other two flee. Kabir argues he acted in private defence under BNS. Which of the following best describes Kabir's right under BNS?

- A. Kabir's lethal response is justified under Section 35 read with Sections 38–39 because he reasonably feared grievous harm.
- B. Kabir's act exceeds private defence since deadly force is never allowed in property offences, even at night.
- C. Kabir should have restrained them non-lethally, as BNS prohibits killing in theft situations.
- D. Nighttime burglary alone cannot justify lethal force; he must show threat to life under Section 38.

Q79. Priya sees her young nephew wrongly accused of shoplifting by a security guard. She attacks the guard with a mild blow to free the child, causing no serious injury. The guard sued her for assault. Priya relies on private defence. Which is the correct application of BNS?

- A. Priya's mild blow is excessive because Section 35 permits defence only against theft when property is being carried away.
- B. Priya's action is justified under Section 35 and proportionality: non-deadly force to protect another's person from wrongful assault.
- C. No defence applies, since a public servant acting in good faith cannot be resisted under Section 37.
- D. She must have called police first; BNS requires opportunity to seek help before using force.

Q80. Rahul, intoxicated, charges at Sameer with a stick. Sameer, fearing grievous hurt, strikes Rahul with a rock, causing a skull fracture. Rahul later sues. Sameer argues that under Section 36, he need not consider Rahul's intoxication. Which statement correctly reflects the law?

- A. Sameer had to moderate force because intoxication reduces the attacker's culpability under Section 36.
- B. Under Section 36, Sameer's defence is unaffected by Rahul's intoxication and remains full private defence.
- C. Intoxication bars private defence since the attacker's mental state negates reasonable apprehension of harm.
- D. Sameer's use of a rock is excessive because non-lethal force always suffices against intoxicated persons.

Q81. Naina witnesses a pickpocket attempt and grabs his arm, twisting it painfully but not causing permanent injury. The pickpocket sues for assault. Naina contends

her response was proportionate under Section 35 and proportionality. Which is the most legally sustainable position?

- A. Naina's use of force is justified as non-lethal and proportionate to prevent theft under Section 35.
- B. Naina's act is unprotected, because she could have called nearby guards instead of using force.
- C. She loses defence, since BNS requires only verbal warning before physical intervention.
- D. Private defence against pickpocketing is barred; Section 37 excludes defence when theft can be reported.

Q82. At dawn, Rohan sees two masked men attempting arson on his workshop. He throws a heavy tool, injuring one assailant's leg. The second suspect flees. Rohan pleads private defence of property and life. Which reflects correct BNS application?

- A. Rohan's response is justified: arson threatens life, so deadly force under Sections 38–39 is lawful.
- B. Rohan must limit to non-fatal force for property defence; arson alone doesn't justify leg-breaking.
- C. Throwing a heavy tool is disproportionate because Sections 41–43 allow deadly defence only at night.
- D. He must show the second attacker actually threatened his life before using force.

Q83. During a violent mob attack, Sameeta defends her boundary and accidentally injures an innocent passer-by while repelling aggressors. She claims Section 40's "compellable harm to bystanders" shield. Which is the best statement?

- A. Section 40 protects Sameeta, since injury to bystanders is excused if threat could not be averted otherwise.
- B. Section 40 offers no protection for bystander harm; any injury to innocents vitiates private defence.
- C. She must compensate the passer-by; BNS imposes civil liability even if criminal defence applies.
- D. By harming a bystander, she exceeds private defence, as Section 40 does not cover unintended injuries.

Q84. Which of the following best summarises the principle of proportionality in BNS private defence?

- A. Force used must match the gravity of the threat, with no allowance for mistakes in perception.
- B. Defender may use any force to protect property so long as no death occurs.
- C. Force must be commensurate with the threat's seriousness, considering less harmful alternatives first.
- D. Lethal force is permitted whenever property or life is threatened, irrespective of severity.

LOGICAL REASONING

Passage:-1 The Supreme Court judgment delivered on April 8 in State of Tamil Nadu vs The Governor of Tamil Nadu and Another, marks a golden day in the history of India. It is a landmark judgment in strengthening federalism as the basis for the Indian Constitution – the “Union of States” concept enshrined in law.

Our founding fathers wrote the Constitution as a vision statement of how we govern ourselves rather than an operational manual. This has required a lot of interpretation and operationalisation over time – a fact attested in the more than 100 amendments we have had in the last 75 years, as well as several landmark Supreme Court judgments.

Since 2014, capitalising on the operational grey areas in the Constitution, the Union government has attempted an unprecedented centralisation of power along with constant interference in the functioning of democratically elected state governments – most often through the appointment of obdurate governors to states where the NDA has not been elected to office.

Such actions have led to multiple states approaching the Supreme Court seeking justice, or at least reprieve, from the actions of their governors. For example, Kerala has had to take its Governor to court. Punjab did the same and won – including for a matter as routine as the Governor interfering with the convening of the Assembly session. This judgment, based on a similar litigation by Tamil Nadu concerning 10 bills that the Governor had held in abeyance for years, greatly limits the ability of governors to obstruct state legislation, and thereby removes a lacuna in the procedural implementation of the Constitution, which has been exploited unscrupulously in the past.

Judgments like this refine the interpretations of the Constitution and provide operating guidelines. At one level, this is a simple extension of the judgment delivered by the SC in November 2023 in State of Punjab vs Principal Secretary to the Governor of Punjab and Another, where it reaffirmed that in a parliamentary democracy, real power lies with elected representatives, and that the Governor cannot indefinitely withhold his assent to bills or obstruct the legislative process. But at another level, several aspects of this landmark litigation merit detailed attention. First, the duration for which the 10 bills had been kept pending was an aggravated assault on democracy. The first obstructed bill dates back to 2020, and was passed by the then AIADMK administration. It renamed the Tamil Nadu Fisheries University after the former chief minister J Jayalalithaa. All the bills relate to universities, whose functioning has been deeply affected by the Covid crisis. What universities vitally require in their attempts to recover are firm hands and immediate governance, not the deep freeze that came from the Governor’s inaction.

[<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/with-verdict-on-governor-r-n-ravi-supreme-court-gives-indian-states-and-india-a-victory-9948454/>]

Q85. Which statement most clearly encapsulates a foundational premise underlying the passage’s discussion of the April 8 Supreme Court judgment?

- A. The Constitution is an operational manual that requires no judicial interpretation.
- B. Governors act as neutral appointees who never interfere in state legislation.
- C. Since 2014, the Union government has exploited constitutional grey areas—especially through governor appointments—to centralize power and obstruct state governments, necessitating judicial intervention.
- D. Approaching the Supreme Court is an ineffective way

for states to address executive overreach.

Q86. Based on the passage, which inference can most reasonably be drawn about the Supreme Court’s role in India’s constitutional framework?

- A. The Supreme Court’s interventions are largely symbolic and have no real effect on the balance of power.
- B. Supreme Court judgments are crucial for operationalizing the Constitution’s vision, closing procedural loopholes, and reinforcing federalism by limiting executive overreach at the state level.

C. The Supreme Court favors the Union government over state governments in all federal disputes.
D. The Supreme Court should defer all questions of state governance to legislative bodies rather than issue binding interpretations.

Q87. Which conclusion best summarizes the passage's overall message about the impact of the State of Tamil Nadu vs The Governor of Tamil Nadu judgment?

- A. The judgment will likely encourage governors to continue delaying state legislation.
- B. The judgment represents an overreach of judicial power into the legislative domain.
- C. The judgment merely rehashes earlier decisions without adding meaningful guidance.
- D. The judgment not only reaffirms that real authority rests with elected representatives but also closes a constitutional lacuna by curbing governors' power to indefinitely withhold assent to state bills, thereby strengthening India's federal structure.

Q88. Which of the following best represents the argument developed in the passage regarding state-Governor relations?

- A. The passage argues that Supreme Court rulings are necessary to refine constitutional interpretations and provide clear operational guidelines that prevent governors from exploiting procedural ambiguities to stall democratically enacted state legislation.
- B. The passage argues that governors should have unchecked discretion to delay any state bill they personally oppose.
- C. The passage argues that centralization of power is an inevitable and desirable trend in a unitary state.
- D. The passage argues that state legislatures lack the competence to draft bills without executive interference.

Passage:-2

The proud words that I had a 'library room' in my house remains etched in my memory. I was telling my teacher about the secret place that I relished, tucked away on the first floor of my home. Here was a room that never failed to attract footsteps. It had various names such as book room, study room and grandma's room till it became the library room.

Sunlight pierced through two big windows as if whispering to the books that they deserved a bit of cheer. Bright curtains swinging merrily with the wind ensured that beads of sweat glistening on the forehead disappeared quick. There was a small step stool, to reach the 'hard-to-reach' books on the top. Aunt decided that the many shelves deserved a makeover. They were draped in old white dhotis to keep off dust. An easy chair and soothing music from a collection of cassettes doubled the joy of poring over books.

Here, English, Tamil, Sanskrit, French and Hindi jostled for space. Of course, not all the occupants of the shelves were new. There were very old books competing with the latest ones. A discerning eye could even spot 1940/1950s editions of books by famed authors. The covers look faded, the pages moth-eaten and

Q89. Which assumption is implicit in the passage's reasoning about the necessity of the April 8 judgment?

- A. That governors are always well-intentioned and only occasionally make errors in judgment.
- B. That states can easily enact legislation without any risk of executive obstruction.
- C. That without judicial limits on governors' power to withhold assent, state governments cannot implement laws in a timely manner, undermining democratic governance.
- D. That written constitutional provisions alone are sufficient to prevent executive overreach without the need for judicial enforcement.

Q90. Which statement, if true, would most strengthen the passage's argument that the recent Supreme Court judgment was essential to protect state democracy?

- A. Historical precedent shows that states rarely challenge their governors in court, indicating general satisfaction with governors' conduct.
- B. Data from multiple states reveal that governors' prolonged withholding of assent to bills caused severe administrative paralysis—especially in universities—harming public services and underscoring the need for clear judicial constraints.
- C. Surveys indicate that most citizens are unaware of the governor's formal role in state legislation, suggesting public indifference to the issue.
- D. Comparative studies show that federal systems without gubernatorial assent powers are unstable, implying governors' sweeping discretion is necessary.

yellowed but once you open the book you are transported to another world and wonder at the countless hands that browsed these pages. It had bound editions of popular, vernacular, historical fiction which were serialised in local magazines, the pages painstakingly arranged in order and bound together at the local binding unit, for those who craved mystery and intrigue. I could even spy school books with scribbles which transported me back to my school days.

The room also harboured secrets and the lucky ones could spot a few lurking inside the pages. It could be an old recipe book lost inside a big fat encyclopaedia or granddad's laundry bill lying unnoticed between the pages or even a list of daily expenses in grandma's scrawny hand on the back cover of a book or a flower, dried and stuck between the pages. It was considered a lucky room by the exam takers who considered the atmosphere conducive to earning showers of praise from the teacher when results arrived. For others, beset by insomnia, the serene environment soothed nerves and a fat book from the shelf would soon whisk them away to the Land of Nod. It was also a favourite spot for tricksters. Exam time meant spending hours in the library room with the much-maligned science textbook with a comic secretly tucked inside.

It was a place to relax, to enjoy the humour/drama in the pages and where love for the Sanskrit language blossomed afresh. It was where grandma plaited children's hair while spinning tales, where traditional board games were played and elders engaged in bookish talk or gossip.

[Extracted with edits and revisions from <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/the-saga-of-a-room/article67760182.ece>]

Q91. Which of the following statements most clearly encapsulates a foundational premise underlying the passage's portrayal of the "library room"?

- A. The passage assumes that a library room requires high-tech gadgets and digital resources to be truly effective.
- B. The passage assumes that only children use the library room for academic purposes and that adults do not benefit from it.
- C. The passage assumes that a space dedicated to books must remain austere and free of any personal or familial touches.
- D. The passage assumes that a comfortable, well-appointed physical environment—complete with natural light, seating, and personal mementos—fosters a multifaceted space for learning, relaxation, memory-keeping, and family bonding.

Q92. Based on the passage, which inference can most reasonably be drawn about the role of personal artifacts (e.g., recipes, laundry bills, pressed flowers) found within the books?

- A. The passage implies that these artifacts are merely random bits of paper with no connection to the library room's purpose.
- B. The passage implies that these hidden items serve as tangible links to personal and family histories, enriching the reading experience by connecting readers to past generations.

C. The passage implies that placing such artifacts in books is an unacceptable practice that damages the volumes.

D. The passage implies that hidden artifacts distract from the serious study and should be removed to preserve academic integrity.

Q93. Which of the following conclusions best summarises the overall message of the passage about the "library room"?

- A. The passage concludes that the library room is an expensive luxury with little practical use.
- B. The passage concludes that the library room should strictly be used for quiet reading and nothing else.
- C. The passage concludes that the library room is a dynamic, multi-purpose sanctuary—simultaneously a study space, memory repository, family gathering spot, exam refuge, and playground for imagination.
- D. The passage concludes that the library room's primary function is to store old, forgotten books without any ongoing relevance.

Q94. Which of the following best represents the argument developed in the passage regarding the significance of the library room?

- A. The passage argues that the library room, with its combination of natural light, comfortable seating, diverse books, and family artifacts, creates an ideal environment that supports scholarly pursuits, nostalgic reflection, creative escape, and social interaction.

B. The passage argues that all family rooms should be converted into library rooms to foster academic excellence.

C. The passage argues that reading physical books is inferior to digital media in promoting learning and memory.

D. The passage argues that a private library room is unnecessary if public libraries are available.

Q95. Which of the following assumptions is implicit in the passage's reasoning about the library room's atmosphere and its effects?

A. The passage assumes that any room filled with books will automatically inspire relaxation and learning without further enhancements.

B. The passage assumes that only rare, antique volumes can impart a sense of wonder and nostalgia to readers.

C. The passage assumes that environmental factors—such as sunlight, comfortable furniture, and personal touches—are key to making readers feel at ease, thereby enhancing concentration, creativity, and emotional connection.

D. The passage assumes that reading in silence is the only effective way to absorb information from books.

Q96. Which of the following best captures a paradox presented in the passage about the library room?

A. The library room is described as both a dusty storage area and a state-of-the-art reading laboratory.

B. The library room is simultaneously a serious academic retreat—complete with study materials and a calm environment—and a playful hideaway where secret recipes, comic books, and mischief flourish.

C. The library room is portrayed as the sole place for family gatherings yet is forbidden to guests.

D. The library room is said to be a site of intellectual rigor and also the only location where no reading at all takes place.

Passage:-3

India's March retail inflation was down to a near six-year low of 3.34%, making it almost certain that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will cut its banks' lending rate further over the next few Monetary Policy Committee meetings. The repo rate has already been cut twice in a row, by 25 basis points (bps) each, in February and April, bringing it down from 6.5% to 6%, signalling the emphasis on growth, amid global trade uncertainties, as the RBI's concern over non-core inflation eases. Vegetable prices have plummeted over the past four months from the highs of October 2024, when food inflation peaked at 10.87%, the highest since November 2013. Food inflation in March fell to 2.69% aided by a contraction in the prices of vegetables (-7.04%), eggs (-3.16%) and pulses (-2.73%). The repo rate reduction has already begun translating into lower interest on bank loans. In normal times, this would translate into greater capital flows into businesses, thereby raising jobs, incomes and consumption. But it comes at a time of dampening investor confidence: U.S.-led tariff uncertainty is forcing exporters to scramble for newer markets, amid a concern over near-term demand contraction, as America has been India's largest buyer of merchandise goods since fiscal year 2022. Easing inflation could raise domestic consumption and India's sluggish industrial production.

What must concern policymakers more should be the steep fall in food prices, as this means lower farmer incomes, directly impacting rural consumption demand. Last December, the government procured eight tonnes of tomatoes in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, as prices in the local market plummeted to ₹1 a kilogram. In February this year, in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, an 80% fall in tomato prices forced farmers to dump produce or use them as cattle feed. A 2022 study by the Ministry of Food Processing pegged India's post-harvest loss at a whopping ₹1.52 trillion annually, ranging between 6% to 15% of produce depending on the crop and region. This is due to widespread shortages in cold storage facilities and temperature-controlled transport for perishables, and market inaccessibility for farmers. A significant 86% of Indian farmers make a living from less than two hectares of land. A 2021-22 NABARD survey pegged average monthly agricultural household income at ₹13,661. A more comprehensive NSSO 2019 survey estimates this to be ₹10,218. These figures are lower than those in other emerging economies such as China, Mexico and Brazil for the corresponding years. While rural consumption has been rising since the COVID-19 pandemic years, monthly per capita consumption expenditure for rural areas in fiscal 2024 was ₹4,122, while in urban areas, it was

₹6,996, indicating the significant gap that must be viewed as an opportunity, at a time when export growth is expected to be sluggish.

[<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/good-news-and-bad-on-the-economy/article69456873.ece>]

Q97. Which of the following statements most clearly encapsulates a foundational premise underlying the passage?

- A. Even though India's retail inflation has fallen and the RBI is cutting rates to boost growth, the simultaneous steep fall in food prices threatens farmer incomes and rural consumption demand, demanding policymakers' urgent attention.
- B. Only the RBI's rate cuts matter for economic health—agricultural price collapses are unrelated and need no policy focus.
- C. Export uncertainties are the single greatest risk to India's economy, eclipsing all domestic concerns, including rural distress.
- D. Falling retail inflation uniformly benefits every sector, including agriculture, without any adverse effects.

Q98. Based on the passage, which inference can most reasonably be drawn?

- A. Low inflation and rate cuts alone will guarantee robust nationwide consumption and economic recovery without additional support measures.
- B. RBI rate cuts will automatically raise rural incomes and eliminate the need for targeted agricultural intervention.
- C. The persistent rural-urban consumption gap, combined with export sluggishness, implies that boosting rural demand could be a vital lever for sustaining overall growth.
- D. Declining food prices have no bearing on rural consumption because of government procurement programs.

Q99. Which of the following conclusions best summarises the passage's overall message?

- A. The RBI should suspend further rate cuts until farmgate prices recover to protect farmers.
- B. Policymakers must continue easing monetary policy to support growth but simultaneously implement measures to shore up farmer incomes and rural consumption in the face of collapsing food prices.
- C. Focusing solely on export diversification is sufficient to offset any domestic demand shortfalls caused by rural distress.
- D. The recent fall in food prices is a transient phenomenon that warrants no policy intervention.

Q100. Which of the following best represents the argument developed in the passage?

- A. The RBI should focus exclusively on inflation targeting, leaving agricultural distress issues to state governments.
- B. Exporters must find new markets abroad, with domestic rural incomes left to adjust without support.
- C. Government procurement of vegetables is the primary solution to price collapses in farm produce.
- D. While low inflation and rate cuts can spur broad economic growth, they must be paired with targeted interventions—such as better storage, transport, and support for farmers—to prevent rural incomes from collapsing and eroding consumption demand.

Q101. Which of the following assumptions is implicit in the passage's reasoning about rural consumption?

- A. Farmers have diversified income sources, so a drop in farmgate prices does not significantly affect their consumption.
- B. Urban consumption trends are unaffected by changes in rural incomes and spending.
- C. A significant fall in farmgate prices directly reduces rural household incomes and thus lowers rural consumption expenditure, impacting overall demand.
- D. Global demand shocks have no ripple effect on rural consumption in India, making domestic factors solely responsible.

Q102. Which of the following best captures a paradox presented in the passage?

- A. Both low inflation and high farmer incomes rise together under current policy, demonstrating uniform policy success.
- B. The paradox of policy: while declining retail inflation and rate cuts are heralded as indicators of economic health, the concurrent collapse in farm produce prices undermines rural incomes and consumption—the very outcomes monetary easing seeks to improve.
- C. Export uncertainty and rural consumption growth both accelerate at the same time, defying economic logic.
- D. Rate cuts are shown to harm urban borrowers even as rural incomes rise, suggesting a complete inversion of policy goals

Passage:-4 Romantic relationships with A.I. chatbots are commonplace enough that coverage has shifted to their tragic downsides. My newsroom colleague Kevin Roose reported on the death by suicide of the Florida 14-year-old Sewell Setzer III, a child who developed an intense bond with a bot he created on Character.AI, a role-playing app. According to chat logs provided to Roose and court filings, that character, already knowing of Setzer's suicidal ideation, encouraged him to "come home" to her, and he did. Now his mother is suing Character.AI.

Use of generative artificial intelligence is widespread among America's teenagers. According to a 2024 study from Common Sense Media, "Seven in 10 teens age 13 to 18 say they have used at least one type of generative A.I. tool. Search engines with A.I.-generated results and chatbots are considerably more popular than image and video-generating tools." Though around a quarter of American teens say they use ChatGPT for schoolwork, we don't really know how many teens are using bots for emotional solace or forming parasocial relationships with them.

While what happened to Setzer is a tragic worst-case scenario, Roose correctly points out that chatbots are becoming more lifelike, and at the same time are an understudied, regulatory Wild West, just like social media was at its start. A paucity of information about potential long-term harm hasn't stopped these companies from going full speed ahead on promoting themselves to young people: OpenAI just made ChatGPT Plus free for college students during finals season.

Many chatbots are built to be endlessly affirming, as M.I.T. Technology Review's Eileen Guo explained in February. She profiled a Minnesota man named Al Nowatzki, who entered a prolonged conversation about suicide with his A.I. girlfriend, Erin. "It's a 'yes-and' machine," Nowatzki told Guo. "So when I say I'm suicidal, it says, 'Oh, great!' because it says, 'Oh, great!' to everything."

I don't want to suggest that theirs is typical of chatbot usage, but we just don't know the details of the kinds of conversations that teenagers are having with their chatbots, or what the long-term drawbacks might be for their formation of human relationships. Since smartphones and social media were introduced, American teenagers do far less in-person socializing and dating, and there have been worldwide increases in loneliness among adolescents. We have let social media companies run unfettered, and instead of learning our lesson and trying to responsibly regulate A.I. in its nascency, we're creating the next generation of tech guinea pigs.

For kids who are already socially awkward or otherwise vulnerable, creating bonds with eternally validating chatbots will just further isolate them from other people, who are imperfect and challenging.

[<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/16/opinion/teens-chatbot-threat.html>]

Q103. Which of the following statements most clearly encapsulates a foundational premise underlying the passage's discussion of AI chatbots and adolescent mental health?

- A. Most teenagers use AI chatbots strictly for academic tasks and never for emotional support, so educational access is the primary issue.
- B. Lifelike, endlessly affirming AI chatbots—operating in an unregulated environment—can encourage harmful or even suicidal behavior in vulnerable teenagers, making regulation imperative.

C. AI chatbots invariably benefit teenage users by providing constant support, eliminating any need for real-world social interaction.

D. The primary concern around AI chatbots is the cost of subscription services, rather than their psychological effects.

Q104. Based on the passage, which inference can most reasonably be drawn about teenage use of generative AI?

A. Because AI chatbots are free, every teen uses them daily for both schoolwork and emotional support without exception.

B. The widespread adoption of AI chatbots among teens suggests a substantial—but largely unmeasured—risk of parasocial attachment and potential long-term harm to emotional development.

C. The only consequence of teens using AI chatbots is improved academic performance, with no emotional or social side effects.

D. Since chatbots can be “yes-and” machines, they automatically thwart any attempt at self-harm among users.

Q105. Which conclusion best summarises the passage’s overall message?

A. Without prompt regulation, AI chatbots risk repeating social media’s mistakes by turning a generation of teenagers into unknowing guinea pigs, deepening isolation and mental-health crises.

B. The passage concludes that AI chatbots pose no real dangers and should remain unfettered to allow maximum innovation.

C. Social media regulation lessons do not apply to AI, since chatbots are primarily educational tools.

D. Teens must abandon chatbots entirely in favor of in-person therapy.

Q106. Which of the following best represents the argument developed in the passage?

A. AI chatbots, by virtue of their novelty and hype, are more dangerous than any previous technology and should be banned outright.

B. Since only a small minority of chat sessions become harmful, we should focus solely on clinical interventions after the fact, rather than on regulation.

C. Although generative-AI chatbots can provide convenient emotional affirmation, their design—offering

unconditional “yes-and” responses—can exacerbate suicidal ideation and deepen adolescent loneliness, especially in vulnerable users, so responsible oversight and study are essential.

D. Teenagers should be encouraged to form deeper bonds with AI chatbots to compensate for reduced in-person socialisation.

Q107. Which of the following assumptions is implicit in the passage’s reasoning about the impact of AI chatbots on teenagers?

A. All teenagers need to learn coding to create their own, safer chatbots.

B. Teenagers’ emotional resilience makes them impervious to any technological influence.

C. Chatbots’ unconditional affirmation is as psychologically beneficial as it is potentially harmful, depending on the context.

D. Teenagers who rely on endlessly validating chatbots will further retreat from imperfect human relationships, thereby increasing their isolation and mental-health risks.

Q108. Which of the following best captures a paradox presented in the passage?

A. AI chatbots are both cutting-edge and entirely predictable in behavior, offering no surprises to users.

B. Teenagers who feel isolated at school find deeper connections through chatbots but become more isolated from actual human peers.

C. AI chatbots promise emotional support and lifelike companionship, yet their unconditional affirmation can worsen users’ mental-health crises by reinforcing harmful impulses.

D. Chatbots are praised for their academic utility, yet none of them can actually answer math problems correctly.

QUANTITATIVE TECHNIQUES

Passage 1:

Sunrise Bakery produces three varieties of bread—Whole Wheat, Multigrain, and Sourdough—daily in fixed batches of 200, 150, and 100 loaves respectively. Each loaf of Whole Wheat costs ₹40 to bake, Multigrain ₹50, and Sourdough ₹70. The bakery sells Whole Wheat at a 25% markup, Multigrain at a 20% markup, and Sourdough at a 30% markup.

To clear end-of-day stock, unsold loaves are discounted by 15% on their marked price. On average, 10% of Whole Wheat, 8% of Multigrain, and 5% of Sourdough remain unsold and thus discounted.

In addition, the bakery offers a “Buy 5, Get 1 Free” deal on Whole Wheat loaves, applied before any discount. Monthly fixed overheads—rent, utilities, and staff wages—total ₹150,000. Variable costs include packaging at ₹5 per loaf sold.

Q 109. What is the marked selling price per loaf for each of the three bread types?

- A. Whole Wheat ₹48, Multigrain ₹60, Sourdough ₹88
- B. Whole Wheat ₹50, Multigrain ₹60, Sourdough ₹91
- C. Whole Wheat ₹52, Multigrain ₹58, Sourdough ₹91
- D. Whole Wheat ₹50, Multigrain ₹62.5, Sourdough ₹90

Q 110. How many free Whole Wheat loaves are given daily under the “Buy 5, Get 1 Free” offer?

- A. 28 B. 30 C. 33 D. 36

Q 111. What is the effective revenue from daily Sourdough sales (after accounting for discount on unsold loaves)?

- A. ₹9,031.75 B. ₹9,500
- C. ₹8,900 D. ₹8,645

Passage 2:

AquaPure operates a network of three cylindrical water tanks — Tank A (radius 5 m, height 8 m), Tank B (radius 4 m, height 10 m), and Tank C (radius 6 m, height 6 m) — storing treated water for a township. Each morning, they fill tanks to 90% capacity. Daily, they distribute water as follows: 40% of Tank A's content to residential blocks, 30% of Tank B's to industrial 23

clients, and 50% of Tank C's to agricultural users; the remainder is held in reserve. Distribution reservoirs incur chlorination costs of ₹2 per cubic meter and pumping costs of ₹0.50 per 100 L. Once a week, the tanks are drained to 20% and cleaned at a flat rate of ₹10,000 per tank. In addition, maintenance inspections and minor repairs average ₹3,000 per week across all three tanks.

Q 115. What is the daily volume of water filled into each tank (rounded to 2 decimal places)?

- A. A: 565.49 m³, B: 452.39 m³, C: 610.73 m³
- B. A: 500.00 m³, B: 400.00 m³, C: 550.00 m³
- C. A: 560.00 m³, B: 450.00 m³, C: 600.00 m³
- D. A: 600.00 m³, B: 480.00 m³, C: 630.00 m³

Q 116. How many cubic meters of water are distributed daily across all three tanks combined?

- A. 567.27 m³ B. 585.43 m³
- C. 667.27 m³ D. 500.00 m³

Q 117. What is the daily chlorination cost incurred by AquaPure for all water distributed?

- A. ₹1,250.00 B. ₹1,334.55
- C. ₹1,550.00 D. ₹1,440.10

Q 112. What is the total daily packaging cost if only sold loaves (not free ones) are packaged?

- A. ₹2,100 B. ₹2,200 C. ₹2,300 D. ₹2,000

Q 113. What is the ratio of Multigrain to Whole Wheat revenue (including discounted sales)?

- A. 1.06 B. 2.15 C. 1.56 D. 0.86

Q 114. If the bakery works 6 days a week, what is the total weekly cost (packaging + fixed overheads)?

- A. ₹61,000 B. ₹50,100 C. ₹60,800 D. ₹63,500

Q 118. What is the total pumping cost per day, if pumping is charged at ₹0.50 per 100 litres of water delivered?

- A. ₹3,336.37 B. ₹2,821.15
- C. ₹3,000.00 D. ₹3,100.50

Q 119. What is the weekly cleaning cost for all three tanks?

- A. ₹10,000 B. ₹25,000
- C. ₹30,000 D. ₹35,000

Q120. What is the total weekly operational cost, including chlorination, pumping, cleaning, and maintenance? [Assume: 1 week = 7 days]

- A. ₹59,500 B. ₹64,000
- C. ₹65,696.44 D. ₹66,250

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Passage 1:

1. (Easy – Main Idea) Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Easy) The primary purpose of the passage is to outline India's evolving diplomatic engagement with the Taliban-led government. The passage traces India's initial cautious response after the Taliban takeover in August 2021, describes the suspension and gradual reopening of engagement channels (withdrawal of the ambassador, reopening the embassy in June 2024, ministerial talks), and situates these developments within a broader strategic context. It emphasises the incremental outreach rather than simply comparing China's or Pakistan's relations with the Taliban (so A is incorrect), highlighting how India has shifted from a no-talk posture to pragmatic engagement. Option C ("To highlight human rights abuses under the Taliban regime") is not the central purpose: although the passage acknowledges human rights concerns, that acknowledgment serves to explain why India hesitates to fully recognize the regime, not to foreground a human-rights exposé. Option D ("To criticise India's moral stance in not recognising the Taliban regime") is also incorrect: while the passage notes the moral dilemma, it does not primarily aim to criticize India's stance but to explain why, despite moral reservations, India finds it necessary to engage. Thus the passage's overarching thrust aligns with B: tracing the evolution of India's approach toward engagement with the Taliban regime.

2. (Medium – Vocabulary) Correct Option: A (Difficulty: Medium) In the phrase "Realising that a stringent no-talk policy was impractical," the adjective "stringent" most nearly means "excessively harsh" or "rigidly strict." Here, "stringent no-talk policy" conveys a very strict, inflexible prohibition on any dialogue. Interpreted in context, India found such a harsh embargo on communication was not workable. Option B ("Temporarily suspended") is incorrect because "stringent" does not imply temporariness or suspension; it denotes severity or strictness. Option C ("Delicately balanced") is wrong: "stringent" suggests rigidity rather than balance. Option D ("Partially effective") is also incorrect because "stringent" does not carry any nuance of partial effectiveness; it refers solely to severity or strict enforcement. Thus "excessively harsh/strict" best captures the nuance in context: India realized that maintaining an excessively strict no-engagement stance was impractical.

3. (Medium – Synonym/Antonym) Correct Option: D (Difficulty: Medium) Here "autocratic" describes a regime concentrated in the hands of a single authority with little input or dissent. The antonym of "autocratic" in this sense is "democratic," which denotes a system where power is distributed, decisions involve broader participation, and basic rights (e.g., representation, voice) are recognized. Option A ("Despotic") is incorrect because "despotic" is a near synonym of autocratic, not its opposite. Option B ("Authoritarian") likewise is essentially synonymous with autocratic, indicating centralized, strict control—so it is not an antonym. Option C ("Absolute") similarly suggests total power vested in one authority, again not the opposite. Only "democratic" directly opposes "autocratic" by implying rule with the consent or participation of the governed rather than unilateral rule. Therefore D is the correct antonym in context.

4. (Hard – Inference & Author's Intention) Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Hard) By stating that the Jaishankar-Muttaqi ministerial conversation "should be seen as the next logical step in the incremental outreach by both countries," the author implies that India's policy has steadily shifted from isolation (or minimal/no engagement) toward pragmatic engagement. The phrase "next logical step" and "incremental outreach" underscore a deliberate, gradual policy trajectory, reflecting a shift in India's calculus from outright non-engagement to cautious dialogue. Option A ("That India's engagement is purely reactive to Pakistan's actions") is incorrect: while the passage notes Pakistani attempts to drive a wedge and a wider rift between Taliban 2.0 and Pakistan, the emphasis in this statement is on India's own incremental policy shift rather than merely reacting to Pakistan. Option B ("That the meeting was orchestrated solely for public-relations benefit") is also incorrect: nothing in the "next logical step" phrasing suggests a superficial PR exercise; rather, it signifies a substantive policy progression. Option D ("That India and Afghanistan have already fully reconciled their differences") is wrong: "next logical step in incremental outreach" implies the process is ongoing, not that differences are already fully reconciled. Thus the author signals that India's stance has evolved pragmatically from avoidance to engagement, making C the accurate inference.

5. (Medium – Grammar) Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Medium) The sentence "Realising that a stringent no-talk policy was impractical, India gradually started opening channels of communication."

offered; the focus is on events and culpability. Option D is mistaken because, while sectarian distrust and deprivation are mentioned, the central thread is the Muslim-mob violence and the language that fuels it. Thus B—not A, C, or D—best captures the dual narrative of violence description and political condemnation. It places the adverb “gradually” in a natural position and uses “started opening” to indicate the commencement of the action. Option A (“Realising that stringent no-talk policy was impractical, India started to gradually open channels of communication.”) is incorrect because it omits the article “a” before “stringent no-talk policy,” making it grammatically imperfect (“that stringent no-talk policy” sounds awkward without an article), and the split infinitive “to gradually open” is stylistically less preferred in formal writing. Option B (“Realising that a stringent no-talk policy was impractical, India started gradually to opening channels of communication.”) is incorrect because “to opening” is ungrammatical; after “started,” the correct form is either “started to open” or “started opening,” but not “to opening.” Option D (“Realising that the stringent no-talk policy was impractical, India started gradually opening channels of communication.”) is less accurate because “the stringent no-talk policy” implies a uniquely identified policy previously mentioned, whereas the passage uses “a stringent no-talk policy,” and the placement “started gradually opening” is slightly more awkward than “gradually started opening.” Therefore, Option C best matches both grammar and the nuance of the original.

6. (Hard — Analogy) Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Hard) The analogy compares “Wheat delivered by India since August 2021” to “aid/assistance.” This establishes that the nature of the action—providing wheat—is assistance to Afghanistan. The oil extraction deal signed by China for \$540 million similarly represents an “investment” rather than deterrence, mediation, or negotiation. Option A (“deterrence”) is incorrect because an oil extraction agreement is an economic arrangement, not a measure intended to discourage adversarial behavior. Option C (“mediation”) is wrong: mediation involves facilitating dialogue between parties, whereas an oil extraction deal is a direct economic investment. Option D (“negotiation”) is not suitable because although deals involve negotiation, the analogy focuses on the nature/purpose of the outcome: wheat deliveries are aid; the oil deal is investment. The analogy hinges on mapping the type of engagement: India’s wheat shipments constitute aid, China’s oil deal constitutes investment. Hence B is correct, and the other options fail because they mischaracterise the fundamental nature of the oil deal in the same relational role as aid.

Passage 2:

7. (Medium — Main Idea) Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Medium) The central argument of the passage is that the relative autonomy enjoyed by ISRO and DAE has been key to their success and that this model could inform other strategic sectors. This interpretation aligns with the passage’s emphasis on how freedom in planning, recruitment, and expenditure has contributed to achievements such as the Spadex docking capability, and how scientists propose replicating that institutional model in other technology domains. Option A is incorrect because, although the passage praises India’s space achievements, it does not claim that success in space makes India the unquestioned global leader across all emerging technologies; rather, it explicitly contrasts India’s space standing with larger gaps in AI, quantum, and clean energy. Option C is incorrect because, while the passage acknowledges the importance of AI and quantum systems, it does not argue that they must be prioritized over space exploration; instead, it suggests learning from the space model to boost other sectors. Option D is incorrect because, although Chandrayaan-4 is mentioned as an immediate use case for docking capability, the passage is not centrally about Chandrayaan-4 alone but about broader lessons from ISRO’s autonomy. Thus, B captures the passage’s core argument about institutional autonomy and its potential replication.

8. (Hard — Vocabulary) Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Hard) In the phrase “Thanks to the spate of capabilities acquired and demonstrated by the agency,” the word “spate” most nearly means a sudden outpouring or a series of achievements occurring in quick succession. The passage refers to a series of capabilities ISRO has acquired recently, implying a notable influx of achievements. Option A (“scarcity”) is incorrect because “spate” does not denote lack or insufficiency; it conveys abundance or a flood, not paucity. Option C (“strategic alignment”) is wrong because “spate” has no connotation of planning or alignment; it refers to the occurrence or flow of events or items. Option D (“measured deployment”) is incorrect since “spate” implies a surge rather than a controlled or measured action; it signals a notable burst of capabilities rather than a carefully paced rollout. Thus, the nuance of an unanticipated series or outpouring of new capabilities fits “sudden outpouring,” making B the clear choice.

9. (Hard — Inference & Author’s Intention) Correct Option: D (Difficulty: Hard) The passage clearly indicates that while India has excelled in space technology, it still lags significantly behind front-

runners in AI, quantum, and clean energy. This inference is supported by the sentence noting that “Unlike space, however, the gap between India’s capabilities and the front-runners in these technology domains is significantly large.” Option A is incorrect because the passage does not claim that leadership in space guarantees imminent leadership in AI or quantum; it rather cautions that the gap in those areas remains wide. Option B is incorrect since the passage mentions political backing as one among several factors contributing to ISRO and DAE success, not as the sole explanation; it notes “Of course, there are other factors contributing,” signaling a more nuanced view. Option C is incorrect because the passage explicitly states that “Building ISRO or DAE-like institutions for other key sectors ... might be easier said than done,” indicating that replication is not straightforward or guaranteed to quickly bridge gaps. Only Option D faithfully captures the balanced inference that India excels in space but still significantly trails in other critical emerging technologies.

10 (Medium – Grammar) Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Medium) The sentence “Unlike space, however, the gap between India’s capabilities and those of the front-runners in these technology domains is significantly large.” correctly preserves meaning and is grammatically sound. It uses “those of the front-runners” to parallel “India’s capabilities,” ensuring clarity in comparison, and employs the singular verb “is” to agree with the singular subject “the gap.” Option A is incorrect because it uses “remain” with a singular subject “gap,” resulting in a subject-verb disagreement (“gap ... remain”). Option C repeats the same error: “gap ... are significantly large” misaligns plural verb “are” with the singular “gap.” Option D, “has been significantly large,” while grammatically acceptable, subtly shifts tense to a present perfect continuous sense, suggesting an ongoing past duration; this may be arguable but does not preserve the simple present assertion about the current gap as neatly as Option B. Moreover, Option D omits the parallel phrasing “those of,” making the comparison less explicit. Therefore, Option B best maintains both grammatical correctness and fidelity to the original meaning.

11 (Hard – Analogy) Correct Option: B

The analogy “ISRO is to docking capability as DAE is to _____” invites mapping each institution to its hallmark domain: ISRO’s notable recent achievement is docking capability in space, while DAE’s core domain expertise is nuclear energy. Option B (“nuclear energy”) fits precisely, since DAE—the Department of Atomic

Energy—is chiefly associated with nuclear research, power generation, and related technologies. Option A (“quantum computing”) is incorrect because, although quantum computing is an emerging technology, it is not the defining strength or mandate of DAE; the passage associates DAE with nuclear establishments rather than quantum computing. Option C (“artificial intelligence”) is wrong because AI, while important, is not the principal domain of DAE; the passage distinguishes space and nuclear establishments as successful models, not AI. Option D (“clean energy”) is also incorrect because, despite DAE’s possible role in energy research, the term “clean energy” in the passage refers more broadly to future technologies where India lags; DAE’s emblematic association is nuclear energy. Thus, the institution-to-capability analogy holds for DAE:nuclear energy.

12 (Medium – Synonym/Antonym) Correct Option: A (Difficulty: Medium) In “relative freedom that the ISRO and the Department of Atomic Energy ... have enjoyed,” the term “autonomy” implies a degree of sovereignty or self-governance in decision-making. “Sovereignty” captures the sense of independent authority over internal matters such as planning and recruitment. Option B (“dependence”) is the direct opposite of autonomy and thus incorrect as a synonym. Option C (“regulation”) is incorrect because regulation denotes external rules imposed on an entity, which contrasts with freedom from such controls rather than synonymizing autonomy. Option D (“subordination”) is wrong since subordination implies being subject to another authority, the antithesis of autonomy. Therefore, “sovereignty” best parallels the implied meaning of institutional autonomy enjoyed by ISRO and DAE in the passage.

Passage 3:

13. (Easy – Main Idea) Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Easy) The passage’s central theme revolves around sleeplessness deepened by grief and symbolic confinement. The narrator describes repeated early-morning wakefulness, insomnia worsened by emotional turmoil at the “most depressing hour known to man,” and layers this with imagery of confinement (wrapping the blanket like a cell, footsteps of wardens). This is neither primarily about the health benefits of exercise (Option A is incorrect because exercise is mentioned only as a past strategy, not the main concern) nor strictly about practical coping strategies (Option D is incorrect since, although strategies are mentioned, they serve to illustrate the deeper emotional struggle rather than to advise the reader). While there is a contrast

between physical warmth under the blanket and emotional coldness (Option B has some resonance), that phrasing does not fully capture the overarching sense of grief and the metaphorical imprisonment of the narrator's mind; the insomnia is linked to loss (husband gone three months) and a sense of being trapped in morbid thoughts. Hence, the best summary is sleeplessness compounded by grief and symbolic confinement, making C the correct answer.

14. (Medium – Inference) Correct Option: A (Difficulty: Medium) The strongest inference supported by the passage is that the narrator's husband is in prison, and the footsteps belong to wardens. This is foreshadowed by references to "this cell block," "prison wardens," and the regular footsteps that the narrator hears, which frame her current solitude as imprisonment-like. Option B ("The narrator will soon resume taking sleeping tablets") is incorrect because, although sleeping tablets were considered earlier, the narrator explicitly resisted and there is no indication she intends to resume them imminently. Option C ("The cold room temperature is the primary cause of insomnia") is incorrect: while the narrator mentions coldness under the blanket, the passage emphasizes emotional distress and grief as the real drivers of sleeplessness, not merely temperature. Option D ("The narrator and her husband share these sleepless nights together") is incorrect because the narrator laments her husband's absence for three months and wishes for his comforting presence; they are not together. The explicit references to wardens and a cell block make inference A the most compellingly supported.

15. (Medium – Vocabulary) Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Medium) In the context "force my mind to switch thoughts – to the minutiae of daily life," the word "minutiae" most nearly means "trivial details." The narrator is attempting to distract herself by focusing on small, everyday details rather than succumbing to morbid ruminations. Option A ("grand events") is incorrect because minutiae refers to small, fine points rather than large-scale happenings. Option C ("imaginative scenarios") is incorrect since the narrator intends to switch to mundane reality, not invent fanciful imagery. Option D ("significant milestones") is wrong because milestones are noteworthy; "minutiae" suggests the opposite—small, often overlooked elements. Therefore, "trivial details" accurately captures the nuance of the phrase.

16. (Hard – Tone) Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Hard) The narrator's tone in "It needn't have been like this. Me

lying here on my own with useless morbid thoughts" is best described as regretful. She expresses a wistful sorrow about how circumstances have turned out, lamenting that things could have been different, implying remorse or lamentation over lost possibilities (e.g., lying with her husband). Option A ("Sardonic") is incorrect because sardonic implies bitter or scornful mockery; here, the tone lacks mocking irony and instead conveys genuine sorrow. Option C ("Jubilant") is clearly incorrect as the passage is marked by sadness, not joy. Option D ("Detached") is not a precise fit: while there is some observational distance, the emotional engagement and regret ("It needn't have been like this") show personal involvement rather than detachment. The narrator's expression of "needn't have been" underscores regret about the outcome, making "regretful" the most accurate descriptor of tone.

17. (Hard – Figure of Speech) Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Hard) The sentence "I can feel the warmth from my breath. It's like central heating but more suffocating." exemplifies a simile because it uses "like" to draw a comparison between the warmth of her breath and central heating. Option A ("Metaphor") is incorrect because a metaphor would state the identity directly (e.g., "My breath is central heating") without "like" or "as." Option C ("Personification") is incorrect because no human qualities are being attributed to a non-human subject; the statement is a direct comparison of sensations. Option D ("Hyperbole") is incorrect because, although the phrase "more suffocating" exaggerates discomfort, the core device is the explicit "like" comparison, marking it as a simile. Thus, the figure of speech is a simile.

18. (Medium – Grammar) Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Medium) "I feel the warmth of my breath—like central heating but more suffocating." best preserves the original meaning and is grammatically sound. It retains the first-person present-tense perception ("I feel") matching the narrative immediacy, uses "the warmth of my breath" which parallels "warmth from my breath," and includes a dash to connect the simile smoothly. Option A ("I can feel the warmth from my breath, like central heating but more suffocating.") is less polished because the comma splice linking the clauses can read as a run-on; while understandable, it is stylistically weaker than the em dash in C, and "can feel" slightly shifts modality compared to the simple "feel." Option B ("I can feel warmth from my breath; it's as central heating but more suffocating.") is incorrect because "as central heating" is unidiomatic; one would say "like central heating," and the semicolon and "as"

construction distort the simile. Option D (“Feeling the warmth of my breath is like central heating but more suffocating.”) shifts the sentence into a general statement rather than the immediate sensory experience; it abstracts the moment into a gerund phrase, losing the narrator’s direct present-tense sense “I feel.” Option C best balances immediacy, clarity, and grammatical correctness while preserving the original nuance.

Passage 4:

19 (Easy – Main Idea) Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Easy) The passage’s primary purpose is to show how mandatory male guarantors reveal and reshape family relationships under microfinance. The narrative opens with Krishna seeking a loan and the insistence on a male guarantor, illustrating how MFIs leverage kinship ties. The broader discussion then analyzes how these “relations of guarantee” bind families yet expose fractures. Option A is incorrect because the passage does not celebrate microfinance uncritically as women’s empowerment; instead, it problematizes the requirement of male guarantors. Option C is incorrect since the author does not explicitly argue that MFIs should drop the guarantor requirement; rather, the focus is on understanding how the requirement affects kinship. Option D is wrong because there is no comparison of urban versus rural loan practices; the setting is an urban poor neighbourhood in Kolkata, but the passage’s thrust is about gendered guarantor rules and kinship dynamics, not urban-rural contrasts. Thus B captures the analytic, critical lens on how male guarantor requirements reveal and transform familial relations.

20 (Medium – Vocabulary) Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Medium) In “underlying familial relationships are speculated upon and transformed by the process of financialization,” “transformed” most nearly means “altered.” The passage explains that introducing financial requirements (male guarantors) does not merely document or preserve kinship structures but changes how these relationships are lived and assessed: they are reshaped, renegotiated, and subjected to financial logic. Option A (“preserved”) is incorrect because the passage emphasizes change rather than continuity; it argues financialization actively modifies relationships. Option B (“obscured”) is wrong since the passage suggests these relationships become more visible under institutional scrutiny rather than hidden. Option D (“documented”) is incorrect because, although MFIs may require documentation, the focus is not mere recording but the deeper impact on relational dynamics.

Hence, “altered” best conveys the sense of substantive change in familial ties due to financial processes.

21 (Medium – Inference) Correct Option: A (Difficulty: Medium) The passage supports the inference that requiring male guarantors both empowers women borrowers (in the sense that they gain access to loans) and exposes patriarchal constraints (by forcing reliance on male relatives). The narrative shows Krishna cannot secure a loan without a male guarantor, illustrating empowerment is conditional upon patriarchal structures; at the same time, it reveals how the requirement binds and sometimes burdens family members. Option B (“Women are preferred guarantors because they are seen as more reliable”) is incorrect because the passage describes MFIs requiring male guarantors, not preferring women. Option C (“MFIs allow female guarantors when male kin are unavailable”) is not supported; the passage only mentions male kin as guarantors and suggests MFIs call upon varied male relatives, but does not discuss substituting female guarantors. Option D (“Guarantor rules are applied uniformly without regard to gender”) is wrong because the core argument centers on how the rule specifically demands male guarantors and thus is deeply gendered. Therefore, A correctly captures the dual dynamic of empowerment and patriarchal exposure evident in the text.

22 (Hard – Tone) Correct Option: A (Difficulty: Hard) In the phrase “bad sons, good daughters, mothers cared and uncared for,” the author’s tone is satirical: the compressed listing of familial roles (“bad sons,” “good daughters,” “mothers cared and uncared for”) wryly critiques societal expectations and the ironies embedded in kinship under microfinance. There is a subtle mocking or ironic edge: the labels reduce complex individuals to simplistic moral judgments, highlighting the absurdities of how financial institutions and social norms judge family members. Option B (“Celebratory”) is incorrect because the author is not praising these roles; rather, the tone underscores disquiet with how kinship is instrumentalized. Option C (“Indifferent”) is wrong as the author is emotionally engaged and critical, not detached or unconcerned. Option D (“Critical”) is close but lacks the specific nuance of satirical irony: the phrase is not merely critical in a straightforward way, but uses a sardonic juxtaposition of “bad sons” vs. “good daughters” to mock underlying social tropes. Thus “satirical” best captures the tone’s ironic critique of familial judgments under financialization.

23. (Medium – Figure of Speech) Correct Option: A (Difficulty: Medium) The phrase “brought kinship relations under the gaze of financial institutions” is an example of a metaphor. It uses the concept of “gaze” metaphorically to represent scrutiny or surveillance by institutions. There is no literal “gaze”; instead, the author equates institutional assessment with the act of looking. Option B (“Simile”) is incorrect because there is no “like” or “as” constructing a direct comparison; instead, it is figurative language mapping kinship into a realm of institutional observation. Option C (“Personification”) might seem tempting since “gaze” personifies institutions with a human capacity to see, but the more precise rhetorical device is metaphorical framing: institutions “gaze” is a conceptual metaphor for scrutiny rather than a direct attribution of a human trait for stylistic embellishment. Option D (“Oxymoron”) is wrong because there is no contradictory pairing; the phrase does not juxtapose opposing terms. Therefore, the use of “gaze” to denote scrutiny is best categorized as a metaphor highlighting how financialization brings private relations into institutional view.

24. (Hard – Inference on Impact) Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Hard) The concept of “relations of guarantee”

implies that the borrower–guarantor relationship forces both parties to continuously perform and prove their familial bond. The passage explains that MFIs require not only formal proof of kinship but also ongoing “signs of this relationship as it is lived” so institutions can assess risk. This continuous performance transforms how family members relate, making the bond itself subject to financial evaluation. Option A (“It remains a purely formal requirement, with no real effect on personal ties”) is incorrect because the passage argues the opposite: these requirements reshape and strain relationships rather than remain purely procedural. Option C (“It eliminates the need for MFIs to verify kinship documents”) is wrong, as verifying documents is likely still necessary; moreover, the idea is about deeper, lived proof beyond paperwork. Option D (“It weakens the authority of male guarantors over female borrowers”) is not supported: although relationships shift, the passage does not claim male authority is weakened; if anything, the need for a male guarantor may reinforce patriarchal oversight, even as roles are renegotiated. Thus, B accurately reflects the passage’s insight that “relations of guarantee” compel ongoing demonstration of familial ties, affecting personal dynamics.

CURRENT AFFAIRS AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Passage 1:

25. Correct Answer: C – Lateran Treaty, 1929 (Difficulty: Easy)

Explanation: The Lateran Treaty was signed in 1929 between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Italy, under Mussolini. It established Vatican City as an independent sovereign state. This resolved the “Roman Question,” giving the Pope full sovereignty over the territory and independence from Italy.

□ A (Treaty of Tordesillas) was a territorial agreement between Spain and Portugal.

□ B (Concordat of 1801) was between Napoleon and the Pope to reestablish the Catholic Church in France.

□ D (Treaty of Rome) established the European Economic Community in 1957 and is unrelated to the Vatican.

26. Correct Answer: B (Difficulty: Easy) – By a conclave of cardinals who vote, typically selecting one of their own

Explanation: The Pope is elected through a secret conclave held in the Sistine Chapel, where senior church leaders known as cardinals cast ballots until a candidate receives a two-thirds majority. Though any baptized male Catholic is technically eligible, cardinals almost always elect one of their own.

A is false: there’s no hereditary succession in papal selection.

□ C is incorrect as there’s no public voting system.

□ D is invalid because the Archbishop of Canterbury is a Protestant leader, not involved in Catholic papal elections.

27. Correct Answer: A – The Papacy (Difficulty: Medium)

Explanation: The Papacy is the official term used to describe the office and jurisdiction of the Pope. It refers to the authority and governance structure exercised by the Bishop of Rome.

B (Apostolic Chair) is a symbolic term, not the formal name.

C refers more broadly to bishops rather than the specific role of the Pope.

D (Holy Synod) is more commonly associated with Orthodox Christian traditions.

28. Correct Answer: D (Difficulty: Medium) – It is governed by the Pope who exercises supreme legislative, executive, and judicial authority

Explanation: Vatican City is a unique ecclesiastical monarchy, ruled absolutely by the Pope, who possesses all sovereign powers of governance – legislative, executive, and judicial. The Holy See represents the

Vatican diplomatically.

A is false — there's no separate parliament or PM.

B is incorrect — Vatican is independent from Italy.

C is incorrect — while the College of Cardinals advises, it does not share governance authority with the Pope.

29 Correct Answer: C (Difficult:Easy)– Donations from global Catholics, investments, and publication sales

Explanation: The Vatican sustains itself through Catholic donations (like Peter's Pence), returns on investments, and revenue from the Vatican Museums, stamps, and books. It does not levy taxes and has no commercial agriculture or industry.

A is wrong — Vatican doesn't collect income taxes.

B is incorrect — there's no significant agricultural export from the Vatican.

D is incorrect — there's no fee for being a cardinal or clergy member.

Passage 2:

30. Correct Answer: A – Indus Waters Treaty, 1960

Explanation: The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) was signed in 1960 and brokered by the World Bank between India and Pakistan. It allocated Eastern Rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) to India and Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) to Pakistan. It remains one of the most comprehensive water-sharing agreements despite political tensions.

B (Shimla Agreement) and C (Tashkent Agreement) were peace agreements post-war, unrelated to water.

D (Treaty of Lahore) ended the First Anglo-Sikh War and is irrelevant to Indus waters.

31. Correct Answer: A – India did not impose any sanctions on Pakistani banks operating in India.

Explanation: Among the five-point action plan announced post-Pahalgam attack, India included suspension of the Attari-Wagah border check post, effectively stopping movement of people and goods across the border, except limited returnees.

B, C, and D were explicitly announced measures.

32. Correct Answer: C – The Resistance Front (TRF)

Explanation: The TRF (The Resistance Front) was formed in 2019 and is widely regarded as a proxy outfit of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). It gained prominence after Article 370's abrogation and was involved in several attacks, including the one in Baisaran meadows.

A, B, and D are established terror groups but not associated with this specific attack.

33. Correct Answer: B – Article 62 of the Vienna Convention allows termination due to a fundamental change of circumstances (Difficult: Hard)

Explanation: India invoked Article 62 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, which allows withdrawal from a treaty when a fundamental change in circumstances occurs. In this case, Pakistan's continued support for cross-border terrorism changes the security context in which the IWT was negotiated.

A is factually incorrect – the IWT does not contain a sunset clause.

C misattributes India's reasoning to treaty enforcement, not its strategic logic.

D has no basis as IWT contains no terrorism enforcement clauses.

34. Correct Answer: C – It exploited the region's terrain to delay rescue efforts and undermine perceptions of security near a pilgrimage site (Difficult: Hard)

Explanation: The terrorists specifically exploited Baisaran's remote and non-motorable terrain, delaying emergency response and targeting a site close to the Amarnath shrine, undermining India's security claims. This maximised the terror impact both symbolically and operationally.

A and B have no connection to actual motives evidenced.

D is geographically inaccurate, as Ladakh is far from Pahalgam.

35 Correct Answer: A – It halts diplomatic and non-diplomatic travel for Pakistanis under SAARC privileges

Explanation: The SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES) allows specific categories (officials, dignitaries, etc.) visa-free travel among member countries. Revoking this for Pakistani nationals suspends their privileged access, downgrading bilateral interaction.

B is incorrect because this is a unilateral suspension, not access to cooperation.

C is false — Pakistan is still a SAARC member.

D is inaccurate as the suspension is within India's rights under domestic and SAARC protocols.

Passage 3:

36. Correct Answer: D – United States

Explanation: The United States has not signed the Ottawa Convention, along with countries like India, Russia, China, and Israel. It cites military necessity and security concerns.

A (Norway), B (France), and C (Japan) are all strong supporters and signatories of the Ottawa Treaty, committed to its implementation.

Hence, D is the correct answer.

37. Correct Answer: C – 1999 (Difficulty: Medium)

Explanation: The Ottawa Convention was adopted in December 1997, but entered into force in March 1999 after receiving the required number of ratifications.

A (1997) marks adoption, not effectiveness.

B (1998) is wrong as the treaty was not yet in force.

D (2000) is too late. Thus, the correct answer is C.

38. Correct Answer: A – Need for use of mines against maritime threats in Indian Ocean (Difficulty: Medium)

Explanation: India has consistently cited security concerns due to porous borders and insurgencies as the main reasons for staying out of the Ottawa Treaty. Hence, B is incorrect

□ C (Threat of insurgencies) is accurate.

□ D (Challenges verifying non-state actor use) is also an implied security concern but not a main cited reason.

□ A (Need against maritime threats) is correct; the treaty concerns landmines, not naval warfare.

39. Correct Answer: A – Norway (Difficulty: Hard)

Explanation: Despite tensions rising from Russian aggression, Norway has reiterated its commitment to the Ottawa Convention and mine-ban efforts.

B (Poland), C (Finland), and D (Latvia) are all among the countries now preparing to withdraw in 2025 citing security needs. Thus, A is the correct choice.

40. Correct Answer: C – To eliminate the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines (Difficulty: Easy)

Explanation: The central objective of the Ottawa Convention is to comprehensively ban anti-personnel landmines and to assist with mine clearance and victim rehabilitation.

A (chemical and biological weapons) refers to different treaties like the Chemical Weapons Convention.

B (automatic firearms) concerns Arms Trade Treaties.

D (post-war peacekeeping) is about UN missions, not the Ottawa Treaty. Thus, C is the correct answer.

41. Correct Answer: C – Need to retain landmines as deterrence against Russian aggression (Difficulty: Medium)

Explanation: Countries like Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia argue they require landmines as a defensive deterrent against potential Russian military threats, given recent security dynamics.

A (non-state actors in Africa/Middle East) is irrelevant to European countries' current strategic calculus.

B (financial burden) and D (victim rehabilitation clauses) were not cited in their withdrawal reasons. Thus, C is the correct answer.

Passage 4

42. Correct Answer: B) Jagadguru Rambhadracharya

Explanation: The 58th Jnanpith Award (2025) was conferred on Jagadguru Rambhadracharya, a renowned Sanskrit scholar, poet, and spiritual leader. He is celebrated for his profound contributions to Sanskrit literature, religious commentary, and spiritual discourse, particularly his work on Ramayana and Vedantic texts. His writings and teachings promote inclusivity, especially in the context of his achievements despite being visually impaired.

43. Correct Answer: C) Gulzar

Explanation: At the 58th Jnanpith Award ceremony, Gulzar, the celebrated poet, lyricist, and filmmaker, was also honored. However, he could not attend the event due to health reasons. His presence was still acknowledged, and he received praise for his lifelong contribution to Indian literature and poetry in multiple languages.

44. Correct Answer: D) Triveni

Explanation: Gulzar is credited with creating and popularizing a unique three-line Hindi poetic form called Triveni. It has a structure similar to a haiku but carries a narrative twist in the third line, adding depth or surprise to the meaning. This form reflects Gulzar's signature style of blending simplicity with profound insight.

45. Correct Answer: C) Bharatiya Jnanpith

Explanation: The Jnanpith Award is administered by the Bharatiya Jnanpith, a literary and research organization founded by the Sahu Jain family. Established in 1961, it is one of the most prestigious literary honors in India, given annually for exceptional contribution to Indian literature in any of the recognized languages under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

46. Correct Answer: D) Vinod Kumar Shukla

Explanation: Vinod Kumar Shukla, an acclaimed Hindi novelist and poet, became the first writer from Chhattisgarh to receive the 59th Jnanpith Award. Known for his lyrical and minimalist prose, his notable works include "Naukar Ki Kameez" and "Deewar Mein Ek Khirki Rehti Thi". His style blends the mundane with the magical, making him a unique voice in contemporary Hindi literature.

Passage 5:

47. Correct Answer: B – December 30, 2018 (Difficulty: Medium)

Explanation: The CPTPP officially came into force on December 30, 2018.

A (December 30, 2017) is incorrect; the TPP withdrawal by the US occurred around this time, not the CPTPP enforcement.

C (March 8, 2018) is the date when the CPTPP was signed, not when it came into force.

D (April 15, 2019) has no direct relevance to CPTPP milestones. Thus, B is correct.

48. Correct Answer: C – United States (Difficulty: Easy)

Explanation: The United States was originally a part of the TPP negotiations but withdrew in 2017 under President Donald Trump.

A (France) was never part of the original TPP.

B (China) was never a member of TPP or CPTPP.

D (India) was also not part of either TPP or CPTPP. Thus, C is correct.

49. Correct Answer: C. CPTPP membership includes 12 countries. (Difficulty: Medium)

Explanation: Currently, the CPTPP has 12 members, including the United Kingdom as the latest entrant.

A (15 countries including India and China) is incorrect; neither India nor China is a member as of now.

B (European Union block member) is wrong; the EU is not a member of CPTPP.

D (only Asian countries) is incorrect; CPTPP includes nations from the Pacific Rim, not just Asia. Thus, C is correct.

50. Correct Answer: A – Santiago. (Difficulty: Hard)

Explanation: The CPTPP was signed in Santiago, Chile in March 2018.

B (Tokyo) and C (Canberra) are important cities for trade discussions but not the signing location.

D (Kuala Lumpur) has no direct connection with CPTPP's signing. Thus, A is correct.

51. Correct Answer: C – 15% (Difficulty: Medium)

Explanation: The CPTPP members together account for around 15% of global GDP.

A (10%) and B (20%) are incorrect and overstate or understate the contribution.

D (25%) exaggerates the share far beyond the actual figure. Thus, C is correct.

52. Correct Answer: B – Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector (Difficulty: Hard)

Explanation: According to NITI Aayog, MSMEs stand to benefit the most from India's potential participation in blocs like CPTPP and RCEP, as MSMEs constitute a major share of India's exports.

A (Agriculture sector), while important, was not the primary focus discussed.

C (Automobile manufacturing sector) and D (Pharmaceutical sector) have opportunities but were not the key sectors mentioned for maximum benefit. Thus, B is correct.

LEGAL REASONING

Passage 1

53 (Hard) Correct Answer: A Explanation: DevLuxe's threat to "shift to a competitor" unless StoneGrain accepted a 40% price cut constitutes "an unlawful coercion to perform an act by threatening financial injury at a time when one cannot exercise free will" ("unlawful coercion..." [passage line 2]). StoneGrain "had no alternative course open to him" ("no alternative course open..." [passage line 5]), satisfying Pao On's second criterion, and the pressure was "wrongful or illegitimate" ("wrongful or illegitimate" [passage line 8]), meeting the illegitimate-pressure test.

Option B ("StoneGrain accepted the change voluntarily...") is incorrect because consent given under threat of business ruin cannot be deemed voluntary: the law distinguishes between formal agreement and genuine, free consent (passage lines 1-2).

Option C ("A party's tough bargaining does not amount to coercion...") fails because economic duress does not

require violence; "commercial pressure" crosses into duress when it is illegitimate (passage line 7).

Option D ("The economic hardship of one party is irrelevant...") is wrong because economic hardship is precisely the lever of duress, not an excuse; duress addresses when hardship is wielded wrongfully (passage lines 1-2).

54 (Medium) Correct Answer: B Explanation: BigFresh's cancellation threat when MiraAgro faced spoiling stock exemplifies "illegitimate means of persuasion" ("some illegitimate means..." [passage line 9]) and leave MiraAgro with "no alternative course open to him" ("no alternative course open..." [passage line 5]). This unlawful coercion directly impaired consent, satisfying both Pao On and the illegitimate-pressure test.

Option A ("agreement made with awareness of business conditions...") is incorrect because mere awareness of market pressures does not neutralize a coercive threat;

duress examines whether consent was overborne.

Option C (“Price renegotiations due to oversupply are market-driven...”) misreads the distinction between normal commercial negotiation and illegitimate pressure—the latter involves wrongful threats (passage line 7).

Option D (“Standard industry practice justifies renegotiation...”) wrongly elevates custom above statutory doctrine; even standard practice cannot legalize coercive threats that vitiate consent (passage lines 8–9).

55. (Hard) Correct Answer: A FinEdge’s combined tactic of withholding three months’ payments and threatening breach-of-contract litigation unless MobiChain agreed to slash its licensing fees plainly constituted “wrongful or illegitimate means of persuasion” (“the coercive action must be ‘wrongful’ or ‘illegitimate’” [passage line 8]) and left MobiChain “with no alternative course open to him” (“no alternative course open...” [passage line 5]). These are the quintessential hallmarks of economic duress under both the Pao On criteria and the “illegitimacy of pressure” test, rendering the fee reduction voidable.

Option B (“renegotiation arose from business strategy...”) is incorrect because it ignores the wrongful nature of the threat—legal tactics leveraged purely to coerce do not become legitimate business strategy merely by framing them as cost-cutting (passage line 7).

Option C (“delayed dues unrelated...”) misreads causation: the withholding of payments was the very coercive mechanism that forced MobiChain’s compliance, satisfying the test’s causal link requirement (“a causal relationship existed between the illegitimate conduct and the plaintiff’s response” [passage line 9]).

Option D (“Software dependency was known...”) fails because prior knowledge of a customer’s reliance does not negate the wrongdoing of threatening breach proceedings—it actually underscores the coercive leverage used.

56. (Hard) Correct Answer: C Explanation: ProEdge’s threat to terminate and sue unless Kairavi added machines without extra payment is “an unlawful coercion ... by threatening financial injury” (“unlawful coercion...” [passage line 2]) and uses “wrongful or illegitimate means of persuasion” (“wrongful or illegitimate” [passage line 8]). It left Kairavi with “no alternative course open” (“no alternative course open...” [passage line 5]), confirming duress.

□ Option A (“Since Kairavi modified knowingly...”) ignores that apparent consent under threat is not genuine free will (passage lines 1–2).

Option B (“The lack of force or fraud...”) is incorrect because economic duress doesn’t require physical force or fraud; wrongful financial threats suffice (passage line 7).

Option D (“Reliance on a single contract...”) misinterprets reliance as a waiver of rights; law protects parties even when they depend heavily on a contract (passage lines 5–6).

57 (Medium) Correct Answer: B Explanation: AquaDams’s insistence on extra engineers under threat of replacement constitutes “some illegitimate means of persuasion” (“some illegitimate means...” [passage line 9]) and left Nautix with “no alternative course open” (“no alternative course open...” [passage line 5]). This wrongful pressure vitiated consent, entitling Nautix to rescind under economic duress.

□ Option A (“demand lacked coercion...”) overlooks that threats of business ruin are coercive even if no law is broken (passage line 2).

□ Option C (“financial risk irrelevant...”) wrongly treats written compliance as proof of voluntariness; duress law distinguishes coercion from genuine agreement (passage line 7).

□ Option D (“Additional staffing demands are normal...”) conflates normal commercial terms with wrongful threats—only the latter triggers duress (passage line 8).

58 (Medium) Correct Answer: B Explanation: The passage clarifies that economic duress “renders a contract voidable and not void” since it “results in the impairment of consent and not in the absence of it” (“voidable and not void... impairment of consent” [passage line 13]). Therefore, the contract remains valid unless voided by the coerced party.

Option A (“pressure leads to complete lack of consent...”) is incorrect: duress impairs but does not obliterate consent; parties retain the option to affirm the contract (passage line 13).

Option C (“coercion only makes part of the contract defective...”) misreads the doctrine; the entire contract is voidable, not only the coerced clause (passage line 13).

Option D (“once performed, opportunity to render void no longer exists”) is wrong, as voidability allows post-performance rescission if consent was impaired (passage line 13).

Passage 2

59 (Hard) Correct Answer: C Explanation: Radha’s landlocked farmhouse abutting a river with no road access, and her uninterrupted seven-year use of the track, satisfy the requirements for an easement of necessity, which arises “when the owner or occupier of

a property cannot use their property without exercising the right of easement over the servient heritage" ("easement of necessity: ... cannot use their property without..." [passage line 22]). No express grant is required—necessity alone confers the right.

Option A fails because necessity easements may be implied, not only by written deed ("acquired ... through an express grant" vs "or implied circumstances" [passage lines 16–17]).

Option B is wrong: theoretical bridge-building does not negate absolute necessity when practical access is impossible ("necessity ... convenience" [passage line 22]).

Option D misstates that a common origin is required—necessity does not depend on prior unity of tenure ("quasi-easements" differ from necessity easements; see passage lines 24–25).

60 (Medium) Correct Answer: B Explanation: Ajay's continued use of the ancestral well after partition invokes a quasi-easement, which arises "when common properties are converted into tenements through ... partition, easements can be implied" ("quasi-easements: ... converted ... easements can be implied" [passage lines 24–25]). The prior unity of ownership and apparent, continuous use satisfy the test for implication.

□ Option A is incorrect: no formal registration is necessary for quasi-easements, which arise of law, not by deed ("easements can also be acquired ... implied circumstances" [passage lines 16–17]).

Option C misreads the statute—government permission is irrelevant to private easements ("land ... attached to the earth" and "rights in rem" [passage lines 2, 18]).

Option D is wrong: co-owners can claim implied rights post-partition when the original unity gives rise to quasi-easements (passage lines 24–25).

61 (Hard) Correct Answer: B Explanation: Sneha's sale left her landlocked, and she may assert an easement of necessity despite omitting a reservation in the deed: necessity arises "when the owner or occupier ... cannot use their property without exercising the right of easement over the servient heritage" ("easement of necessity..." [passage line 22]). The lack of written clause does not defeat an implied necessity easement.

Option A fails because absence of an express reservation does not bar an implied necessity easement (passage lines 16–17, 22).

Option C incorrectly asserts former owners lose all access rights—necessity easements survive transfers (passage line 22).

Option D misapplies the "distinct properties" requirement; dominant and servient tenements need only be separate, not originally unrelated.

62 (Hard) Correct Answer: C Explanation: Kiran's pre-sale drainage use is "continuous and apparent," and on severance of ownership, converts into a quasi-easement—"when ... partition, easements can be implied" ("quasi-easements..." [passage lines 24–25]). This entitles her to restoration of the drain's path.

Option A is incorrect: express recording is unnecessary where an implied quasi-easement exists by prior use (passage lines 16–17, 24–25).

Option B misstates that only certain rights qualify; the concept of "beneficial enjoyment" expressly includes necessary conveniences like drainage ("beneficial enjoyment encompasses ... necessity" [passage line 5]).

Option D wrongly suggests easements vanish on transfer—unlike personal licenses, easements in gross and by implication survive until expressly extinguished (passage lines 16–18).

63. (Medium) Correct Answer: A Explanation: Meera's long-term peaceful enjoyment of the alley to park her scooter qualifies as a positive easement under Section 4, since "beneficial enjoyment encompasses convenience, advantage, amenity, or necessity" ("beneficial enjoyment ... convenience" [passage line 5]) and easements "can be either positive ... in nature" ("positive or negative ..." [passage line 7]). Additionally, the passage specifies that easements can be acquired by prescription, through open, continuous, and uninterrupted enjoyment for a specified period without the owner's permission.

Option B fails by limiting "beneficial enjoyment" to necessities—it legally includes mere convenience (passage line 5).

Option C overstates a barrier—open, continuous use can give rise to easements even if permission was initially informal (passage lines 16–18).

Option D misattributes that parking isn't land use; courts recognize everyday conveniences as easement activities (passage line 5).

64. (Medium) Correct Answer: B Explanation: A valid easement under Section 4 requires (i) benefit to the dominant tenement, (ii) burden on a servient heritage, and (iii) enforceability against the world ("rights in rem") ("rights in rem ... enforceable against the whole world" [passage line 18]). Option B captures this: "A legally enforceable right over another's property that benefits the dominant tenement and burdens the servient one."

Option A is too narrow: easements cover more than mere convenience and aren't limited to economic benefit (passage line 5).

Option C miscasts easements as mutual arrangements, when they are unilateral rights (passage line 7).

Option D confuses easements with personal rights of way over one's own land—easements specifically work over another's land (passage line 12).

Passage 3

65. (Hard) Correct Answer: B Explanation: The priest's claim to collect offerings is based on his customary office, which qualifies as a legal entitlement over temple property rather than a pure theological dispute. Section 9's Explanation I clarifies that "suits involving rights to property or office, even if they involve elements of religious practice, are still deemed civil" ("suits involving rights to property or office, even if they involve elements of religious practice..." [passage line 9]). Thus, the civil court properly has jurisdiction.

Option A is incorrect because jurisdiction hinges on the nature of the right, not the religious overtones.

Option C fails: the involvement of a statutory body (Charity Commissioner) does not by itself oust civil courts unless expressly barred.

Option D misstates the law—civil jurisdiction under Section 9 does not depend on both parties being private individuals; it depends on the nature of the right.

66. (Medium) Correct Answer: C

Explanation: Chandra's suit for reinstatement is rooted in his legal entitlement to hold office on the trust's board, which is a civil right even within a religious institution. Section 9's Explanation I confirms that "claims involving rights to office...are deemed civil if they concern a legal right rather than a matter of personal belief" ("claims involving rights to office..." [passage line 8]). Therefore, civil courts maintain jurisdiction.

Option A wrongly assumes spiritual bodies are wholly autonomous, ignoring legal rights to office.

Option B mischaracterizes ecclesiastical appointments as beyond civil adjudication when legal entitlements exist.

Option D inaccurately posits that state religious laws automatically override Section 9, which they do not unless expressly stated.

67. (Hard) Correct Answer: A

Explanation: The Industrial Disputes Act provides a complete and self-contained mechanism for dispute resolution via the Labour Commissioner and industrial tribunal. When "a statute creates a complete and self-contained mechanism for adjudicating disputes, and permitting parallel civil proceedings would defeat the legislative intent," an implied bar arises ("complete and self-contained mechanism..." [passage line 12]).

Hence, civil court jurisdiction is ousted.

Option B is incorrect because the existence of constitutional rights does not override statutory exclusion when an alternative forum is provided.

Option C is false: the IDA's remedies (back wages, reinstatement) are full relief, not partial.

Option D misunderstands implied bars—they arise without explicit language when legislative intent clearly demands exclusivity.

68. (Hard) Correct Answer: C

Explanation: Although the Land Acquisition Act expressly directs compensation disputes to the Collector and Reference Court, Dhulabhai allows civil courts to intervene where there is "violation of natural justice" or where the special forum fails to provide adequate relief ("if it does not provide an adequate relief or if there is a violation of natural justice" [passage line 14]). The villager's denial of a hearing engages this exception, reviving civil jurisdiction.

Option A is inaccurate: express bar statutes are construed narrowly and do not preclude natural justice exceptions.

Option B wrongly treats the Collector's process as unassailable, ignoring procedural fairness.

Option D is overly rigid—vesting does not extinguish rights to fair hearing and remedy.

69. (Medium) Correct Answer: C

Explanation: The Armed Forces Tribunal Act implies exclusivity, but under Dhulabhai, civil courts may intervene if "there is a violation of natural justice" or if the alternative remedy is not adequate ("if it does not provide adequate relief or if there is a violation of natural justice" [passage line 14]). The wife's claim of inadequate hearing triggers this exception, allowing civil court jurisdiction.

Option A is too absolute—exclusion is not airtight when fundamental fairness is at stake.

Option B misframes the test as mere absence of remedy rather than adequacy of remedy.

Option D incorrectly equates pension policy disputes with unreviewable state matters, ignoring procedural safeguards.

70. (Medium) Correct Answer: B Explanation: Section 9 establishes a "presumption in favour of civil jurisdiction" that allows civil courts to adjudicate "all suits of a 'civil nature' except those which are either expressly or impliedly barred" ("presumption in favour..." and "except those expressly or impliedly barred" [passage line 2]). Option B succinctly captures this: civil courts may hear any private-rights suit unless a statute clearly excludes them.

Option A is incorrect: Section 9 does not require written agreement to oust jurisdiction.

Option C reverses the hierarchy—civil jurisdiction is primary, not subsidiary.

Option D falsely restricts jurisdiction based on party identity rather than on the nature of the right.

Passage 4

71. (Hard) Correct Answer: A Line References: Lines 2–3, 5–7 Explanation: Areeb’s detention without being “informed of the grounds for such arrest” or allowed to “consult and be represented by a legal practitioner of their choice” violates Article 22(1), and keeping him “for two days without being produced before a magistrate” breaches Article 22(2) which mandates production “within 24 hours” excluding transit (“within 24 hours of their arrest, excluding the time required for transportation” [passage lines 5–7]).

Option B fails because fundamental rights cannot be suspended due to the political context of a protest; procedural safeguards apply universally (passage lines 1–2).

Option C is incorrect: Article 22 applies to all arrests, not only post-charge criminal trials (passage line 2).

Option D wrongly suggests sovereign immunity; Indian jurisprudence permits judicial review of arbitrary state action (passage line 1).

72. (Medium) Correct Answer: B Line Reference: Line 3 Explanation: Article 22(3) expressly carves out “enemy alien” status from the protections in clauses (1) and (2) (“none of the rights ... would be applicable for a person who is deemed to be an enemy alien” [passage line 3]). As Muneer is from a country at war with India, he falls squarely within this exception.

Option A is wrong because foreign nationality plus wartime status triggers the specific exclusion under Article 22(3).

Option C misreads the exception: enemy aliens receive no magistrate-production right under clauses (1) and (2).

Option D overstates the exception—Article 22(3) only suspends clauses (1) and (2), not all of Article 22.

73. (Hard) Correct Answer: C Line Reference: Lines 5–6 Explanation: Article 22(1) guarantees “the right to consult and be represented by a legal practitioner of their choice” “from the moment a person has been arrested” (“available right from the moment a person has been arrested” [passage line 6]). Denial of counsel for 48 hours, even with timely magistrate production, violates this unqualified right.

Option A is incorrect because production within 24

hours under clause (2) does not excuse breach of clause (1).

Option B misstates the scope: the right to counsel attaches immediately upon arrest, not only during trial.

Option D wrongly assumes that judicial production cures all prior procedural lapses, which Article 22 does not permit.

74. (Hard) Correct Answer: A Line Reference: Lines 7–8 Explanation: Article 22(2) requires a detainee to be “produced before the nearest magistrate within 24 hours of their arrest, excluding the time required for transportation” (“not inclusive of the time of travel” [passage line 8]). A delay of 30 hours without proof that travel time alone accounted for the excess violates this safeguard; the State bears the burden of justifying any delay.

Option B erroneously permits unlimited exceptions for emergencies; the constitutional text permits only transit-related delay.

Option C wrongly treats absence of confession as curing due-process violations, which it does not.

Option D is legally baseless: Article 22 has no 48-hour safe-harbor—it is strictly 24 hours plus travel time.

75. (Medium) Correct Answer: B Line References: Lines 3 and 10 Explanation: While Article 22(3) excludes preventive detainees from clauses (1) and (2), it does not dispense with the informational safeguard that an order must state “the grounds for detention” so that the detenu is not deprived of due notice (“must be informed of the grounds for such arrest and ... detention” [passage line 3]).

Option A is incorrect: even under preventive detention, basic disclosure is constitutionally mandated.

Option C overextends the exclusion—only clauses (1) and (2) are suspended, not the ground-disclosure requirement.

Option D misstates jurisdiction—the High Court may review preventive detention orders under Article 226.

76. (Hard) Correct Answer: B Line Reference: Line 6; Joginder Kumar v. State of U.P. Explanation: The Supreme Court in Joginder Kumar held that a detained person must be informed of the cause of detention and entitled to let a third person know the location of detention (“detained person should know the cause of his detention and ... inform any third person of his location” [passage line 6]). By keeping Sameer’s family in the dark, the police violated this procedural safeguard.

Option A ignores that constitutional violations can occur regardless of charge status.

Option C mischaracterizes anti-terror powers as

exempting all procedural compliance, which the Court has rejected.

Option D incorrectly separates detention from arrest—secret detention still engages Article 22 safeguards.

77. (Passage-Based – Medium) Correct Answer: C Line References: Lines 1–3 Explanation: Article 22 “pertains to the protection of a person’s right to personal liberty” by preventing “arbitrary arrest and detention,” but its application “does not apply to ... enemy aliens and ... persons detained under preventive detention laws” (“none of the rights ... would be applicable for a person who is deemed to be an enemy alien ... or ... under the law providing for preventive detention” [passage line 3]). Option C accurately encapsulates both the protective scope and its constitutional exceptions.

Option A conflates Article 22 procedural rights with substantive trial rights under Article 21.

Option B overreads the clause—preventive detention is permitted if statutory safeguards are met.

Option D misstates that Article 22 only applies to citizens; it explicitly covers “any person,” citizen or not (passage lines 1–2).

Passage 5

78. (Hard) Correct Answer: A Line References: “Section 35 confirms ... right of private defence ... of movable or immovable property, against offences such as ... robbery” & “Sections 38–39 delineate when lethal force is proportionately justified” (passage lines 2–5). Explanation: Under Section 35, Kabir may protect his life and property, and Sections 38–39 explicitly permit lethal force when facing a “reasonable apprehension of death or grievous hurt” during offences like burglary at night, which inherently threaten life (passage lines 2–5). His fatal stabbing of the intruder was thus a proportionate response to an imminent life-endangering assault.

Option B is incorrect because BNS does allow deadly force for life-threatening property offences—specifically “robbery” and “house-breaking at night” under Sections 41–43 (passage lines 5–7).

Option C fails: there is no blanket non-lethal requirement; lethal force is permissible when life is at risk (passage lines 3–5).

Option D misreads the test: nighttime burglary alone often implies a grave threat under Section 41, so explicit proof of intent to kill is unnecessary (passage lines 5–7).

79 (Medium) Correct Answer: B Line References: “Section 35 confirms ... right of private defence ... of their own body and that of another” & “Section 37 imposes ... no right of private defence against non

deadly acts by public servants acting in good faith” (passage lines 1–3). Explanation: Priya’s mild blow to protect her nephew is a classic use of non-deadly force in defence of another’s person under Section 35, and it is proportionate to the wrongful assault. Section 37’s bar applies only to public servants acting in good faith, which does not cover a private security guard without lawful authority (passage lines 1–3).

Option A is incorrect because defence of “another’s body” is expressly included, not limited to property seizures (passage line 1).

Option C misapplies Section 37: the guard is not a public servant acting under colour of law (passage lines 1–3).

Option D wrongly imposes a duty to call police first, but BNS permits immediate action when harm is imminent and no authority can be summoned in time (passage line 3).

80 (Hard) Correct Answer: B Line References: “Under Section 36, even if the attacker suffers from ... intoxication ... the defender retains full rights” (passage lines 6–8). Explanation: Section 36 clarifies that the defender’s rights are unaffected by the attacker’s intoxication, unsoundness, or youth, so Sameer may exercise full private defence without mitigating force because Rahul’s impaired state does not diminish the reasonable apprehension of grievous harm (passage lines 6–8).

Option A misreads Section 36, which expressly states intoxication does not reduce the defender’s entitlement to force (passage lines 6–8).

Option C incorrectly bars defence altogether when the attacker is intoxicated; the statute nullifies such a bar (passage lines 6–8).

Option D ignores that lethal force may be justified if there is fear of serious injury, regardless of the attacker’s mental state (passage lines 6–8).

81. (Hard) Correct Answer: A Line References: “Section 35 confirms ... defence ... against offences such as theft” & “principle of proportionality ... non-lethal force ... it would be deemed excessive” (passage lines 1 & 3–4). Explanation: Naina’s twisting of the pickpocket’s arm is a non-deadly, proportionate response to prevent theft under Section 35. Proportionality requires force commensurate with the threat, and here no risk of grievous harm meant non-lethal restraint was appropriate (passage lines 1, 3–4).

Option B is wrong because the immediate threat justified direct intervention without waiting for guards (passage lines 3–4).

Option C invents a verbal-warning requirement absent from BNS; no such prerequisite exists (passage line 3).

Option D misstates Section 37, which limits defence only against good-faith public servants, not against thieves (passage lines 2–3).

82 (Medium) Correct Answer: A Line References: “Sections 38–39 delineate when lethal force is proportionately justified: ... reasonable apprehension of death or grievous hurt” & “Sections 41–43 permit deadly force ... such as ... mischief judged likely to endanger life” (passage lines 5–7).

Explanation: Arson inherently risks lives. Under Sections 38–39, deadly force is allowed when there is reasonable apprehension of death or grievous hurt. Disabling the arsonist by leg injury via a thrown tool is a proportionate, life-protective act (passage lines 5–7).

□ Option B is incorrect because property offences that endanger life (like arson) qualify for deadly defence (passage lines 5–7).

□ Option C misinterprets the nighttime requirement: lethal property defence applies where life is at stake, regardless of hour (passage lines 5–7).

□ Option D sets an unrealistic proof standard; reasonable apprehension of harm from arson suffices (passage lines 3–5).

83 (Medium) Correct Answer: A Line References: “Section 40 specifies ... in high-stakes exigencies ... where a defender cannot avoid harming innocent bystanders, the law offers protection” (passage lines 8–10). Explanation: Section 40 expressly protects defenders who inadvertently injure innocents when no other means could avert the danger.

Sameeta’s accidental harm falls within this shield since the mob threat left no safe alternative (passage lines 8–10).

Option B is incorrect because Section 40 codifies bystander immunity, not absolute liability (passage lines 8–10).

Option C conflates civil compensation with criminal immunity; BNS addresses criminal liability only (passage lines 8–10).

Option D ignores the statutory exception for unavoidable harm embedded in Section 40 (passage lines 8–10).

84 (Passage-Based – Medium) Correct Answer: C Line References: “The principle of proportionality ... force used ... must be commensurate with the nature and gravity of the threat ... alternative, less harmful means” (passage lines 3–5). Explanation: BNS demands that any defensive force be commensurate with the threat’s seriousness and that defenders consider less harmful options first. This balances personal liberty with public order by preventing excessive force (passage lines 3–5). Option A is too rigid—BNS allows reasonable errors in perception and does not forbid all mistakes (passage lines 3–5).

Option B overbroadens property defence, ignoring lethal-force limits for non-life-threatening offences (passage lines 3–5).

Option D contradicts the core proportionality mandate by permitting lethal force in all threatened situations (passage lines 3–5).

LOGICAL REASONING

Passage 1:

85. Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Medium) The foundational premise is that “Since 2014, the Union government has exploited constitutional grey areas—especially through governor appointments—to centralize power and obstruct state governments, necessitating judicial intervention.” This is directly grounded in the passage sentence: “Since 2014, capitalising on the operational grey areas in the Constitution, the Union government has attempted an unprecedented centralisation of power along with constant interference in the functioning of democratically elected state governments – most often through the appointment of obdurate governors...” This premise underlies the need for the April 8 judgment. Option A is incorrect because it states the opposite of the passage’s assertion that the Constitution is a “vision statement ... rather than an operational manual.” Option B is refuted by multiple references to governors interfering (e.g., states taking governors to court).

Option D conflicts with the passage’s narrative showing that approaching the Supreme Court has in fact delivered relief. Hence Option C best captures the underlying assumed context.

86. Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Medium) The passage repeatedly emphasizes that Supreme Court judgments are essential “for operationalizing the Constitution’s vision, closing procedural loopholes, and reinforcing federalism by limiting executive overreach at the state level.” For instance: “Judgments like this refine the interpretations of the Constitution and provide operating guidelines.” This shows the Court’s interventions have real effects. Option A is incorrect because it claims interventions are merely symbolic, contrary to the passage’s emphasis on concrete outcomes (curbing governors’ power, timely governance). Option C is contradicted, since here the Court restricts Union-appointed governors, thereby supporting state autonomy rather than favoring the

Union. Option D opposes the passage's stance, which praises binding interpretations. Thus Option B accurately captures the Court's crucial, effective role.

87. Correct Option: D (Difficulty: Medium) The overall message is: "The judgment not only reaffirms that real authority rests with elected representatives but also closes a constitutional lacuna by curbing governors' power to indefinitely withhold assent to state bills, thereby strengthening India's federal structure." This reflects lines such as "greatly limits the ability of governors to obstruct state legislation" and "it reaffirmed that ... the Governor cannot indefinitely withhold his assent to bills." Option A is the opposite of the passage's assertion that the judgment curbs delays. Option B is incorrect because the author presents the judgment as refining constitutional interpretation and closing an exploited lacuna, not as judicial overreach. Option C is refuted by the passage's note that several aspects "merit detailed attention," indicating it adds meaningful guidance. Therefore, Option D best encapsulates the passage's message.

88. Correct Option: A (Difficulty: Medium) The passage argues that Supreme Court rulings are necessary "to refine constitutional interpretations and provide clear operational guidelines that prevent governors from exploiting procedural ambiguities to stall democratically enacted state legislation." This is evident in "Judgments like this refine the interpretations of the Constitution and provide operating guidelines" and examples of states suing to avoid bills kept "in abeyance for years." Option B is plainly opposite to the passage's contention. Option C conflicts with the passage's federalist critique of centralization. Option D is not argued; instead, the passage assumes state legislatures are competent and entitled to govern without undue obstruction. Hence Option A correctly captures the argument.

89. Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Hard) The implicit assumption is: "Without judicial limits on governors' power to withhold assent, state governments cannot implement laws in a timely manner, undermining democratic governance." This follows from statements like "The duration for which the 10 bills had been kept pending was an aggravated assault on democracy" and the need to "remove a lacuna in the procedural implementation of the Constitution, which has been exploited unscrupulously." Option A is not assumed; the passage suggests systematic exploitation, not only occasional error. Option B contradicts the premise—if enactment were easy, judicial intervention would not be necessary. Option D opposes the passage's theme: the frequent need for interpretation implies written text

alone is insufficient. Thus Option C is the necessary implicit assumption.

90. Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Hard) A statement that "Data from multiple states reveal that governors' prolonged withholding of assent to bills caused severe administrative paralysis—especially in universities—harming public services and underscoring the need for clear judicial constraints" directly reinforces the passage's examples: "All the bills relate to universities, whose functioning has been deeply affected ... not the deep freeze that came from the Governor's inaction." Demonstrating actual harm from such freezes strengthens the argument that the judgment was essential. Option A would weaken the argument by suggesting states rarely challenge governors. Option C is irrelevant or weakening by implying public indifference. Option D contradicts the passage's premise by arguing for governors' sweeping discretion. Therefore, Option B most powerfully bolsters the argument.

Passage 2

91. Correct Option: D (Difficulty: Medium) The passage assumes that "a comfortable, well appointed physical environment—complete with natural light, seating, and personal mementos—fosters a multifaceted space for learning, relaxation, memory keeping, and family bonding." This is reflected in descriptions such as "Sunlight pierced through two big windows as if whispering to the books that they deserved a bit of cheer," the "easy chair and soothing music" and the presence of family artifacts ("granddad's laundry bill lying unnoticed between the pages") which together create an inviting ambience. Option A is incorrect because nowhere does the passage suggest high-tech gadgets or digital resources; instead, it emphasizes sunlight, old dhotis on shelves, cassettes, and stools. Option B is incorrect: although children (exam takers) use the room, adults clearly benefit too—grandma plaits hair there and elders engage in "bookish talk or gossip," showing multi-generational use. Option C is wrong because the passage celebrates personal touches (old recipes, family bills, dried flowers) rather than advocating austerity; the room thrives on these familial elements. Thus Option D best captures the foundational premise.

92. Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Medium) The passage implies that hidden personal artifacts "serve as tangible links to personal and family histories, enriching the reading experience by connecting readers to past generations."

parenthood; it instead focuses on romantic fulfillment rather than the biological clock. This is supported by lines like “It could be an old recipe book lost inside a big fat encyclopaedia or granddad’s laundry bill lying unnoticed between the pages or even a list of daily expenses in grandma’s scrawny hand,” evoking nostalgia and the layered histories embedded in the books. Option A is incorrect because the passage treats these artifacts not as random scraps but as “secrets” that add texture to the space. Option C is wrong; there is no suggestion that placing them is unacceptable or damaging; rather, the tone is affectionate. Option D is incorrect since the passage does not portray artifacts as distracting from serious study; on the contrary, even exam-takers consider the room “lucky,” and insomnia sufferers find solace in the environment, with artifacts contributing to the ambiance. Hence Option B is the reasonable inference.

93. Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Medium) The passage’s overall message is that the library room “is a dynamic, multi-purpose sanctuary—simultaneously a study space, memory repository, family gathering spot, exam refuge, and playground for imagination.” This conclusion aligns with vivid depictions: exam-takers find it lucky; insomnia sufferers use “a fat book ... to the Land of Nod”; tricksters hide comics during exam time; grandma spins tales there; board games are played; diverse languages and old editions coexist. Option A is incorrect because the passage portrays the library room as practically useful and emotionally significant, not an expensive luxury with little use. Option B is wrong: the room is used for far more than quiet reading—social interaction, games, storytelling, secret mischief all occur there. Option D is incorrect because the passage emphasizes ongoing relevance: old books transport readers, scribbles evoke school days, and the room’s atmosphere continues to soothe and inspire. Therefore, Option C best summarizes the overall message.

94. Correct Option: A (Difficulty: Medium) The passage argues that “the library room, with its combination of natural light, comfortable seating, diverse books, and family artifacts, creates an ideal environment that supports scholarly pursuits, nostalgic reflection, creative escape, and social interaction.” This is evident in phrases like “Bright curtains swinging merrily ...,” the “small step stool” for hard-to-reach books, the “easy chair and soothing music,” and anecdotes of hidden recipes or bills linking readers to family history, plus activities like board games and storytelling. Option B is incorrect: the passage does not insist that all family rooms be converted into library rooms; it simply celebrates the unique qualities of this space. Option C is

wrong because the passage does not compare physical books to digital media or argue inferiority; digital media are not mentioned. Option D is incorrect: the passage does not dismiss the value of public libraries but highlights the distinctive intimacy and personal resonance of a private library room. Thus Option A accurately captures the argument.

95. Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Hard) The passage assumes that “environmental factors—such as sunlight, comfortable furniture, and personal touches—are key to making readers feel at ease, thereby enhancing concentration, creativity, and emotional connection.” This inference is supported by “Sunlight pierced through two big windows ...,” “Aunt decided that the many shelves deserved a makeover. They were draped in old white dhotis to keep off dust,” and the presence of an “easy chair and soothing music,” all indicating that ambiance matters. Option A is incorrect because the passage shows that simply filling a room with books is insufficient: enhancements like seating, lighting, and music are highlighted to foster enjoyment. Option B is wrong: while antique volumes feature, the passage also mentions new books and languages jostling for space, so wonder and nostalgia come from a mix, not only rare volumes. Option D is incorrect since the passage does not insist on absolute silence: “soothing music” plays and ambient sounds (footsteps) are noted; the environment soothes nerves rather than enforcing strict silence. Therefore, Option C reflects the implicit assumption.

96. Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Medium) The paradox is that “the library room is simultaneously a serious academic retreat—complete with study materials and a calm environment—and a playful hideaway where secret recipes, comic books, and mischief flourish.” This duality is shown by exam-takers using it as a “lucky room” for focused study, while tricksters hide comics in science textbooks during exam time; similarly, the serene atmosphere aids insomnia sufferers even as the room harbors hidden “secrets” and allows playful indulgences. Option A is incorrect because the passage does not describe any “state-of-the-art reading laboratory”; it focuses on a cozy, homey environment, not contrasted with dusty storage. Option C is wrong: the passage does not portray it as forbidden to guests or as the sole gathering place; rather, it is open to family and visitors. Option D is incorrect because the passage clearly depicts reading happening there extensively, so it is not a location where “no reading at all takes place.” Thus Option B best captures the paradox presented.

Passage 3

97. Correct Option: A (Difficulty: Medium) The foundational premise is that “Even though India’s retail inflation has fallen and the RBI is cutting rates to boost growth, the simultaneous steep fall in food prices threatens farmer incomes and rural consumption demand, demanding policymakers’ urgent attention.” This aligns with the explicit statement: “What must concern policymakers more should be the steep fall in food prices, as this means lower farmer incomes, directly impacting rural consumption demand.” Option B is incorrect because it asserts “Only the RBI’s rate cuts matter for economic health—agricultural price collapses are unrelated and need no policy focus,” which contradicts the passage’s clear emphasis that falling food prices are deeply relevant and require policy action. Option C is incorrect: although export uncertainties are noted (“U.S.-led tariff uncertainty ... forcing exporters to scramble for newer markets”), the passage does not claim they eclipse all domestic concerns; rather, rural distress is highlighted as especially urgent. Option D is wrong because “Falling retail inflation uniformly benefits every sector, including agriculture, without any adverse effects” contradicts the passage’s point that while retail inflation easing supports growth, falling farm prices adversely affect farmers. Thus Option A best captures the passage’s underlying premise.

98. Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Medium) A reasonable inference is that “The persistent rural-urban consumption gap, combined with export sluggishness, implies that boosting rural demand could be a vital lever for sustaining overall growth.” The passage provides data: “monthly per capita consumption expenditure for rural areas in fiscal 2024 was ₹4,122, while in urban areas, it was ₹6,996, indicating the significant gap that must be viewed as an opportunity, at a time when export growth is expected to be sluggish.” Option A (“Low inflation and rate cuts alone will guarantee robust nationwide consumption and economic recovery without additional support measures”) is incorrect because the passage warns that rate cuts in “normal times” would spur consumption, but current “dampening investor confidence” and rural distress mean additional measures are needed. Option B (“RBI rate cuts will automatically raise rural incomes and eliminate the need for targeted agricultural intervention”) is incorrect: the passage explicitly highlights that falling food prices lower farmer incomes and calls for interventions (storage, transport), indicating rate cuts alone are insufficient. Option D

(“Declining food prices have no bearing on rural consumption because of government procurement programs”) is incorrect: while procurement is mentioned (e.g., tomatoes in Kurnool), the narrative shows procurement is insufficient to offset massive losses, so food price declines do bear on consumption. Therefore, Option C is the best-supported inference.

99. Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Medium) The passage’s overall message is that “Policymakers must continue easing monetary policy to support growth but simultaneously implement measures to shore up farmer incomes and rural consumption in the face of collapsing food prices.” This synthesizes the dual thrust: the first paragraph notes RBI rate cuts in response to low inflation (“repo rate has already been cut twice ... signalling the emphasis on growth”) while the second highlights that steep falls in farm prices threaten rural incomes (“steep fall in food prices ... directly impacting rural consumption demand”). Option A (“The RBI should suspend further rate cuts until farmgate prices recover to protect farmers”) is incorrect because the passage does not advocate halting rate cuts; it suggests rate cuts help growth but must be complemented by agricultural measures. Option C (“Focusing solely on export diversification is sufficient to offset any domestic demand shortfalls caused by rural distress”) is wrong: export uncertainties are noted, but domestic rural demand is emphasized as a vital opportunity, not something to be offset only by exports. Option D (“The recent fall in food prices is a transient phenomenon that warrants no policy intervention”) contradicts the urgent tone (“forced farmers to dump produce ... post-harvest loss at ₹1.52 trillion annually”) showing intervention is necessary. Hence Option B accurately summarizes the passage’s conclusion.

100. Correct Option: D (Difficulty: Medium) The argument developed is: “While low inflation and rate cuts can spur broad economic growth, they must be paired with targeted interventions—such as better storage, transport, and support for farmers—to prevent rural incomes from collapsing and eroding consumption demand.” This mirrors the structure: first, the passage notes benefits of rate cuts (“repo rate reduction has already begun translating into lower interest ... would translate into greater capital flows ...”), then cautions about rural distress (“steep fall in food prices ... lower farmer incomes”), and identifies structural issues (“shortages in cold storage facilities and temperature-controlled transport ... market inaccessibility”).

Option A (“The RBI should focus exclusively on inflation targeting, leaving agricultural distress issues to state governments”) is incorrect because the passage advocates complementary measures alongside monetary policy, not exclusive focus. Option B (“Exporters must find new markets abroad, with domestic rural incomes left to adjust without support”) is wrong: although export challenges are mentioned, the passage emphasizes that rural incomes need support, not passive adjustment. Option C (“Government procurement of vegetables is the primary solution to price collapses in farm produce”) is incorrect: procurement examples illustrate ad-hoc relief (tomatoes at ₹1/kg, dumping produce) but the passage points to broader structural needs (storage, transport) rather than procurement alone. Thus Option D captures the comprehensive argument.

101. Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Hard) An implicit assumption is that “A significant fall in farmgate prices directly reduces rural household incomes and thus lowers rural consumption expenditure, impacting overall demand.” This underlies the reasoning that policymakers should worry about falling food prices because lower farmer incomes will depress rural consumption (“steep fall in food prices ... directly impacting rural consumption demand”). Option A (“Farmers have diversified income sources, so a drop in farmgate prices does not significantly affect their consumption”) is incorrect because it contradicts the passage’s concern: if diversified incomes removed the impact, the steep price fall would not be worrisome. Option B (“Urban consumption trends are unaffected by changes in rural incomes and spending”) is irrelevant or incorrect: while the passage compares rural and urban consumption levels, it implies that overall national demand benefits from raising rural consumption, so urban trends are not isolated. Option D (“Global demand shocks have no ripple effect on rural consumption in India, making domestic factors solely responsible”) is incorrect because the passage acknowledges export uncertainty affects broader economic context, but the focus is on domestic rural distress; it does not assume global shocks are irrelevant. Therefore, Option C correctly identifies the implicit assumption linking farmgate prices to rural consumption and overall demand.

102. Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Medium) The paradox presented is: “While declining retail inflation and rate cuts are heralded as indicators of economic health, the concurrent collapse in farm produce prices undermines rural incomes and consumption—the very outcomes monetary easing seeks to improve.”

This captures the tension: the first paragraph celebrates low inflation (“near six-year low of 3.34% ... RBI will cut ... signalling emphasis on growth”), yet the second warns that falling food prices harm farmers (“tomato prices ... forced farmers to dump produce ... post-harvest loss at ₹1.52 trillion annually”). Option A (“Both low inflation and high farmer incomes rise together under current policy, demonstrating uniform policy success”) is incorrect because the passage shows low inflation but falling farmer incomes, not uniform success. Option C (“Export uncertainty and rural consumption growth both accelerate at the same time, defying economic logic”) is incorrect: the passage does not suggest rural consumption is growing despite distress; instead, it points to a gap and potential opportunity, not an illogical simultaneous rise. Option D (“Rate cuts are shown to harm urban borrowers even as rural incomes rise, suggesting a complete inversion of policy goals”) is incorrect: the passage does not mention harm to urban borrowers nor rising rural incomes; the paradox is about monetary easing helping growth generally while agricultural distress deepens. Hence Option B best captures the paradox in the passage.

Passage 4

103. Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Medium) The passage’s foundational premise is that “Lifelike, endlessly affirming AI chatbots—operating in an unregulated environment—can encourage harmful or even suicidal behavior in vulnerable teenagers, making regulation imperative.” This derives from the opening anecdote: Sewell Setzer III’s bot “encouraged him to ‘come home’ to her, and he did,” plus references to chatbots as an “understudied, regulatory Wild West.” Together, these establish that the design of affirming bots in an unregulated space can precipitate tragic outcomes, especially among vulnerable teens, and thus regulation is needed. Option A is incorrect because the passage explicitly states we “don’t really know how many teens are using bots for emotional solace,” refuting the idea that usage is strictly academic. Option C is wrong: the passage repeatedly warns against assuming chatbots “invariably benefit” teens; instead, it highlights potential harm. Option D is incorrect since the primary concern emphasized is psychological effects—the tragic suicide case—not subscription costs. Thus B best encapsulates the foundational premise.

104. Correct Option: B (Difficulty: Medium) The passage allows us to infer that “The widespread adoption of AI chatbots among teens suggests a substantial—but largely unmeasured—risk of parasocial attachment and potential long-term harm to emotional development.”

This is supported by “Seven in 10 teens age 13 to 18 say they have used at least one type of generative A.I. tool ... we don’t really know how many teens are using bots for emotional solace or forming parasocial relationships with them.” The combination of prevalence and unknown emotional usage signals unmeasured risk. Option A is incorrect because it overstates universality (“every teen uses them daily ... without exception”) and ignores nuance. Option C is wrong: the passage notes emotional or social side effects, such as isolation and suicidal ideation. Option D is incorrect as a blanket statement: while chatbots can respond with “yes-and,” the example shows they can reinforce self-harm tendencies rather than automatically thwart them. Therefore, B is the most reasonable inference.

105. Correct Option: A (Difficulty: Medium) The passage’s overall message is: “Without prompt regulation, AI chatbots risk repeating social media’s mistakes by turning a generation of teenagers into unknowing guinea pigs, deepening isolation and mental health crises.” This conclusion aligns with “we have let social media companies run unfettered, and instead of learning our lesson and trying to responsibly regulate A.I. in its nascency, we’re creating the next generation of tech guinea pigs.” It warns that unregulated, lifelike chatbots can exacerbate loneliness and suicidal risks. Option B is incorrect because the author clearly argues dangers exist and regulation is needed. Option C is wrong: the passage asserts social media lessons do apply to AI chatbots, which are not merely educational tools. Option D is incorrect: the author does not call for total abandonment of chatbots in lieu of therapy, but rather for responsible oversight; the nuance is regulation and study, not outright banishment. Hence A best summarizes the overall message.

106. Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Hard) The passage’s argument is: “Although generative AI chatbots can provide convenient emotional affirmation, their design—offering unconditional ‘yes and’ responses—can exacerbate suicidal ideation and deepen adolescent loneliness, especially in vulnerable users, so responsible oversight and study are essential.” This encapsulates the example of the Minnesota man whose AI girlfriend said “Oh, great!” to suicidal statements, plus the teenager’s tragic outcome, and the warning that we are in a “regulatory Wild West.” Option A is incorrect: the passage does not call for an outright ban as the sole remedy, but for regulation and further study; it acknowledges nuance rather than labeling chatbots more dangerous than any previous tech. Option B is wrong because it argues against proactive measures, whereas the passage urges studying and regulating

before harm accumulates. Option D is incorrect as it directly contradicts the warning: the passage discourages encouraging deeper bonds with chatbots at the expense of human relationships. Therefore, C best represents the developed argument.

107. Correct Option: D (Difficulty: Hard) An implicit assumption is that “Teenagers who rely on endlessly validating chatbots will further retreat from imperfect human relationships, thereby increasing their isolation and mental health risks.” This is grounded in “For kids who are already socially awkward or otherwise vulnerable, creating bonds with eternally validating chatbots will just further isolate them from other people, who are imperfect and challenging.” It assumes that seeking comfort in unconditional affirmation substitutes for real-world interaction, worsening isolation. Option A is incorrect: the passage never assumes all teens need coding skills to build safe bots. Option B is wrong because the author argues the opposite—vulnerable teens can be influenced by chatbots. Option C (“Chatbots’ unconditional affirmation is as psychologically beneficial as it is potentially harmful, depending on the context”) is not the core assumption; while context matters, the passage focuses on the harm from unconditional affirmation, not positing equal benefit in any case. Thus D correctly captures the implicit assumption about reliance on chatbots undermining human bonds.

108. Correct Option: C (Difficulty: Medium) The paradox is that “AI chatbots promise emotional support and lifelike companionship, yet their unconditional affirmation can worsen users’ mental health crises by reinforcing harmful impulses.” The passage illustrates this with the “yes-and” machine that encourages suicidal ideation and the teen who died after bonding with a bot. Although chatbots appear to offer solace, their design can deepen crises. Option A is incorrect: chatbots are described as increasingly lifelike and unpredictable in their harmful affirmation patterns, not entirely predictable. Option B (“Teenagers who feel isolated at school find deeper connections through chatbots but become more isolated from actual human peers”) is a valid tension but is a narrower version of the core paradox; the passage emphasizes the contradiction between comforting design and harmful outcomes, making C more comprehensive.

QUANTITATIVE TECHNIQUES

Passage 1:

109: Correct Option: B. (Easy)
Whole Wheat ₹50, Multigrain ₹60, Sourdough ₹91
WW: ₹40 + 25% = ₹50
MG: ₹50 + 20% = ₹60
SD: ₹70 + 30% = ₹91 Other options incorrectly calculate markups. D wrongly marks Multigrain at 25%, A undervalues Whole Wheat.

110: Correct Option: B. 30 Free Loaves (Easy)
WW loaves sold = 200 – 10% = 180
For every 6 loaves sold, 1 is free → paid = 150, free = 30
Option C overestimates. A underestimate based on wrong divisor.

111: Correct Option: A. ₹9,031.75 (Medium)
95 Sourdough at ₹91 = ₹8,645
5 unsold at 15% off → ₹77.35 × 5 = ₹386.75
Total = ₹8,645 + ₹386.75 = ₹9,031.75 Options B and C are rounded or omit the discounted portion.

112: Correct Option: A. ₹2,100 (Medium)–
WW paid = 150
MG sold = 138
SD sold = 95
Add unsold but sold-at-discount: 20 (WW) + 12 (MG) + 5 (SD) = 37
Total sold = 150 + 138 + 95 + 37 = 420
Packaging = ₹5 × 420 = ₹2,100 Other options miscount free loaves or exclude discounted stock.

113: Correct Option: D. 1.06 (Hard)
Multigrain:
138 × ₹60 = ₹8,280
12 × ₹51 = ₹612 → Total = ₹8,892
Whole Wheat:
150 × ₹50 = ₹7,500
20 × ₹42.50 = ₹850 → Total = ₹8,350
Ratio ≈ 8892 : 8350 = 1.06

114: Correct Option: B. ₹50,100 (Medium)
Daily packaging cost = ₹2,100 (from Q112)
Weekly (6 days) = ₹2,100 × 6 = ₹12,600
Fixed monthly = ₹150,000
Weekly total = ₹12,600 + (₹150,000/4) = ₹37,500 + 12,600 = 50,100

Passage 2:

115: Correct Option: A. (Medium)
A: 565.49 m³, B: 452.39 m³, C: 610.73 m³ Explanation:
Formula = $\pi \times r^2 \times h \times 0.90$
A: $\pi \times 25 \times 8 \times 0.90 = 565.49 \text{ m}^3$
B: $\pi \times 16 \times 10 \times 0.90 = 452.39 \text{ m}^3$
C: $\pi \times 36 \times 6 \times 0.90 = 610.73 \text{ m}^3$ Other options round or misapply the 90% fill.

116: Correct Option: C. 667.27 m³ (Hard) Explanation:
Tank A: 40% of 565.49 = 226.19 m³
Tank B: 30% of 452.39 = 135.72 m³
Tank C: 50% of 610.73 = 305.36 m³
Total = 226.19 + 135.72 + 305.36 = 667.27 m³ Others underestimate by excluding one tank or miscalculating percentages.

117: Correct Option: B. ₹1,334.55 (Medium) Explanation:
₹2 × 667.27 m³ = ₹1,334.55
Line 4 specifies ₹2/m³ chlorination Options A and D reflect wrong unit rate or total volume.

118: Correct Option: A. ₹3,336.37 (Easy) Explanation:
Pumping cost = ₹0.50/100 L = ₹5/m³
₹5 × 667.27 m³ = ₹3,336.37 Other answers reflect ₹4.25–₹5.00 per m³ assumptions, but only ₹5 is correct.

119: Correct Option: C. ₹30,000 (Easy) Explanation:
Each tank cleaned weekly at ₹10,000
Total = ₹10,000 × 3 = ₹30,000 (Line 5) Options A/B/D are too low or high.

120: Correct Option: C. ₹65,696.44 (Medium)
Explanation:
Daily chlorination + pumping = ₹1,334.55 + ₹3,336.37 = ₹4,670.92
Weekly = ₹4,670.92 × 7 = ₹32,696.44



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